

JOHN BLOUNDELLE-BURTON

# TRAITOR AND TRUE

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**Traitor and True**

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# Traitor and True A Romance

## CHAPTER I

The doors of the Taverne Gabrielle, in the Rue des Franc Bourgeois in the Marais, stood open to all passers-by, and also to the cool wind blowing from the south-east. This evening, perhaps because it was summer-time, and perhaps, also, because it was supper-time for all in Paris from his Splendid Majesty down to the lowest who had any supper to eat, the appropriately named tavern-since directly opposite to it was the hôtel which Henri IV. had built for the fair Gabrielle d'Estrées-was not so full as it would be later on.

Indeed, it was by no means full, and the landlord, with his family, was occupying the time during which he scarcely ever had a demand for a pint of wine, or even a *pigeolet*, to have his own supper.

There were, however, some customers present-since when was there ever a time that the doors of a cabaret which is also an eating-house, and that one of good fame in a populous neighbourhood, did not have some customers beneath its roof at every hour of the day from the moment the doors opened until they closed? And the Taverne Gabrielle was no exception to this almost indisputable fact.

In one corner of the great, square room there sat an ancient bourgeois with his cronies sipping a flask of Arbois; in another a young man in the uniform of the Régiment de Perche was discussing a savoury ragout with a demoiselle who was masked; close by the open door, with the tables drawn out in front of it, though not too near to it to prevent free ingress and egress, were two men who, in an earlier period than that of Le Dieudonné, might have been termed *marauds*, swashbucklers, *bretteurs*, or heaven knows what. Now-even in the days which seemed to those who lived in them to be degenerate ones with all the flame and excitement of life departed, and which seem to those who have lived after them to have been so full of a strong, masterfully pulsating, full-blooded existence, perfumed with all that goes to make life one long romance-these men might have appeared to be anything except sober citizens or honest bourgeois carrying on steady, reputable callings. For, on their faces, in their garb, even in their wicked-looking side-weapons which now hung peacefully on the wall close by where they sat, there was an indescribable something which proclaimed that they were not men bringing up families decently and honestly. Not men content with small gains obtained by honest labour, by taking down their shutters at dawn and putting them up again long after nightfall; not men who walked side by side with their wives to Saint Eustache or Saint-Germain-l'Auxerrois on Sabbath mornings while leading their children by the hand. Men, indeed, to judge by their appearance, their words and exclamations-which would not have graced the salons of St. Germain or Versailles! – and also by their looks and gestures, more fitted, more suitable to, and better acquainted with a huge fortress-prison close at hand, termed the Bastille, than any place of worship.

"He should be here by now," the elder of the two said to his companion, whom he addressed frequently as Fleur de Mai. "The sun has set and, ere long, every bell in Paris will be proclaiming that it is nine o'clock. If he comes not soon, there will be little time for us to go to the Hôtel des Muses and have a cast for a pistole or two. Van den Enden closes his *tripot* early."

"He will come, Boisfleury. So will the other. His master and, now, ours. Yet, remember what I have already told you, treat neither of them too much *en maître*. Remember also, that we are all officers and gentlemen-or have been."

"Yet-*malheur à tous!* we are no longer officers and, well! they are."

"La Truamont is not. The other, the Chief, is, seeing that he is actual first in command of all the guards of the Splendid One."

"If he were not he would not be coming here to-night. That command gives him the power he desires."

"Yes, combined with the other power, the other assistance, he expects."

"Will he succeed, Fleur de Mai?"

"Succeed!" the younger man, addressed as Fleur de Mai, exclaimed. "*Cadédis!* 'tis to be hoped so. Or else, where are we? We, *mon ami*. Where are we?"

"There," Boisfleury said, pointing a finger towards the Rue St. Antoine, at the end of which the Bastille stood; "or there," directing an eye towards the vicinity of the Louvre, close by which was the Place du Carrousel where, when the great *place* in front of the Bastille was similarly occupied, the Wheel was set up.

"Precisely. Therefore, *mon camarade*, he must not fail. There is too much at stake; our precious lives principally. Afterwards his. Then, hers. To say nothing of Van den Enden's life."

"Theirs are of poor account. Yet, *à-propos* of hers; where is she and what is she doing now?"

"Plotting, of course. For him whom she loves and for her province which, though it treated her but scurvily, she still loves. Being a woman, neglect on one side and ill-treatment on the other has made her love grow stronger. It does that with some women and most dogs, since their love is like tropic flowers that often grow best in dry, uncared-for soil."

"But her other love; for him? Does that not prosper?"

"Again the dog's nature is shown in that. She gets no love, but still she loves on and on blindly. If that," imitating the other's recently pointing finger, "or that," imitating his recently directed glance, "claims him it will claim her too. Should he ever get into the jaws of Madame la Bastille she will get there also. For, again, dog-like, where he goes Emérance will follow."

"Such a love is worth having," his comrade said meditatively, as though, perhaps in better days, he had once possessed, or dreamed of possessing, a similar one.

"For which very reason the Chief does not value it. If he were forced to sigh and moan for want of it and still find it refused—"

"He would never do that for any woman!"

"'Tis true. And in this case he is right. So long as he disdains her so long will she serve him heart and soul. She will intrigue for him, spy for him, work for him and, in the end, die with him if he dies 'there' or 'there'," again imitating, saturninely, the other; "or, if may be, die for him. But, if he succeeds, if he arrives at that which he hopes to reach, then-well! — they will die apart. For, succeeding, she will not be able to follow where he goes: the spot where she remains will have been left far behind by him."

"'Tis hard on her," the elder man said, still musing. "A woman's love, a true woman's love, is worth having; it is too good a thing to be wasted."

"It is the fate of woman's love where misplaced. Now," he said, "look behind you down the street. La Truauumont is coming. We shall hear of our first employment. It will not be a pleasant journey, but we shall be away from all plotting and we shall be well paid. That is better than 'there,'" and again Fleur de Mai mockingly imitated his companion.

Turning round on his chair and glancing down the street, Boisfleury saw that a burly, bull-necked man was coming along it with his light cloak thrown over one arm, since the evening had not yet become cool enough for it to be worn, and heard the end of the scabbard of his rapier scraping the cobble stones of the road as he walked, since there were no footpaths in the Rue des Franc Bourgeois.

Yet, bull-necked and burly though this man might be, there was about him something that proclaimed him of better metal than those whom he was undoubtedly coming to meet, and also that, even as they were men accustomed to obey, so he was one well used to command. For there was in him an indescribable yet easily recognised air of command, a look, an air, that told plainly enough that this man had in his life given more orders, with the certainty of those orders being obeyed, than

he had ever taken. In age he was perhaps fifty, or a year or two less, he was plainly but well dressed, and, in spite of the ruggedness of his appearance, he was a well-favoured, good-looking man.

He drew near to the Taverne Gabrielle now and entered it as Fleur de Mai and Boisfleury each rose to their feet and saluted him in a manner different from that of the other, yet typical of each. The former, who, though a younger man than his companion, was evidently the principal of the two, welcomed the Captain La Truauumont more *en camarade* than the other; more familiarly indeed, as though feeling that, in absolute truth, he was his equal. The latter rose with some sort of quiet dignity which, while expressing the fact that he considered himself as quite a humble instrument to be bought by money, was not without a certain self-respect. Also, that dignity seemed to suggest that, once, the man's position had been different from, and better than, it was now or would ever be again.

"So," La Truauumont said, "you keep the rendezvous. It is very well. Unhappily, I have made it too late. The citizens have supped, their wives will be putting the children to bed, they will be coming forth to drink their flask and discuss their neighbours', and their own, doings. This tavern will be full ere long; we had best go elsewhere since there is much to talk over."

"There is Van den Enden's," Fleur de Mai said. "Plenty of rooms there where none can overhear or intrude! What say you, noble captain? You know the place and the man. Likewise, *she* is there and-well! she is in the affair and deeply too."

"'Twill do. It is there I have told the Chief I will be between ten and eleven. He will be back by then from making his last arrangements for the departure of that other." After which he said, while addressing both men, "You set out to-morrow night."

"All nights are the same to us-is it not so, Boisfleury?" Fleur de Mai exclaimed, slapping his somewhat melancholy comrade on the back as though to hearten him up.

"It is," the other said. "All nights and all roads, and all days as well. Fleur de Mai and I require little preparation. Our horses are in their stables, our clothes on our backs; our best friends," with a glance of his eye-that glance with which a Frenchman can infer a whole sentence! – towards the weapons hanging in their sashes on the wall, "are there."

"Good. You will have a light, easy task of it, a pleasant ride through the sunniest provinces of France; the best of inns to sleep in, eat in, drink in-"

"So. So. 'Tis very well," grunted Fleur de Mai approvingly.

"– and," continued La Truauumont, "your pockets filled with pistoles ere you set out, replenished with them when you arrive at your destination, and refilled again when you return to Paris. Can heart of man desire more?"

"Whatever the hearts of Fleur de Mai and Boisfleury may desire more," the former of those two worthies said, "they are not likely to get. Therefore we are content. We will guard the noble lady valiantly. If our two swords are not enough to shield her and her companion, 'tis not very like a dozen others could."

"There will be one other," La Truauumont said quietly, as now Fleur de Mai made a sign to the drawer to bring the reckoning.

"One other!" the latter exclaimed, turning round to look at La Truauumont. "What other? Any of our 'friends' by chance? Of our noble and distinguished confraternity?"

"By no means. The other blade-he is a good one-is a young man who loves the *demoiselle de compagnie* of the illustrious traveller; one who rides half-way upon the long journey to thereby keep his *fiancée* company and to act as protector, escort, squire of dames."

"Who is he? Do we know him?" While, dropping his voice, Fleur de Mai added, "Is he in the Great Venture?"

"No, to each and every question. You have never heard of him or seen him, and he knows no more of the 'Great Venture' than he who is the object of that great venture's existence knows. The man in question is an Englishman."

"An Englishman!" the two companions exclaimed together, while Fleur de Mai added, "What do we want with him?"

