

DUMAS ALEXANDRE

THE HERO OF THE
PEOPLE: A HISTORICAL
ROMANCE OF LOVE,
LIBERTY AND LOYALTY

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CHAPTER I

LOCKSMITH AND GUNSMITH

THE French Revolution had begun by the Taking of the Bastille by the people of Paris on the Fourteenth of July, 1789, but it seemed to have reached the high tide by King Louis XVI, with his Queen Marie Antoinette and others of the Royal Family, leaving Versailles, after some sanguinary rioting, for the Capital, Paris.

But those who think, in such lulls of popular tempests, that all the mischief has blown over, make a mistake.

Behind the men who make the first onset, are those who planned it and who wait for the rush to be made and, then, while others are tried or satisfied, glide into the crowds to stir them up.

Mysterious agents of secret, fatal passions, they push on the movement from where it paused, and having urged it to its farthest limit, those who opened the way are horrified, at

awakening to see that others attained the end.

At the doorway of a wine saloon at Sevres by the bridge, over the Seine, a man was standing who had played the main part, though unseen, in the riots which compelled the Royal Family to renounce an attempt to escape out of the kingdom like many of their sycophants, and go from Versailles Palace to the Tuileries.

This man was in the prime of life: he was dressed like a workingman, wearing velveteen breeches shielded by a leather apron with pockets such as shinglers wear to carry nails in, or blacksmith-farriers or locksmiths. His stockings were grey, and his shoes had brass buckles; on his head was a fur cap like a grenadier's cut in half or what is called nowadays an artillerist's busby. Grey locks came straggling from under its hair and mingled with shaggy eyebrows; they shaded large bulging eyes, keen and sharp, quick, with such rapid changes that it was hard to tell their true color. His nose was rather thick than medium, the lips full, the teeth white, and his complexion sunburnt.

Without being largely built, this man was well formed: his joints were not coarse and his hands were small and might have seemed delicate but for their being swart like those of workers in metal.

Despite the vigor of the biceps muscle shown from his having rolled up his shirt sleeves, the skin was remarkable for its whiteness, and almost aristocratically fine.

Within his reach was a richly gold-inlaid double-barrelled fowling piece, branded with the name of Leclere, the fashionable

gunsmith of Paris. You may ask how could such a costly firearm come into the hands of a common artisan? In times of riot it is not always the whitest hands which grasp the finest weapons.

This man had only arrived from Versailles since an hour, and perfectly well knew what had happened there: for to the landlord's questions as he supplied him with a bottle of wine which he did not touch, he had answered as follows:

“The Queen is coming along with the King and the Dauphin. They had started at half afternoon, having at last decided to live at the Tuileries; in consequence of which for the future Paris would no longer want for bread, as it would have in her midst, the Baker, the Baker's Wife and the Baker's Boy, as the popular slang dubbed the three ‘Royals’.”

As for himself, he was going to hang round to see the procession go by.

This last assertion might be true, although it was easy to tell that his glance was more often bent on the side towards Paris than Versailles, which led one to surmise that he did not feel obliged to tell Boniface exactly what his intentions were.

In a few seconds his attraction seemed gratified, for he spied a man, garbed much like himself, and appearing of the same trade, outlined on the ridge of the road. He walked heavily like one who had journeyed from afar.

His age appeared to be like his awaiter's, that is, what is called the wrong side of forty. His features were those of a common fellow with low inclinations and vulgar instincts.

The stranger's eye was fastened on him with an odd expression as if he wished with a single scrutiny to measure the gold, if any, and the alloy in his composition.

When the wayfarer from the town was within twenty steps of this man lounging in the doorway, the latter stepped inside, poured the wine from the bottle into two glasses and returning to the doorstep with one tumbler held up, he hailed him:

"Hello, mate! it is pretty cold weather, and the road is a long one. What do you say to our having a drop of the red to cheer us up and warm us?"

The workman from town looked round to make sure that he was alone and that the greeting was addressed to him.

"Speaking to me, are you?"

"Who else, as you are alone?"

"And offering me a go of wine?"

"Why not, as we are brothers of the file and bossing-hammer alike? or some at nigh."

"Anybody can belong to a trade," said the other looking hard at the speaker; "but the point is, are you a greenhand or a master of the craft?"

"I reckon we shall tell how far we have learnt the trade while drinking and chatting together."

"All right then!" said the other, walking up to the door, while the inviter showed the table set out with the wine. The man took the tumbler, eyed the contents as if he had doubts, but they disappeared when the stranger poured himself out a second

brimmer.

“Why, hang it all, are you getting so proud that you will not drink with a shopmate?”

“No, dash me if I am – here is Good Luck to the Nation!”

The workman’s grey eyes were fixed on the toast-giver’s.

He tossed off the glass at a draft, and wiped his lips on his sleeve.

“Deuse take it, but it is Burgundy wine,” he remarked.

“And good liquor, too, eh? the vintage was recommended to me; and happening along I dropped in, and I am not repenting it. But why not sit down and be at home? there is some more in the bottle and more in the cellar when that is gone.”

“I say, what are you working at here?”

“I have knocked off for the day. I finished a job at Versailles and I am going on to Paris with the royal procession as soon as it comes along.”

“What procession?”

“Why, the King and the Queen and the little Prince, who are returning to the city with the Fishmarket women and two hundred Assemblymen, all under protection of Gen. Lafayette and the National Guard.”

“So the fat old gentleman has decided to come to town?”

“They made him do it.”

“I suspected so when I started for Paris at three this morning.”

“Hello! did you leave Versailles at three without any curiosity about what was going off?”

“No, no, I itched to know what the gent was up to, being an acquaintance, a chum of mine, by the way, though I am not bragging; but you know, old man, one must get on with the work. I have a wife and children to provide for, and it is no joke now. I am not working at the royal forge.”

The listener let what he heard pass without putting any questions.

“So, it was on a pressing job that you went back to Paris?” he only inquired.

“Just that, as it appears, and handsomely paid too,” said the workman, jingling some coin in his pocket, “though it was paid for by a kind of servant, which was not polite, and by a German, too, which blocked me from having any pleasant chatter during the work. I am not one for gab, but it amuses one if no harm is spoken of others.”

“And it is no harm when harm is spoken of the neighbors, eh?”

Both men laughed, the stranger showing sound teeth against the other’s snaggy ones.

“So, then, you have knocked off a good job, wanted doing in a hurry, and well paid?” said the former, like one who advances only a step at a time, but still does advance. “Hard work, no doubt?”

“You bet it was hard. Worse than a secret lock – an invisible door. What do you think of one house inside of another? some one who wants to hide away, be sure. What a game he could have – in or out, as he pleased. ‘Your master in?’ ‘No, sir: just stepped

out.’ ‘You are a liar – he came in just now.’ ‘You had better look, since you are so cocksure.’ So they look round, but I defy them to find the gentleman. An iron door, you will understand, which closes on a beading-framed panel, while it runs on balls in a groove as on wheels. On the metal is a veneer of old oak, so that you can rap with your knuckles on it and the sound is identical with that of a solid plank. I tell you when the job was done, it would take me in myself.”

“Where the mischief would you do a job like that? but I suppose you would not tell even a pal?”

“I cannot tell because I do not know.”

“What hoodwinked you?”

“Guess again and you will be wrong. A hack was waiting for me at the city turnpike bars. A chap came up and asked: ‘Are you so and-so?’ I said ‘I am.’ ‘Good, we are waiting for you: jump in.’ So I got inside the coach, where they bandaged my eyes, and after the wheels had gone round for about half an hour, a big carriage-door was opened. They took me out and up ten steps of a flight of stairs into a vestibule, where I found a German servant who said to the others: ‘Goot! make scarce of yourseluffs; no longer want we you.’ They slung their hook out of it, while the blinders were taken me off, and I was shown what I had to do. I had pitched into the work like a good hand, and was done in an hour. They paid me in bran-new gold, tied up my eyes, put me back in the carriage, dropped me on the same spot where I was taken up, wished me safe home – and here I am.”

“Without your having seen anything, even out of the tail of the eye? Deuse take me if ever I heard of a bandage which would stop a man catching a glimpse on one side or t’other. Better own up that you had a peep at something?” pursued the stranger.

“Well, I did make a misstep at the first stone of the stairs so that, in throwing up my hands to keep from falling, I got a peep from its disarranging the handkerchief. I saw a regular row of trees on my left hand which made me think that I was in some avenue. That is all, on my honor.”

“I can’t say it is much. For the main avenue is long and more than one house has a carriage-doorway betwixt the St. Honore Coffeeshouse and the Bastile.”

“The fact is,” said the locksmith, scratching his head, “I don’t think I am up to telling the house.”

The questioner appeared satisfied, although his countenance did not usually betray his feelings.

“But,” exclaimed he, as if skipping to another topic, “are there no good locksmiths at Paris that they have to send to Versailles for one?”

CHAPTER II

THE THREE ODDITIES

THE locksmith lifted his tumbler to his eye's level, admired the liquor with pleasure, and said after sipping it with gratification:

"Bless you, yes, plenty of locksmiths at Paris."

He drank a few drops more.

"Ay, and masters of the craft." He drank again. "Yes, but there is a difference between them."

"Hang me," said the other, "but I believe you are like St. Eloi, our patron saint, master among the master-workmen."

"Are you one of us?"

"Akin, my boy: I am a gunsmith. All smiths are brothers. This is a sample of my work."

The locksmith took the gun from the speaker's hands, examined it with attention, clicked the hammers and approved with a nod of the sharp action of the lock: but spying the name on the plate, he said:

"Leclere? this won't do, friend, for Leclere is scanty thirty, and we are both a good forty, without meaning to hurt your feelings."

"Quite true, I am not Leclere, but it is the same thing, only a little more so. For I am his master."

"Oh, capital!" chuckled the locksmith; "it is the same as my

saying ‘I am not the King but I am the same thing, only more so, as I am his master.’”

“Oho,” said the other rising and burlesquing the military salute, “have I the honor of addressing Master Gamain, the King of Locksmiths?”

“Himself in person, and delighted if he can do anything for you,” replied Gamain, enchanted at the effect his name had produced.

“The devil! I had no idea I was talking to one of the high flyers in our line,” said the other. “A man so well considered.”

“Of such consequence, do you mean?”

