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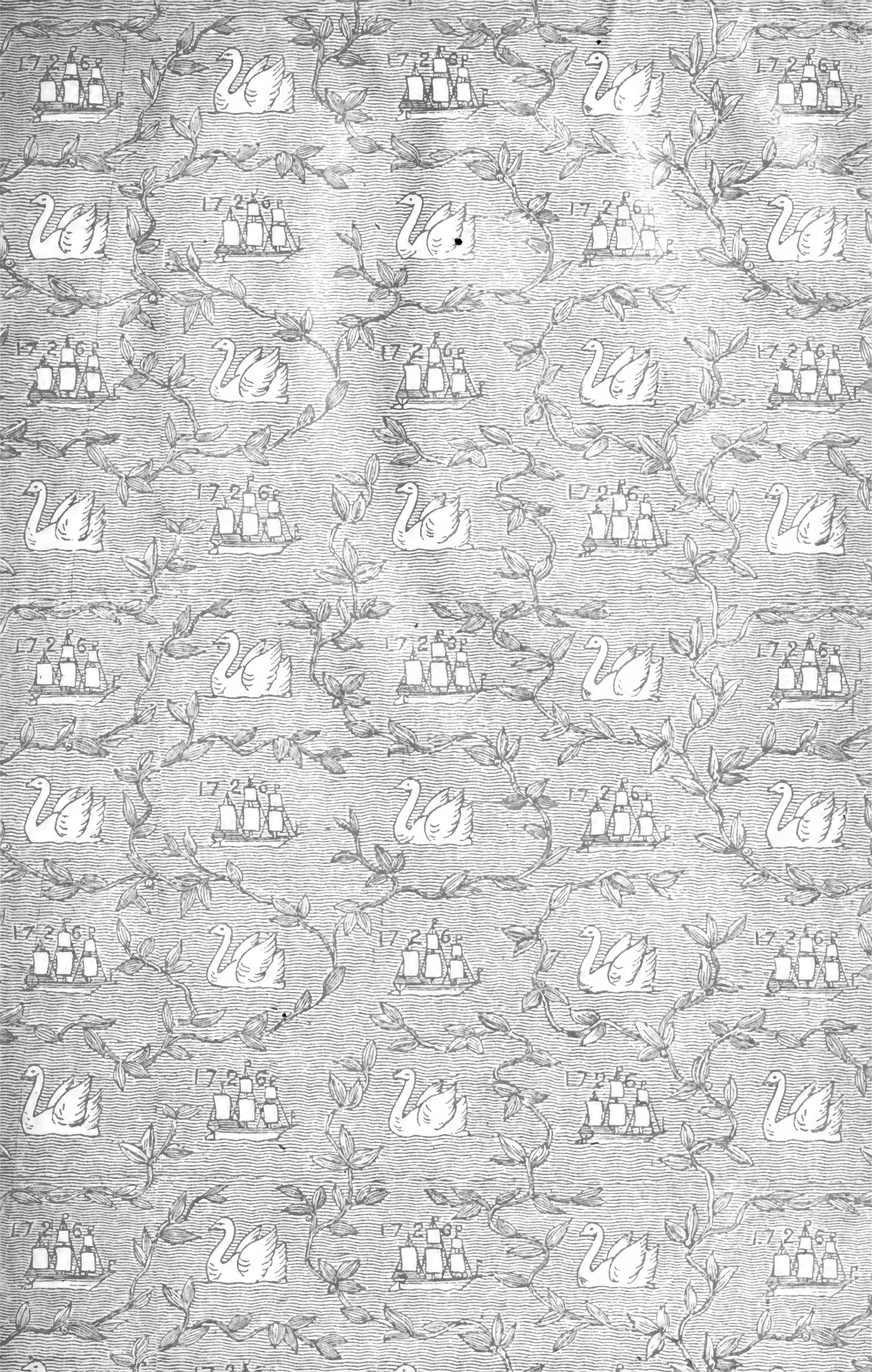
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THE REFUGEES

A TALE OF TWO CONTINENTS

BY

A. CONAN DOYLE

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BY THE SAME AUTHOR.

Micah Clarke.

The Captain of the Polestar.

The Doings of Raffles Haw.

The Firm of Girdlestone.

The White Company.

The Great Shadow.

A Study in Scarlet.

The Sign of Four.

The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes.

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PART I.

IN THE OLD WORLD.

CHAPTER XII.

THE KING RECEIVES.

