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THE LONELY GUARD,

—BY—

NORMAN INNES,

Author of "The Surge of War" (London Magazine, Eveleigh Nash, 1906); "Parson Croft" (Eveleigh Nash, 1907.)

(Continued.)

CHAPTER IV.

OF MY WELCOME IN ROHN.

Upon a rock in the valley of the Rhonau stands the Castle of Rohn. Mountains gird it east and west, mountains, pine-clothed and sombre, whose crests rise ruddy to the summer sun or gleam white beneath wintry skies.

Towards the south-west the crag rises sheer for more than two hundred feet, but on the north side slopes more gradually to the valley.

Fire and siege has Rohn known in its day, but that afternoon as I rode at the head of my five-and-thirty hussars beside the brawling Rhonau, its grey towers and ivy-grown battlements, clear cut against a fleecy sky, told of peace and repose rather than of beacon's glare and the turmoil of sally and escalade.

As a fortress its days were numbered; riven and riddled by the cannon of Tilly and Wallenstein, at the dawn of the eighteenth century it was but a ruin of the mighty pile that had played its part in the feudal strife of mediaeval Europe.

The day had been hot and the evening breeze blew cool from the mountains as we clattered through the hamlet of Rohn-splashed across a ford and thence through sheltered orchards, approached the main entrance of the castle. It seemed that our coming was not unexpected, for at the gate-house stood an old porter, who hobbled before us into the lower courtyard where I found some long outbuildings, part stables, part granaries, which would provide quarters for my troopers and their horses.

From this lower court rose a flight of steps zigzig and narrow, flanked by a loop-holed wall, the stones of which newly-chipped and pitted, and in places grimly stained, told that the defenders of the crumbling pile had made a stout resistance when a few weeks previously our white-coated battalions had first invaded Bavaria. Up this stairway I climbed, between the porter and Karl Knecht, my corporal. Very silent was the porter—doubtless his task was little to his liking—but my under-officer was gay enough and seemed well content with the prospect of some weeks in the strange old place. At the head of these treads deep-worn by the feet of warriors innumerable, we reached the upper courtyard, some thirty yards square and more than twenty feet above the level of the court below. Upon three sides a low embattled parapet crowned the rock and on the fourth rose the keep, a flight of stairs leading up to the entrance. A few ruined buildings, together with an old well occupied this inner court, while in the centre grew a bay tree, grey and lichen-covered, yet with life in its limbs and gnarled old trunk as lite wealth of foliage attested.

The prospect over the surrounding country was wide. Immediately beneath us lay the valley studded with fields and orchards, bounded by the pines and the beeches that fringed the spurs of the mountains. Southwestward the mountains parted towards the lower country, while to the north the gorge narrowed to a pass amid a medley of crag and peak. No better site could freebooting noble have chosen for his stronghold, commanding as it did the highway through the valley. Some dozen homesteads and cottages were scattered beside the stream while not a quarter of a mile from the castle-rock rose the spire of a small church or chapel.

Truth to tell as I glanced round this upper court, I was struck by the absence of servants or retainers; my men were unsaddling the horses beneath, my corporal was beside me, but save for the old porter, not another soul was in sight.

No sight of lacquey or major-dome, of groom or scullion; I had expected to have been received by the Baron von Rohn himself, or at the worst by his steward, and having to put up with the welcome of a single katekeeper, wounded by self-esteem.

The stillness of the place and its utter loneliness was as strange as the lack of ceremony was annoying—a few jackdaws were chattering about an ivy-wreathed tower, across the valley the whistle of a kite sounded shrill and the wizened old figure in the faded blue livery stood silent in the brilliance of the waning sunlight.

Somewhat sharply, perhaps with an affectation of authority, I turned to the man.

"And now, fellow, I would see thy master."

The man loked up at me blinking his eyes.

"My master?" he stammered in amazement, "my mistress, your worship means, doubtless. The ladies are——"

But I cut him short.

"Thy master, knave," I cried impatiently. "He should have met me ere this."

The man stared incredulously—a plague on his trick of the blinking eyes.

"Nay, your worship," faltered he, "we have no master in Rohn."

No master? Impossible! For a moment the man's answer took my breath away; for a moment I was inclined to pay no credit to his tale, and then called to mind that Her Majesty had never given me the slightest clue to the identity of the owner of the castle. I, as was natural, had jumped to the conclusion that this owner was of mine own sex, and was taken aback at this unlooked for piece of news. So, in the place of the turbulent old noble that I had pictured in my imagination. I was to keep ward over his widow; a pretty task was mine like to be in face of a woman's caprice.