“Well, maybe I have not used the right word, but then I am only a poor smith, and you are the master smith for the master of France. I say,” he went on in another tone, “it can’t be always funny to have a king for a ‘prentice, eh?”

“Why not?”

“Plain enough. You cannot eternally be wearing gloves to say to the mate on your bench: ‘Chuck us the hammer or pass the retail file along.’”

“Certainly not.”

“I suppose you have to say: ‘Please your gracious Majesty, don’t hold the drill askew.’”

“Why, that is just the charm with him, d’ye see, for he is a plain-dealer at heart. Once in the forge, when he has the anvil to the fore, and the leathern apron tied on, none would ever take him for the Son of St. Louis, as he is called.”

“Indeed you are right, it is astonishing how much he is like the next man.”

“And yet these perking courtiers are a long time seeing that.”

“It would be nothing if those close around him found that out,” said the stranger, “but those who are at a distance are beginning to get an idea of it.”

His queer laugh made Gamain look at him with marked astonishment. But he saw that he had blundered in his pretended character by making a witticism, and gave the man no time to study his sentence, for he hastened to recur to the topic by saying:

“A good thing, too; for I think it lowers a man to have to slaver him with Your Majesty here and My Noble Sire there.”

“But you do not have to call him high names. Once in the workshop we drop all that stuff. I call him Citizen, and he calls me Gamain, but I ain’t what you would call chummy with him, while he *is* familiar with me.”

“That is all very well; but when the dinner hour comes round I expect he sends you off to the kitchen to have your bread and cheese with the flunkeys.”

“Oh, Lor’, No! he has never done that; quite the other way about, for he gets me to bring in a table all set into the workshop and he will often put his legs under the mahogany with me, particularly at breakfast, saying: ‘I shall not bother about having breakfast with the Queen, as I should have to wash my hands.’”

“I can’t make this out.”

“You can’t understand that when the King works like us, he

has his hands smeared with oil and rust and filings, which does not prevent us being honest folks, and the Queen would say to him, with her hoity-toity prudish air: ‘Dirty beggar, your hands are foul.’ How can a man have a fop’s hands if he works at the forge?”

“Don’t talk to me about that – I might have married high if I could have kept my fingers nice,” sighed the stranger.

“Let me tell you that the old chap does not have a lively time in his geographical study or his library; but I believe he likes my company the best.”

“That is all very amusing for you, except having to endure so poor a pupil.”

“Poor,” repeated Gamain. “Oh, no, you must not say that. He is to be pitied, to tell the truth, in his coming into the world as a king, for he is but a man – and having to waste himself on a pack of nonsense instead of sticking to our art, in which he makes good way. He will never be but a third-rate king for he is too honest, but he would have made an excellent locksmith. There is one man I execrate for stealing away his time – that Necker fellow, who made him lose such a lot of time!”

“You mean with his accounts and financing.”

“Ay, his fine-Nancy-ing, indeed.”

“But you must make a fat thing out of such a lad to bring on.”

“No, that is just where you are in error: that is why I bear a grudge to him, Louis the Father of the Kingdom, the Restorer of the French Nation! People believe that I am rich as *Creases*,

while I am as poor as Job.”

“You, poor? why, what does he do with all his money?”

“He gives half to the poor and the other half is got away by his parasites, so that he never has any brass. The Coigny, Polignac and Vaudreuil families eat him up, poor dear old boy! One day he wanted to cut down Lord Coigny’s appointments, and the gentleman waylaid him at our forge door: after going out for five minutes, the King came back, pale as a ghost, muttering: ‘Faith, I believe he would have caned me.’ ‘Did he get the appointments reduced, Sire?’ I inquired. ‘I let them stand,’ he said: ‘what else could I do?’ Another time he wanted to scold the Queen for giving Duchess Polignac three hundred thousand francs for the linen for her baby, and what do you think?”

“It is a pretty sum for a baby!”

“Right you are: but it was not enough: the Queen made him give her five hundred thousand. You have only to look how these Polignacs have got on, who had not a penny when they started in, but are running away from France with millions. I should not have minded if they had any talent, but just give those neerdowells a hammer or cold chisel; they could not forge a horseshoe: give them file and screw-driver and see how they would get on at a common lock! However, they can wag the tongue to some purpose, since they hounded the King on so that they leave him in a quagmire. He may flounder out as best he can, with the help of General Lafayette and Mayor Bailly, and Lord Mirabeau. I gave him good advice, but he would not listen to me,

and he leaves me with fifteen hundred livres a-year, though I am his trainer, who first showed him to hold a file properly.”

“But I suppose that when you worked with him, there were some pickings?”

“But am I working with him now? Since the Taking of the Bastille, I have not set foot inside his palace. Once or twice I met him: the first time, as there was a crowd about in the street, he just bobbed his head; the next, on the Satory Road, he stopped the coach for the coast was clear. ‘Good morning, my poor Gamain, how goes it?’ he sighed. ‘How goes it with you, Sire? but I know it is rough – but that will be a lesson to you.’ ‘Are your wife and children well?’ he said to shift the talk. ‘All fine but with appetites like ogres.’ ‘You must make them a little present from me.’ He searched his pockets, but he could rake up only nine louis. ‘That is all I carry with me, my poor Gamain,’ he said with a kind of groan, ‘and I am ashamed to do so little.’ Of course, it was small cash for a monarch to give, short of ten gold pieces, so paltry a sum to a work-fellow – So –

“You refused them?”

“Catch me? No, I said: ‘I had better grab, for he will meet somebody else not so delicate as me, who would take them.’ Still, he need not fret himself, I shall never walk into Versailles unless I am sent for, and I do not know as I shall then.”

“What a grateful heart this rogue has,” muttered the stranger, but all he said aloud was: “It is very affecting, Master Gamain, to see devotion like yours survive misfortune. A last glass to the

health of your ‘prentice.”

“Faith, he does not deserve it, but never mind! here’s to his health, all the same!” He drank. “Only to think that he had thousands of bottles in his cellar which would beat this, and he never said to a footman: Take a basket of this lush to my friend Gamain!’ Not he – he would sooner have it swilled by his Lifeguardsmen, the Swiss, or his Flanders Regiment. They did him a lot of good, I do not think!”

“What did you expect?” questioned the other, sipping his wine, “kings are ungrateful like this one. But hush! we are no longer alone.”

In fact, three persons were entering the drinking saloon, two men of the common sort and a fishfag, and they took seats at the table matching that at which Gamain and his “treater” were sitting.

The locksmith raised his eyes to them and stared with an attention making the other smile. They were truly worthy of some remark.

One of the two men was all body: the other all legs: it was hard to say anything about the woman.

All-Body resembled a dwarf: he was under five feet in hight: he may have lost an inch or so from his knees knocking although when he stood up, his feet kept apart. Instead of his countenance redeeming the deformity, it seemed to highten it; – for his oily and dirty hair was flattened down on his bald forehead; his eyebrows were so badly shaped as to seem traced at random; his

eyes were usually dull but when lighted up sheeny and glassy as the toad's. In moments of irritation, they threw out sparks like a viper's, from concentrated pupils. His nose was flat, and deviated from the straight line so that his prominent cheek bones stood out all the more. Lastly, to complete the hideous aspect, his yellow lips only partly covered the few, black and loose teeth in his twisted mouth.

At first glance you would say that gall, not blood, flowed in his veins.

The other was so opposed to the short-legged one that he seemed a heron on its stilts. The likeness to the bird was the closer from his head being lost between his humped shoulders so as to be distinguished solely by the eyes, like blood-spots, and a long, pointed, beak-like nose. Like the heron, too, he seemed to have the ability to stretch his neck, and put out the eyes of one at a distance. His arms also were gifted with this elasticity, and while seated, he might pick up a handkerchief dropped at his feet without moving his body.

The third person was ambiguous; it being difficult to divine the sex. If a man, he was upwards of thirty-four, wearing a stylish costume of the fishmarket stallkeepers, with lace kerchief and tucker, and gold earrings and chain. His features, as well as could be made out through layers of rouge and flake white, together with beauty-patches of sticking plaster of all fancy shapes, were slightly softened as in degenerated races. As soon as one caught sight of him one wanted to hear him speak in the hope that

the voice's sound would give his dubious appearance a stamp by which he could be classed. But it was nothing to the purpose: his soprano voice left the curious observer still deeper plunged into doubt.

The shoes and stockings of the trio were daubed in mud to show that they had been tramping in the road for some time.

“Lord save us, I seem to know that woman, from having met her before,” said Gamain.

“Very likely at court,” sneered the pretended workman “their manners have been there quite a while and they have been visitors, the fishmarket dames, of late. But,” he went on, pulling his cap down on his brow and taking up his gun, “they are here on business: consequently, we had better leave them alone.”

“Do you know them?”

“By sight. Do you?”

“I say that I have met the woman before: tell me who the men are and I may put my finger on her name.”

“Of the two men, the knock-kneed one is the surgeon, Jean Paul Marat; while the humpback is Prosper Verrieres.”

“Aha!”

“Does not that put you on the right track?”

“My tongue to the dogs if it does!”

“The fishwoman is – “

“Wait, it is – but, no – impossible – “

“I see that you will not name *him*– the fishwoman is the Duke of Aiguillon.”

At this utterance of the title, the disguised nobleman started and turned, as well as his companions. They made a movement to rise as men do when in presence of a leader: but the pretended gunsmith laid a finger on his lips and passed them by.

Gamain followed him, believing he was in a dream.

At the doorway he was jostled by a running man, who seemed to be pursued by a mob, shouting:

“Stop him – that is the Queen’s hairdresser! stop the hairdresser!”

Among the howling and racing men were two who carried each a human head on a pikestaff. They were those of two Lifeguards, killed at Versailles in defending the Queen from the mob.

“Halloa, it is Leonard,” said the strange workman, to the fugitive.

“Silence, do not name me,” yelled the barber, dashing into the saloon.

“What do they chase him for?” inquired Gamain.

“The Lord knows,” was the response: “maybe they want him to curl the hair of the poor soldiers. In Revolutionary times, fellows have such quaint fancies!”

He mixed in with the throng, leaving Gamain, from whom he had probably extracted all he wanted, to make his way alone to his workshop at Versailles.

