

DUEL WITH BOISMOREL

Lieutenant-Colonel Jean de la Colonie

The King of France seconded the dragoon officer Jean de la Colonie to Bavarian service, where in 1702 he organized a regiment of Grenadier Guards, composed of deserters from the French army. Boismorel, a Frenchman sent by the Duke of Orleans to serve as an aide-de-camp to the Elector of Bavaria, asked to command the new regiment, and the Elector granted his request. At the Battle of Marquartstein in July 1704, the hot-tempered Boismorel called Lieutenant-General Marquis de Maffei a traitor and drew his pistol to shoot the General. As a consequence, de Maffei placed Boismorel under arrest. After the battle, de Maffei garrisoned the Grenadier Regiment at Ingolstadt to defend that city from the advancing enemy armies. Following the Anglo-Austrian victory at the Battle of Blenheim in August 1704, the commander of Bavarian forces in Ingolstadt surrendered to the Austrians.

Ingolstadt, 1704

I set out from Ingolstadt to report myself to Prince Eugene¹ on the day he had appointed for me to receive the articles of our capitulation. Boismorel, like the rest of the garrison, was perfectly aware of the object of my journey, and that there was no question of further negotiation. I found everything arranged exactly as the Prince had kindly promised me. He himself handed me the articles of the treaty, assured me that the commissioners were then at work upon lists for the payment of our garrison, and that when this was complete we should receive our money. I was empowered to tell our people that they would not be asked to evacuate the place until two days after everyone had been settled with; he could not state positively the date of our departure, because it was necessary to communicate the terms of the treaty to the princes through whose territory we should have to pass, and to avoid confusion in the details of our billets. He said further that some time must pass before all was in order, but that if when we left Ingolstadt things were not in readiness, he had arranged that we should wait in the little town of Scheremhausen until our route and escort arrived, which, as far as he could judge, would be on or about 15 December. This over, I took my leave of the Prince and returned to Ingolstadt, where I arrived rather late and prostrated with a sick headache. As on the previous occasion, I found all the officers assembled at the house of Monsieur de Liselbourg, excepting Boismorel; I forthwith made my report, gave the articles into the hands of our general, because contained therein were the promises of payment to the garrison, and then being no longer able to support my malady, I went home to bed.

I had made up my mind to start for Munich early next morning, where lay all my property, to make use of the time before our departure and put in order various matters I had charge of. I got into my dressing-gown immediately on arrival at my lodgings, but passing the time with some arrangements connected with my journey, was still up and about when I saw a regimental garçon-major enter the room with a message to say that Boismorel wished to see me. I pointed out to him that it was impossible for me to go out, and as far as our business was concerned, several officers of the regiment who were at Monsieur de Liselbourg's and who were asked to do so had doubtless informed him on the subject, so that there was nothing to tell him that he did not already know and, besides, I should call on him next morning before starting for Munich. A short time after the garçon-major had left another messenger arrived on the same errand. I asked him if Boismorel was alone, and as he replied that he was at supper with the two engineers, I had no doubt that he wished me to join their party and therefore sent my thanks for the invitation with the same answer as previously; but I was wrong. Boismorel seemed to have thought that it was my duty personally to report to him my arrival and the result of my mission, not being aware that the commandant of the garrison was the proper person to whom such matters had to be reported. Furthermore, he did not really belong to the garrison, because he was supposed to be actually in irons, and as an officer is struck off all duty when merely under arrest, he was not in a position to demand anything from me as commanding the regiment, or even from the most junior subaltern.

¹ Prince Eugene of Savoy (1663–1736), commander of the Austrian forces at Blenheim and in Bavaria

Boismorel's feelings were hurt, and thus he had sent these two messengers to remind me to come and fulfill my duty; they, seeing the awkwardness of the situation, had not dared to deliver me the message as given, and had simply said that he wished to speak to me. The engineers also, equally ignorant of the rules of the service, had strengthened him in his opinion, making out that his authority had been slighted, and that I was trying to assert myself as the commanding-officer of the regiment. All this was quite enough to put him into such a furious temper that after my second reply he started off, entered my room swollen with rage, and demanded a reason for my disobedience.

