

**D'ARCY OF THE
GUARDS; OR, THE
FORTUNES OF WAR**

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D'Arcy of the Guards; Or, the Fortunes of War by Louis Evan Shipman

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LOUIS EVAN SHIPMAN

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D'ARCY *of the* GUARDS

OR

The FORTUNES *of* WAR

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D'ARCY *of the* **GUARDS**

OR

The **FORTUNES** *of* **WAR**

BY

LOUIS EVAN ^{of} **SHIPMAN**

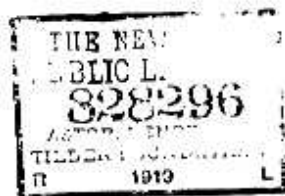


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TO

NICHOLAS BIDDLE

My dear Nic: You and I have shared in common, so wide and various an acquaintance, and have allowed our disancies and admirations to go so often hand in hand, that I feel some hesitancy in commending Major John Gerald D'Arcy—D'Arcy of the Guards—to your special consideration. You will not find him worthy of the little company which includes our old intimates, the Marquis of Esmond, James Durie, David Balfour, Richard FEVEREL, Richmond Roy and Christopher Newman, but the fault of that belongs to me. And if he does take some small place in your affection, I am content enough to think that it will not be for his sake, but for mine.

Your friend,

New York
February, 1899

LOUIS EVAN SHEPMAN

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D'Arcy of the Guards

CHAPTER I

THE INN ON THE HEATH

It was a black night near the end of March in the year 1777, and on that very blackness depended the fate of a gallant officer in His Majesty's service, of a certain maid far away in His Majesty's rebellious American colonies, and the telling of this tale; so often do we find the most momentous instant in our lives hang by the slender thread of a seeming unimportant circumstance. For if the sluggard moon had not been held back beyond his usual wont by a band of riotous and surly clouds, Dick Conyngham and his pals would never have ventured on so hazardous an undertaking; Major D'Arcy would never have been able to put the Marquis of G—— under an obligation; and that omnipotent nobleman would never have

D'ARCY *of the* GUARDS

lifted a finger for the betterment of the young soldier's military fortunes, which hung very slack just at this time, as we shall presently see.

On the edge of the heath not half a score of miles from London, and back from the highway less than a good stone's throw, stood the "Jolly George," a humble but cheerful hostelry, that was particularly affected by Mr. Richard Conyngham and his select circle of night-riders; as audacious and dashing a body of toll-gatherers as ever wore mask and infested the king's post-roads. The casual wayfarer seldom passed into its sanded tap-room; not on account of any prejudice against the hospitality offered there, but because the inn itself was scarce visible from the main road, either by night or day. So its chief visitors were made up of post-boys, coachmen, postillions: the riffraff of the road, and the initiated few of Mr. Conyngham's profession, for whom was reserved the little parlor one step down and back from the tap-room.

It was in special requisition this night,