CHAPTER III

THE UNDYING MAN

IT was the more easy for the pretended gunsmith to blend with the crowd as it was numerous.

It was the advance guard of the procession around the King, Queen and the Prince Royal, leaving the court suburb at half past one.

In the royal coach were the Queen, her son, her daughter, called Madam Royale though a child, Count Provence, the King's brother. Lady Elizabeth his sister, and the Queen's favorite lady of the household, Andrea Taverney Countess of Charny.

In a hundred carriages came the National Assemblymen who had declared they would henceforth be inseparable from the monarch.

This mob was about a quarter of an hour ahead of the royal party, and rallied round the two royal guardsmen's heads as their colors. All stopped at the Sevres wine saloon. The collection was of tattered and half-drunken wretches, the scum that comes to the surface whether the inundation is water or lava.

Suddenly, great stir in the concourse, for they had seen the National Guards' bayonets and General Lafayette's white horse, immediately preceding the royal coach.

Lafayette was fond of popular gatherings: he really reigned

among the Paris people whose idol he was. But he did not like the lowest orders. Paris, like Rome, had a grade under the mere mob.

In particular, he did not approve of Lynch Law, and he had done his utmost to try to save those aristocrats whom the crowd had executed. It was to hide their trophies and preserve the bloody tokens of victory that the multitude kept on ahead. But on being encouraged by the trio of captains waiting at the Sevres saloon, they decided to keep the heads up and wait for the King, so that he should not be parted from his faithful guards.

The mob was increased by the country folks flocking to the road from all quarters to see the cortege go by. A few cheered, adding their uproar to the howls, hoots and groans of the marching column, but the majority, stood dull and quiet on both sides of the road.

Did this mean that they were for the Royal Family? No: or at least unless they belonged to the court party, everybody, even the upper middle class, suffered more or less from the dreadful famine spreading over the kingdom. If they did not insult the King and Queen, they remained hushed, and the silence of an assemblage is often worse than an insult.

On the other hand the myriads roared with all their lung power: "Hurrah for Lafayette!" who took off his hat now and then or waved the sword in his right hand: and "Long live Mirabeau!" who thrust his head out of the carriage window, where he was one of six, to get a whiff of the air necessary for his broad chest.

Hence, amid the silence for himself, the unfortunate Louis

XVI. heard applauded that Popularity which he had lost and that Genius which he had never possessed.

By the King's right side carriage-window walked a man in a black suit whose dress pointed him out as one of the Philosophers, as they were termed, or Revolutionists who worked intellectually for the amelioration of the monarchy. This was the royal honorary physician, Dr. Honore Gilbert. The crowd cheered him at times, for he was a hero of their own. Born a Frenchman, of humble degree, a boy on the estate of the ultra-royalist Baron Taverny, he had educated himself in democratic learning. Falling in love with his master's lovely daughter, Andrea, since Countess of Charny, he had followed her to court. At Paris he became favorite pupil of Rousseau, the revolutionist, and this farther confirmed him in his subversive principles.

But having taken advantage of Andrea while she was powerless under the influence of a mesmeric sleep, he fled the country. He had deposited in sure hands the living evidence of his crime, a boy named Emile (In honor of Rousseau, who wrote a book so called) Sebastian Gilbert, and fled the country. But at the Azores Islands he came in contact with the young lady's brother Philip, who shot him down and believed he left him dead.

But, restored to life by his friend, the Baron Balsamo, otherwise Cagliostro the Magician he accompanied him to America.

The two formed part of the legion of Frenchmen who helped the revolted Thirteen Colonies to throw off the British yoke.

Returning to his country he was arrested at Havre and thrown into the Bastille. When that hated prison was stormed by the Parisians led by the Farmer Billet, he was rescued. He had gone to court to learn who had caused this arrest, and to his amazement discovered that its author was the woman whom he had unutterably wronged. Yes, the baron's daughter had married the Queen's favorite, thought by some to be her paramour, Count George Charny, very rich, very brave and altogether fit to create her a power in the realm.

Gilbert had a sincere pity for royalty under a cloud. He was known to the King as the author of certain articles on the way to steer the Ship of State, and his offer to serve him was gladly accepted.

The mob cheered at the remarkable shaking up of the sands in Time's box by which the revolutionary advocate, fresh from the Bastille dungeons, should walk at the side of the King's coach to shield his life from the assassin. No mere touch of rhetoric, for on the royal visit to Paris lately a bullet had cut a button off the doctor's coat and slain a woman in the throng: this graceful gentlemen in black was then a better safeguard than the soldiers whose heads were now garnishing the pikes there in advance.

Queen Marie Antoinette looked with wonder at this doctor, whose stoicism she could not understand, while to it the American manner of forced quiet added more sternness. Without love or devotion for his sovereigns, he carried out what he considered duty towards them, as ready to die for them as those

who had the qualities of the loyalist he lacked.

On both sides of the royal coach tramped men and women, in mud six inches deep, while amid the ribbons and rags, the Fishmarket women and porters of the Paris Markets swarmed round waves more compact than the rest of the human sea. These clumps were cannon or ammunition wagons, on which sat women singing at the top of their voices. An old song which had been applied to King Louis XV.'s mistress Jeanne Dubarry, and was now altered to suit Marie Antoinette and the situation of affairs, was their choice. They roared:

“The Baker’s wife has got the cash, which costs her very little.”

They also kept reiterating: “We shall not want for bread any more, as we have got the Baker, the Baker’s Wife and the Baker’s Little Boy along.”

The Queen seemed to listen to it all without understanding. Between her knees she held her son, who looked at the multitude as frightened princes stare when appalled.

The King watched with a dull and heavy eye. He had little sleep in the night; he had not made a good breakfast though usually a hearty eater; he had no time to have his hair dressed and his beard had grown long. His linen was limp and roughened, too – all things to his disadvantage. Alas, Louis was not the man for emergencies, and this was a period of emergencies. He bent his head when they came: save once when he held his chin up – it was when he walked upon the scaffold.

Lady Elizabeth was the angel of sweetness and resignation placed by heaven beside those doomed creatures to console the King during the Queen's absence; and the Queen after the King's death.

Count Provence, here as everywhere, had the squinting glance of a false man; he knew that he ran no present danger; he was the popular member of the family – no one knew why – perhaps because he remained in France when his brother Artois fled.

Could the King have read his heart, he might not have felt any gratitude to him for what he pledged in the way of devotion.

Countess Andrea seemed of marble. She had recognized the man she most hated in the King's new confidential adviser, and one whom the Queen seemed bound to win to her side. Like a statue, the stir round her seemed not to affect her, and she looked in attire as trim as if fresh from a band-box. One thought was alive within her, fierce and luminous – love for some unknown – perchance her husband, or hate for Gilbert – at whom she darted lightnings involuntarily whenever their glances crossed. But she felt that she might not defy his with impunity, for he was a pupil of Balsamo Cagliostro, the arch-mesmerist, and might sway her with the same art.

A hundred paces on the other side of the little drinking saloon, the royal train stopped. All along the line the clamor doubled.

The Queen bent out of the window and as the movement looked like a bow to the crowd, there was a long murmur. She called Dr. Gilbert.

He went up to the window: as he had kept his hat off all the way, he had no need to bare his head in respect. His attitude showed he was entirely under her orders.

“What are your people shouting and singing?” she requested to know.

The Queen’s form of putting the question showed that she had been ruminating it for some time. He sighed as much as to say, it is the same old story.

“Alas, my lady,” he proceeded with profound melancholy, “those you call my people, were yours in former times, and it is less than twenty years ago when Lord Brissac, a delightful courtier whom I look in vain for here, showed you the same people shouting for the Dauphin under the City Hall windows and said: ‘You behold twenty thousand admirers there.’”

The Queen bit her lips from the impossibility of catching this man in want of a repartee or of respect.

“That is true – it only proves that the many-headed change,” she said.

Gilbert bowed this time, without retort.

“I asked you a question, doctor,” persisted the lady, with the obstinacy she had for even disagreeable matters.

“Yes, and I answer since your Majesty insists. They are singing that the Baker’s Wife has plenty of money which it gave her no trouble to get. You are aware that they style your Majesty the Baker’s Wife?”

“Just as they called me Lady Deficit before. Is there any

connection between the nicknames?”

“So much also as the finances are concerned. They mean by your money being easily come by that you had complaisant treasurers such as Calonne in particular, who gave you whatever you asked; the people therefore assume that you got your money readily for the asking.”

The Queen’s hand was clenched on the red velvet carriage-window ledge.

“So much for what they are singing. Now, for what they bellow out?”

“They say that they shall no longer want for bread since they have the Baker, the Baker’s Wife and the Baker’s Son among them.”

“I expect you to make this second piece of insolence clear.”

“You would see that they are not so much to blame as you fancy if you were to look to the intention and not weigh the words of the people. Wrongly or rightfully, the masses believe that a great Grain Trust is carried on at Versailles. This prevents flour from coming freely into the capital. Who feeds the Paris poor? the Baker. Towards whom does the working man and his wife hold out their supplicating hands when their children cry for food? the baker and the baker’s wife. Who do they pray to after the Sender of the harvest? the lady of the estate – that is, the loaf-giver, as the name is derived. Are not you three the loaf-givers for the country, the King, yourself and this august child? Do not be astonished at the mighty, blessed name the people give

you, but thank them for cherishing the hope that as soon as the King, the Queen and their son are in the midst of the famished thousands, they will no longer be in want.”

For an instant the royal lady closed her eyes, and she made the movement of swallowing as though to keep down her hatred as well as bitter saliva which scorched her throat.

“So we ought to thank these howlers for their songs and nick-names upon us?”

“Yes, and most sincerely: the song is but an expression of their good humor as the shouts are of their expectations. The whole explains their desire.”

“So they want Lafayette and Mirabeau to live long?”

“Yes,” returned Gilbert, seeing that the Queen had clearly heard the cries, “for those two leaders, separated by the gulf over which you hang, may, united, save the monarchy.”

“Do you mean that the monarchy has sunk so low that it can be picked up by those two?” queried the lady.