I had retired to bed when I saw him enter, followed by the two messengers, who, however, discreetly remained by the door. Approaching me in a hectoring manner, he said, "Well, sir, it seems that I am to be obliged to come here myself to bring you to a sense of duty. Do you know that I am your colonel, and what that means?"

"Yes, sir," said I, "I know you, and if you knew yourself equally well, you would not have troubled yourself to come to my house just to pay me a compliment." However, to enable him to get out of his mistake and recover his temper, I told him with calmness the details of the messages his people had brought, and the answers I had given; how, in the belief that he wished me to join his party, I was obliged to refuse on account of my condition, but he was so wrapped up in his own importance that he still believed I wished to ignore him, and was so full of what the engineers had put into his head that my reasons were of no avail.

Far from recollecting what he owed me, he made use of what I said to overwhelm me with such low abuse that I was ashamed to hear such words from a person of his position. It was in vain for me to point out to him that he had other means at hand for asserting what was due to him, if he believed himself to be insulted, but I said that although I was starting the next morning for Munich, my time was at his disposal, and he could have the satisfaction he wished for.

Instead of listening to this, he made threatening gesticulations with his hands and flourished his fist in my face. Then, seeing this game had gone far enough, and in the fear that I should receive the first blow, I thought it best to be beforehand with him and so, not having any words ready at the moment to apostrophise him with, I gave him a heavy blow with my fist full in the face, which made him stagger. He was so astonished at this that he forgot he had a sword at his side, and in another instant we had grappled with each other. When the two officers heard our struggles, they and my valet rushed in and separated us. Then Boismorel, still forgetful of his sword, threw himself upon the sentry at the top of my staircase, and endeavored to wrest his gun from him, but the grenadier held fast, and his efforts were of no avail.

Whilst this was going on, I dashed into the next room for my arms, and the thought that I should be ready for him sooner than he liked inspired him with such fear that he rushed down the stairs and made off precipitately to his own house. When my anger had calmed somewhat and I was in a condition to think, I could not conceive what evil star could have led me into such an unfortunate business, for I certainly had some reason to think that the author of it would have sacrificed himself for me, in recognition of the trouble I had taken in getting him out of prison and thence to Ingolstadt. I had procured him his liberty, perhaps even saved his life, but far from remembering this, he had just put us into the unfortunate position of having to draw upon each other.

Having been struck, honor now demanded that he should wash out the affront with blood. I had no doubt, therefore, but that I should have to fight early next morning, and in order that he should have nothing to reproach me with regarding the satisfaction to which he was entitled, I put off my journey to Munich till the afternoon. I made a point even of walking in the principal square for a long time so as to show people that he could find me if he wished, but I never heard a word from him.

I then thought that he, knowing I had to go to Munich, wished to meet me outside the town, so I mounted my horse in the afternoon, and stopped on purpose to talk with an officer in the square, to give him time to catch me up on the road, but I had to continue on my journey without seeing him or anyone representing him. Arrived at

Munich, I found the inhabitants in a state of consternation, all gaiety had vanished, and this town, which had been so brilliant last winter, full of society and the affairs of the French army, was plunged in gloom....

5 A few days later I left Munich. ... I learned that the garrison at Ingolstadt had been paid all that was due to it, the Imperialists had entered the place, and that our regiment was quartered in the little town of Scheremhausen, waiting for the escort to conduct them according to the treaty.

10 I joined the regiment without delay, and no sooner had I set foot in my billet than Monsieur de Florimond, the two engineers, and several other officers who were passing to France by favor of my treaty came to tell me that in my absence they had arranged with Boismorel that we should not settle the difference between us until the last day's march before entering France, because it had been intimated that the Imperialists were going to put off the time of our departure in order to see how the matter would end. They reckoned, it seemed, that the event would be productive of some pretext to disturb the regiment and so cause its desertion in a body. It was, therefore, necessary in the interests of the King and the many honest folk who hoped to travel under the protection of the
15 battalion that we should observe a truce until we were on the frontier; then, without prejudicing anyone, we could wipe out our difference. Boismorel, at their request, had consented to this arrangement, and they hoped that I would not oppose it.