"Nothing-no more than he wants with you, he going only, as I have said, to be by the side of his beloved. He goes," La Truamont continued with some little emphasis, "unpaid, unhired and untrammelled. He can turn back when half of the first portion of the journey is completed, or, arrived at the end of the first portion, he can, if it so pleases him, encompass the second with the ladies. He is well-to-do and his pockets are well lined."

"He is an Englishman all the same," Fleur de Mai grumbled.

"On one side only. His mother is a Frenchwoman."

"That's better," both the men said together. After which Fleur de Mai asked: -

"But the Venture? The Great Attempt? You say he knows nought of that. Yet he will be *there* as well as we when the illustrious lady has gone on her way; when Van den Enden-"

"Hush, idiot. No names."

"When the emissary, then, comes to meet her. That other whom we shall see to-night."

"Again I say he is harmless, since he knows nothing. Now, come. Let us to the 'emissary's'. The Chief will be there as soon as may be. We must not be later than he."

Whereon Fleur de Mai once more crooked a ringer at the drawer lurking by the window and keeping an eye on those who had been consuming his master's wine-he being accustomed to trust no one whom he did not know to be an honest bourgeois of the vicinity; and, at the same time, each man reached down his hat and sword and buckled the latter around his waist.

Then, the reckoning paid, the three went forth into the narrow street and directed their steps towards the Rue Picpus which was not so very far off. For it was in that street that there dwelt the man who had, but a few moments before, been spoken of as Van den Enden and the "emissary." A man who was as much concerned in that Great Venture, that Great Attempt referred to, as was either Le Capitaine La Truamont or the other man termed the Chief.

## CHAPTER II

He-Affinius Van den Enden-who spoke and knew eight languages and had invented a new system of shorthand, who was a physician and was called a thief by many; who was a Dutch Jew and proclaimed himself an atheist and an unbeliever in the Christian religion, and had made an atheist of Spinoza amongst others; who lived well on other people's weaknesses, and, eventually, was hanged in Paris over the Quillebeuf affair, kept at this time a bagnio in the Rue Picpus which he called a *pension* and styled "L'Hôtel des Muses." And a pension it was in some ways, though a strange one. In it one might take warm baths, or cold either, if anybody could be found in Paris disposed towards the latter; and one could lodge and board there at a more or less fancy price, while ailing persons could go into retreat in the Dutchman's house until they were over their maladies. Here, too, *sub rosa*, one could purchase diamonds and other jewels-always unset! – at a remarkably cheap price on condition that no questions were asked, and, for the matter of that, sell them without inconvenient questioning. It was likewise possible to buy gold dust, ambergris, elephants' teeth, *Fazzoletti di Napoli*, pills, chocolate and Hogoo (snuff) here; while, also, conspirators, gamblers and private drinkers could have rooms in which to meet in this delectable *pension*. Finally, to add to its charms, one might at night play basset and ombre with some of the most accomplished *escrocs* in Paris.

It will, however, have been gathered that it was neither to buy such commodities as the above, nor to gamble or drink, that Captain La Truamont and his henchmen proceeded to the Hôtel des Muses after leaving the Taverne Gabrielle. They were, indeed, engaged in a more or less degree upon so great an undertaking, one having such vast consequences attending on its success or failure, that, in comparison with that undertaking, bags of pistoles, or chests full of them-if such could have been found in Van den Enden's house! – would have appeared but as dust upon the high road.

Arriving at the Hôtel des Muses and giving two sharp knocks upon the door, it was at once opened to them by a red-haired young woman who was no other than Claire Marie, the daughter of the "physician." To her La Truamont instantly made known his desire that they should all be shown into a private apartment; one that, for choice, had no occupied room on either side of it. Then, the maiden having escorted the three men to that which they required, while saying that the house was almost empty to-night in consequence of the warmth of the evening and the fineness of the weather, the Captain gave orders that Monsieur Louis should be brought to this room immediately on his arrival.

"Also, my child," he said to the red-haired young Jewess to whom Fleur de Mai had already addressed a series of jokes to which she paid very little heed, "tell your father to join us when Monsieur Louis arrives. While as for Madame la Marquise, she is, I should suppose, already within doors."

"She is. *Hélas!* poor lady, she goes out but little now seeing that she is ashamed of the garb she wears. She has but one robe and that is torn and frayed. Between you all-Monsieur Louis, you and my father-though he is not much by way of giving aught-you might well supply her with better array."

"She will be supplied soon. Perhaps to-night. Money has not been too plentiful with us of late. Now, Spain has sent some. Henceforth, Madame la Marquise will not be without fitting raiment. We may have to send her travelling. She must travel as becomes a-marquise."

"She owes money to my father also," the girl added, her hereditary instincts doubtless causing her to recall the circumstance.

"Bah! When we are all as rich as heart of man can desire he can pay himself out of his share of the spoils. Now, *ma belle*, begone and warn your father to be ready for Monsieur Louis, and tell Madame la Marquise to prepare to join us."

Claire Marie went off upon these errands, the former of which she proceeded to execute by calling over the stair-rails to her father below-though she was careful not to do so in a tone that could by any possibility be heard outside the house. After which, and also after having received from her parent below the answer that he knew Monsieur Louis was coming as well as, if not better than, any

one else in the house, she made her way to a flight above that on which she stood, and, going to the end of the passage, rapped on the door of the last room.

Being bidden to enter, the girl did so, and, pushing open the door, found the occupant of that room, a young woman, engaged in arranging her hair in front of a very small glass.

"Madame," Claire Marie said, "all the company are below excepting Monsieur Louis, and he is looked for at once. The Capitaine La Truauumont has bidden me summon you and my father."

"I am making ready to descend," the other answered. "I shall be there ere long." And, she added to herself, after Claire Marie had closed the door and departed, "a fair object I shall appear in his eyes when I do so!" While, as she muttered this, she sighed.

If, however, these reflections were made on her personal appearance, the woman either did not know herself or misjudged herself. For, although she was not beautiful as beauty is reckoned, she had charms that might well be considered the equals of beauty. Her hair, that now she was endeavouring to arrange into the fashion of the day-the fashion that Van Dyck and, later, Kneller depicted-was a lustrous dark auburn; her eyes were dark grey fringed with long black lashes: her mouth, with its short upper lip and full, pouting, lower one, was perfect, especially when she smiled and showed her small white teeth. Her figure, too, was as near perfection as might be.

But, with these charms, there was mingled that which went far to detract very seriously from them, namely, a worn, weary look, a pallor that was hardly ever absent from her face, a lack of colour that spoke either of bodily ailment or mental trouble. Gazing round the melancholy room in which this woman sheltered-"harboured" is a more fitting word-an observer might well have thought that the hardness of her life, a hardness in which, to the sordidness of the apartment was, perhaps, added sometimes the want of food or ordinary necessaries, explained that pallor. Yet, still, in speaking to this woman, in hearing the tone of melancholy in which she answered, in gazing into those dark grey eyes and observing the sadness of their glance, an observer, a listener, would have been disposed to think that the first supposition was wrong and that not bodily, but mental, trouble was the cause of her careworn appearance.

Her hair arranged at last, the woman rose from the chair on which she had been seated, and, after smoothing out some creases in her dress as well as, also, endeavouring to remove some of the stains it bore, went to a drawer and, taking out some various pieces of ribbon and silk, stood before the glass while endeavouring to discover which of the poor frayed scraps of colour might best add any charm to her appearance.

"Yet," she said bitterly, as at last she made her decision, "of what use are these efforts of my wretched vanity? He regards me, will ever regard me, but as a useful auxiliary to his ambitious schemes. I am of the land and the people whose voice and assistance he seeks-once I was of the best of those people. So, too, he knows my fierce determination to stand at last, if Fate so wills it, before those people as their human saviour and not as the outcast they made of me; as the woman who, despised of them, has lived to earn their gratitude. Knowing this, he uses me to aid his own great purpose and will so use me to the end, and, if that end be successful for him, then cast me off. Unhappily," she murmured, her face almost the picture of despair, "I know he will do so, which is for me the worst of all. I serve him understanding well that I am as nought in his eyes. I work to help him, starve and go in rags to make his chance better, and-I am but dust, dross, in his eyes."

After which she turned away from the glass, into which she looked so often while hating to look at all, and went towards the door, muttering, "And still I do it."

When this woman reached the room into which La Truauumont and his companions had been shown earlier, she saw at once that she was the last to arrive at the conference that was about to take place.

Seated round the table there were, besides the three original occupants of the room, two others. One was Affinius Van den Enden, the proprietor of the Hôtel des Muses, the man who had been spoken of as an "emissary," a central figure in the Great Scheme so often referred to. The other, who

had not taken the trouble to remove his hat, was a man of not more than thirty years of age and was extremely handsome. Yet, whatever the charm of his appearance might be, however softly his deep blue eyes could glance from beneath the long dark lashes, however well-cut the features were, all was marred by a look of haughty arrogance that sat perpetually on those features. By an expression that had, however, been described by some as not so much one of arrogance as of an evil disposition or a harsh, cruel temper.

Whatever may have been the cause of this man having continued to wear his hat before those who were his companions for the moment, and whether it proceeded from pride, contempt or superciliousness-or absolute forgetfulness-he instantly removed it on the entrance of Emérance, Marquise de Villiers-Bordéville, as the new-comer was termed. Indeed, if she was in this man's eyes that which she had described herself as being, namely "dust" or "dross," he allowed no sign of any such appreciation, or rather depreciation, of her to be perceptible. Instead, he rose quickly from the chair he occupied, and, while removing his hat from his head with one hand, held out the other to her. After which he murmured in a low, soft voice some words of thanks for her presence in the room that night, and added to them still more thanks for the many services she had performed for him in what he termed "his dangerous cause."