He was going to make some kind of reply when a burst of voices, in dread, with atrocious peals of laughter and a great swaying of the gathering, driving Gilbert closer to the vehicle, announced that he would be needed in defense of the Queen by speech or action. It was the two head-carriers, who, after having made Leonard barb and curl the hair, wanted to have the fun of presenting them to Marie Antoinette – as other roughs, or perhaps the same – had presented the dead heads of sons to their fathers.

The crowd yelled with horror and fell away as these ghastly things came up.

“In heaven’s name, do not look to the right,” cried Gilbert.

The Queen was no woman to obey such an injunction without a peep to see the reason. So her first movement was to turn her gaze in the forbidden direction and she uttered a scream of fright. But, all of a sudden, as she tore her sight from this horrible spectacle as if they were Gorgon heads, they became fixed as though they met another view even more awful, from which she could not detach it.

This Medusa’s head was the stranger’s who had been drinking and chatting with Locksmith Gamain in the wine-store: with folded arms, he was leaning against a tree.

The Queen’s hand left the window cushion, and resting on Gilbert’s shoulder, he felt her clench her nails into its flesh. He turned to see her pale, with fixed eyes and quivering, blanched lips.

He would have ascribed the emotion to the two death’s heads but for her not looking at either. The gaze was in another direction, traveling visually in which he descried the object and he emitted a cry of amaze.

“Cagliostro!” both uttered at the same time.

The man at the tree clearly saw the Queen, but all he did was beckon for Gilbert to come to him.

At this point of time the carriages started on once more. By a natural and mechanical impulse the Queen gave Gilbert an

outward push to prevent his being run over by the wheel. It looked as though she urged him towards the summoner. Anyhow, he was not sufficiently master of himself not to obey the mandate. Motionless, he let the party proceed; then, following the mock gunsmith who merely looked back to be sure he was followed, he entered behind him a little lane going uphill to Bellevue, where they disappeared behind a wall at the same time as the procession went out of sight in a declivity of the hills, as though plunging into an abyss.

CHAPTER IV

FATALITY

GILBERT followed his guide half-way up the slope where stood a handsome house. The foregoer pulled out a key and opened a side door intended for the master to go in or come out without the servants knowing when he did so. He left the door ajar to signify that the companion of the journey was to use it. Gilbert entered and shut the door gently but it silently closed itself tightly with a pneumatic arrangement at the hinges which seemed the work of magic. Such an appliance would have been the delight of Master Gamain.

Through luxuriously fitted passages Gilbert finally came into a drawing room, hung with Indian satin tapestry; a fantastic Oriental bird held the lustre in its beak and it emitted a light which Gilbert knew was electricity, though its application thus would have been a puzzle to others than this specialist in advanced science. The lights represented lily-blooms, which again was an anticipation of modern illuminators.

One picture alone adorned this room but it was Raphael's Madonna.

Gilbert was admiring this masterpiece when the host entered by a secret door behind him from a dressing room.

An instant had sufficed for him to wash off the stain and the

pencilings and to give his black hair, without any grey, a stylish turn. He had also changed his clothes. Instead of the workman was an elegant nobleman. His embroidered coat and his hands glittering with rings in the Italian style, strongly contrasted with Gilbert's American black coat and his plain gold ring, a keepsake from General Washington.

Count Cagliostro advanced with a smiling open face and held out his hand to Gilbert.

"Dear Master," cried the latter rushing to him.

"Stop a bit," interrupted the other, laughing: "since we have parted, my dear Gilbert, you have made such progress in revolutionary methods at all events, that you are the master at present and I not fit to undo your shoestrings."

"I thank you for the compliment," responded the doctor, "but how do you know I have made such progress, granting I have progressed?"

"Do you believe you are one of those men whose movement is not marked although not seen? Since eight years I have not set eyes on you but I have had a daily report of what you did. Do you doubt I have double-sight?"

"You know I am a mathematician."

"You mean, incredulous? Let me show you, then. In the first place you returned to France on family matters; they do not concern me, and consequently –"

"Nay, dear master, go on," interposed the other.

"Well, you came to have your son Sebastian educated in a

boarding school not far from Paris in quiet, and to settle business affairs with your farmer, an honest fellow whom you are now retaining in town against his wishes. For a thousand reasons he wants to be home beside his wife.”

“Really, master, you are prodigious!”

“Wait for something stronger. The second time you returned to France because political questions drew you, like many others; besides you had published several political treatises which you sent to King Louis XVI., and as there is much of the Old Man in you – you are prouder for the approval of the King than perhaps you would be of that of my predecessor in your training, Rousseau – who would be higher than a king this day, had he lived – you yearn to learn what is thought of Dr. Gilbert by the descendant of St. Louis, Henry Fourth and Louis XIV. Unfortunately a little matter has kept alive which you did not bear in mind, as a sequel to which I picked you up in a cave in the Azores, where my yacht put in. I restored you from the effects of a bullet in your breast. This little affair concerned Mdlle. Andrea Taverney, become Countess Charny, which she deserves, to save the Queen’s reputation, compromised by the King coming upon her and Count Charny by surprise.

“As the Queen could refuse nothing to this saver, she got a blank warrant and committal to prison for you, so that you were arrested on the road out of Havre and taken to the Bastile. There you would be to this day, dear doctor, if the people, prepared for a rising by a person whom you may divine, had not in a

day knocked the old building lower than the gutter. I was not sorry, for I had a taste of the fare myself before I was banished the Kingdom. This morning early, you contributed to the rescue of the Royal Family, by running to arouse Lafayette, who was sleeping the sleep of the virtuous; and just now, when you saw me, you were about to make a breastwork of your body for the Queen who seemed threatened – though, between ourselves, she detests you. Is this right? Have I forgotten anything of note, such as a hypnotic seance before the King when Countess Charny was made to disclose how she had led to your imprisonment and how she obtained a certain casket of your papers by one Wolfstep, a police agent? Tell me and if I have omitted any point, I am ready to do penance for it.”

Gilbert stood stupefied before this extraordinary man, who knew so well to prepare his march that his hearer was inclined to attribute to him the faculty of comprising heavenly as well as mundane things, and to read in the heart of man.

“Yes, it is thus and you are still the magician, the fortune-teller, the thaumaturgist, Cagliostro!”

The wonder-worker smiled with satisfaction, for it was evident that he was proud of having worked on Gilbert such an impression as the latter’s visage revealed.

“And now,” continued Gilbert, “as I love you as much as you do me, dear master, and my desire to learn what you have been doing is equal to yours and how I have fared, will you kindly tell me, if I am not intruding too far, in what part of the globe you

have exhibited your genius and practiced your power?"

"Oh, I?" said Cagliostro, smiling, "like yourself I have been rubbing shoulders with kings, but with another aim. You go up to them to uphold them; I to knock them over. You try to manufacture a constitutional monarch and will not succeed; I, to make emperors, kings and princes democratic, and I am coming on."

"Are you really?" queried Gilbert with an air of doubt.

"Decidedly. It must be allowed that they were prepared for me by Voltaire, Alembert and Diderot, admirable Mecaenases, sublime contemners of the gods, and also by the example of Frederick the Great, whom we have the misfortune to lose. But you know we are all mortal, except the Count of St. Germain and myself.

"So long as the Queen is fair, my dear Gilbert, and she can recruit soldiers to fight among themselves, kings who fret to push over thrones have never thought of hurling over the altar. But we have her brother, Kaiser Joseph II. who suppresses three-fourths of the monasteries, seizes ecclesiastical property, drives even the Camelite nuns out of their cells, and sends his sister prince of nuns trying on the latest fashions in hats and monks having their hair curled. We have the King of Denmark, who began by killing his doctor Struensee, and who, at seventeen, the precocious philosopher, said: 'Voltaire made a man of me for he taught me to think.' We have the Empress Catherine, who made such giant strides in philosophy that – while she dismembered

Poland, Voltaire wrote to her: ‘Diderot, Alembert and myself are raising altars to you. We have the Queen of Sweden and many princes in the Empire and throughout Germany.’”

“You have nothing left you but to convert the Pope, my dear master, and I hope you will, as nothing is beyond you.”

“That will be a hard task. I have just slipped out of his claws. I was locked up in Castle Sanangelo as you were in the Bastile.”

“You don’t say so? did the Romans upset the castle as the people of St. Antoine Ward overthrew the Bastile?”

“No, my dear doctor, the Romans are a century behind that point. But, be easy: it will come in its day: the Papacy will have its revolutionary days, and Versailles and the Vatican can shake hands in equality at that era.”

“I thought that nobody came alive out of Castle Sanangelo?”

“Pooh! what about Benvenuto Cellini, the sculptor?”

“You had not wings such as he made, had you, and did you flit over the Tiber like a new Icarus?”

“It would be the more difficult as I was lodged for the farther security in the blackest dungeon of the keep. But I did get out, as you see.”

“Bribed the jailor with gold?”

“I was out of luck, for my turnkey was incorruptible. But, fortunately, he was not immortal. Chance – the believers say, Providence – well, the Architect of the Universe granted that he should die on the morrow of his refusing to open the prison doors. He died very suddenly! and he had to be replaced.”

“The new hand was not unbribable?”

“The day of his taking up his office, as he brought me the soup, he said: ‘Eat heartily and get your strength, for we have to do some stiff traveling this night.’ By George, the good fellow told no lie. That same night we rode three horses out dead, and covered a hundred miles.”

“What did the government say when your disappearance was known?”

“Nothing. The dead and still-warm other jailer was clad in the clothes I left behind; and a pistol was fired in his face; it was laid by his side and the statement was given out that in despair at having no escape and with the useless weapon which I had procured none could tell how, I had blown out my brains. It follows that I am officially pronounced dead and buried; the jailer being interred in my name. It will be useless, my dear Gilbert, my saying that I am alive, for the certificate of my death and burial will be produced to prove that I am no more. But they will not have to do anything of the sort as it suits me to be thought passed away at this date. I have made a dive into the sombre river, as the poets say, but I have come up under another name. I am now Baron Zanone, a Genoese banker. I discount the paper of princes – good paper in the sort of Cardinal Prince Rohan’s, you know. But I am not lending money merely for the interest. By the way, if you need cash, my dear Gilbert, say so? You know that my purse, like my heart, is always at your call.”

“I thank you.”