20 I told these gentlemen that there was no evidence whatever that the Imperialists had such designs concerning us, or still less that they were in the least aware of what had passed between Boismorel and me, but that, as they thought proper that there should be several days truce between us, I had nothing to say against it. Besides, it lay with Boismorel to demand satisfaction from me, and he was at liberty to keep silence as long as he thought fit, though by putting the affair off there was always the fear that he would raise fresh difficulties by reason of his passionate temper. They told me that they had thought as I did, but they had provided for this and hoped to keep
25 him in check.

The warning turned out to be only too true, for Maréchal d'Herberfeld, now commanding this province since Prince Eugene had left for Vienna, annoyed at the rebuff he had received from us at Ingolstadt, thought to revenge himself by altering the date of our departure so as to bring about desertion in the regiment. The 15th and 16th of
30 the month had already gone by without our hearing a word on the subject—a silence that gave rise to considerable consternation, and I was again called upon to go and interview Maréchal d'Herberfeld.

35 The General availed himself of excuses as to the way he had been prevented from giving us this information, and raised withal several further difficulties, which I set to work to clear up. In the course of our conversation I convinced him that some evil-minded person must have set the rumor going as to a difference existing between me and Boismorel, and that there was nothing in it. I also pointed out that our long detention in the country was neither to the Emperor's interest or that of the inhabitants of Scheremhausen, as our grenadiers were a heavy tax upon the district that they were quartered in, and that they would be quite delighted to stay any length of time. In fact, I told him so many things of the sort that he finally determined to fix Christmas Eve as the day of our
40 departure, assured me that the Commissioners and escort would be at the gates of the town that day to conduct us, and, moreover, that a very honest and peaceable set of men had been chosen for this work, with whom we should be perfectly satisfied. I left quite contented with the result of my mission, and brought veritable relief to the minds of our people when I produced such good news.

45 But Boismorel had not yet quieted down; his evil passions caused him to imagine means of revenge without risking his life, and in such a way that no one could make a personal accusation against him for failing to keep to the arrangement he had made. To accomplish this, he availed himself of the disposition and temper of his lieutenant, who might have been called his double. He was a young gentleman from Champagne, full of fire and energy; neither well-educated nor experienced, easily taken in, and incapable of seeing the inwardness or truth
50 of any proposition made to him. Boismorel persuaded him that I intended to do him a harm; that he knew as a fact that I premeditated cashiering him when he arrived in France on account of his friendship for himself, and that as he was in fear lest he should thus become a victim to my jealousy, he advised him to avenge himself upon

me before I had time to do anything of the kind. This young officer was so struck with Boismorel's advice that he incautiously let fall countless threatening remarks against me. The Chevalier de la Bastide, who was extremely attached to me, found out all this and fearing some sudden outbreak, reported the details to me when I returned from my interview with General d'Herberfeld.

I was therefore on my guard when on the same day I accidentally met the lieutenant in one of the streets. It struck me that here was a chance of disabusing his mind by explaining matters to him, and stopped him for this purpose; but I found him so prejudiced against me that without further ceremony he showered abuse upon me in such a high voice, and a manner so entirely wanting in due respect, that I drew my sword and hit him with the flat of the blade to show my resentment at his words. I then stepped back to give him time to defend himself; but a number of people who were attracted by his voice came up, separated us, and saw us to our respective quarters.

Boismorel was overjoyed when he learned that the affair had turned out in a way that made withdrawal impossible before matters were brought to the usual climax, and that the lieutenant must demand satisfaction from me, since no official objection on the score of his being but a subaltern could now be put forward. He hoped that this active and robust youth would relieve him of the danger he would incur in fighting me, and he spent the rest of the day doing his best to excite all the fury and rancor that lay in his nature. He advised him to arm himself with a thick stick in order to hit me before I had time to draw my sword, should he be able to surprise me, so as to wash out the insult of the blow I had given him with the flat of my blade, and with this object sent him next morning to prowl round my quarters.

