

TRUXTON KING

By **GEORGE BARR MCCUTCHEON.**

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Now let us turn to John Tullis and his quest in the hills. It goes without saying that he found no trace of his sister or her abductors. On the fifth day a large force of Dawbergen soldiers, led by Prince Danton himself, found the fagged, dispirited American and his half starved men encamped in a rocky defile in the heart of the wilderness.

That same night a Graustark mountaineer passed the sentinels and brought news of the disturbance in Edelweiss.

In a flash it occurred to John Tullis that Marlanx was at the bottom of this devilry. The abduction of Loraine was a part of his plan! Prince Danton advised a speedy return to the city. His men were at the command of the American. Moreover, the prince himself decided to accompany the troops.

Before sunrise the command, now five or six hundred strong, was picking its way down the dangerous mountain roads toward the main highway. Fifteen miles below Edelweiss they came upon the company of soldiers sent out to preserve order in the railroad camps, which was, of course, a further reinforcement.

The sound of shooting in the distance struck their ears. Instantly the entire force was alert. A dozen shots were fired in rapid succession, then single reports far apart. The steady beat of horses' feet were now plain to the attentive company. There was a quick, inclusive call to arms. A squad stood ready for action.

A small group of horsemen came thundering down the defile. Three minutes after the firing was first heard scintillas threw their rifles to their shoulders and blocked the approach of the riders.

A wild, glad shout went up from the foremost horseman. He had pulled his beast to its haunches almost at the muzzle of the guns.

"Tullis!" he shouted, waving his hat.
John Tullis ran toward the excited group in the road. He saw three men, one of whom was shouting his name with all the power in his lungs.

"Thank God, we've found you!" cried the horseman.

"King!" exclaimed Tullis, suddenly recognizing him. A moment later they were clasping hands.

"What has happened, King? Where have you been? We looked for you after your disappearance."

"That's ancient history," interrupted the other. "How soon can you get these troops on the march? There's not a moment to be lost."

"Good glory, man, tell me what it is! What has happened? The prince—what of him?" cried Tullis, grasping King's arm in the clutch of a vise.

"He sends his love and rescinds the order of exile," said King, smiling, then seriously: "Marlanx has taken the city. It was all a game, this getting rid of you. The prince and the others are besieged in the castle. Thank God, we got to you in time! Back here a couple of miles we came upon a small gang of robbers. We had a bit of shooting, and I regret to say, no one was bagged."

"Loraine—where is she, King?" "Don't tremble like that, old man. She's safe enough in the castle. Oh, it was a fine game Marlanx had in his mind!"

While the troopers were making ready for the march Truxton King and Hobbs related their story to eager, horrified groups of officers.

Finally the battalion, augmented by the misguided company from the deserted railroad camps, moved swiftly into the defile, led by young Babot. Truxton King rode beside the brother of the girl he loved, uttering words of cheer and encouragement.

"The Countess Ingomede—has anything been heard from her?" asked Tullis. He had been thinking of her for days and nights.

"Well, nothing definite," said King suavely.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE RETURNS.

FROM the highlands below the Monastery Captain Haas and his men were able to study the situation in the city. The impracticability of an assault on any one of the stubborn, well guarded gates was at once recognized. A force of 700 men, no matter how well trained or how determined, could not be ex-

often withstood the attack of as many thousands. The wisdom of delaying until a few thousand loyal though poorly armed countrymen could be brought into play against the city appeared at once to Prince Danton and John Tullis.

Squads of men were sent without delay into the hills and valleys to call the panic-stricken, wavering farmers into the fold. The watchers in the hills could see as well as hear the ponding that raged almost at their feet, so to speak.

The next morning Captain Haas announced to his followers that Marlanx had begun to shell the castle. Big guns in the fortress were hurling great shells over the city, dropping them in the park. On the other hand, Colonel Quinnox during the night had swung three Gatling guns to the top of the wall; they were stationed at intervals along the wall, commanding every point from which an assault might be expected.

That night recruits from the farms and villages began to straggle into the camp. They were armed with rifles, ordinary shotguns and unique blunderbusses, swords, staves and aged lances. All were willing to die in the service of the little prince. By the close of the second day nearly 3,000 men were encamped above the city. Late that night John Tullis rode into camp at the head of a great company from the Ganlook province. He had retaken the town of Ganlook, seized the fortress and recruited the entire fighting strength of the neighborhood. More than that, he had unlimited and conveyed to the provisional camp two of the big guns that stood above the gates at the fortress.