“Ah, you think to incommode me, because you met me in my dress as a workman? do not trouble about that; it is merely one of my disguises; you know my ideas about life being one long masquerade where all are more or less masked. In any case, my dear boy, if ever you want money, out of my private cash box here – for the grand cash box of the Invisibles is in St. Claude Street – come to me at any hour, whether I am at home or not – I showed you the little, side door; push this spring so – “ he showed him the trick – “and you will find about a million ready.”

The round top of the desk opened of itself on the spring being pressed, and displayed a heap of gold coin and bundles of banknotes.

“You are in truth a wonderful man!” exclaimed Gilbert; “but you ought to know that with twenty thousand a-year, I am richer than the King. But do you not fear being disquieted in Paris?”

“On account of the matter of the Queen’s Necklace for which I was forbid the realm? Go to! they dare not. In the present ferment of minds I have only to speak one word to evoke a riot: you forget that I am friendly with all the popular leaders – Lafayette, Necker, Mirabeau and yourself.”

“What have you come to do at Paris?”

“Who knows? perhaps what you went over to the United States to do – found a republic.”

“France has not a republican turn of mind,” said the other, shaking his head.

“We shall teach her that way, that is all. It has taken fifteen

hundred years to rule with a monarchy; in one hundred the Republic will be founded to endure – why not as long?”

“The King will resist; the nobility fly to arms; and then what will you do?”

“We will make a revolution before we have the Republic.”

“It will be awful to do that, Joseph,” said Gilbert, hanging his head.

“Awful indeed, if we meet many such as you on the road.”

“I am not strong, but honest,” said the doctor.

“That is worse: so I want to bring you over.”

“I am convinced – not that I shall prevent you in your work, but will stay you.”

“You are mad, Gilbert; you do not understand the mission of France in Europe. It is the brain of the Old World, and must think freely so that the world will be the happier for its thought. Do you know what overthrew the Bastille?”

“The people.”

“No: public opinion. You are taking the effect for the cause.”

“For five hundred years they have been imprisoning nobles in the Bastille and it stood. But the mad idea struck an insane monarch one day to lock up thought – the spirit which must be free, and requires space unto immensity, and crack! it burst the walls and the mob surged in at the breach.”

“True enough,” mused the younger man.

“Twenty-six years ago, Voltaire wrote to Chauvelin: ‘All that I see is sowing Revolution round us, and it will inevitably come

though I shall not have the bliss to see the harvest. The French are sometimes slow to come into the battle but they get there before the fight is over. Light is so spread from one to another, that it will burst forth in a mass soon, and then there will be a fine explosion. The young men are happy for they will behold splendors. What do you say about the flare-ups of yesterday and what is going on to-day?"

"Terrible!"

"And what you have beheld in the way of events?"

"Dreadful!"

"We are only at the beginning."

"Prophet of evil!"

"For instance, I was at the house of a man of merit, a doctor of medicine and a philanthropist: what do you think he was busy over?"

"Seeking the remedy for some great disease."

"You have it. He is trying to cure, not death, but life."

"What do you mean?"

"Leaving epigrams aside, I mean that there not being means enough for quitting life, he is inventing a very ingenious machine which he reckons to present to his fellow countrymen, to put fifty or eighty persons to death in an hour. Well, my dear Gilbert, do you believe that so human a philanthropist, so distinguished a physician as Dr. Louis Guillotin, would busy himself about such an instrument unless he felt the want of it?"

"I know that this is not so much a novelty as a machine

forgotten, as a proof of which I showed it as an image in a glass of water to Marie Antoinette. She was then espoused to the Dauphin of France, now its sovereign, and it was down at Taverney where you were a dependent. The old baron was alive then, and the lady of the manor was Mdlle. Andrea.”

“Ah,” sighed Gilbert at this reminder of his boyhood.

“But at the first you had eyes only for the servant-maid, Nicole, afterwards Olive Legay, as the Dauphiness, to whom she bore an amazing resemblance by the bye, is the Queen of France. Well I repeat that the future Queen was shown by me this instrument to which I shall suggest no name, though the olden ones are the Maiden, the Widow and the *Mannaya* in my country. The thing so alarmed her that she swooned dead away. It was in limbo at the era, but you shall see it at work presently if it be successful; and then you must be blind if you do not spy the hand of heaven in it all, it being foreseen that the time would come when the headsman would have his hands too full and that a new method must be devised.”

“Count, your remarks were more consoling when we were in America.”

“I should rather think they were! I was in the midst of a people who rose and here in society which falls. In our Old World, all march towards the grave, nobility and royalty, and this grave is a bottomless pit.”

“Oh, I abandon the nobility to you, count, or rather it threw itself away in the night of the fourth of August; but the royalty

must be saved as the national palladium.”

“Big words, my dear Gilbert: but did the palladium save Troy? Do you believe it will be easy to save the realm with such a king?”

“But in short he is the descendant of a grand race.”

“Eagles that have degenerated into parrots. They have been marrying in and out till they are rundown.”

“My dear sorcerer,” said Gilbert, rising and taking up his hat, “you frighten me so that I must haste and take my place by the King.”

Cagliostro stopped him in making some steps towards the door.

“Mark me, Gilbert,” he said, “you know whether I love you or not and if I am not the man to expose myself to a hundred sorrows to aid you to avoid one – well, take this piece of advice: let the King depart, quit France, while it is yet time. In a year, in six months, in three, it will be too late.”

“Count, do you counsel a soldier to leave his post because there is danger in his staying?”

“If the soldier were so surrounded, engirt, and disarmed that he could not defend himself: if, above all, his life exposed meant that of half a million of men – yes, I should bid him flee. And you yourself, Gilbert, you shall tell him so. The King will listen to you unless it is all too late. Do not wait till the morrow but tell him to-day. Do not wait till the afternoon but tell him in an hour.”

“Count, you know that I am of the fatalist school. Come what come may! so long as I shall have any hold on the King it will be

to retain him in France, and I shall stay by him. Farewell, count: we shall meet in the action: perhaps we shall sleep side by side on the battlefield.”

“Come, come, it is written that man shall not elude his doom however keen-witted he may be,” muttered the magician: “I sought you out to tell you what I said, and you have heard it. Like Cassandra’s prediction it is useless, but remember that Cassandra was correct. Fare thee well!”

“Speak frankly, count,” said Gilbert, stopping on the threshold to gaze fixedly at the speaker, “do you here, as in America, pretend to make folk believe that you can read the future?”

“As surely, Gilbert,” returned the self-asserted undying one, “as you can read the pathway of the stars, though the mass of mankind believe they are fixed or wandering at hazard.”

“Well, then – someone knocks at your door.”

“Yes.”

“Tell me his fate: when he shall die and how?”

“Be it so,” rejoined the sorcerer, “let us go and open the door to him.”

Gilbert proceed towards the corridor end, with a beating of the heart which he could not repress, albeit he whispered to himself that it was absurd to take this quackering as serious.

The door opened. A man of lofty carriage, tall in stature, and with strong-will impressed on his lineaments, appeared on the sill and cast a swift glance on Dr. Gilbert not exempt from uneasiness.

“Good day, marquis,” said Cagliostro.

“How do you do, baron?” responded the other.

“Marquis,” went on the host as he saw the caller’s gaze still settled on the doctor, “this is one of my friends, Dr. Gilbert. Gilbert, you see Marquis Favras, one of my clients. Marquis, will you kindly step into my sitting-room,” continued he as the two saluted each other, “and wait for a few seconds when I shall be with you.”

“Well?” queried Gilbert as the marquis bowed again and went into the parlor.

“You wished to know in what way this gentleman would die?” said Cagliostro with an odd smile; “have you ever seen a nobleman hanged?”

“Noblemen are privileged not to die by hanging.”

“Then it will be the more curious sight; be on the Strand when the Marquis of Favras is executed.” He conducted his visitor to the street door, and said: “When you wish to call on me without being seen and to see none but me, push this knob up and to the left, so – now, farewell – excuse me – I must not make those wait who have not long to live.”

He left Gilbert astounded by his assurance, which staggered him but could not vanquish his incredulity.

CHAPTER V

THE CANDLE OMEN

IN the meantime the Royal Family had continued their road to Paris. The pace was so slow and delayed that it was six o'clock before the carriage containing so much sorrow, hatred, passions and innocence, arrived at the city bars.

During the journey the Dauphin had complained of being hungry. There was no want of bread as many of the pikes and bayonets were holding up loaves and the Queen would have asked Gilbert to get one, if he had been by. She could not ask the mob, whom she held in horror.

"Wait till we are in the Tuileries Palace this evening," she said, hugging the boy to her.

"But these men have plenty," he protested.

"But that is theirs, not ours. And they went all the way to Versailles for it as there was none in Paris, these three days."

"Have they not eaten for three days?" said the Prince. "Then they must be awful hungry, mamma."

Etiquet ordered him to address his mother as Madam, but he was hungry as a poor boy and he called her mamma as a poor boy would his mother.

Ceasing to grieve, he tried to sleep. Poor royal babe, who would cry many times yet for bread before he died.

At the bars a halt was made, not to repose but to rejoice over the arrival. It was hailed with song and dance. A strange scene almost as terrifying in this joy as the others had been for ghastliness.

The fishmarket-women got off their horses, captured from the slain Lifeguardsmen, hanging their swords and carbines to the horns. Other women and the market-girls jumped off their cannon, which appeared in their alarming smoothness.

They all joined hands and danced around the royal carriage. Separating it from the deputies and the National Guard, an omen of what was to follow. This round dance had the good intention to set the enforced guests at ease: the men and women capered, kissed, hugged and sang together. The men lifted up their partners as in Teniers' pictures.

This went on as night was falling, on a dark and rainy day, so that the dancing by the light of torches and the gun-stocks and fireworks, took fantastic effects of light and shade almost infernal.

After half an hour all shouted a general hurrah; all the firearms were shot off at risk of shooting somebody; and the bullets came down in the puddles with a sinister plash.

The prince and his sister wept; they were too frightened to feel hungered.

At the City Hall a line of troops prevented the crowd from entering the place. Here the Queen perceived her foster-brother, and confidential servant, Weber, an Austrian who had followed

her fortunes from home, and was trying to pass the cordon and go in with her. To be more useful to the Queen he had put on a National Guard uniform and added the insignia of a staff-officer. The Royal Groom had lent him a horse. Not to excite suspicion he kept at a distance during the journey. Now he ran up at her call.