I was in the act of dressing when I noticed him from my window parading the square, stick in hand, so in order not to delay the satisfaction he intended to derive from me, I finished my toilet as quickly as possible, and sallied out to look for him without troubling much about his stick. I could not see him in the square, so took the direction of Boismorel's lodgings, where I thought it likely he would be, and saw him in the street talking to the colonel through the window. As soon as I was sure that both had seen me, I made my way towards a gate of the town to gain space for our battle, and avoid the possible contingency of our being separated as had happened on the evening before. The Lieutenant followed on my heels, and seeing me pass through the gate got it into his head that I had taken this road with the intention of avoiding him. This idea increased his courage to the extent that he quickened his pace, shouting, "Stop, stop! You are not going to escape from me."

I was on the bridge over the ditch of the town when his voice rang harshly in my ears; hurt by the unworthy insinuation conveyed by this threat, I turned, sword in hand, and in two bounds was upon him. He had barely time to draw his own and discard the stick, which he had now no chance of using in the way he had planned. The tactics I confronted him with were so contrary to his expectations that they contributed much to his disadvantage; however, he did his best to defend himself, but was confused, lost his head, and was quite unprepared. I soon saw that I could easily finish off my man and had, happily for him, plenty of time to reflect that if I killed him the fact of his death would doubtless be made the cause of some awkward trouble. Hence I only wounded him twice in the arm and disarmed him. I gave him his life that I had in my power, although I was well aware that I should not have met with the same fate if I had been at his mercy, for Boismorel had commended me too warmly to his care.

Several officers who had their suspicions of this affair, and whom curiosity had brought to the spot, heard me reprimand him for his evil intentions, and for being capable of following such advice without realizing that he who gave it simply wished to sacrifice him for his own revengeful purpose. I made him see how mistrustful he should be of such pernicious gossip, and that he should profit by the experience he had just undergone to avoid mixing himself up with other people's quarrels. In point of fact he appreciated this, and did all he could to bring himself back again to my good opinion of him, the which I granted him with pleasure. Boismorel, who awaited with extreme anxiety the outcome of our combat, was aghast when he learned the advantage I had gained over

his friend and the lecture I had administered to him after our encounter, and for the time being let the matter rest.

5 The day of our departure, as arranged with Maréchal d'Herberfeld, came at last; the escort and Commissioners joined us at Scheremhausen, and we took the road to France on 23 December....

10 We now found ourselves fairly on our road with the commissaries and 150 cuirassiers as escort under the command of a captain, a man of mark in the Empire. He arranged the details of our billets, halts, marches, and transport with all the exactitude that we could have wished for, and brought about so good a feeling between the cuirassiers and our grenadiers that it appeared as if both were serving under the same flag. Thus our journey was as comfortable and peaceful as possible; the officers messed together day after day, and these pleasant moments inspired them with the idea of trying to bring about a reconciliation between Boismorel and me. They believed they had discovered a plausible excuse to this end in giving a different aspect to our affair, and persuaded themselves that it was a simple misunderstanding of no consequence, and what had passed in the privacy of my chamber was no evidence that there was deliberate intention on either of our parts to give offence; that we had always been friends up to the time of this trifling occurrence, and that there was no reason for enmity in so small a matter. Moreover, as no one could possibly have the right to criticize us on this point, we ought to suppress our feelings, and make it up as good friends should.

20 The first proposals as to this arrangement were made to Boismorel, as they naturally supposed that if he agreed to them there would be no further obstacle to our reconciliation. He it was who had been struck. I was in the position of owing him satisfaction, so that if he was content, I ought to be likewise. Any scruples that Boismorel may have had were soon being devised to enable him to avoid the risk incurred in the meeting which he ought to have demanded from me. He swallowed his own disgrace, persuaded himself that these gentlemen were right in their premises, and gladly accepted their propositions. After assuring themselves of Boismorel, they came on at once to interview me; but I could hardly believe that his consent was really genuine or that there might not have been some mis-understanding in the report they made me. It appeared, however, that the matter was beyond question, and instead of having to give satisfaction, sword in hand, to Boismorel, I was to be let off with the embrace of amity. This arrangement was followed by much conviviality, which continued until our arrival at Strasburg on 8 January 1705.