But from Emérance there came no words that could be construed as an acknowledgment of the man's courteous phrases. On entering the room she had glanced once into his eyes while making some slight inclination of her head: when he held out his hand she took it listlessly, and, on seeing that Fleur de Mai was, in a more or less good-humoured manner, motioning her to the seat that he too had risen from on her entrance, sank into it. While, as for words, the only ones she uttered were: "I am glad we have all met here to-night: it is as well that our plans should now be known to all."

"They will not occupy much time in exposing," the man who had been spoken of by La Truamont and his companions as "Monsieur Louis," answered. "The time for action is approaching." After which he continued, "Van den Enden sets out for Spain almost immediately. He may go tomorrow, or a week hence, or in two weeks at least. He will return as soon as he has got the promise from Spain and that which is as necessary, the remainder of the money. Only he will not return to Paris."

"Meanwhile?" Emérance asked quietly, "what of the others. Those I have seen in Normandy are firm."

"All are firm, madame."

"That is well. But if he," directing her eyes towards Van den Enden, who was engaged in turning over a mass of papers that he had brought into the room, "if he does not return to Paris, to where will he go?"

"Basle is the place appointed."

"Basle!" Emérance exclaimed, while as she did so her pallor became even more perceptible than before. "To Basle! Ah, yes, I understand," and she whispered to herself: "Basle that lies almost half-way betwixt Nancy and the road to Italy by which *she* will progress."

"Perhaps," said Monsieur Louis, "madame does *not* understand. Basle lies outside France though close to the frontier-therefore, once there, all French people are safe."

"The Colonel of all King Louis' Guards is surely safe anywhere in France. Monsieur must be thinking of the safety of some other person than himself. In any case I could never believe monsieur's own safety, at such a moment as this above all, would induce him to voyage to Basle."

"Madame has judged aright. I have no intention of quitting France."

"Ah!" the marquise exclaimed, a dash of colour springing to her cheeks at these words. Then she added, "It is very well. Monsieur should be in France now. Especially, now."

The other took no notice of this remark and, at this moment, La Truamont spoke for the first time.

"Emérance," he said, addressing her without any ordinary prefix, "you understand well enough why Basle is chosen for the rendezvous. All those who will accompany Madame la Duchesse from Paris to Nancy, and from Nancy to Basle, will leave her there, unless the young English *fiancé* of Mlle. D'Angelis chooses to go farther. To go even to Geneva or across the Alps. Being in no wise concerned in our hopes and aspirations there is no reason why he should not do so. He knows nothing of our plans, he will never be permitted to know. Indeed," continued La Truamont grimly, "if he were to know of them, if he were ever to learn them, the knowledge would have to be dearly paid for."

"It would," Fleur de Mai muttered, as he curled up his great moustache, while the expression on the faces of all the others—from the grin on that of Van den Enden to the calm, far-off look in the eyes of Emérance, showed that La Truamont had clearly expressed that which was in all their minds.

## CHAPTER III

"The Great Attempt," which has been more than once referred to in the previous pages, was nothing less than a plot devised to remove Louis XIV. from the throne of France and to place upon that throne Louis, Prince and Chevalier de Beaurepaire, a man who had been the chosen playmate of the King in his infancy and was now the Colonel of all his Majesty's regiments of Guards.

The infamy of this treachery-infamous as treachery always is! – was doubly so in such a case as this, and it is not, therefore, surprising that all the principals concerned in it were spoken of by other names than their own; that meetings were hardly ever held twice in the same place, and that, as had happened before now, many such meetings had even taken place outside of France itself. Amongst those who thus masqueraded under such aliases-and they were many-were the Prince de Beaurepaire who was always spoken and written of as "Monsieur Louis," Van den Enden as the Seigneur de Châteaugrand, Emérance as the Marquise de Villiers-Bordéville-and countless noblemen in Normandy who did so under other sobriquets.

For "The Plot" originated in Normandy and owed its rise to a tax which had been imposed on the wood, or trees, of which the forests in that province were so full, and which wood was to the landowners a considerable source of revenue. One of the old original taxes of this nature had long been submitted to by the Normans, but the imposition of a new one had caused the discontent that gradually grew into a plot-it was only one of many formed against Louis XIV. during his long reign! – to depose him. Gradually too, as the scheme grew, the wealthy landowners and nobles of Brittany and Guienne also took part in it.

A more powerful conspirator against the King of France and his throne than the inhabitants of three of his most important provinces was, however, in the field, that conspirator being Spain itself. Louis had, earlier than this, deprived Spain of some of her possessions, and it was now suggested to the Spanish Governor of Brussels that, if his country were willing to supply the Norman conspirators with money, arms and men, Quillebeuf, at the mouth of the Seine in the Bay of Le Havre, might easily be seized by a hostile fleet. And, since half the country between that place and Paris would be favourable to the designs of the invaders, six hundred men well mounted and equipped could easily reach Versailles, overpower the detachments of regiments serving there as the King's Guard, and not only possess themselves of his person but also of the persons of all the Royal Family. A Republic such as that of Venice or of Holland was to be founded, De Beaurepaire was to be the President, and ample funds were to be supplied by Spain.

It was at this meeting that all was to be decided with regard to a visit that Van den Enden was now to make to Brussels-in spite of his seventy-four years of age! – there to draw the promised sum over and above the trifle that had already been advanced as earnest on the part of Spain, and to arrange for the attack on Quillebeuf.

"For," said the old adventurer-whose gifts and talents should long ago have lifted him far above the level of ordinary adventurers, and probably would have done so if his sense of rectitude and plain-dealing had been as considerable as were his acquirements-"the signal is made by Spain, she joins in. Behold the *Brussels Gazette*," and he placed before De Beaurepaire and the others a copy of that, then, well-known paper.

Leaning over the Prince's shoulder, La Truamont read out from one portion of the paper: "His Majesty King Louis XIV. is about to create two new marshals of France," and from another: "The courier from Spain is expected shortly."

Then, seeing on the faces of Fleur de Mai and Boisfleury a look of bewilderment which showed plainly enough that, however much the other persons present might understand these apparently uninteresting portions of general intelligence, they, at least, certainly did not do so, La Truamont, addressing them, said: -

"It was arranged with the Comte de Montérey, the Spanish Governor of Brussels, that, if Spain decided to act, these pieces of news should be inserted in the *Gazette* by his orders. They have been inserted; therefore we have won Spain to our side. The fleet specially belonging to Holland will embark six thousand men at a given moment; arms and weapons for twenty thousand men will also be put on board, and money to the extent of two million francs will be provided. Van den Enden goes now to Brussels to finally decide everything and-

"To bring a portion of the money away with him," Van den Enden put in. "We want money badly in spite of having already received something as earnest of the matter being considered."

"But Basle! Why Basle?" Emérance exclaimed, while as she spoke her eyes rested on De Beaurepaire's face. "It is far away," she continued, speaking with emphasis. "Far from Paris and farther still from Normandy. It is going a long distance."

"It is outside France," La Truauumont said, "and, consequently, safe. While Spain is doing the business in company with the Normans in the North-West, those who are directing the puppets will be doing so from the South-East."

"He cannot be there," Emérance said, her eyes still fixed on De Beaurepaire.

"No," De Beaurepaire replied, "I must remain in Paris. I may indeed be required in Normandy. But there is a certain lady, a certain *grande dame de par le monde* who will pass through Basle from Nancy on her road to Italy. You know that, Madame de Villiers-Bordéville, as well as you know that I have promised to see her to, and safely outside, the gates of Paris."

"Yes, I know," the woman said, her eyes lowered now as his were raised to them, while her usual pallor had once more given way to the flush that at intervals tinged her cheeks, "I know."

"Also you know, madame, you must in very truth know, that I have agreed to find for this lady some trifling escort as far as Basle, whence she may cross the St. Gothard or go to Geneva if she decides to pass the St. Bernard. Now, that escort will be composed of Fleur de Mai, as he elects to call himself, and Boisfleury-

"Which is a name his fathers bore," that worthy interrupted.

"Both," went on De Beaurepaire, "are Normans as you, madame, are. Both, like you, are heart and soul in this great scheme now so near to its accomplishment. And, since they, perforce, must find themselves at Basle, though not necessarily at Geneva, it is to Basle that Van den Enden will go. Thence, from that place, they can all return in safety to Paris, since who, entering France from Switzerland, can be suspected of coming from the Spanish Netherlands or of having any dealings with the Normans?"

"And I? Where shall I be? I who am as much heart and soul in this as you, or any of you?" looking round on all present. "I who am Norman as La Truauumont, Boisfleury and Fleur de Mai are? Though heart and soul in it from no desire of reward but only in the hope to obtain justice at last."

"Later, I will tell you where you will be in this great scheme," De Beaurepaire said in a low voice, his almost whispered words being unheard by the others who had begun to read a number of letters that Van den Enden had produced. Letters that, in those days, had they been signed by the actual names of the writers instead of by assumed ones, would have meant death to each and all: letters that now, old and dingy and with the black ink turned red and rusty, still repose in the archives of Paris. Yet letters now-and long ago-known to have been written by those whose names are scrawled plainly across them in a far more recent hand than those of the original writers; names such as De Longueville, Saint Ibal, Franquetot-Barberousse, De Fiesque and many others illustrious for centuries in the North-West.

"I will speak with you later. To-night," De Beaurepaire said, even as Fleur de Mai and his companions still conversed and told each other that, with such men as these at their backs and with, towering over all, the wealth and power of Spain-though they forgot that Spain could scarcely be still powerful when ruled over by its baby King, Charles, who was later to become an idiot in mind and an invalid in body-they could not fail in their great attempt.

And so the talk-the discussions of the future arrangements, of how Van den Enden was to correspond with De Beaupaire by first sending his news in cypher to Basle, whence it would be re-written and sent to him, while other re-written copies would be sent to Rouen-went on until, at last, the meeting drew near to its end.

"And you, Emérance," La Truamont said, as now the men were resuming their swords and preparing to depart from the Hôtel des Muses, "do you know what part you have next to play? There are no more hesitating Norman nobles or gentlemen left in Paris for you to watch; they have all returned to their homes, being persuaded that the attempt is as good as made and carried through triumphantly. Likewise, you can do nought in Normandy yourself."