“What have you come for?” she demanded; “you will be useless here while at the Tuileries you will be needed. If you do not go on before, nothing will be ready for our accommodation.”

“Capital idea that,” said the King.

The Queen had spoken in German and the King had replied in English as he did not speak the other tongue though understanding it.

The bystanders held foreign tongues in horror, and they murmured and this swelled to a roar when the square opened and let the coach roll through.

The welcoming speech was made by Billy, Mayor of Paris, who played the King a scurvy trick by repeating his answer: “I always come with pleasure and confidence among my good people of Paris,” without the word “confidence” which spoilt matters, and he was taken to task by the Queen for it.

It was not till ten o'clock that the royal carriage got back to the Tuileries where Weber had done the best he could for them.

Count Provence had gone to Luxembourg Palace.

Weber had located the Royal Family in Countess Lamarck's rooms, but the comforts were limited. For instance there was no

room for Countess Charny at supper and she talked of spending the night in a chair for want of a bed. But knowing the great favor in which the Queen held the countess, they placed a couch for her in the next room to the Queen's.

The latter shuddered at this for she thought of the count being with his wife, and Andrea saw the emotion.

"There must be some corner for me elsewhere," said she; "I will go find it."

"You are right, countess," said the King while Marie Antoinette mumbled something unintelligible. "We will do something better to-morrow."

The King watched the stately countess go out, while he held the plate to his mouth.

"That lady is a delightful creature," he said, "and Charny ought to be happy to find such a phoenix at court."

The Queen leant back in her chair to hide her sensation, not from the speaker, but from his sister Elizabeth, who was frightened lest she had fallen ill.

The Queen did not breathe at ease till alone in her room.

She had heard her daughter say her prayers, speaking a little longer than usual as she was pleading for her brother who had gone to rest forgetting to say his.

Sitting alone at a table, somehow she had the panorama of her life pass before her.

She recalled that she was born on the second of November, 1755, the day of the Lisbon earthquake, which swallowed up fifty

thousand souls and extended five thousand miles.

She recalled that the room she slept in, in France, at Strasburg, represented the Massacre of the Innocents and so frightened her in the flickering lamplight that she had always retained a terrible memory of her first night on French soil.

She recalled how, stopping at Taverney House, she had been shown in the gardens by Baron Balsamo the image of an unknown instrument for decapitation: this was the man who, under the name of Cagliostro, had exercised a fatal influence on her destiny, as witness his hand in the Queen's Necklace trial; though she was advised that he had perished in the papal dungeons as a magician and atheist, had she not seen him this day in the mob during the halt at Sevres?

She recalled that in Madam Lebrun's portrait she had unwittingly made her pose as the unfortunate Henrietta Maria of England, in her portrait, as Wife of Charles I. the Beheaded.

She recalled how, when she got out of her coach for the first time at Versailles, in that Marble Court where so much blood lately flowed on her behalf, a lightning stroke had flashed so extraordinarily that Marshal Richelieu had said: "An evil omen!" albeit he was a cynic not easily startled by superstition.

She was recalling all this when a reddish cloud, from her eyes being strained, thickened around her, and one of the four candles in the candelabrum went out without evident cause.

While she was looking at it, still smoking, it seemed to her that the next taper to it paled sensibly, and turning red and then blue

in the flame, faded away and lengthened upward, as if to quit the wick, from which it leaped altogether. It was extinguished, as though by an unseen breath from below.

She had watched the death of this with haggard eyes and panting bosom, and her hands went out towards the candlestick proportionable to the eclipse. When gone out, she closed her eyes, drew back in her armchair, and ran her hand over her forehead, streaming with perspiration.

When she opened them anew, after ten minutes, she perceived that the flame of the third candle was affected like the rest.

She believed it was a dream or that she was under some hallucination. She tried to rise but seemed nailed to her chair. She wanted to call her daughter, whom she would not have aroused a few minutes before for a second crown, but her voice died away in her throat. She tried to turn her head but it was rigid as if the third light expiring attracted her eyes and breath. Like the other pair, it changed hue and swaying to one side and the other, finally shot itself out.

Then fear had such mastery that speech returned to her and that made her feel restored in courage.

“I am not going to distress myself because three candles happened to go out,” she said; “but if the fourth suffers the same fate, then woe is me!”

Suddenly, without going through the transitions of the others, without lengthening or fluttering to left or right as if the death-angel wing had wafted it, the fourth flame went out.

She screamed with terror, rose, reeled and fell to the floor.

At this appeal the door opened and Andrea, white and silent in her night-wrapper appeared like a ghost on the sill. When she had revived her mistress with the mechanical action of one impelled by sheer duty, the Queen remembered all the presage, and aware that it was a woman beside her, flung her arms round her neck, and cried:

“Save me, defend me!”

“Your Majesty needs no defense among her friends,” said Andrea, “and you appear free of the swoon in which you fell.”

“Countess Charny,” gasped the other, letting go of her whom she had embraced, and almost repelling her in the first impulse.

Neither the feeling nor the expression had escaped the lady. But she remained motionless to impassibility.

“I shall undress alone,” faltered the Queen. “Return to your room, as you must require sleep.”

“I shall go back, not to sleep but to watch over your Majesty’s slumber,” returned Andrea, respectfully curtsying to the other and stalking away with the solemn step of a vitalized statue.

CHAPTER VI

THE REVOLUTION IN THE COUNTRY

OUR intention being to temporarily abandon the fortunes of our high and mighty characters to follow those of more humble but perhaps no less engaging heroes, we take up with Sebastian Gilbert whom his father, immediately after his release from the Bastille, confided to a young peasant named Ange Pitou, foster-brother of the youth, and despatched them to the latter's birthplace, Villers Cotterets.

It was eighteen leagues from the city, and Gilbert might have sent them down by stage-coach or his own carriage; but he feared isolation for the son of the mesmerists' victim, and nothing so isolates a traveler as a closed carriage.

Ange Pitou had accepted the trust with pride at the choice of the King's honorary physician. He travelled tranquilly, passing through villages trembling with the thrill from the shock of the events at Paris as it was the commencement of August when the pair left town.

Besides Pitou had kept a helmet and a sabre picked up on the battlefield where he had shown himself more brave than he had expected. One does not help in the taking of a Bastille without preserving some heroic touch in his bearing subsequently.

Moreover he had become something of an orator; he had studied the Classics and he had heard the many speeches of the period, scattered out of the City Hall, in the mobs, during lulls in the street fights.

Furnished with these powerful forces, added to by a pair of ponderous fists, plenty of broad grins, and a most interesting appetite for loiters-on who did not have to pay the bill, Pitou journeyed most pleasantly. For those inquisitive in political matters, he told the news, inventing what he had not heard, Paris having a knack that way which he had picked up.

As Sebastian ate little and spoke hardly at all, everybody admired Pitou's vigorous paternal care.

They went through Haramont, the little village where the mother of one and the nurse of the other had died and was laid in earth.

Her living home, sold by Pitou's Aunt Angelique, her sister-in-law, had been razed by the new owner, and a black cat snarled at the young men from the wall built round the garden.

But nothing was changed at the burying-ground; the grass had so grown that the chances were that the young peasant could not find his mother's grave. Luckily he knew it by a slip of weeping willow, which he had planted; while the grass was growing it had grown also and had become in a few years a tolerable tree.

Ange walked directly to it, and the pair said their prayers under the lithe branches which Pitou took in his arms as they were his mother's tresses.

Nobody noticed them as all the country folk were in the field and none seeing Pitou would have recognized him in his dragoon's helmet and with the sword and belt.

At five in the afternoon they reached their destination.

While Pitou had been away from Haramont three years, it was only as many weeks since he quitted Villers Cotterets, so that it was simple enough that he should be recognized at the latter place.

The two visitors were reported to have gone to the back door of Father Fortier's academy for young gentlemen where Pitou had been educated with Sebastian, and where the latter was to resume his studies.

A crowd collected at the front door where they thought Pitou would come forth, as they wanted to see him in the soldier's appurtenances.

After giving the doctor's letter and money for the schooling to Abbé Fortier's sister, the priest being out for a walk with the pupils, Pitou left the house, cocking his helmet quite dashingly on the side of his head.

Sebastian's chagrin at parting was softened by Ange Pitou's promise to see him often. Pitou was like those big, lubberly Newfoundland dogs who sometimes weary you with their fawning, but usually disarm you by their jolly good humor.

The score of people outside the door thought that as Pitou was in battle array he had seen the fights in Paris and they wanted to have news.

He gave it with majesty; telling how he and Farmer Billet, their neighbor, had taken the Bastile and set Dr. Gilbert free. They had learnt something in the Gazettes but no newspaper can equal an eye-witness who can be questioned and will reply. And the obliging fellow did reply and explain and at such length that in an hour, one of the listeners suddenly remarked that he was flagging and said:

“But our dear Pitou is tired, and here we are keeping him on his legs, when he ought to go home, to his Aunt Angelique’s. The poor old girl will be delighted to see him again.”

“I am not tired but hungry,” returned the other. “I am never tired but I am always sharpset.”

Before this plain way of putting it, the throng broke up to let Pitou go through. Followed by some more curious than the rest, he proceeded to his father’s sister’s house.

It was a cottage where he would have been starved to death by the pious old humbug of an old maid, but for his poaching in the woods for something that they could eat while the superfluity was sold by her to have the cash in augmentation of a very pretty hoard the miser kept in a chair cushion.

As the door was fastened, from the old lady being out gossiping, and Pitou declared that an aunt should never shut out a loving nephew, he drew his great sabre and opened the lock with it as it were an oyster, to the admiration of the boys.

Pitou entered the familiar cottage with a bland smile, and went straight up to the cupboard where the food was kept. He used in

his boyish days to ogle the crust and the hunk of cheese with the wish to have magical powers to conjure them out into his mouth.

Now he was a man: he went up to the safe, opened it, opened also his pocket-knife, and taking out a loaf, cut off a slice which might weigh a fair two pounds.

He seemed to hear Aunt Angelique snarl at him, but it was only the creak of the door hinges.