30 Maréchal de Marsin, who was in command there, received us in the most gracious manner possible, and covered us with congratulations on our good fortune in being able to preserve the regiment by means of an honorable treaty in spite of such adverse circumstances. He told us that he had orders to send us to Mons, in Flanders, by a route that he would point out, but that he wished us to rest eight days in Strasburg, so that he might have the pleasure of entertaining us. He kept the Imperialists who had accompanied us for a similar purpose, showed them all the hospitality that lay in his power for three days, and on their departure directed two wagons full of choice wine to join their train, one of champagne and the other of Burgundy, as a present to the officers, who went on their way rejoicing....

40 I then informed Boismorel that I intended to profit by the remainder of the winter season and go into the country to put various matters in order, taking Bastide with me.

45 He was charmed to find himself relieved of the presence of two individuals who stood in the way of his ambition to be the sole head of the regiment, and to pose as its savior. He even flattered himself that I intended to retire altogether, and gave the regiment to understand this. I however wrote to Maréchal d'Arcko, who was with the Elector¹ at Brussels, and reported to him fully all that had passed in the regiment, my proposed tour, my return to Mons before the opening of the campaign, and then set off with Bastide.

50 Our journey was without incident, and we arrived at Villeneuve very near the date named to his relations. So determined were they to give me a good reception that they assembled their friends, etc., to the extent that they

¹ Maximilian II Emanuel (1662–1726), Elector of Bavaria (1679–1726)

could hardly have made more preparations in the case of the advent of an ambassador than they did for me. The nobility and principal inhabitants heaped attentions upon me. Nothing could have been more gracious than the manners of these gentlemen; every day there were fresh entertainments, sumptuous repasts followed by dances and balls, and I spent the Carnival in the most agreeable fashion....

5 Bastide's affairs established, my presence became no longer necessary, so I left Villeneuve the second week of Lent to pass a few days in Bordeaux, to fill in the time before my return to Flanders. Besides the convenience of passing Lent there, the desire to see my own friends again was the real object of my journey; as regards the lawsuit I had left there, it had passed from my memory so completely that I never thought of it for one single moment....

10 I had scarcely settled this affair than I received letters from Mons, by which I was informed that Boismorel had entered the town at the head of the regiment in the manner of a triumph, as if he himself had carried his soldiery safely through all the dangers they had undergone; these airs availed him nothing, as care had been taken to give the Elector full particulars of what had passed between him and the Marquis de Maffei, and his escape contrary to the orders of the Electress. Copies of the inquiry which had been instituted against him had been forwarded by the Princess to His Electoral Highness, and two days after his arrival he was again imprisoned.

15 Nevertheless, by the influence of the Duke of Orleans, he had been enabled to extricate himself from this unfortunate position at the cost of being cashiered from the King's service. I learned further that in deference to his illustrious protector, he had had the luck to be taken back as aide-de-camp to the Elector with his rank as colonel; that the difference we had had between us had been much noised abroad, particularly at the house of the Duchess de Crouy, which was a daily meeting-place for all the élite of the town. He, having wished to take part in these gatherings, was, however, given to understand that he would get but a bad reception as he bore the stain of having been struck without having exacted the proper satisfaction. In order to clear himself he had published an outrageous story by which he attempted to prove that I had absconded to avoid a duel, and would certainly never re-appear. In fact, so successfully had he played his part that I was now the guilty one in the opinion of the whole garrison, and these libels obliged me to demand satisfaction of him.