Had the occupant of the castle been a man, my position must of necessity have been difficult, my path beset by pitfalls, but with a woman who would press a thousand whims upon me, insist on the privileges of her sex, I had not reckoned. In place of the fiery old count, I should have to do with some vengeful lady as loyal to the Bavarian king as to the memory of her husband, ready to thwart our Austrian interests with all a woman's zeal and impetuosity.

"Then lead me to thy mistress," I growled, fin'ing my tongue te last and at the same time giving orders that all servants, men and women alike should be mustered in the upper court that my corporal might take note of the occupants of the castle.

The man seemed little disturbed by my ill-humor. With all difference he bowed and led the way across the court, up a flight of six steps and on into a large vaulted chamber, bare, stone-flagged, chill as a cavern, and lit by narrow windows high in the outer wall. A lacquey, nearly as old as the gate-keeper, was dozing at his ease upon a bench in this cheerless hall. He rose to his feet awkwardly and with a start as if our entrance had roused him from slumber, and then glanced inquiringly at the porter, who, without uttering a word, returned his fellow servant's stare with listless blinking gaze. The lacquey, however, was quick to guess my identity.

"May it please Your Excellency," he stammered—his nervous hesitating manner flattered my selfesteem—"the Countess, my mistress, bade me bear you her greetings and desire the honor of your company in the Red Chamber where supper is already prepared."

My brow cleared somewhat, the man's tone was respectful, the purport of his speech conciliatory, and the mention of supper most welcome at the end of a weary day in the saddle. Perhaps after all, thought I, this widow is not the grim old dame of my fancy.

I gave my instructions to Corporal Knecht as to the disposal of my company, the posting of sentinels, and the inspection of the inmates of the castle, and at the laquey's suggestion followed him to an upper floor where a chamber had been prepared for my accommodation. To say that the room was richly furnished would be wide of the truth, but the place was lofty and carpeted, garnished with chairs and presses, and if the hangings upon the walls were faded the view from the window over valley, forest and mountain was wide, bounded only by jagged peaks and far horizon. Another window, little better than a loophole in size, looked upon the two courtyards and so to the gatehouse—had I chosen the chamber myself it could not have been more to my liking.

But that evening I had little time to spare either on the distant prospect or on the furniture of this room wherein I was to sleep. I was anxious, nay, curious rather, to see the mistress of this gloomy old pile, to put my preconceived ideas to the proof. Through a wide oak-pannelled corridor, down a stone-flagged staircase the servant led me, till he paused before a door whose worm-eaten panels told of age and rough usage.

In another moment he had lifted the latch and I realized that I was standing in the presence of the mistress of the castle.

But still I was at a loss, in doubt as great as ever, for before me were two women, each of an age—the elder could scarce have been more than five-and-twenty—each tall and heavily built and each very evidently embarraseed.

"The Countess of Rohn," said I, bowing low. "My——"

"Their Excellencies, the Countesses," interrupted the lacquey, who had followed me into the room. "The Countess Inez von Rohn and the Countess Elsa."

I bowed again, thankful or this enlightment, though struck by the unfamiliar name of the elder lady, and continued—

"My name is Alan Lesly, Captain of Her Hungarian Majesty's Hussars. Your Excellencies' guest of necessity, but none the less at Your Excellencies' service."

The Countesses von Rohn were not ill-looking; if corse-limber and dull-featured, the flush upon their cheeks told of health, and their eyes half wondering, half bashful, set my mind at rest as to malice and evil intent. But these ladies were out of touch with the usages of the polite world it seemed, for my efforts at conciliation were met with nought but self-conscious giggles from the one and by the other with timid silence. Not a word passed their lips, side by side they stood at the further end of the long chamber, two awkward figures in plain dresses, all out of countenance at the appearance of a stranger.

Nor was I altogether at my ease, the prolonged silence broken by a hoyden's laughter was disconcerting—these ladies of Rohn seeming strangely lacking in breeding. In despair of making aught of hostesses such as these, I turned to the lacquey. To tell the truth he appeared aware of the unpleasantness of my position, the suspicion of a frown crossed his brow as he repeated in a somewhat louder tone—

"Captain von Lesly, at your Excellencies' service. If it is your pleasure, supper shall be served at once."

