

# At sword's point;

OR,  
A SOLDIER OF THE RHINE.

By ST. GEORGE RATHBORNE

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## CHAPTER XII (Continued).

Three against one is always heavy odds, even when the lone individual is built in heroic mold, and Paul was not averse to calling for assistance from such a source.

So he stroiled up and down, nursing a cigar and keeping close to the line of carriage.

A singular thing happened, which gave Paul cause for much speculation later on.

Gleaming down the line, he saw a woman's head projected suddenly from the window of a first-class carriage.

It was an quickly withdrawn, and somehow he was under the impression that the sight of him so near at hand had been the cause of its disappearance.

More than this, Rhineland was almost ready to take his oath that he had seen something familiar about the head.

In fact, he had good cause to believe the party was no other than the Countess Almeide.

When he walked slowly past the compartment he found that the shade drawn down and all dark within, so that he could discover no confirmation of his suspicion.

As it really gave him food for thought.

He rarely needed something of the sort to take his mind away from his troubles, which at times threatened to overwhelm him.

All about again, and they were off. Paul saw no reason to regret his little saunter, since, besides giving him an opportunity to give a good clear to the open air, it had also settled his conjectures regarding his fellow travelers, and at the same time opened his eyes to the possible presence of the Countess.

Several times, from the adjoining compartment, had come the sound of a snuff box, and there was something very familiar about its general nature, though Paul could not manage to just place it.

He wondered whether these men meant him ill or if he had drawn largely upon his imagination in thinking so.

They appeared to have settled down and were all locked in Morpheus' arms—somehow the air seemed to grow heavier, and Paul's resistance of less avail, until finally, half way between midnight and dawn, he crossed the borderland of sleep.

## CHAPTER XIII.

In Durand Vite.

Perhaps half an hour had elapsed, when the stout French merchant raised his head and with eager eyes surveyed the corner where Paul was sprawled asleep.

Convinced that everything was propitious, he gave the foot of the young tourist a sudden kick that brought the latter erect on his feet.

The merchant puffed and grinned, whereupon the other arose and approached Paul, who still slept on, utterly unconscious of the danger which he was in.

They seized upon the American, Paul struggled desperately—alas! he was taken at such disadvantage that he found himself almost powerless against these men.

One had a knee upon his chest and was choking him, while the other gripped his hands together and proceeded to the them in a most ignominious fashion.

When this had been accomplished they suffered Paul to rise, which he did with alacrity, at the same time demanding to know what such an indignity meant, and threatening them with all manner of punishment when their destination was reached.

But all that had no effect, so Paul lay back in his corner and thought again that this was the end of his adjoining compartment.

Like a flash it came to him where he had heard that chery sound before. It was the Englishman who had stood at his back in the student days and whose words of genuine sympathy and good luck he could distinctly remember.

What a relief to find that Briton do to the pretended keeper once he was let loose among them!

Then Paul considered that the Englishman might find him to prove a myth, after all, so he set about to free himself from his bonds.

It was hard work, but at last—how he stretched a leg of relief when the stretched bonds fell off his wrist!

Free again, thank heaven! and ere he would allow those ignominious cords to be again wrapped about his arms he would die.

Now, to lay hold of the weapon. Steady one of the fellows was eyeing him in a suspicious manner, and it would not do to let the game be discovered at this stage.

As the man rose from his seat and drew back the traveling rug, the American struck him with all his force at the same time springing to his feet. He reached now for the firearm.

The situation took a sudden turn, however, from the plan of campaign which he had laid out, for just at this interesting moment there came several sharp pings from the motor ahead, then a crash, and a tremendous upheaval that betokened a serious accident on the road; and, of course, Paul was no immediate use for his little persuader.

A smash-up on the railway is serious enough at any time, but it seems to possess an added horror when one is so situated that the freedom of limbs is denied.

Rhineland felt the carriage violently upheaved, then toss to the right and left as if in the grasp of a hurricane.

All manner of horrible sounds burst upon his ears, very nearly deafening him.

When he crawled out from the wreckage he found quite a mob engaged his attention in rescuing those

less fortunate than himself from the wreck.

One good turn this accident did Paul—he was free from the unwelcome attention of the men who had watched him so closely, and who had been taking drastic measures to get him into their power, at the time the smash occurred.

Just then Paul heard a voice from close by, a voice that calmly begged assistance, a voice that showed no trace of fear or alarm.

He knew it belonged to the Englishman, and with all speed he made for the spot, eager to render Sir Noel what help he could.

No doubt the other was surprised to hear an English voice address him, but under the conditions he did not lack any expression until his limbs had been extricated from their predicament.

"Any serious damage, Sir Noel?" asked Paul, seeing the other make a cursory examination.