20 This letter filled my inmost soul with vexation; despair seized me when I thought of so many good people so prejudiced against me, and that on my re-joining the garrison I should be regarded with contempt. I regretted having gone so far out of my way on account of Bastide as to accompany him to the country; I ought to have led the regiment to Mons, where my presence would have prevented all these slanders, or at least if an attempt had been made to utter them, I would have been in a position to put a stop to them before any impression had been made. I longed to be in Mons to avenge upon so knavish a trick, and after receiving this letter made no long stay at Bordeaux....

30 I left Bordeaux for Mons (after having told Bastide to join me there), and called whilst passing through Paris upon the Marquis de Ricous, whom I found reduced to despair at the reverse of his fortunes brought upon him by the Battle of Höchstädt.¹ He had been in some sort discredited ever since, and this weighed upon him to such an extent that his health was shattered and he died shortly afterwards. I felt the deepest grief at the loss of one who had given me so many practical proofs of his friendship.

40 I arrived at Mons three hours after mid-day and, having entered the town by a side road, dis-mounted at a secluded inn so that my arrival should be unknown to anyone. As soon as I had settled down in my room I sent to ask one of the senior captains in the Electoral Prince's regiment, named Grondeur, to come and speak to me. This officer was one of those fellows who never have any hesitation in drawing their swords, he even made rather a business of it, so that I thought I could not apply to anyone better able to point out to me the most appropriate spot on which to settle the quarrel between Boismorel and myself, and to carry my challenge for me. I was sure that in case of a difficulty he would know how to make things easy. Grondeur appeared without keeping me

¹ Many Frenchmen blamed the Marquis de Ricous, Louis XIV's ambassador to the Elector of Bavaria, for their defeat at the the Battle of Blenheim (which the French called the Second Battle of Höchstädt)

waiting, and being informed of my intentions said he quite understood what had to be done; that he could show me a quiet spot absolutely suited to the purpose, and that he would put himself at my service with the greatest pleasure. He added that if Boismorel accepted the challenge, of which he had no doubt, he would act as our guide; that there could not be a better opportunity of settling this affair once and for all, as no one in the garrison was aware of my arrival, and he would therefore go at once and find Boismorel, who he was sure would be of the same opinion. “You wish apparently as challenger,” said he, “to leave him the choice of weapons?”

“Certainly,” I replied. “I accept in advance any conditions that you may make so long as Boismorel appears on the ground.”

Grondeur set out to find Boismorel, who evinced extreme surprise on learning that I was in the town and that I intended remaining *incognito* until I had obtained the satisfaction I demanded of him. He had so fully persuaded himself that I had quite left the service that, in his astonishment, he hardly knew how to answer Grondeur. At last, after having remained some time in perplexity, he replied that the King had forbidden dueling, but he was in the habit of strolling in the streets, and if I required anything of him I had only to attack him on our meeting, when he would defend himself. Grondeur did his best to explain matters to him, but he stuck to his point, and the only answer I could get was this regulation of the King’s, to which Boismorel intended religiously to adhere.

Nevertheless I again sent Grondeur, and begged him to make Boismorel understand that the pretext he had devised to avoid fighting could only lead to his dis-honor; that he knew as well as I did that we were responsible to the Elector for our actions; that he himself, now an outlaw from France, had no one to rely upon but this Prince, who was sure to have a bad opinion of two people of our standing if we did not follow the customs prescribed by honor. Also that we were too much in view of his Court and troops to evade this duel, and that for a long time past he had owed it to himself to have forestalled me in my challenge.

He, however, was not disturbed by these arguments, and I was obliged to leave two days later to report myself to Maréchal d’Arcko at Brussels without having had the chance of coming across Boismorel. The only hope left me was that of meeting him on the field, when I reckoned that he would have no excuse left him for evading the satisfaction that I demanded of him.

France, however, fearing a further development of the successes gained by the Allies on the Rhine, sought to create a diversion by raising dissension amongst the Dutch. To this end we had prepared a larger army than any we had had in the previous campaigns, and as soon as Maréchal de Villeroi¹ had mobilized it, he left our lines and invested the little town of Huy. The Elector of Bavaria, who was then at Brussels, was not long in joining him; and Boismorel, in his capacity of aide-de-camp, was obliged to follow His Highness, which gave me the hope that he would be no longer able to avoid granting me that which he had refused at Mons.