And with that these two sisters of noble birth seated themselves at a table which was set at one end of the room with no more grace than one might have looked for in a peasant's daughters, while she whose gaucherie was the most marked on account of her giggling, in a rough uncultivated voice, half-bold half-hesitating, bade me be seated.

And so the meal began, the old lacquey waiting upon us, I seated betwixt the women, whom I soon discovered had as little knowledge of the world as I of the customs of Tartary. As for the food and the wine set before us, I have tasted both better and worse, though I paid but little attention to dish or flagon, so occupied was I in doing my best to oevrcome the ladies' embarrassment and to discover some matter that might interest us in common. But, alack! for my good intentions and for the efforts of these hapless dames, do what I might, I could not altogether dispel the air of constraint that brooded o'er that first supper that I tasted in Rohn. From my heart I pitied the sisters, who, it was plain to see, had spent their lives in that mountain valley without the society of their equals of either sex, for they were not without a certain charm, though perhaps it was the look of health on their fair features, the strength in their upright heavily-moulded figures that caught my eye. Their voices were harsh, their laughter loud and they had a trick of dropping their eyes when spoken to and flushing to the roots of their flaxen hair. I should have taken them for the daughters of petty landowners rather than for scions of an honored race, with their boorish manners, uncouth speech, and shyness with which a certain familiarity of manner contrasted oddly. But in spite of my fruitless efforts towards enlivenling the meal, my heart was at rest, little had I to fear from such as these. Guile and craft alike were lacking on their homely features, features innocent of all expression, bucolic, indifferent. And I smiled to think that my royal mistress, who had given me such minute and reiterated instructions, had been misinformed as to these simple ladies, who, it seemed, cared little whether Austrian or Bavarian ruled in Rohn.

The appetites of my hostesses did them credit and between each dish they whispered together, nay, more I fancied that they favored the laquey with covert smiles and glances of intelligence, but try as I would it was but rarely that I succeeded in eliciting more than monosyllables from them.

At length this strange meal was ended by the ladies rising abruptly, nor had I time to take my leave or with them a good-night ere they had hurried from the room, leaving me alone with the manservant.

(To be Continued).

Suffered From Heart and Nerve Troubles FOR THE Last Ten Years.

The heart has supplied to it two sets of nerves, one set which quickens, the other which slows its action. The proper action of these nerves, so important to the well-being of the heart, depends upon the general condition of the nervous system. If there be nerve derangement of any kind it is bound to produce all the various phenomena of heart derangement.

Knowing the intricate structure of the heart, and being aware how diseases of the nerves affect the heart, we have combined in Milburn's Heart and Nerve Pills a treatment that will cure all forms of nervous disorders as well as act on the heart itself, and in this is the secret of their success in curing so many cases of heart trouble which have defied all other treatment.

Mrs. John Riley, Douro, Ont., writes: "I have been a great sufferer from heart and nerve troubles for the last ten years. After trying many remedies and doctoring for two years, without the least benefit, I decided to give Milburn's Heart and Nerve Pills a trial. I am thankful to say that, after using nine boxes, I am entirely cured, and would recommend them to all sufferers."

Price 50c. per box or three for $1.25, at all dealers, or mailed direct on receipt of price by The T. Milburn Co., Limited, Toronto, Ont.

German Government Fighting Hard Against Tuberculosis

Millions of leaflets are being circulated among the people of the Empire, informing the masses how to guard against Tuberculosis, of which 100,000 Germans die every year. The time is fast approaching when this disease will be treated like diphtheria and smallpox—the patient being isolated and removed from contact with others. Meantime it is to be hoped the masses will learn the all-important lesson of guarding against coughs and chest colds, from which tuberculosis always springs. When your throat tickles, your chest feels tight and sore, when you sneeze and feel cold shivers up your back—that should be your warning. The following treatment is known to be very efficient: Give the chest and throat a vigorous hand-rubbing with Nerviline, and take twenty drops of Nerviline in hot sweetened water. If there is any hoarseness or cough, gargle well with Nerviline and put a Nerviline Porous Plaster over the chest. By following this advice you can keep clear of colds, pneumonia, bronchitis, and preserve uniform good health. This is worth cutting out and preserving.

AUSTRALIA WILL SHARE THE BURDEN

Will Keep 20,000 Soldiers As Well As 15 Coast Defence Vessels --- Welcome For the American Fleet.

