

MONK

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Monk by Julian Corbett

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JULIAN CORBETT

MONK

English Men of Action

MONK





MONK

From a Miniature by SAMUEL COOPER in the Royal Collection at Windsor



M O N K

BY

JULIAN CORBETT

London

MACMILLAN AND CO.
AND NEW YORK

1889

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CHAPTER I

DEVONSHIRE AND FOREIGN SERVICE

IN the middle of September, 1625, the great expedition by which Charles the First and Buckingham meant to revenge themselves upon the Spaniards for the ignominious failure of their escapade to Madrid was still choking Plymouth harbour with disorder and confusion. Impatient to renew the glories of Drake and Raleigh and Essex, the young King went down in person to hasten its departure. Great receptions were prepared for him at the principal points of his route, and bitter was the disappointment at Exeter that he was not to visit the city. For the plague was raging within its walls, and while holiday was kept everywhere else, the shadow of death was upon the ancient capital of the west.

Hardly, however, had the King passed them by when the citizens had a new excitement of their own. The noise of a quarrel broke in upon the gloom of the stricken city. Those within hearing ran to the spot and found a sight worth seeing. For there in the light of day, under the King's very nose, as it were, a stalwart young gentleman of about sixteen years of age was thrashing the under-sheriff of Devonshire within an inch

of his life. With some difficulty, so furious was his assault, the lad was dragged off his victim before grievous bodily harm was done, and people began to inquire what it was all about.

Every one must have known young George Monk, who lived with his grandfather, Sir George Smith, at Heavy-tree, close to Exeter. Sir George Smith of Maydford was a great Exeter magnate, and his grandson and godson George belonged to one of the best families in Devonshire, and was connected with half the rest; and had they known how the handsome boy was avenging the family honour in his own characteristic way, they would certainly have sympathised with him for the scrape he was in.

For the honour of the Monks of Potheridge in North Devon was a very serious thing. There for seventeen generations the family had lived. Ever since Henry the Third was King they had looked down from their high-perched manor-house over the lovely valley of the Torridge just where the river doubles upon itself in three majestic sweeps as though it were loath to leave a spot so beautiful. By dint of judicious marriages they had managed to be still prosperous and well connected. It was no secret indeed that they claimed royal blood by two descents on the distaff side. For the grandmother of George's father, Sir Thomas, was Frances Plantagenet, daughter and co-heiress of Arthur Plantagenet, Viscount Lisle; and his grandfather's grandmother, as co-heiress of Richard Champernown of Insworth, had brought him the Cornish bordure and kinship with King John through Richard, King of the Romans, and his son, the Earl of Cornwall.

But of late things had been going very hard at Poth-