I saw him arrive, and immediately made up my mind to let him know my intentions the first thing next morning. To carry my challenge to him I enlisted the services of the Sieur Hoguan, an Irishman by nationality, a lieutenant-colonel in the Electoral Guards, and a man of courage, now a lieutenant-general of the King’s army in Portugal. He straightway went off to find Boismorel, resolved to make the latter arrange the hour and weapons. I had purposely taken Hoguan to a coppice in which was a little clearing used as a saw-pit, a most suitable place for our affair, so that he could acquaint Boismorel of the spot at once in case he accepted.

Hoguan was successful in his mission, settled that we should meet at six in the evening of the same day at the place agreed upon, and that we should fight with swords. He who happened to arrive first on the ground was to wait until seven o’clock and whistle or call, so as to make his arrival known. Finally, there were to be two witnesses to the fight, who were merely to act as umpires, following the Bavarian custom in pre-arranged duels, and the Sieurs Hoguan and Nicolini were so appointed.

¹ François de Neufville (1644–1730), Duc de Villeroi and Marshal of France (1693–1730)

The hour arrived, and all four of us appeared at the place appointed as the field of battle, Hoguan accompanying Boismorel while I brought Nicolini. The others arrived a second or so before us, and set to work to call out at the very moment that I appeared before Boismorel. As I was annoyed at his being beforehand with me, I drew out my watch to point out to him that it was not my fault, for six o'clock had not then struck.

I perceived whilst paying him this attention that he was not over-pleased at my self-possession, and that he was suffering much from the want of that characteristic himself. He wore a troubled look, which marked the agitation passing within him; but I did not keep him long in suspense, for as soon as I had replaced my watch I drew my sword, and we set to with fury. We had some grounds to fear each other; Boismorel was the most apt and skilful man in France in the use of arms, and I was about his match, although bred in a part of the country which, owing to our bringing-up and the rude air, makes for clumsiness.

However, having left home very young I had since breathed a purer air, or perhaps nature had worked somewhat in my favor, so Boismorel was aware that he had quite as much to fear of me as I of him. We had each made many thrusts, and tried all the ruses we knew without scoring a hit on either side, though once I thought I had noticed a slight resistance to the point of my sword; but there was nothing to show this in my adversary's expression, and our combat became fiercer and fiercer until we came to close quarters. Then each did his best to trip up his opponent, but so skillful were we both in this art that we found ourselves forced to grapple with each other arm to arm. I proved myself here the stronger, and at the second attempt I grassed my man, and presented the point of my sword to the pit of his stomach to force him to give up his arms and cry for mercy; but our two seconds separated us, telling me that as I had his life in my hands, I had ended the affair more gloriously than if I killed him outright, and they allowed Boismorel to keep his sword.

Nevertheless, a private misgiving at thus leaving my enemy in possession of his arms after his defeat caused me to watch his movements, and well for me that I did so, for as soon as he was on his legs again he suddenly lunged out at me with his sword to the full extent of his arm, with such violence that, although I parried the thrust, the blade pierced my coat and waist-coat just over the navel, and passed between my skin and shirt. Our friends were greatly surprised to see me obliged to defend my life against a man who owed me his own. They were distressed beyond measure at their carelessness, but they could do nothing further as the next instant we were fighting so furiously that it would have been more dangerous to attempt to separate us than to allow us to continue the combat.

Once more, then, we desperately thrust at each other with victory still in the balance; again I felt a slight resistance to the point of my sword as if it had hit something, but I did not see my enemy wince, and our set-to continuing without the slightest relaxation, we once more came to close quarters. As soon as I had gripped Boismorel, I threw him to the ground, face uppermost, at my first effort, and I could then have taken his life without offending honor, because after the deed he had just committed he had rendered himself unworthy of the slightest mercy. I could not help feeling that, given a hundred less creditable opportunities of taking mine, he would not have shown me mercy in any one of them. However this may have been, when I found myself the victor, my resentment faded, and I found myself relenting. By way of precaution I presented the point of my sword to our witnesses, to show them that they were not to interfere this time until I had disarmed him, when all at once Boismorel began to cry out in a half-stifled voice that he was dead. We at once turned to him, and he was so pale that we had no doubt that he was dying.