Sydney, N. S. W., March 15—There was a dramatic scene today at a great gathering of citizens when at the conclusion of an address on the subject of national defense, the premier, Alfred Deakin, read a cablegram announcing that the American fleet of battleships would visit Sydney and Melbourne. He called for three cheers for the United States and the audience rose en masse and responded with defeaning hurrahs.

The prime minister said that he was sure that such a welcome as the American fleet had never known outside of its own country would be accorded it by Australia and the cheering that followed this statement seemed evidence of the fact that the Australians, one and all, have a feeling stronger than mere friendship for the Americans and their navy.

Premier Deakin in his speech, advocated greater expenditures for national defense. He said that the burden imposed upon the people of Great Britain for the maintenance of their naval and military forces was beginning to tell and that wealthy Australians could not expect to enjoy the privileges of the protection against invasion without bearing their share of the cost. The expenditure recommended is $9,000,000 annually for an army of 20,000 men and fifteen coast defense vessels.

Melbourne, March 15.—The Australian commonwealth, officially and generally, hails with pleasure, the announcement from Washington that the American battleship fleet will visit the Antipodes next July or August. The federal ministers are delighted with the idea of such a visit. The minister of defense, Thomas Ewing, says that the presence of America's fleet will be most gratifying to all Australians.

"We feel that our future in the Pacific," he said, "is bound up with that of the United States."

There are several reasons for the satisfaction experienced by Australians. Premier Alfred Deakin was not flattering the American people in the communication he addressed to their government through Consul General John P. Gray here last December, to have the warships come to this quarter of the globe. In his invitation he said: "No other federation in the world possesses so many features of likeness to that of the United States as does the commonwealth of Australia, and I doubt whether any two peoples could be found who are in nearer touch with each other and are likely to benefit more by anything that tends to knit their relations more closely."

Australians of all classes, indeed, have a decided liking and admiration for Americans due to sentimental, commercial and even political causes. In the first place, America is the nearest Caucasian neighbor and friend that the commonwealth has. This fact is given added strength because, speaking broadly, Australians are almost supersensitive over Asiatic proximity, prestige and influence, and whether there is ground for such feeling or not, they are apprehensively mindful of their great physical separation from any cognate people. This feeling includes the Japanese, although regardless of the Anglo-British alliance.

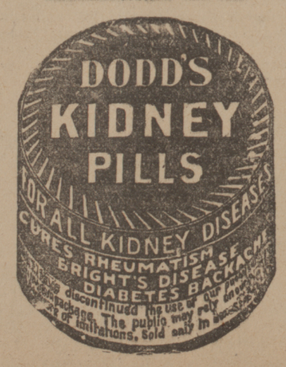
In brief the United States is the only foreign power with territory in the Pacific for which Australia has a distinct liking. But there are other considerations than these. Aside from the cardinal one that the commonwealth's whole scheme of government is patterned after that of the United States, there are strong commercial and other ties. Australian coal is shipped in large quantities to the Pacific coast and Australian meat goes to the Philippines. Australian irrigation experts study the immense schemes for watering the arid tracts in the American western states and Australian students and educators go to America to learn American methods and systems. Mr. Deakin himself, is an enthusiast over the United States. He visited America for the Victorian government in the eighties to inspect its irrigation works and he has never forgotten the country or its greatness. Hence the American fleet will surely have a lavish welcome in Australian waters. The Australian people are notably hospitable and they will out-do themselves in entertaining the American officers and sailors.

BROKE HER LEG

Misfortune did not come singly to Mrs. Annie Byron, of Erin street, yesterday. When on her way to the central police station to arrange for the release of her son Thomas, locked up on a charge of drunkenness, she fell on the icy sidewalk in front of the jail breaking her leg and injuring herself otherwise.

Mrs. Byron is a widow 70 years of age and keeps house for her son. On Saturday evening she waited in vain for Thomas to return to her roof and after much worry she learned that he had been arrested. Early yesterday morning she set out to see him, and got along all right until within a few steps of her destination. Then she slipped on a bit of ice and went down, striking the pavement hard. Her screams brought Sergt. Kilpatrick and Policeman Scott to the scene and they carried her into the guard room of the central station. Dr. D. E. Berryman was summoned and ordered her removal to the General Public Hospital. The son is still in jail.

Among the passengers on the steamer Empress of Ireland, from England, on Saturday were C. B. Macneill, K. C., and Mrs. Macneill, of Vancouver. Mr. Macneill is the youngest brother of Rev. L. C. Macneill of St. John, and is his guest for a day or two. He is a member of a leading law firm in Vancouver.