"Somewhere I can do something."

"Doubtless," the man said, looking down on her with a glance that might well have been taken for one of pity. "And it may be-we will hope so-under happier, more cheerful circumstances than this," now looking round the room they were in with a glance that might have been considered as embracing the whole of Van den Enden's delectable abode. "Your life," he went on, "has never been a happy one; your circumstances here, in Paris, are of the worst. They may now improve."

"What is to be done with me?" the unfortunate woman asked listlessly. "Or for me? I have no hopes. Or only one-which will never be realised. My greatest hope," she almost whispered to herself, "is that at last I may lose all hope."

"Be cheered," La Truamont said, the roughness of the old soldier of fortune-part bravo, part hero, part swashbuckler-the usual ingredients of most soldiers of fortune! – smoothed out of his features so that, for the moment, he presented the appearance of a tender father talking to an unhappy child: "Be cheered. If that which we hope for and, hoping, greatly dare to attempt, should succeed, you will, you shall, rise as we rise. Whatever you can wish for, aspire to, he 'Monsieur Louis'-*le Dédaigneux* as he is sometimes called, will see that you attain."

"It is impossible," the girl whispered. "Impossible. What I wish for he cannot give, not possessing it himself."

"Be not so sure. He is young, passionate, and, though many a silken thread has held him lightly for a time-"

"I have no silken thread wherewith to bind him," Emérance said, her eyes cast down, her breast heaving painfully. "Nor do I desire any other woman's-women's-"

"You do not understand, Emérance," La Truamont said very gently. "Much as trouble and sorrow have taught you, you have not yet learnt all the secrets of a man's heart. A silken thread!" he went on, turning his back still more on the others so that, while they could not hear his words, neither should they see the movement of his lips, which movement, on occasions, will sometimes tell as much as words themselves. "A silken thread! What species of cord, of thong is that to hold a strong, reckless man? A thing befitting the place where it is most often found-a lady's boudoir, her bower, the seat in a tower window; a gilded chamber where carpets from Smyrna, skins, rugs, make all soft to the feet; the plaything of a *rêveuse*, a love-lorn dame."

"Well?" Emérance whispered, lifting her eyes to the other. "Well?"

"But there are other cords," La Truamont went on. "The heart-strings of women to whom dalliance is unknown: women who will starve, intrigue, follow, dare all for him they love: who will bravely bear the cords, the threads that make them regard the block, the gibbet, as a sweeter thing than bowers and tapestry and silken hangings-so long as block or gibbet are risked with him they love."

"Ah!" the woman gasped in an indrawn breath.

"What does he want now with women in their great saloons, their oratories, their boudoirs? Is he not risking his life upon one cast; does he not therefore want women as well as men of action to help him, women who will keep steady before their eyes, even as he keeps, as all of us keep before our eyes, the diadem of France, the throne of France-France itself, on one side? As also he keeps,

and we keep before our eyes, the scaffold outside the Bastille, the Wheel at the Cross Roads, the Gibbet-on the other side? And for such a woman will there be no reward, no acknowledgment?"

"Alas!" the unhappy creature murmured. "He is De Beaurepaire. I am-what?"

"A sorely tried, a deeply injured woman, a lady. One evilly, wickedly, entreated by the land she now hopes to aid. One who loves De Beaurepaire," he added softly.

"Heaven knows how much," the other whispered. "That only!"

"To-night the Prince will speak with you," La Truauumont continued. "To-night he will show to you the absolute faith and belief he will put in your loyalty to him and his cause, which is yours and mine and that of all Normans. Emérance, to-night he will confide in you a great task; he will put himself, his life, his honour, the honour of his house in your hands; he will place in your hands the chance of sending him to that wheel, that gibbet I spoke of but now. Does a man trust any woman with his honour and his life unless he knows that they are so safe in her hands, that they are so bound up with her own life and honour, that she needs must guard them safely?"

"Briefly," the woman said, her eyes raised for a moment to those of La Truauumont, "he knows I love him. Alas! the shame that any man should know I have given him my love unasked and unrequited."

"How can he fail to know? Yes, he does know. But you, Emérance, do you not know something on your part of how love and, above all, fidelity, begets love in return?"

\* \* \* \* \*

The three men, La Truauumont, Fleur de Mai and Boisfleury had gone, they having taken the precaution to separate and make their way by different routes towards the better part of the city. Van den Enden and De Beaurepaire were in another room concluding their last arrangements for communicating with each other when the former should have reached Brussels. And Emérance leant out of the window of the room in which the meeting had been held and inhaled such air as was to be obtained from the stuffy street that was little better than an alley.

Yet it was not only for the sake of inhaling the air of the warm summer night that she leant over the sill while idly toying with a flower that grew, or half-grew and half-withered away, in an imitation Nevers flowerpot, but also for the sake of gaining time to collect and, afterwards, arrange her thoughts.

For she knew that, if La Truauumont's words meant anything at all, to-night would be fateful to her. She knew that, ere the bell of Saint Eustache, which had but a moment or so ago struck ten, should strike another hour, De Beaurepaire would have confided to her some task which, while it raised her from the almost degraded position of a spy-from the hateful task of watching Norman gentlemen and noblemen in Paris to discover if there was any defection on their part from that which they were deeply sworn to assist in-would not only put his life in her hands, but also jeopardise her own.

Nevertheless-as still she trifled with the flower while meditating deeply-not one of these three things, her own advancement to a position of trust and importance, or the power over De Beaurepaire's life and honour which that position would put in her hands, or-and this was, or would have been with many women, the greatest of all-the deadly peril in which she herself must stand henceforth, weighed with her in comparison with a fourth. In comparison with the fact that, henceforth, no matter whether the Great Attempt succeeded or failed-as it would most probably do-she and De Beaurepaire must for ever be associated together. For, if it failed, there could be but one fate for them to share together: if it, by any chance, succeeded, some little part of the success must fall to her share.

That, that only, was all she desired while knowing well there could be nothing more. She had herself uttered the words to La Truauumont that told all. The man she loved was De Beaurepaire, and he was far, far above her; as high above her as the eagle soaring in the skies is above the field-mouse; while, if the success were achieved, he would be as much more above her as the sun in its mid-day

splendour is above the eagle. But, still-still-she would have played her part, she would have helped him to that splendour he had attained, she could never afterwards be forgotten or put entirely aside.

"To some women's hearts," she whispered now, "a recollection, the shadow of a memory, is all that they may dare to crave, all they can hope for. Happy are some women to obtain so much as that. If I can help him to succeed it will be enough. It is not much, yet, for me, it must suffice."

Then, as thus she mused, she heard the door open behind her, she heard a step taken into the room and, next, the voice of De Beaurepaire say, "Madame, I am here to speak with you."

## CHAPTER IV

When first Georges, Sieur de la Truauumont, of an ancient Norman family, late a captain of "La Garde de Monsieur" and formerly of the Regiment de Roncherolles, had broached to the Prince Chevalier de Beaurepaire the suggestion that he should place himself at the head of the Norman plot for deposing King Louis, he had also indicated to him a number of persons of whom he might make use.

Passing over the greatest, since they were all known to the Prince and were also resident in Normandy, he had described to his half-friend and half-employer more than one who would be useful in Paris, and, among them, was Emérance, who styled herself the Marquise de Villiers-Bordéville.

"Who and what is she?" De Beaurepaire had asked almost indifferently, while wondering how a woman who lived in a decayed, though once fashionable, quarter of Paris and was reported by La Truauumont to be in an almost penniless condition, could be of the slightest assistance to him.

"She is a woman well born, of ancient family, who has been badly treated by all with whom she has of late had to deal. She was accused and tried for a crime she never committed and she was acquitted. But, with those of her breed, the trial was enough to place her outside the pale. Fortunately it was the King's own court-not a local Norman one-that tried her, and, out of that, grew her determination to assist in wrenching Normandy-nay, France-from his hands, of reinstating herself in the eyes of our beloved province by acting as one of its saviours."

"How?" De Beaurepaire asked, already almost wearied by this short account of the unhappy woman's life.

"By spying on those who, having given in their adhesion to the plot, might, perhaps, find more profit in betraying it than keeping faith with it. Therefore she came to Paris, and, while watching those who might become backsliders, learnt that you, whom she had seen before, were the accepted head of the movement. And she will serve you well. Never fear for that."

"Why serve me? At present her pay cannot be great. As yet the bulk of money we hope to get is not ours."

"Why! Why! Well! you have known enough of women, young as you still are. You know why she will serve you."

"Bah!" De Beaurepaire said, "she works for her pay, poor as it is."

"Does she?" replied La Truauumont quietly.

"Georges," De Beaurepaire continued, addressing the other by his Christian name as he often did in these days, "who is this woman? You know still more than you will tell."

"I know nothing more of her except that she is, like myself, from Normandy. And I know that, for this self-same reason, she will go hand in hand with us in the scheme we have set afloat when-well! – when Madame la Duchesse is safe in Italy and we are back in France."

"You know nothing more of her?"

"Nothing. Van den Enden brought her to me here and said she might be useful, being Norman. When she heard you were the head and front of our future undertaking, she said she would do all we might ask. She had, as I say, seen you before and-la! la! – admired you. But she was poor, she said, and she must live. As you now know, the Jew brought you and her together, and she was finally vowed heart and soul to us, to the cause-to you. De Beaurepaire, you can grapple her to that cause, to yourself; you can make her do aught you, or we, desire if you will but give her a kindly word, a-

"I will think upon it," the Prince said, while telling himself that already he had thought enough.

"She will be worth it. Do that. Be generous to her and she will go hand in hand to the scaffold with you if you desire."

"*Bon Dieu!* there is no need for that. And the scaffold is not for a De Beaurepaire."

"The heavens forbid! Yet, when the time comes-it is at hand-we shall throw a great stake."

"And win!"

"So be it. I live in hopes."