Marlanx trained two of his big guns on the camp in the hills. From the fortress he threw many futile shells toward their place of shelter. They did no damage; instead of death, they brought only laughter to the scornful camp. Under cover of night the two Ganlook cannons were planted in a position commanding the southeastern city gate. It was the plan of the new besiegers to bombard this gate, tearing it to pieces with shot.

The knowledge that Marlanx had no big guns except those stationed in the fortress was most consoling to Tullis and his friends. He could not destroy the castle gates with shells, except by purest chance. He could drop shells into the castle, but to hit a gate twenty feet wide? Never!

Truxton King was growing haggard from worry and loss of sleep. He could not understand the abominable, criminal procrastination. He was of a race that did things with a dash and on the spur of the moment. His spirit sickened day by day. John Tullis, equally unhappy, but more philosophical, often found him seated upon a rock at the top of the ravine, an unlighted pipe in his fingers, his eyes intent upon the hazy castle.

"Cheer up, King. Our time will come," he was wont to say.
Then came the night before the proposed assault on the gates. The guns were in position, and the cannonading was to begin at daybreak. Truxton was full of the bitterness of doubt and misgiving. Was she in love with Vos Engo? Was the count's progress favorably under the hand of the enemy? Was his undoubted bravery having its effect upon the wavering susceptibilities of the distressed Loraine?

The sound of a voice in sharp command attracted his attention. There was a bright moon, and Truxton could see other pickets hurrying to join the first. A few moments later several trespassers were escorted through the lines and taken directly to headquarters—a man and two women, King observed.

John Tullis was staring hard at the group approaching from the roadway. One woman walked ahead of her companions. Suddenly he sprang forward with a cry of amazement.
It was the Countess Ingomede.

Her arrival created a sensation. In a moment she was in the center of an amazed circle of men. Tullis, after his first low, eager greeting at the edge of the fire circle, drew her near to the warmth giving flames. Prince Danton and Captain Haas threw rugs and blankets in a great heap for her to sit upon. Every one was talking at once. The countess was smiling through her tears. "Make room for my maid and her father. They are colder and more fatigued than I," she said, lifting her tired, glorious eyes to John Tullis, who stood beside her. "We have come from Bahak. They suffered much that I might enjoy the slender comforts I was so ready to share with them."

"Thank God, you are here!" he said in low, intense tones. She could not mistake the fervor in his voice nor the glow in his eyes.
"I knew you were here, John. I am not going back to Count Marlanx. It is ended."
"I knew it would come, Ingomede. You will let me tell you how glad I am some day."

"Some day, when I am truly, wholly free from him, John. I know what you will say, and I think you know what I shall say in reply." Both understood and were exalted. No other word passed between them touching upon the thing that was uppermost in their minds.

Food was provided for the wayfarers, and Tullis' tent was made ready for the countess and her maid.
The countess' story was soon told. Sitting before the great fire, surrounded by eager listeners, she related her experiences.

(To Be Continued.)

JUSTICE M'CALL IS EXONERATED

Cleared of All Connection With Fire Insurance Bribery Scandals Which Are Now Being Probed—Had No Dealings With Company.

NEW YORK, April 4.—Justice E. E. McCall of the New York supreme court has been completely exonerated of all the charges made against him in connection with the fire insurance bribery scandals which are now being probed.

In a statement issued by Superintendent William Hotchkiss who is in charge of the investigation Hotchkiss said that the charge that Justice McCall was involved in the scandal was without foundation.

Hotchkiss' statement was made after Justice McCall had proved that his transactions with Attorney Buckley were merely those of a friend and in no way connected with the bribery of state legislators.

It was proved that Justice McCall had no dealings of any sort with the insurance companies.

Buckley was employed by various fire insurance companies as an "accelerator" of insurance legislation in the New York assembly. At the outset of the investigation it was charged that not only the New York state legislature, but other legislatures and men prominent in state and national politics would be involved.

Hotchkiss is endeavoring to prove, in the investigation, that fire insurance companies have been bled for years by corrupt legislators.

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