"Thank heaven, I have come out better even than I might have expected," he boasted, piece of business, isn't it? But you seem to know me—we have met somewhere. I am glad to shake your hand and thank you for the help you gave."

As he did so, he leaned forward, endeavoring to see Paul's face.

"I am Paul Rhineland—we met under peculiar circumstances at Heidelberg," Paul said, quietly.

The big Briton squeezed his hand more firmly.

"By Jove, you—out about some brave work for us—thirteen stitches, my boy, it took to cover that fellow's cheek. A rare mark he'll carry for life. Glad to meet you again, doubly glad to be under such circumstances."

He hurried off to where a fire was burning, and in which quarter they were carrying the injured as fast as rescued from the wreck.

Just then a shriek from feminine lungs, which in the distance reminded Paul of what he had seen.

Was the Countess Almeide on the train, as he had some reason to believe? He hurried to the spot where he remembered having seen her, but when he looked the next was empty.

A man with a lantern rendered him some assistance, since by the aid of the light he discovered certain articles in the snug nest so recently occupied by a lady as served to prove her identity.

But his suspicions were not overdrawn, and she had been the genius who had helped him to escape the trap by which he had been trapped.

The accident had, unfortunately, taken place at a lonely part of the road, and his assistance could hardly come before dawn.

Curiously caused Paul to draw closer to the fire and survey the groups near by.

He was searching for the Countess, and though the women were hardly in a condition to appear presentable, still he believed he could have recognized the adventuress in any guise.

To his surprise he failed to discover her! Then he turned to make inquiries, but he believed he could have recognized the truth; but before he reached the doctor, the female assistant, who was fitting about like an angel, had been standing up, and carrying water to parched lips, came between his eyes, and the blazing fire, and Paul was stunned to discover in this leader-headed sister of charity the woman he had looked upon as a cold-blooded adventuress, Countess Almeide.

The sight of the Countess in the role of charity gave Paul a queer sensation—he had seen her role in the dunes in Paris, men with titles and fortunes, and the Englishman who had been a new feature which he had never dreamed could exist in her nature.

It only went to show that she was a woman after all, a tender heart beneath the exterior—perhaps, had fortune been more kindly in surrounding him with luxury she might have been a blessing rather than a curse to mankind.

At any rate Paul found himself comforting her faults and feeling more charitable toward her.

She had seen and recognized him, and instantly came to his side.

The doctor told me you were unhurt," she said, and to know that his safety had been upon her mind while she worked.

"I regret to tell you that one of your friends has vanished, and the other has a broken leg—possibly you have found him yonder," he remarked.

She did not blush at all, but simply laughed.

"Yes, I have attended to him. He groans horribly and has not the nerve of a child. No doubt you condemn me for using such heroic measures to free him, but I am not a fool, but I believe in the adage that the end justifies the means. You know that which may ruin me should it come out, and I am sure as I glory in defend my own self. Besides—I had other reasons for my actions."

Paul knew what she meant, and his old feeling of repulsion came back.

Such determination appalled him. It was possible to escape from the clutches of this wonderful woman when she set her mind upon her capture.

A less stubborn man might have yielded to what he was pleased to call the irresistible, but Paul was saved from this fate by the memory of a face.

Though Hildegarde might be lost to him forever, he could not forget the charm of that modest blush which signaled the condition of her heart toward him.

By that memory he was ready to steer his craft, whether dire disaster the favoring winds of fortune, overlook him.

"My visit to Berlin," he said, "is one of pure desire, but in clearing the

incident it will be necessary to place the blame upon a scientist and given to experiments, a little caution may not be out of place before committing to him a favor. That, however, did not occur to a well-known public man whose experience is related in an Austrian paper, says the Youth's Companion. He went to the laboratory of an old schoolmate, a Melbourne professor of chemistry, to make a friendly call. The professor was studying a dark brown substance spread out on a sheet of paper.

"I say," he cried, when greetings had been exchanged, "would you kindly let me place a bit of this on your tongue?"

His taste has become vitiated by trying all sorts of things."

Certainly responded the accommodating friend, and he promptly opened his mouth.

The professor took up some of the substance under analysis and put it on his friend's tongue. The man worked it around in his mouth for fully a minute, tasting it much as he might have tasted a choice confection.

"Note any effect?" asked the professor.

"No, none."

"It doesn't paralyze or prick your tongue?"

"I thought not. There are no alkaloids in it, then. How does it taste?"

"Bitter as gall."

"Item—m-m! All right."

By this time the visitor's curiosity was aroused. "But what is it, anyhow?" he inquired.

"I don't know. That's what I'm trying to find out. Some one has been poisoning horses with it."

Defenses Cannot Be Cured

By local action, as you cannot reach the defense of the body, it is by constitutional means. Defenses cannot be cured by local action, as you cannot reach the defense of the body, it is by constitutional means.

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