After De Beaurepaire had seen Emérance again, after he had more carefully observed her soft features and noted her sad look: above all, after he had seen one or two of the glances she had cast on him, he decided he would grapple her to him and to the cause. A woman such as this was wanted for the scheme he had on foot—the wild, delirious scheme of striving to find himself ruler of France and with, it might be, Louis for his subject instead of his king. He would do it, he would use Emérance de Villiers-Bordéville, as she called herself, to wheedle and hoodwink others, to sow the poison-seed of treachery and anarchy and revolt in their souls, to ride for him to other countries with messages and treaties to be signed and executed; to do all he bade her. And, as slaves had ere now been crowned with roses and rewarded, so he would crown and reward her. He would be soft and gentle to her, he vowed; he would speak her fair and sweet, and she should be well repaid for her services and no longer go in rags or live poorly.

He had decided all this some month or so before the night when now he came back to Emérance to tell her what further services were required of her above those she had already rendered, and, during that period, he had had good opportunities of observing her unfailing fidelity to him and his cause. One thing, however, that he had resolved to do had not yet been carried out. The money with which he meant to reward her, the money that should enable her to be decently housed, well fed and properly clad and equipped, had not yet been forthcoming. Spain had sent nothing until a few days before, and that only a trifle, since it had been arranged that no money was to be paid until the signal was given in the *Gazette de Bruxelles*, and then she had only sent this small sum on the representation being made that the conspirators in France would themselves do nothing until Spain led the way. As for De Beaurepaire he had nothing; his years of extravagant living and the expense which his appointments caused him necessitating his continually asking money from his mother.

"Madame," he said, as now he entered the room, "I am here to speak with you." Then, seeing that although Emérance turned away from the window and faced him, she uttered no word, he continued, "My presence is not irksome, I trust."

"There could be no presence less so," the woman answered, regaining full command of her speech, of which some strange inward agitation had momentarily deprived her. A moment later, forgetting that the room in which she was belonged no more to her than to him, she motioned to De Beaurepaire to be seated and, ere he could place a chair for her, had seated herself.

"To-night," she went on, her calmness all returned, "you are to tell me what farther part I can play in your-our, since I am Norman-enterprise. Do so, therefore, I entreat of you. And, whatever it may be, have no fear to name it. What there is to be done, I will do."

"Madame is very brave," the Prince said, his voice soft and gentle and his look—that was so often harsh and contemptuous—equally so. "Very brave. Madame's heart is in this."

"It is," Emérance replied. "To the end. I fear nothing in this cause; nothing. Speak freely."

"At present," De Beaurepaire said, "there is no danger to madame in what she is asked to perform. Nay, she is but asked to perform that which should bring safety to herself in place of danger. I ask her on behalf of the Attempt and—well!—of myself, to quit France." Then, seeing that the pallor on the face of Emérance had increased—if that were possible: seeing, too, that her lips framed, though they did not utter, the word "Never," he added, "only for a little while. A few days at most."

"So!" the woman exclaimed, divining his meaning in a moment, "it is not to quit France because I am no longer wanted, or am dangerous, or no longer to be trusted, but because—"

"Madame, you have guessed aright, or perhaps you know the service I would demand."

"It is not hard to guess. The great lady," Emérance said, in a tone more of sorrow than bitterness, "she who is so great and might, had she so chosen, have been greater, quits France for Italy. Her journey is to be well protected. Even Monsieur le Prince will escort her outside the gates. The guards

he commands; the other soldiery to whom he can issue commands that must be obeyed; the watch, the police, will be prevented from interfering with her. Ah! it is well to be Madame la Duchesse de-

"Silence, I beg. Do not mention her name. Should it ever become known that I have lent her assistance in her escape from Paris, I should not be safe from the King's wrath. And, at present, that wrath is a thing that even I must fear since, should it fall on me, it might, nay must, prevent our venture from progressing. The Bastille, Vincennes, some gloomy fortress far from Paris are not places where plots can well be carried on."

"The Bastille, Vincennes-for you!" Emérance exclaimed again, her eyes fixed on the other. "Ah! That must never be." Then, suddenly, she leant forward across the table towards De Beaurepaire. "What is it I am to do? What?"

"Listen, Emérance-madame," the man replied, correcting himself as he observed the flush that overcame her features as he mentioned her name: a flush that, he observed almost with surprise, transformed her from a pale, careworn woman to a beautiful one. "Listen. There sets out with madame a party of four, not one of whom I dare trust entirely. Two of this party are Fleur de Mai and Boisfleury, Normans like yourself-

"You may trust them both. They are too deeply embarked in our scheme to betray any other."

"It may be so. Yet the former is a babbler, especially in his cups. The other is morose and melancholy; one who may possess that inconvenient thing called a conscience. If this conscience pricks him, or he should become alarmed as to discovery being made of the Attempt, he may tell all."

"Not 'twixt here and Basle. Still, if it is to watch those men until they are safe in Switzerland that I am being sent, it shall be done."

"Not that more than to watch the others."

"The Duchess!" Emérance exclaimed, astonished. "She would not betray you!"

"She knows somewhat of the scheme and disbelieves in its chance of success. Above all, she fears for me and my probable ruin."

"Therefore, she loves you."

"Nay. But we have been friends since almost childhood. If by betraying the scheme to the King, by causing all others who are concerned in it to be betrayed so that, thereby, she might save me, I do think she would do it."

"If she will do it nought can prevent her. In Italy-in Basle-in Geneva-in Nancy-she can do it. Who can control the posts? One letter to Louis will be enough."

"Let her but reach Italy, be once across the Alps, and she may send a thousand letters if she will. For, by the time they can reach Louis' hands, he should be powerless. The Dutch fleet will be off Quillebeuf, the men who are to seize on him will be riding in small troops and companies, by divers routes towards Versailles or Fontainebleau or wherever the Court may chance to be. Before a letter can cross the Alps and reach him there-well! he will be neither at Fontainebleau nor Versailles to receive it."

"They will not murder him!" the woman exclaimed, a look of terror in her face. "That must never be. No Norman would consent to that. He must not go the way of his grandsire."

"Fear not. None dream of such a thing, nor, if it were so, would I be party to any such compact. Instead, he will go at first on the way he has sent many others. To Pignerol perhaps, or out of France. To England." After which De Beaurepaire returned to the subject which was the real object of his interview with Emérance.

"Besides Fleur de Mai and Boisfleury," he went on now, "two others go with her. One is Mademoiselle d'Angelis, the daughter of a French father and English mother, the other is an Englishman named Humphrey West, the son of an English father and a French mother. They are lovers. Have you ever heard speak of them?"

"Of him, never. Of her, yes. Is she not the *demoiselle de compagnie* of Madame la Duchesse?"

"She is."

"What can they know, or knowing, what harm do?"

"Listen, Emérance," De Beaurepaire said now, while no longer taking pains to correct himself since he knew, felt sure, that the unhappy woman secretly loved him, and, consequently, that this familiar style of address would be far from displeasing to her. "Listen. The Duchess is *une folle*, a chatterer. She may talk of, hint at, what she knows. And a word dropped in the ears of her followers, a hint, would be the spark that would explode the magazine."

"What could they do, what should they do? They will be in Italy, too; if a letter from across the Alps will take so long in reaching Louis; if, when it reaches Fontainebleau, or Versailles, he shall be no longer there, how can either this man or the woman he loves travel back to France faster than it? And why should either do anything?"

"His Majesty was good to Humphrey West's mother when his father, an old cavalier, died, and he put pressure on Charles after his restoration to at last make good to them the money and estate Cromwell had seized on during his protectorate. D'Angelis, the girl's late father, was one of Louis' earliest tutors, and Louis loved him and has also been good to his widow and the girl. If either Humphrey West or Jacqueline d'Angelis should learn that an untoward breath of wind was like to blow against him, the former, at least, would take horse and ride back as fast as one steed after another could carry him to divulge all."

"What power shall I have to stop them? What can I do?"

"Follow them, watch them, until they leave Nancy together. If Humphrey West still forms one of the *cortège* we are safe until they reach Basle. At Basle watch them again and again, while, if all leave that place, either for the St. Gothard or for Geneva, thereby to make the passage of the St. Bernard-why, then, let them go. Once out of Basle and on the road to Italy and we are entirely safe. You will have done your work and," he added with that smile which so stirred the heart of the unhappy woman, "your friends in Paris will be awaiting you eagerly."

"My friends," said Emérance sadly. "I have none. Not one." But, seeing a look on De Beaurepaire's face that partly made her feel delirious with delight and partly caused her to feel as though her heart had turned to ice within her, so wide was the gulf between this man and her, she quickly returned to the matter in question: "And if I discover aught that you should know at once? If one or other of the men sets out for, returns to Paris; if a letter should by chance be sent-what then?"

"Then," said De Beaurepaire, "fly back more swiftly than they, if you can accomplish it. Spare neither pains nor money-to-morrow you shall be furnished with ample for your needs from the funds Spain has sent. Outstrip post or horseman, or, failing the possibility of that, follow as swiftly as may be. Thus, Emérance, my friend, my co-plotter, my sweet Norman ally, shall you win the deepest gratitude of Louis de Beaurepaire. Thus, too, if he wins in this great cause, will you make him your debtor for ever. You will make him one who will never forget the services Emérance de Villiers-Bordéville has rendered him."

## CHAPTER V

Three nights after the conversation between De Beaurepaire and Emérance, the clock of St. Germain-l'Auxerrois was striking ten and the *couvre-feu* was sounding from the steeples of many other church towers, as a large, substantial travelling carriage drawn by six horses passed slowly out of the Rue Richelieu and took its way through the great open Place du Louvre towards where the Bastille stood, and, beyond that, the Porte St. Antoine.

A few minutes, perhaps a quarter of an hour, before this time, that carriage had been stationed in one of the narrow streets running out of the Rue Richelieu and, to it, there had advanced two young men dressed in the height of the fashion of the period. But their velvet and lace, their silk stockings and high red-heeled shoes, and also their rapiers, were all hidden, since they were covered up by the large furred *houppelandes* with which these young gallants were enveloped from their throats to their heels. So much enveloped that the patches on their faces were even more invisible than were their remarkably bright eyes and, indeed, the greater part of their features.