Our first thought was to tend his soul and body, and to this end our seconds hurriedly set out, the one for a chaplain, the other for a surgeon, whilst I remained at his side. I had no need to request him to make a formal surrender of his sword, as he had dropped it out of sheer helplessness; my only fear was lest he should die in my arms before the return of our friends, and wishing, should this happen, that he should do so in a proper state of mind, I raised him into a sitting posture by propping him up against me, and exhorted him to die a good Christian. He with difficulty forgave me being the cause of his death, but, finally, affected by the remarks that his case

inspired me to make, he commended his soul to God, admitted that he had brought all upon himself and that he deserved his fate.

5 As soon as I believed that I had given a better turn to his thoughts, I asked him if he did not wish to make any arrangements regarding his family or others, and told him that he had only to commission me and I would carry out his directions exactly as he might order me. He hardly answered this question, only saying that he would be dead before help arrived, though he begged me urgently to take the portrait of the cook, which he wore as a relic next his heart, and place it in her hands on the first opportunity. Our interview was finished by the arrival of our friends, who with all diligence had brought with them the surgeon-major of my grenadiers, a most skillful man, 10 who, after inspecting three wounds that Boismorel had sustained in his body, and which he had not felt during the heat of the fight, told us that he hoped to save him. His first action with regard to these injuries was to well suck them—the most sovereign remedy to apply to all wounds caused by iron.

15 Whilst this was going on, I noticed the Chevalier de la Bastide, who had arrived with my valet and three horses, which he had taken care to bring with him in case of accident. Bastide, who saw blood upon my coat (which I had hitherto been unaware of), made sure that I was wounded, and insisted upon examining me.

20 I assured him that I felt nothing and was in no way hurt, but he would not be denied; indeed, I really thought he would strip me naked to search me; so I set to work to look myself, and then, wishing to use my left hand, found thereon a swelling, back and front, the size of a nut. It had been pierced right through, and the swelling was caused by the accumulation of blood without its hurting me, as by good luck no tendon had been injured. I judged that I must have received it when rushing into close quarters. I sucked my wound myself and, without plasters or much pain, shortly afterwards found it had healed.

25 Suction and bandaging seemed to relieve Boismorel, and he was able to mount one of my horses, which was led by my valet. Monsieur Hoguan and the surgeon-major then accompanied him to his quarters, which were in a large abbey, where the Elector and Maréchal de Villeroi were lodged. He was so well known that his mishap would soon be published abroad among the headquarter staff, so I thought it best to be on the safe side and keep out of harm's way. 30

I and Bastide betook ourselves to two captains of the Nivernais regiment, the Chevalier de Montelembert and la Pairière de Villeneuve d'Agenois, the former of whom is now brigadier in the King's army. I slept the night with them, and next morning early requested the hospitality of Baron de Bourlemont at his château, two leagues distant, pending news of Boismorel's condition, and so as to be in a position to ensure my safety in case of his death. I there heard that his wounds were going on as well as could be expected, and twelve days later the surgeon-major called to assure me that his skill was no longer needed. I ordered him to go and report on my account to Maréchal d'Arcko, who would willingly speak to the Elector, who in turn would doubtless send a messenger to tell me to present myself at his Court as if I had never absented myself. 35

40 I soon found myself in attendance on the Maréchal to thank him for all his kindness. He told me without any affectation that he was glad of my success, after which I presented myself before the Elector, in whose eyes I could read approval of my action. The courtiers followed suit in showering congratulations upon me; but the more these courtly personages complimented me, the greater was the chagrin of Boismorel, to whom all this was duly reported. 45

His annoyance was such that he could never bring himself to be reconciled with me again, and service with the Elector having become distasteful to him, he joined that of the King of Spain, thanks to the influence of the Duke of Orleans.