In former times, the old fraud used to whine about poverty and palm him off with cheap cheese and few flavors. But since he had left she got up little delicacies of value which lasted her a week, such as stewed beef smothered in carrots and onions; baked mutton with potatoes as large as melons; or calves-foot, decked with pickled shallots; or a giant omelet sprinkled with parsley or dotted with slices of fat pork of which one sufficed for a meal even when she had an appetite.

Pitou was in luck. He lighted on a day when Aunt Angelique had cooked an old rooster in rice, so long that the bones had quitted the flesh and the latter was almost tender. It was basking in a deep dish, black outside but glossy and attractive within. The coxcomb stuck up in the midst like Ceuta in Gibraltar Straits.

Pitou had been so spoilt by the good living at Paris that he never even reflected that he had never seen such magnificence in his relative's house.

He had his hunk of bread in his right hand: he seized the baking dish in his left and held it by the grip of his thumb in the grease. But at this moment it seemed to him that a shadow

clouded the doorway.

He turned round, grinning, for he had one of those characters which let their happiness be painted on their faces.

The shadow was cast by Angelique Pitou, drier, sourer, bonier, not bonnier, and more mean than ever.

Formerly, at this sight, Pitou would have dropped the bread and dish and fled.

But he was altered. His helmet and sword had not more changed his aspect than his mind was changed by frequenting the society of the revolutionary lights of the capital.

Far from fleeing, he went up to her and opening his arms he embraced her so that his hands, holding the knife, the bread and the dish, crossed behind her skeleton back.

“It is poor Pitou,” he said in accomplishing this act of nepotism.

She feared that he was trying to stifle her because she had caught him red-handed in plundering her store. Literally, she did not breathe freely until she was released from this perillous clasp.

She was horrified that he did not express any emotion over his prize and at his sitting in the best chair: previously he would have perched himself on the edge of a stool or the broken chair. Thus easily lodged he set to demolishing the baked fowl. In a few minutes the pattern of the dish began to appear clean at the bottom as the rocks and sand on the seashore when the tide goes out.

In her frightful perplexity she endeavored to scream but the

ogre smiled so bewitchingly that the scream died away on her prim lips.

She smiled, without any effect on him, and then turned to weeping. This annoyed the devourer a little but did not hinder his eating.

“How good you are to weep with joy at my return,” he said. “I thank you, my kind aunt.”

Evidently the Revolution had transmogrified this lad.

Having tucked away three fourths of the bird he left a little of the Indian grain at the end of the dish, saying:

“You are fond of rice, my dear auntie: and, besides, it is good for your poor teeth.”

At this attention, taken for a bitter jest, Angelique nearly suffocated. She sprang upon Pitou and snatched the lightened platter from his hand, with an oath which would not have been out of place in the mouth of an old soldier.

“Bewailing the rooster, aunt?” he sighed.

“The rogue – I believe he is chaffing me,” cried the old prude.

“Aunt,” returned the other, rising majestically, “my intention was to pay you. I have money. I will come and board with you, if you please, only I reserve the right to make up the bill of fare. As for this snack, suppose we put the lot at six cents, four of the fowl and two of bread.”

“Six? when the meat is worth eight alone and the bread four,” cried the woman.

“But you did not buy the bird – I know the old acquaintance by

his nine years comb. I stole him for you from under his mother and by the same token, you flogged me because I did not steal enough corn to feed him. But I begged the grain from Miss Catherine Billet; as I procured the bird and the food, I had a lien on him, as the lawyers say. I have only been eating my own property.”

“Out of this house,” she gasped, almost losing her voice while she tried to pulverize him with her gaze.

Pitou remarked with satisfaction that he could not have swallowed one grain more of rice.

“Aunt, you are a bad relative,” he said loftily. “I wanted you to show yourself as of old, spiteful and avaricious. But I am not going to have it said that I eat my way without paying.”

He stood on the threshold and called out with a voice which was not only heard by the starers without but by anybody within five hundred paces:

“I call these honest folk for witnesses, that I have come from Paris afoot, after having taken the Bastile. I was hungered and tired, and I have sat down under my only relation’s roof, and eaten, but my keep is thrown up at me, and I am driven away pitilessly!”

He infused so much pathos in this exordium that the hearers began to murmur against the old maid.

“I want you to bear witness that she is turning from her door a poor wayfarer who has tramped nineteen leagues afoot; an honest lad, honored with the trust of Farmer Billet and Dr. Gilbert; who

has brought Master Sebastian Gilbert here to Father Fortier's; a conqueror of the Bastile, a friend of Mayor Bailly and General Lafayette."

The murmuring increased.

"And I am not a beggar," he pursued, "for when I am accused of having a bite of bread, I am ready to meet the score, as proof of which I plank down this silver bit – in payment of what I have eaten at my own folk's."

He drew a silver crown from his pocket with a flourish, and tossed it on the table under the eyes of all, whence it bounced into the dish and buried itself in the rice. This last act finished the mercenary aunt; she hung her head under the universal reprobation displayed in a prolonged groan. Twenty arms were opened towards Pitou, who went forth, shaking the dust off his brogans, and disappeared, escorted by a mob eager to offer hospitality to a captor of the Bastile, and boon-companion of General Lafayette.

CHAPTER VII

THE ABDICATION IN A FARMHOUSE

AFTER having appeased the duties of obedience, Pitou wished to satisfy the cravings of his heart. It is sweet to obey when the order chimes in with one's secret sympathies.

Ange Pitou was in love with Catherine, daughter of farmer Billet who had succored him when he fled from his aunt's and with whom he had taken the trip to Paris which returned him a full-fledged hero to his fellow-villagers.

When he perceived the long ridge of the farmhouse roofs, measured the aged elms which twisted to stand the higher over the smoking chimneys, when he heard the distant lowing of the cattle, the barking of the watchdogs, and the rumbling of the farm carts, he shook his casque on his head to tighten its hold, hung the calvary sabre more firmly by his side, and tried to give himself the bold swagger of a lover and a soldier. As nobody recognized him at the first it was a proof that he had fairly succeeded.

The farmhands responded to his hail by taking off their caps or pulling their forelocks.

Through the dininghall window pane Mother Billet saw the military visitor. She was a comely, kind old soul who fed her

employes like fighting cocks. She was, like other housewives, on the alert, as there was talk of armed robbers being about the country. They cut the woods down and reaped the green corn. What did this warrior's appearance signify? attack or assistance?

She was perplexed by the clodhopper shoes beneath a helmet so shining and her supposition fluctuated between suspicion and hope.

She took a couple of steps towards the new-comer as he strode into the kitchen, and he took off his headpiece not to be outdone in politeness.

"Ange Pitou?" she ejaculated. "Whoever would have guessed that you would enlist."

"Enlist indeed?" sneered Pitou, smiling loftily.

As he looked round him, seeking someone, Mistress Billet smiled, divining who he was after.

"Looking for Catherine?" she asked unaffectedly.

"To present her with my duty," said Pitou.

"She is ironing," responded Mrs. Billet; "but sit ye down and talk to me."

"Quite willing, mother." And he took a chair.

In all the doorways and windows the servants and laboring men flocked to see their old fellow. He had a kindly glance for them all, a caress in his smile for the most part.

"So you come from town, Ange?" began Mother Billet. "How did you leave the master?"

"He is all right, but Paris is all wrong."

The circle of listeners drew in closer.

“What about the King?” inquired the mistress.

Pitou shook his head and clacked his tongue in a way humiliating to the head of the monarchy.

“And the Queen?”

Pitou said never a word.

“Oh,” groaned the crowd.

Pitou was aching for Catherine’s coming.

“Why are you wearing a helmet?”

“It is a trophy of war,” rejoined the young peasant. “A trophy is a tangible testimonial that you have vanquished an enemy.”

“Have you vanquished an enemy, Pitou?”

“An enemy – pooh!” said the valiant one, disdainfully. “Ah, good Mother Billet, you do not know that Farmer Billet and yours truly took the Bastille between us.”

This speech electrified the auditory. Pitou felt the breath on his hair and the helmet mane, while their hands grasped the back of his chair.

“Do tell us what our master has done,” pleaded Mrs. Billet, proud and tremulous at the same time.

Pitou was hurt that Catherine did not leave her linen to come and hear such a messenger as he was. He shook his head for he was growing discontented.

“It will take a time,” he observed.

“Are you hungry, or thirsty?”

“I am not saying no.”

Instantly all the men and maids bustled about so that Pitou found under his hand goblets, mugs, bread, meat, cheese, without realizing the extent of his hint. He had a hot liver, as the rustics say: that is, he digested quickly. But he had not shaken down the Angelican fowl in rice; he tried to eat again but had to give up at the second mouthful.

“If I begin now,” he said, “I should have to do it all over again when Miss Catherine comes.”

While they were all hunting after the young girl, Pitou happened to look up and saw the girl in question leaning out of a window on the upper landing. She was gazing towards Boursonne Woods.

“Oh,” he sighed, “she is looking towards the manor of the Charnys. She is in love with Master Isidor Charny, that is what it is.”

He sighed again, much more lamentably than before.

Taking the farmer’s wife by the hand as the searchers returned fruitless in their search, he took her up a couple of the stairs and showed her the girl, mooning on the window sill among the morning glories and vines.

“Catherine!” she called: “Come, Catherine, here is Ange Pitou, with news from town.”

“Ah,” said Catherine coldly.

So coldly that Pitou’s heart failed him as he anxiously waited for her reply.

She came down the stairs with the phlegm of the Flemish girls

in the old Dutch paintings.

“Yes, it is he,” she said, when on the floor.

Pitou bowed, red and trembling.

“He’s wearing a soldier’s helmet,” said a servant-woman in her young mistress’s ear.

Pitou overheard and watched for the effect. But her somewhat pallid though evercharming face showed no admiration for the brazen cap.

“What is he wearing that thing for?” she inquired.

This time indignation got the upperhand in the peasant.

“I am wearing helmet and sabre,” he retorted proudly, “because I have been fighting and have killed Swiss and dragoons: and if you doubt me, Miss Catherine, you can ask your father, and that is all.”

She was so absent-minded that she appeared to catch the latter part of the speech alone.

“How is my father?” asked she; “and why does he not return home with you? Is the news from Paris bad?”

“Very,” replied the young man.

“I thought that all was settled,” the girl objected.

“Quite true, but all is unsettled again.”

“Have not the King and the people agreed and is not the recall of Minister Necker arranged?”