Behind these evident scions of the *haut monde* there walked a young serving man, or servitor, dressed in a sober, faded-leaf coloured costume yet having on his head a great hat from which the long cocks-plumes depended and fell over his face, and, at his side, a stout rapier of the Flamberg order.

Drawing near to the carriage at which one or two passers-by were looking curiously, while one of the night-watch who happened to be in the neighbourhood was doing the same, one of the two young men turned round to the servitor behind and said: -

"Jean, have you left word that we shall return at midnight from the masquerade and that we shall require supper?"

"I have, Monsieur le Vicomte."

"So be it. Therefore, Pierre," said the vicomte, addressing his friend, "let us away. Already the first dance will be over and, *me confond!* there are plenty of *beaux yeux* will be looking for our arrival. Fellows," glancing up at the coachman and footman on the box, "set out. And miss not your way. Remember," speaking loudly and harshly, "'tis to the Rue de la Dauphine we go; to the house of Monsieur le Marquis de Vieuxchastel. If you proceed not straight you shall be whipped to-morrow. You hear, dog?"

"I hear, Monsieur le Vicomte," the coachman answered in a surly tone, though, as he did so, he turned his head and looked at a bystander under the oil lamp, and thrust his tongue into his cheek and winked and muttered an offensive word.

"So be it," the vicomte said, as he got into the carriage after his friend and while the servitor clambered up behind. "So be it. Now be off. Do you hear, beasts? *En route* for the Rue de la Dauphine."

Slowly, therefore, because all large vehicles progressed but heavily over the uneven roads of Paris, the great carriage went on its way; though, since, instead of at once crossing the Pont Neuf—which is so old! – it continued to remain on the north side of the river, it would seem that the coachman had, in truth, missed his way in spite of the injunctions of the vicomte.

Soon, too, by following this route, the carriage was underneath the frowning towers of the Bastille and passing by the moat in front of the great door, and so went on through the Marais and past old streets and, at last, past old houses standing alone and having, in some cases, thatched roofs. A few minutes later it neared the Porte St. Antoine with its great wooden, iron-studded gate closed for the night.

But, here, by the side of the road, which was but a mass of dry mud, there stood a house, or rather cottage, with a penthouse roof, having outside of it a staircase leading to the upper floor. A house that had, also, a long wall running at right angles from it which threw a darkness deeper than that of the starlight night itself over all beneath it.

"This," said the coachman to the footman, "is the spot," while the servitor who was behind noticed that the speaker crossed himself. "*Bon Dieu!*" the man went on, "what a place for a love tryst, an elopement."

"'Twill serve," the other fellow said; "and he in there wants neither De Beaurepaire nor us yet."

"And never will, *Dieu le plaise*," the trembling coachman said, since the man who inhabited this house was the executioner.

Then, the carriage, which had gradually drawn into the deepest shadow of the wall came to a stop, and, from out that shadow, there stepped forth a man. A man who, advancing to the door of the vehicle, opened it and said: -

"So! you are here. Both. And, for the third-Humphrey West?"

"He is here, Monsieur le Chevalier," the supposed servitor behind replied, jumping down from the banquette. "Here."

"And you, my noble and illustrious friends," the Prince said, glancing up at the coachman and footman, "my noble friends of the tripot and the gargote; how fares it with you? *Cadédis!* the ride you have before you will wash all the fumes of Van den Enden's poisoned wine out of you. When you return to Paris with your pockets stuffed full of pistoles your mothers will not know you."

"Now," ignoring the answers which the two men on the box growled back; men who were, in truth, Fleur de Mai and Boisfleury. "Now, all is arranged. You, Madame la Duchesse," addressing the handsome young gallant who had hitherto been termed M. le Vicomte, "will ride through the gate by my side. You, Mademoiselle d'Angelis, will ride with the faithful Humphrey. While as for you," looking up at the men above, "you will follow close behind."

As thus De Beaurepaire spoke, from behind where Paris lay there fell upon the ears of those assembled near the gatehouse the sounds of a horse's hoofs, of a horse in full gallop, while, to them, were added the jangle of bridle and bridoon as well as another sound which told of a sword clanking against stirrup and spur in accompaniment with the action of the horse's body.

"Are we pursued?" asked Fleur de Mai, his big hand ready to draw his weapon from its sheath. "If so, one thrust through the horse and then another through the rider and, lo! there is no further pursuit," and he laughed, indeed gurgled, deep down in his chest.

"If it should be my husband or one of his menials!" the Duchess murmured fearfully.

"Tush!" exclaimed De Beaurepaire, "there is but one, and we are four. While if the rider is soldier, gendarme, or police spy, he takes his orders from me. What have we to fear therefore?"

Suddenly, however, he gave a laugh and said, "Listen. Hark to him how he sings as he rides along. 'Tis La Truamont who has drunk his last cup in Paris quicker than one might have deemed, and has caught us on the road sooner than I, who know him well, could have expected."

And so, in truth, it was. Upon the night air were borne the strains of a song the adventurer was singing: in a deep, rich voice was being trilled forth the chanson: -

Pour faire ton âme et ton corps  
Le ciel épuisa ses trésors,  
Landriette, Landriri.

En grâces, en beauté, en attraits  
Nul n'égalera jamais,  
Landriette, Landriri.

"*Hola!*" he cried, breaking off suddenly in his tribute of admiration to some real or imaginary beauty while reining in his steed with a sudden jerk. "*Hola!* What have we here? Young gallants in cloak, plume and sword; the great and mighty Prince de-"

"Peace. No names, imbecile," exclaimed the latter.

"And all the basketful," La Truauumont continued, taking no notice of his leader's words. "My own beloved Fleur de Mai, countryman and companion-

"'Tis true, though you say it," growled Fleur de Mai in a harsh, sonorous voice.

"And Boisfleury. The illustrious Boisfleury. Good! Good!" When, addressing De Beaurepaire, La Truauumont continued, "Noble Prince, do we not pass the barrier to-night, or do we sleep at attention outside that?" and he nodded to the gloomy house close by.

"No. Since you are come so much the better. We will all pass through together," and he repeated the instructions he had given before La Truauumont came up, while adding, "For your descriptions, remember that you," to Boisfleury and Fleur de Mai, "are of my following, and you," to Humphrey, "that which you please to term yourself. You, madame and mademoiselle," addressing the Duchess and Jacquette with a smile, "know also who and what you are. Now for the horses. They are here. Come all and mount, excepting you La Truauumont who are already provided for."

Giving his arm to the Duchess as he spoke he led the way to a still darker portion of the wall, under which were six horses all saddled and bridled and by the heads of which stood two of his own grooms.

"Ah, ha!" exclaimed Humphrey, as a grey mare looked round and whinnied as he approached, "there she is, my pretty 'Soupir,'" and going up to her he stroked her silky muzzle and whispered to her.

"To horse," said De Beaurepaire, "to horse all. Madame," to the Duchess, "mount," while she, obeying him, put her foot in the stirrup and her hand to the mane and raised herself to the saddle as easily as she might have done had she been in truth the cavalier she pretended to be.

A minute or two after, all were mounted. The Prince was on a great fiery chestnut which might have been chosen with the purpose of matching the strong masterful man who now bestrode it; Jacquette was on a mare lithe as Soupir herself, and the two desperadoes on horses strong and muscular.

"Summon the gate," the former said now. "Summon in the name of the King."

"Open," cried La Truauumont, "open. *Par ordre du Roi*. Open, I say."

"Who are you?" cried out a voice from the gatehouse window, at which a man's face had by now appeared. "Who are you that summon thus in the name of the King? Stand and answer."

"The Prince and Chevalier Louis De Beaurepaire, Grand Veneur and Colonel of all His Majesty's Guards," replied La Truauumont, knowing well that his master would not deign to answer at all. "Attended by the Chief of his own bodyguard, the Captain de La Truauumont."

"And the others, most worshipful sir?"

"The Vicomte d'Aignay-le-Duc," called back Humphrey, naming, as had been decided, one of the Duchess's estates, "attended by Monsieur Jean de Beaufôret," naming another, "followed by their attendant, Monsieur Homfroi."

"And the others, who are they, illustrious seigneur?"

"Le Capitaine Fleur de Mai, Le Colonel Boisfleury, both of Prince de Beaurepaire's bodyguard," bawled the former in an authoritative, dictatorial voice.

"Pass all," the man said now, the gate beginning to creak on its hinges as he spoke. "Pass. Good-night, noble seigneurs."

"Bid him let the gate remain open," De Beaurepaire said to La Truauumont. "Tell him I do but ride outside it, there to make my adieux to the 'Vicomte'."

After which, and when this order had been given, all rode through the gate. The travellers were outside Paris; they had left it behind.

All had done so with the exception of De Beaurepaire who-since he had fulfilled his promise of preventing the Duchess from being interfered with in her flight from a mad husband until, at least, she was outside the city walls-was about to say farewell to the party.

"Farewell, Louis de Beaurepaire," that lady said now, as she placed her long-gloved hand in his, while her soft, dark eyes looked out at him from under her curled wig and plumed hat, "farewell. You have placed me in the way that leads to safety and freedom; I beseech of you to do nothing that may make safety and freedom strangers to you. Hear my last words before I go. Even as now you turn back to Paris and all the honours that you have, so turn back from that which may deprive you of all honour; ay! and more. *Addio.*"

## CHAPTER VI

The road to Nancy from Paris ran through the old province of Champagne until Lorraine was entered-Lorraine, which, since the peace of Westphalia, had fallen under French rule.

Along this road the cavalcade led by La Truaumont progressed day by day on its way towards Nancy, a hundred and fifty miles and more by road from Paris. Between each morning and night the members of that cavalcade rode on and accomplished some thirty miles at a slow pace so as to spare their horses as much as possible, while halting in the evenings at old inns where, though they gave no name, their appearance and their manners proclaimed that they were persons, or at least that one of them was, of high importance.