It may have been that Mademoiselle Nanon, the faithful *confidante* of Madame de Maintenon, had learned something of this interview, or it may be that Père La Chaise, with the shrewdness for which his Order is famous, had come to the conclusion that publicity was the best means of holding the king to his present intention, but whatever the source, it was known all over the court next day that the old favourite was again in disgrace, and that there was talk of a marriage between the king and the governess of his children. It was whispered at the *petit lever*, confirmed at the *grand entrée*, and was common gossip by the time that the king had returned from chapel. Back

into wardrobe and drawer went the flaring silks and the feathered hats, and out once more came the sombre coat and the matronly dress. Scudéry and Calpernedi gave place to the missal and St. Thomas à Kempis, while Bourdaloue, after preaching for a week to empty benches, found his chapel packed to the last seat with weary gentlemen and taper-bearing ladies. By mid-day there was none in the court who had not heard the tidings, save only Madame de Montespan, who, alarmed at her lover's absence, had remained in haughty seclusion in her room, and knew nothing of what had passed. Many there were who would have loved to carry her the tidings; but the king's changes had been frequent of late, and who would dare to make a mortal enemy of one who might, ere many weeks were past, have the lives and fortunes of the whole court in the hollow of her hand?

Louis, in his innate selfishness, had been so accustomed to regard every event entirely

from the side of how it would effect himself, that it had never struck him that his long-suffering family, who had always yielded to him the absolute obedience which he claimed as his right, would venture to offer any opposition to his new resolution. He was surprised, therefore, when his brother demanded a private interview that afternoon, and entered his presence without the complaisant smile and humble air with which he was wont to appear before him.

Monsieur was a curious travesty of his elder brother. He was shorter, but he wore enormously high boot-heels, which brought him to a fair stature. In figure he had none of that grace which marked the king, nor had he the elegant hand and foot which had been the delight of sculptors. He was fat, waddled somewhat in his walk, and wore an enormous black wig, which rolled down in rows and rows of curls over his shoulders. His face was longer and darker than the king's, and his nose more prominent, though he shared

with his brother the large brown eyes which each had inherited from Anne of Austria. He had none of the simple and yet stately taste which marked the dress of the monarch, but his clothes were all tagged over with fluttering ribbons, which rustled behind him as he walked, and clustered so thickly over his feet as to conceal them from view. Crosses, stars, jewels, and insignia were scattered broadcast over his person, and the broad blue ribbon of the Order of the Holy Ghost was slashed across his coat, and was gathered at the end into a great bow, which formed the incongruous support of a diamond-hilted sword. Such was the figure which rolled towards the king, bearing in his right hand his many-feathered beaver, and appearing in his person, as he was in his mind, an absurd burlesque of the monarch.

"Why, Monsieur, you seem less gay than usual to-day," said the king, with a smile. "Your dress, indeed, is bright, but your

brow is clouded. I trust that all is well with madame and with the Duc de Chartres?"

"Yes, sire, they are well; but they are sad like myself, and from the same cause."

"Indeed! and why?"

"Have I ever failed in my duty as your younger brother, sire?"

"Never, Philippe, never!" said the king, laying his hand affectionately upon the other's shoulder. "You have set an excellent example to my subjects."

"Then why set a slight upon me?"

"Philippe!"

"Yes, sire, I say it is a slight. We are of royal blood, and our wives are of royal blood also. You married the Princess of Spain; I married the Princess of Bavaria. It was a condescension, but still I did it. My first wife was the Princess of England. How can we admit into a house which has formed such alliances as these a woman who is the widow of a hunchback singer, a mere

lampooner, a man whose name is a byword through Europe?"

The king had stared in amazement at his brother, but his anger now overcame his astonishment.

"Upon my word!" he cried; "upon my word! I have said just now that you have been an excellent brother, but I fear that I spoke a little prematurely. And so you take upon yourself to object to the lady whom I select as my wife!"

"I do, sire."

"And by what right?"

"By the right of the family honour, sire, which is as much mine as yours."

"Man," cried the king, furiously, "have you not yet learned that within this kingdom I am the fountain of honour, and that whomsoever I may honour becomes by that very fact honourable? Were I to take a cinder-wench out of the Rue Poissonnière, I could at my will raise her up until the highest in France would be proud to

bow down before her. Do you not know this?"

"No, I do not," cried his brother, with all the obstinacy of a weak man who has at last been driven to bay. "I look upon it as a slight upon me and a slight upon my wife."

"Your wife! I have every respect for Charlotte Elizabeth of Bavaria, but how is she superior to one whose grandfather was the dear friend and comrade in arms of Henry the Great? Enough! I will not condescend to argue such a matter with you! Begone, and do not return to my presence until you have learned not to interfere in my affairs."

"For all that, my wife shall not know her!" snarled Monsieur; and then, as his brother took a fiery step or two towards him, he turned and scuttled out of the room as fast as his awkward gait and high heels would allow him.