“Necker is not of much consequence now,” said Pitou jeeringly.

“But that ought to satisfy the people.”

“It falls so short of that, that the people are doing justice on their own account and killing their enemies.”

“Their enemies? who are their enemies?” cried the girl astonished.

“The aristocrats, of course,” answered the other.

“Whom do you call aristocrat?” she asked, turning paler.

“Why, naturally, they that have grand houses, and big properties, and starve the nation – those that have everything while we have nothing; that travel on fine horses or in bright coaches while we jog on foot.”

“Heavens,” exclaimed the girl, so white as to be corpse-like.

“I can name some aristo’s of our acquaintance,” continued he, noticing the emotion. “Lord Berthier Sauvigny, for instance, who gave you those gold earrings you wore on the day you danced with Master Isidore. Well, I have seen men eat the heart of him!”

A terrible cry burst from all breasts and Catherine fell back in the chair she had taken.

“Did you see that?” faltered Mother Billet, quivering with horror.

“And so did Farmer Billet. By this time they have killed or burnt all the aristocrats of Paris and Versailles. What do you call it dreadful for? you are not of the higher classes, Mother Billet.”

“Pitou, I did not think you were so bloodthirsty when you started for Paris,” said Catherine with sombre energy.

“I do not know as I am so, now; but – “

“But then do not boast of the crimes which the Parisians

commit, since you are not a Parisian and did not do them.”

“I had so little hand in them that Farmer Billet and me were nigh slaughtered in taking the part of Lord Berthier – though he had famished the people.”

“Oh, my good, brave father! that is just like him,” said Catherine, excitedly.

“My worthy man,” said Mrs. Billet with tearful eyes. “What has he been about?”

Pitou related that the mob had seized Foulon and Berthier for being the active agents for higher personages in the great Grain Ring which held the corn from the poor, and torn them to pieces, though Billet and he had tried to defend them.

“The farmer was sickened and wanted to come home, but Dr. Gilbert would not let him.”

“Does he want my man to get killed there?” sobbed poor Mother Billet.

“Oh, no,” replied Pitou. “It is all fixed between master and the doctor. He is going to stay a little longer in town to finish up the revolution. Not alone, you understand, but with Mayor Bailly and General Lafayette.”

“Oh, I am not so much alarmed about him as long as in the gentlemen’s company,” said the good old soul with admiration.

“When does he think of returning?” inquired the daughter.

“I don’t know in the least.”

“Then, what have you come back for?”

“To bring Sebastian Gilbert to Father Fortier’s school, and

you, Farmer Billet's instructions."

Pitou spoke like a herald, with so much dignity that the farmer's wife dismissed all the gapers.

"Mrs. Billet," began the messenger, "the master wants you to be worried as little as possible, so he thinks that while he is away, the management of the farm should be in other hands, younger and livelier."

"Oh!"

"Yes, and he has selected Miss Catherine."

"My daughter to rule in my house," cried the woman, with distrust and inexpressible jealousy.

"Under your orders," the girl hastened to say, while reddening.

"No, no," persisted Pitou, who went on well since he was in full swing: "I bear the commission entire: Master Billet delegates and authorizes Miss Catherine to see to all the work and govern the house and household in his stead."

As Billet was infallible in his wife's eyes, all her resistance ceased instantly.

"Billet is right," she declared after a glance at her daughter; "she is young but she has a good head, and she can even be headstrong. She can get along outdoors better than me; she knows how to make folks obey. But to be running about over field and hills will make a tomboy of her – "

"Fear nothing for her," interposed Pitou with a consequential air; "I am here and I will go around with her."

This gracious offer, by which Ange probably intended to make

an effect, drew such a strange glance from Catherine that he was dumbfounded.

Pitou was not experienced in feminine ways but he guessed by her blush that she was not giving complete acquiescence, for he said with an agreeable smile which showed his strong teeth between the large lips:

“Even the Queen has a Lifeguard. Besides, I may be useful in the woods.”

“Is this also in my husband’s instructions?” queried Madam Billet who showed some tendency towards cutting sayings.

“Nay,” said Catherine, “that would be an idle errand and father would not have set it for Master Pitou while he would not have accepted it.”

Pitou rolled his frightened eyes from one to the other: all his castle in the air came tumbling down. A true woman, the younger one understood his painful disappointment.

“Did you see the girls in Paris with the young men tagging at their gown-tails?”

“But you are not a girl, after you become mistress of the house,” remonstrated Pitou.

“Enough chatter,” interrupted Mother Billet; “the mistress of the house has too much work to do. Come, Catherine, and let me turn over things to you, as your father bids us.”

As soon as the house was placed under the new ruler the servants and workmen were presented to her as the one from whom in the future orders would flow. Each departed with the

alacrity shown by the new officials at the beginning of a fresh term.

“What about me?” inquired Pitou, left alone and going up to the girl.

“I have no orders for you. What do you think of doing?”

“What I did before I went away.”

“Then you worked for my father and mother. I have nothing in your line, for you are a scholar and a fine Paris gentleman now.”

“But look at the muscle in my arms,” protested the poor fellow in desperation. “Why do you force me to die of hunger under the pretence that I am a learned man? Are you ignorant that Epictetus the philosopher was a tavern waiter to earn his bread, and that Æsop the fabulist had to work for a living? and yet they were more learned than ever I shall be. But Master Billet sent me down here to help on the farm.”

“Be it so; but my father can force you to do things that I should shrink from imposing upon you.”

“Don’t shrink, and impose on me. You will see that I can stand anything. Besides you have books to keep and accounts to make out; and my strong point is figuring and ciphering.”

“I do not think it enough for a man,” rejoined Catherine.

“Am I good for nothing, then?” groaned Pitou.

“Well, live here a bit,” she said; “I will think it over and we shall see what turns up.”

“You want to think it over, about my staying. What have I done to you, Miss Catherine? you do not seem to be the same

as before.”

Catherine shrugged her shoulders very slightly. She had no good reasons to fear Pitou and yet his persistency worried her.

“Enough of this,” she said, “I am going over to Fertemilon.”

“I will saddle a horse and go with you.”

“No; stay where you are.”

She spoke so imperiously that the peasant remained riveted to the spot, hanging his head.

“She thinks I am changed, but,” said he, “it is she who is another sort altogether.”

When he was roused by hearing the horse’s hoofs going away, he looked out and saw Catherine riding by a side path towards the highway.

It occurred to him that though she had forbid him to accompany her, she had not said he must not follow her.

He dashed out and took a short cut through the woods, where he was at home, till he reached the main road. But though he waited a half-hour, he saw nobody.

He thought she might have forgotten something at the farm and started back for it; and he returned by the highway. But on looking up a lane he spied her white cap at a distance.

Instead of going to Fertemilon, as she distinctly stated, she was proceeding to Boursonne.

He darted on in the same direction but by a parallel line.

It was no longer to follow her but to spy her.

She had spoken a falsehood. In what end?

He was answered by seeing her thrash her horse into the trot in order to rejoin a horseman who rode to meet her with as much eagerness as she showed on her part.

On coming nearer, as the pair halted at meeting, Pitou recognized by his elegant form and stylish dress the neighboring lord, Isidore Charny. He was brother of the Count of Charny, lieutenant of the Royal Lifeguards, and accredited as favorite of the Queen.

Pitou knew him well and lately from having seen him at the village dances where Catherine chose him for partner.

Dropping to the ground in the brush and creeping up like a viper, he heard the couple.

“You are late to-day, Master Isidore,” began Catherine.

“To-day?” thought the eavesdropper; “it appears that he has been punctual on other meetings.”

“It is not my fault, my darling Kate,” replied the young noble. “A letter from my brother delayed me, to which I had to reply by the bearer. But fear nothing, I shall be more exact another time.”

Catherine smiled and Isidore pressed her hand so tenderly that Pitou felt upon thorns.

“Fresh news from Paris?” she asked. “So have I. Did you not say that when something alike happens to two persons, it is called sympathy?”

“Just so. Who brings you news?”

“Pitou.”

“And pray who is Pitou?” asked the young noble with a free

and easy air which changed the red of the listener's cheek to crimson.

"You know well enough," was her reply: "Pitou is the farmboy that my father took on out of charity: the one who played propriety for me when I went to the dance."

"Lord, yes – the chap with knees that look like knots tied in a rope."

Catherine set to laughing. Pitou felt lowered; he looked at his knees, so useful lately while he was keeping pace with a horse, and he sighed.

"Come, come, do not tear my poor Pitou to pieces," said Catherine; "Let me tell you that he wanted to come with me just now – to Fertemilon, where I pretended I was going."

"Why did you not accept the squire – he would have amused you."

"Not always," laughed the girl.

"You are right, my pet," said Isidore, fixing his eyes, brilliant with love, on the pretty girl.

She hid her blushing face in his arms closing round it.

Pitou closed his eyes not to see, but he did not close his ears, and the sound of a kiss reached them. He tore his hair in despair.

When he came to his senses the loving couple were slowly riding away.

The last words he caught were:

"You are right, Master Isidore; let us ride about for an hour which I will gain by making my nag go faster – he is a good beast

who will tell no tales,” she added, merrily.

This was all: the vision vanished. Darkness fell on Pitou’s spirit and he said:

“No more of the farm for me, where I am trodden on and made fun of. I am not going to eat the bread of a woman who is in love with another man, handsomer, richer and more graceful than me, I allow. No, my place is not in the town but in my village of Haramont, where I may find those who will think well of me whether my knees are like knots in a rope or not.”

He marched towards his native place, where his reputation and that of his sword and helmet had preceded him, and where glory awaited him, if not happiness. But we know that perfect bliss is not a human attribute.

CHAPTER VIII

ANOTHER BLOW

AS everybody in his village would be abed by ten o'clock, Pitou was glad to find accommodation at the inn, where he slept till seven in the morning. At that hour everybody had risen.

On leaving the Dolphin Tavern, he noticed that his sword and casque won universal attention. A crowd was round him in a few steps.

Undoubtedly he had attained popularity.

Few prophets have this good fortune in their own country. But few prophets have mean and acrimonious aunts who bake fowls in rice for them to eat up the whole at a sitting. Besides, the brazen helmet and the heavy dragoon's sabre recommended Pitou to his fellow-villager's attention.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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