For the Duchess, Jacqueline and Humphrey took their meals together behind a screen in whatever public room they sat down, as was the custom of the nobility when travelling; La Truaumont took his alone behind another screen close by, while the *soi-disant*, or, it may be, the actual Colonel-for Colonels could oft fall low in these times! – Boisfleury took his in company with the sinister and truculent Fleur de Mai.

"And, *sang bleu!*" exclaimed the latter individual on the third night of their halt, which took place at Vitry, "if we were not ordered to sit apart and to restore ourselves like serving men and valets by this insolent La Truaumont, I would be well content with the office. This ride through the air of Champagne is good for our health, the food and drink is wholesome and ample, the absence of expense good for our pockets. Nevertheless, I do think I must stick my rapier through La Truaumont's midriff at the end of the ride. For his insults," and he swallowed a large gulp of golden Avize, a local wine.

"Stick thy fork in thy mouth and thy glass down thy throat!" replied Boisfleury, tearing the flesh off a chicken's wing with his teeth as he spoke, "and utter no banalities. You are well paid, you sleep warm and soft o' nights and eat and drink of the best, and all you have to do is to ride by my side and listen to my sweet converse and hold your babbling tongue. While as to rapiers through midriffs-what would the attempt profit you? La Truaumont is a *ferrailleur* of the first water. Better put good food inside you than your vitals outside."

"I am as good as he," Fleur de Mai replied in a voice which was getting husky with the Avize, when suddenly Boisfleury interrupted any further observations by exclaiming: -

"Be silent, fool, and stagger to thy feet. See, the Duchess rises from the table behind the screen. Ha! the Englishman bids madame good-night. He kissed her hand and, *me damne!* kisses slyly the ear of the girl, d'Angelis. Ha! Ha! The kiss, the English kiss! They can do nothing without that. And, observe, La Truaumont comes this way. Stand steady on thy feet, *chameau.*"

"Boot and saddle at six o'clock to-morrow," said La Truaumont as he came down the great inn-room which was part hall, and, at the end, part kitchen. "Up at five. Boisfleury, see he is up," looking at Fleur de Mai.

"I shall be up," muttered that worthy. "Have no fear. A pint of this wine will not make me sleep heavily. I'll throw the dice with you now for a bottle of the best."

\* \* \* \* \*

The noble lady, Ortenzia, Duchesse de Castelluccio, who was now riding from Paris to Nancy on her way to cross the Alps and, later, to join her own family, that of the Scoriatis, had some few years before this made almost a similar journey to France, there to marry her countryman the Duc de Castelluccio, a man whose family, originally poor, had followed Concino Concini-the Maréchal

d'Ancre-into France, but had managed to escape the awful end that had overtaken both him and his wife.

Having escaped such a fate as the assassination of the former or the execution by burning of the latter, as well as any other forms of death which the creatures of those once powerful adventurers might well have expected to overtake them, the family thrived and prospered. Steering clear of political machinations until the Concinis were almost forgotten and, indeed, until Louis le Juste was himself in his grave, they devoted themselves to commerce and, above all, to money lending and, thereby, grew rich.

But when, at last, Mazarin's star was in the ascendant as it became shortly after the death of Richelieu, they attached themselves to his fortunes, while, as he grew all powerful, so did they who, coming to France almost paupers, were now enormously wealthy.

One grief there was, however, that fell heavily on old Felice Ventura who had, by this time, become Monsieur le Duc de Castellucchio (he having decided to confer honour on his birthplace by taking its name for his title), and that grief was that his only son and successor gave signs of becoming a maniac, if he were not already one.

Always strange as a boy, this son had, as a young man, given still more astonishing signs of mental derangement, and, a short time after he had espoused Ortenzia Scoriati, the daughter of a noble and wealthy Milanese family, he was regarded and spoken of not only as a lunatic but a dangerous one. For, from such outbreaks as rousing the whole house from their beds by saying that a ghost was wandering round it, and by dragging his wife out of her own bed by the hair to look for the apparition; by not allowing any footmen to be in his service who were under seventy, in case his wife should fall in love with them, and by breaking up all the statues he owned (which his father had collected at an enormous cost) since he proclaimed such things to be heathen and profligate, he proceeded to greater extremities. He invariably tore the patches off his wife's face whenever she placed them on it, saying that they were the allurements used by giddy women; he insisted next that his wife should have her teeth drawn so that she should become hideous in the eyes of the world, and it was only by the flight from him which she was now undertaking that the Duchess was able to prevent herself from being thus disfigured for the rest of her life.

But even before this moment had arrived, his conduct had been such as to induce the unhappy Duchess to determine to leave him. He ruined all the costly furniture and pictures, as well as the statues, which his old father had accumulated, on the usual plea that they were not fit for modest people to gaze upon, while, not six months before this flight took place, he invited his wife to go for a drive with him in their coach one afternoon, and, when they had set out, calmly informed her that they were going to Rome. But that which was worse than all for the Duchess was that they actually did continue their journey to that city, though neither of them had either a change of clothes or of linen with them.

It was to De Beaurepaire, whom she had known ever since she came to France, that the Duchess turned for assistance when she determined to finally quit it, while for a companion in her journey she looked to her *demoiselle de compagnie*, "Jacquette," or Jacqueline d'Angelis.

For Jacquette loved her and pitied her sad lot, and, had it not been for her stronger love for Humphrey, and her hopes for a happy future with him, she would not only have accompanied the Duchess on this journey they were making at this moment but would never have contemplated parting from her.

And now, therefore, not only was Mademoiselle d'Angelis a member of that small band but so, also, was Humphrey West, since, having at present no occupation whatsoever, and no interest in life except to be by the side of the girl he loved so well, he had made interest with De Beaurepaire and the Duchess-both of whom had always treated him well and kindly-to be allowed to form one of the latter's escort as well as to be the knight and sentinel of his betrothed.

That these two should love each other was not strange, nor would it have been strange even if they had met no longer than a year ago. He was young and good looking enough to win any woman's fancy, while, beside his sufficiency of good looks, he was tall and broad and gave signs of health and strength in every action of his body.

She, "his girl," as he called her to her face and to himself, was worthy of him. Amidst a Court that, at least from the day when Louis XIII. died, had been none too moral and, under the influence of the Queen-Mother and the then young King, had long since verged towards absolute recklessness, Jacquette moved free and pure herself, while hating, averting her eyes from, and being unwilling to see, all that went on around her. For, while the girl was as beautiful as though she had just left some canvas painted by Correggio, she was, partly and principally owing to her own nature and partly to her English mother's training, almost as pure as though she had just left that mother's side. Similarly, as neither late nights, nor masques, nor dances, nor any wild dissipations whatever to which the Court and all who were in it, or of it, gave themselves up, could impair that fair soft beauty, so neither could whispered words nor looks nor hints from dissolute courtiers impair her purity of mind. To crown all, she loved one man and one alone, and she would never love any other.

And, now, this strangely assorted band of travellers had reached their third halting-place on the road to Nancy, where shelter was to be found in the house of De Beaurepaire's mother. This strangely assorted band consisting of a woman of high rank in two countries, a young girl whose life had been almost entirely passed in the glamour and ease of the French Court, a valiant young Englishman who loved that girl, and three reckless adventurers.

Yet the first three persons of the number had no thought, no presentiment that, beneath the apparently insignificant nature of the journey they were making, there lurked in the hearts of the other three a deeper, a sterner, a more wicked purpose: a more profound and horrible reason for their being on the road. The purpose of reaching a city outside the King's dominions, a Republican city in which no sympathies for a monarch or a monarchy were likely to exist, even should that purpose become known; the purpose of there meeting the arch-plotter of a hideous crime and being able to discuss in safety how the workings of that crime should be decided on.

These first three knew this no more than they knew that, following them, and sometimes preceding them, when opportunity offered, so that she might await their arrival; spying on all their movements and communicating those movements to De Beaurepaire as she learnt them, went a woman whose mad love for him had spurred her on to sink from what was almost as high as patriotism to that which was the deepest depths of wicked intrigue.

## CHAPTER VII

Into the open cobble-stone *place*, which, at that period, was in front of the Krone—at this time the principal hostelry of Basle—rolled the great travelling carriage in which Emérance sat as the night was falling over the city. The coachman cracked his whip loudly as he approached the door, in accordance with the immemorial custom of drivers bringing travellers to any house kept for the accommodation of such persons, and the footman blew upon the bugle which he wore slung round him, partly with the object of warning pedestrians to get out of the way of the carriage, and partly to announce to the villages they passed through that some one of importance was on the road. Now, when the inn was reached, the man sprang from the box to hold the door open and the maid clambered down from the banquette, while the landlord rushed out of the door of the inn followed by two or three *faquins* and stood bowing bareheaded before the handsomely arrayed lady who had descended.

"Madame la Marquise de Villiers-Bordéville," the footman said, while madame herself entered the porch, "requires rooms for herself and following. Also accommodation for the carriage and horses. Madame la Comtesse will repose for some days in Basle."

The landlord's bows and congees increased in force from the time the rank of the visitor was proclaimed until he had learnt all her requirements—which must necessarily be remunerative! — after which he said in an oily, deferential tone: -

"Madame la Marquise shall have one of the best. A suite of apartments *au premier*; all that Madame la Comtesse can desire. There is accommodation for all that madame requires."

"Show me to this suite," Emérance said, speaking now; "let the luggage be taken off the coach and the animals attended to."

After which she followed the still bowing host up the extremely narrow stairs, common enough in those days, to the suite of which he had spoken.