But the king was to have no quiet that

day. If Madame de Maintenon's friends had rallied to her yesterday, her enemies were active to-day. Monsieur had hardly disappeared before there rushed into the room a youth who bore upon his rich attire every sign of having just arrived from a dusty journey. He was pale-faced and auburn-haired, with features which would have been strikingly like the king's if it were not that his nose had been disfigured in his youth. The king's face had lighted up at the sight of him, but it darkened again as he hurried forward and threw himself down at his feet.

"Oh, sire," he cried, "spare us this grief! —spare us this humiliation! I implore you to pause before you do what will bring dishonour upon yourself and upon us!"

The king started back from him, and paced angrily up and down the room.

"This is intolerable!" he cried. "It was bad from my brother, but worse from my son. You are in a conspiracy with him,

Louis. Monsieur has told you to act this part."

The Dauphin rose to his feet and looked steadfastly at his angry father.

"I have not seen my uncle," he said. "I was at Meudon when I heard this news—this dreadful news—and I sprang upon my horse, sire, and galloped over to implore you to think again before you drag our royal house so low."

"You are insolent, Louis."

"I do not mean to be so, sire. But consider, sire, that my mother was a queen, and that it would be strange indeed if for a stepmother I had a ——"

The king raised his hand with a gesture of authority which checked the word upon his lips.

"Silence!" he cried, "or you may say that which would forever set a gulf between us. Am I to be treated worse than my humblest subject, who is allowed to follow his own bent in his private affairs?"

"This is not your own private affair, sire; all that you do reflects upon your family. The great deeds of your reign have given a new glory to the name of Bourbon. Oh, do not mar it now, sire! I implore it of you upon my bended knees!"

"You talk like a fool!" cried his father, roughly. "I propose to marry a virtuous and charming lady of one of the oldest noble families of France, and you talk as if I were doing something degrading and unheard of. What is your objection to this lady?"

"That she is the daughter of a man whose vices were well known, that her brother is of the worst repute, that she has led the life of an adventuress, is the widow of a deformed scribbler, and that she occupies a menial position in the palace."

The king had stamped with his foot upon the carpet more than once during this frank address, but his anger blazed into a fury at its conclusion.

"Do you dare," he cried, with flashing eyes, "to call the charge of my children a menial position? I say that there is no higher in the kingdom. Go back to Meudon, sir, this instant, and never dare to open your mouth again on the subject. Away, I say! When, in God's good time, your are king of this country, you may claim your own way, but until then do not venture to cross the plans of one who is both your parent and your monarch."

The young man bowed low, and walked with dignity from the chamber; but he turned with his hand upon the door.

"The Abbé Fénélon came with me, sire. Is it your pleasure to see him?"

"Away! away!" cried the king, furiously, still striding up and down the room with angry face and flashing eyes. The Dauphin left the cabinet, and was instantly succeeded by a tall thin priest, some forty years of age, strikingly handsome, with a pale refined face, large well-marked features, and the easy

deferential bearing of one who has had a long training in courts. The king turned sharply upon him, and looked hard at him with a distrustful eye.

"Good-day, Abbé Fénélon," said he. "May I ask what the object of this interview is?"

"You have had the condescension, sire, on more than one occasion, to ask my humble advice, and even to express yourself afterwards as being pleased that you had acted upon it."

"Well? Well? Well?" growled the monarch.

"If rumour says truly, sire, you are now at a crisis when a word of impartial counsel might be of value to you. Need I say that it would ——"

"Tut! tut! Why all these words?" cried the king. "You have been sent here by others to try and influence me against Madame de Maintenon."

"Sire, I have had nothing but kindness

from that lady. I esteem and honour her more than any lady in France."

"In that case, Abbé, you will, I am sure, be glad to hear that I am about to marry her. Good-day, Abbé. I regret that I have not longer time to devote to this very interesting conversation."

"But, sire ——"

"When my mind is in doubt, Abbé, I value your advice very highly. On this occasion my mind is happily *not* in doubt. I have the honour to wish you a very good day."

The king's first hot anger had died away by now, and had left behind it a cold, bitter spirit which was even more formidable to his antagonists. The Abbé, glib of tongue and fertile of resource as he was, felt himself to be silenced and overmatched. He walked backwards, with three long bows, as was the custom of the court, and departed.

But the king had little breathing-space.

His assailants knew that with persistence they had bent his will before, and they trusted that they might do so again. It was Louvois, the minister, now who entered the room, with his majestic port, his lofty bearing, his huge wig, and his aristocratic face, which, however, showed some signs of trepidation as it met the baleful eye of the king.

"Well, Louvois, what now?" he asked, impatiently. "Has some new state matter arisen?"

"There is but one new state matter which has arisen, sire, but it is of such importance as to banish all others from our mind."

"What, then?"

"Your marriage, sire."

"You disapprove of it?"