EXPECT RIVER TO BE OPEN EARLY

Millmen and others interested in the lumber trade are looking forward to the opening of the river and the starting of the mills and the impression is that navigation is likely to begin early. Some predict a record early opening, but to beat the season of 1903 the ice would have to go out before March 24, which is not likely. The next earliest opening was in 1881, on April 2. The average is April 20.

Advices from the lumber woods in Maine say that there is still from three to five feet of snow in the woods and that roads are just now being opened up. A slack season is reported by the lumber operators. One of the leading lumber merchants said last night that the total cut would be only 50 or 60 per cent of the average.

Donaldson liner Kastalia, Captain Black, sailed yesterday from this port with a very large general cargo.

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"I used the sample bottle of Psychine you sent me and find it helped me very much. My chest is much better. My wife took the Grippe when she was in Ottawa. She got a large bottle, and after using it for a few days she was quite well. I took a cold and am using it and am getting all right. Again I think it one of the best tonics on the market today."

R. N. Dafoe, Northfield Farm, Que.

Psychine vs. Consumption.

"I was given up 16 years ago as an incurable consumptive, by Prof. Lyman, Rush Medical College, Chicago. I suffered several years after this until I heard of Psychine, and through it I was restored to perfect health, which I have enjoyed for the past ten years. My sickness began first with catarrh of the head. I readily advise catarrh and la grippe sufferers to take Psychine."

Mrs. A. Wells. Lyndall, Man.

A sweeping statement, you say. That is true, but proof of the statement is to be found everywhere.

PSYCHINE is the prescription of one of the greatest Lung Specialists the world has seen. It is the result of his own and several other prominent physicians' life study. It is a thoroughly tested remedy that is doing a great work for humanity.

PSYCHINE builds up the run-down system from whatever cause. Colds, Coughs, Pain in the Chest and Lungs, Bronchitis, La Grippe, Pneumonia, Chills, Night Sweats, Wasting Diseases, and Stomach Troubles, quickly yield to its wonderful curative power. All druggists recommend it. Fifty Cents and One Dollar per bottle.—Dr. T. A. Slocum Limited, Toronto.

A SONG OF SPRING



Spring is here,
Glad and clear.
Ring the happy robin's song;
Blithe and gay
Children play,
Making merry all day long.

Spring is here,
Time of cheer,
Time of song and bursting bud,
Time of glee,
Time when we
Have to wallow in the mud.

Spring is here,
When your dear,
Who at other times is sweet,
Fiercely jaws
Just because
You forgot to wipe your feet.

MAKING THE BEST OF IT.

"I have an uncle and aunt living up in Vermont, ten miles from a railroad," said the Philadelphia drummer, "and last Christmas I went up to see them for the first time in 12 years. They let me off at the store for a week, and the week was about up when a snowstorm came on. It began snowing about noon one day, and when it let up at dark next day my uncle came into the house and said to my aunt:

"'Hanner, there's five feet of snow on the level.'

"'Never mind, Hiram,' she answered. 'Last year at this time there was seven.'

"'But how am I to get to the railroad?' I asked.

"'You can't,' says my aunt. 'It's probably the Lord's doings to save you from being drowned somewheres.'"

"It turned awful cold that night, and next morning my uncle came in from the barn and said:

"'Hanner, it's 20 degres below zero.'"

"But it was 30 this time last year, Hiram."

"'Three of the calves froze to death last night.'"



The barn was floating away on a freshet.

"'But four froze last year.'"

"'And 14 of the hens.'"

"That's again 22 that froze last year, Hiram, Providence is being purty good to us.'"

"I wanted to know how long before the highway would be dug out, and my aunt answered:

"'Now, Harry, don't you worry. If the road was dug out mebbe you'd go home to die of smallpox.

"It grew colder and they lost all their ducks, but aunt said that ducks never paid for their keep. They lost six turkeys but she thanked the Lord there were six left. The well froze up, but she sang hymns as she melted snow. We all got frostbites, but she was thankful they were not boils. I was weather-bound right there for four weeks, and then came a thaw and a rain and let me out. The barn was floating away on the frshet as I left, but Aunt Hanner bade me good-by with a smile and said:

"'Yes, the barn is going, but we orter be good and thankful that the house and the pigpen are left!'"

JOE KERR.

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