Perhaps it was not as elegant a set of rooms as his enthusiastic words might have led the woman to expect; perhaps the Darneux curtains and the green printed stuff-hangings were not as fresh as they had once been, or the narrow windows as clean as they might be; or the iron bars outside them—which reminded Emérance, she knew not why, of a gaol-window—as free of rust as they should have been kept. Yet, as she told herself, this was but the *salon* of an inn in which she would pass some week or two ere flying once more to Paris and the man she loved; therefore it would do very well. The great leather chairs, picked out with gilt, and threadbare by the constant use of strangers, would serve her to sit upon as they had served other travellers before; the odious, awful carpet, with the most horrible subjects from scripture woven into it—and almost worn out of it again by countless feet—at least covered the stone floor; while—had she not often sheltered in worse places! The Hôtel des Muses of Van den Enden, to wit, was worse and more shabby; the Schwarzer Adler at Nancy was nothing like so good.

"It will suffice," she said to herself, "to receive Van den Enden in; to harbour in till I can go back to *him* to learn all that is a-doing and to be done. And then—then—to Louis, my *bien-aimé*, to fortune and happiness extreme, or—to death. Yet, what matters death, if it be shared with him. With him! Ah! how I would welcome it if we may not have life together."

And now, an hour later, the woman who called herself the Marquise de Villiers-Bordéville sat over the great fire of pine logs drawn from the forests on the banks of the Rhine, and ate her supper while her maid attended to her. As she made that meal she pondered on what her life was to be in the future, and whether De Beaurepaire would always be as kind and gentle to her as he was now, and would let her have some share in his great fortune or great downfall, whichever might come to him.

Ere she quitted Paris, the man she had allowed herself to love with an unsought love had told her that the Spanish Governor of Brussels, with whom he was in communication through Van den Enden with regard to the scheme which was on foot for invading France and for the appropriation of Normandy at least, had at last sent a large sum of money for use in the scheme.

"A sum so ample," De Beaurepaire said, "that all employed in helping this cause may now be well equipped. Therefore, you, my fairest of conspirators, must take your share of the spoil," while, as he spoke, he drew from his pocket a wallet stuffed full of drafts and *traites* drawn by the Bank of Amsterdam and honoured wherever presented, and tossed it into the woman's lap.

"It is not yours?" she asked, looking into his eyes. "If so, I will take nought."

"Not even from me-the Chief?"

"From you less than any. I must be paid to live by those who will profit most-the Spaniards. For the rest, I am Norman. I shall profit as well as you."

"Emérance, you may take it from me. Yet," seeing a look of dissent on her face at this, "it is not mine. It comes straight from De Montérey and is to be expended in furtherance of the-the-well! conspiracy in Normandy. You are one of the intriguers, ay! and the sweetest and best of all, therefore you must be well paid. Now, listen to what I have done. A coach is prepared for you to travel in; 'tis yours, and, when you have no further use for it, yours to dispose of with the horses."

"Monsieur! I will not-"

"Tush! It is bought with the money of Spain. With you goes a footman, a trusty vagabond speaking many tongues; one who will serve you well both as servant and courier. Also, though he may rob you he will allow none other to do so. As for a maid, you must find her at some halting-place at which you stay, saying your own has fallen sick and been left behind."

"I require no maid. I can do my own hair a dozen ways myself, and-I have been used to poverty."

"You must forget that you have ever been aught but well-to-do. Remember that you serve Spain now, and Spain pays handsomely for service. Her instruments, too, must make a brave appearance. Therefore, provide yourself also with rich apparel at some halting-place-"

"I want it, heaven above knows," the adventuress muttered to herself.

" – while," the Prince continued, "for gems and jewels befitting your assumed station I will bring you some."

"Never," Emérance said. "I will have none of them. I," she said, "am not a De Beaurepaire, yet I, too, am proud. But-but-there is one thing that I would have. Something, no matter how poor a daub, that I can wear close to me by day and night; something, if I can have it so, that shall prick and sting me when I move or turn, and thereby remind me that the Chief of all is near. Give me your picture and let me wear it, and I will cherish it. Thus, though I need no spur to that which I have to do, there will ever be one close to me."

That which she had to do! Well, she told herself now, she had done it, or partly done it, and was yet to do more; was to continue doing it until the Duchess had left Basle far behind her.

She had done what she had been paid to do-and her face would have been awful for any one to see as she reflected thus, while sitting before the logs of the fire and hearing the booming of the quarters from the old Cathedral tower. Paid to do! by money, with clothes and the wherewithal to travel sumptuously; with the means to engage a maid who should attend to her every want-the wants of a woman who, not a month ago, had nightly to mend and brush her rags ere she could sally forth the next day! – the means to be able to sleep warm and soft. Paid-and even this thought was better though still bitter-by a smile, a kind word from a man whom she had allowed herself to love without that love having been solicited, without its being returned.

She had done, must go on doing for a time, that which she was paid to do. Alas! even as, more than once on this journey, she, all unknown to those others, had been in the same inns with them; as she had crept about dark corridors and staircases endeavouring to hear what they might be saying, above all if they were meditating treachery to *him*, her *adoré*; as, too, she had tried to see and sometimes to possess herself of a letter here and there that had been written by any one of them-so she must continue to do. That those others would put up at the Krone in this city, she knew: she had not failed to learn that, either through her maid's gossip or her purse. The purse that was filled

with Spanish gold as payment for her treason to her country and her King, or, doubly bitter thought, might, for aught she knew, be filled by the man of whom her mad love had made her the slave!

"The shame of it," she murmured now. "Oh! the shame, the shame of it. I, a woman of gentle blood, well-born, well-nurtured, to sink to this. To this!" and, as she so thought and mused, her eyes would turn furtively towards the window-curtains that shut out the sight of the river though not the sound of its rushing, and she wondered if in the swollen, turbulent stream, there was not a more fitting ending to be found to all her mad folly, her wicked treachery, than in aught else.

"If he knew all," she continued to muse now. "If he knew what La Truamont knows; if he should hear of what I have been in my time accused, would he trust me—a spy! — to spy upon those others? Would he have treated me kindly, or ever, even in his softer moments, have spoken gently to me. Ah! would he! To me, 'Emérance de Villiers-Bordéville,'" and she smiled bitterly, "whose name is false, whose title and rank are spurious. Yet," she went on, endeavouring perhaps to excuse herself to herself; "my own, my real, name is the equal of those assumed ones, if he did but know. Ay! as good as those and, in spite of the cloud that once lowered over it, not smirched and blackened then with the names of spy, *intrigueuse*, adventuress."

The logs burnt low and fell together with many a soft clash, while making the woman feel drowsy with their balmy warmth as she sat before the hearth; the cathedral bells from above sounded dreamily to her ears and as though afar off. Even the tall, well-knit and superbly moulded figure and the handsome, dark face of the man whose image was never absent from her mind, were vanishing into the light mists of sleep when, suddenly, she sprang to her feet, startled by what she had heard outside.

A bugle had rung below in the open *place* between the inn and the Rhine; there was the tramping of many horses' hoofs on the rough stones beneath the windows; orders were being shouted, and, mixed with these sounds, the shuffling of feet inside and along the corridors of the inn and the clatter of the chains of the main door being unloosed and the bolts drawn back.

"What is it?" the woman cried to herself, her hand to her breast, her face white. "What? Nothing can be known yet, nothing discovered to warrant their taking me, and—pshaw! — this is a Republican city not a French one. They can do nothing here."

Yet, notwithstanding, Emérance went towards the window and endeavoured to see as much as was possible through the long-since uncleaned, diamond panes of the window, and between the rusty iron bars outside.

What she could perceive was a dozen or so of horsemen clad in scarlet and green and armed with swords and musketoons, who surrounded a coach bigger than that in which she had herself journeyed; a coach which had a table inside it and, on that table, a fixed travelling lamp that shone upon and lit up the faces of two women. One, a woman, dark, soft-eyed and rich in colouring, who was superbly dressed; the other, also well favoured but of a more fair complexion and not so handsomely attired.

The noise and hubbub below continued as she gazed out; the voice of the landlord was heard yelling orders downstairs and the voice of the landlady screaming similar ones above; the escort—for an escort it was, with which the Duke of Lorraine had furnished the Duchess from Nancy to Basle—had dismounted and were leading their horses away. A moment later, Emérance understood that the Duchess and her following were being shown upstairs.

"To the next suite to this," she whispered to herself as she heard voices in the rooms adjoining her own. "Ah! we shall be neighbours. 'Tis well if we encounter each other that she does not know who and what I am."

Listening to the sounds proceeding from the next set of rooms, she endeavoured to discover what person might have taken possession of the chamber on the other side of the partition wall.

What she heard, however, gave her no clue to that. Something she did hear flung down on a table which, by the rattle and clash it made, gave her, who well knew the sound of such things, the

impression of a rapier being thrown on the table after having been unlooped from the wearer's body. And she heard also a man's voice giving orders, and a call from one woman to another in rooms still farther off; but little more than this. Nothing more than the ordinary sounds which, in all times, travellers staying in inns and hotels have heard on the arrival of new-comers in the same house.

## CHAPTER VIII

Meanwhile, the sounds that Emérance had heard in that next set of rooms shut off by the wall from those which she occupied (while being served outside by the same corridor running at right angles from the main passage) had been made by Humphrey West in the room appropriated to him.

For the Duchesse de Castellucchio besides being a timorous woman in some things, although one bold enough in others, was by no means sure whether-even now that she was in a free Swiss Canton and in a city that claimed to be one of the most free and independent in Europe-some steps might not be taken to seize upon her and drag her back to France and into the clutches of her awe-inspiring husband. She knew that, but a league or so off was the frontier of France, while she did not know what the myrmidons of that powerful country might not be able to do against a woman of her position who had fled from a husband possessing the influence which her husband undoubtedly possessed, maniac though he might be. And, not knowing what she feared, she feared doubly. Italian-like, she was naturally superstitious, while, at the same time, her mind was filled with wild romances dealing with beautiful and unfortunate heroines shut up in gloomy castles, or beset in strange inns and out-of-the-way places at night and hidden in dungeons, or thrown into torrents and rivers not unlike the rapid swirling river now rushing beneath, or almost beneath, her windows.

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