"Oh, sire, can I help it?"

"Out of my room, sir! Am I to be tormented to death by your importunities? What! You dare to linger when I order

you to go!" The king advanced angrily upon the minister, but Louvois suddenly flashed out his rapier. Louis sprang back with alarm and amazement upon his face, but it was the hilt and not the point which was presented to him.

"Pass it through my heart, sire!" the minister cried, falling upon his knees, his whole great frame in a quiver with emotion. "I will not live to see your glory fade!"

"Great heaven!" shrieked Louis, throwing the sword down upon the ground, and raising his hands to his temples, "I believe that this is a conspiracy to drive me mad. Was ever a man so tormented in this life? This will be a private marriage, man, and it will not affect the state in the least degree. Do you hear me? Have you understood me? What more do you want?"

Louvois gathered himself up, and shot his rapier back into its sheath.

"Your Majesty is determined?" he asked.

"Absolutely."

"Then I say no more. I have done my duty." He bowed his head as one in deep dejection when he departed, but in truth his heart was lightened within him, for he had the king's assurance that the woman whom he hated would, even though his wife, not sit on the throne of the Queens of France.

These repeated attacks, if they had not shaken the king's resolution, had at least irritated and exasperated him to the utmost. Such a blast of opposition was a new thing to a man whose will had been the one law of the land. It left him ruffled and disturbed, and without regretting his resolution, he still, with unreasoning petulance, felt inclined to visit the inconvenience to which he had been put upon those whose advice he had followed. He wore accordingly no very cordial face when the usher in attendance admitted the venerable figure of Father La Chaise, his confessor.

"I wish you all happiness, sire," said the

Jesuit, "and I congratulate you from my heart that you have taken the great step which must lead to content both in this world and the next."

"I have had neither happiness nor contentment yet, father," answered the king, peevishly. "I have never been so pestered in my life. The whole court has been on its knees to me to entreat me to change my intention."

The Jesuit looked at him anxiously out of his keen gray eyes.

"Fortunately, your Majesty is a man of strong will," said he, "and not to be so easily swayed as they think."

"No, no, I did not give an inch. But still, it must be confessed that it is very unpleasant to have so many against one. I think that most men would have been shaken."

"Now is the time to stand firm, sire; Satan rages to see you passing out of his power, and he stirs up all his friends and

sends all his emissaries to endeavour to detain you."

But the king was not in a humour to be easily consoled.

"Upon my word, father," said he, "you do not seem to have much respect for my family. My brother and my son, with the Abbé Fénélon and the Minister of War, are the emissaries to whom you allude."

"Then there is the more credit to your Majesty for having resisted them. You have done nobly, sire. You have earned the praise and blessing of Holy Church."

"I trust that what I have done is right, father," said the king, gravely. "I should be glad to see you again later in the evening, but at present I desire a little leisure for solitary thought."

Father La Chaise left the cabinet with a deep distrust of the king's intentions. It was obvious that the powerful appeals which had been made to him had shaken if they had failed to alter his resolution. What would be

the result if more were made? And more would be made; that was as certain as that darkness follows light. Some master-card must be played now which would bring the matter to a crisis at once, for every day of delay was in favour of their opponents. To hesitate was to lose. All must be staked upon one final throw.

The bishop of Meaux was waiting in the anteroom, and Father La Chaise in a few brief words let him see the danger of the situation, and the means by which they should meet it. Together they sought Madame de Maintenon in her room. She had discarded the sombre widow's dress which she had chosen since her first coming to court, and wore now, as more in keeping with her lofty prospects, a rich yet simple costume of white satin with bows of silver serge. A single diamond sparkled in the thick coils of her dark tresses. The change had taken years from a face and figure which had always looked much younger than her age, and as the two plotters looked

upon her perfect complexion, her regular features, so calm and yet so full of refinement, and the exquisite grace of her figure and bearing, they could not but feel that if they failed in their ends, it was not for want of having a perfect tool at their command.

She had risen at their entrance, and her expression showed that she had read upon their faces something of the anxiety which filled their minds.

"You have evil news!" she cried.

"No, no, my daughter." It was the bishop who spoke. "But we must be on our guard against our enemies, who would turn the king away from you if they could."

Her face shone at the mention of her lover. "Ah, you do not know!" she cried. "He has made a vow. I would trust him as I would trust myself. I know that he will be true."

But the Jesuit's intellect was arrayed against the intuition of the woman.

"Our opponents are many and strong," said he, shaking his head. "Even if the king remain firm, he will be annoyed at every turn, so that he will feel his life is darker instead of lighter, save, of course, madame, for that brightness which you cannot fail to bring with you. We must bring the matter to an end."

"And how, father?"

"The marriage must be at once!"

"At once!"

"Yes. This very night, if possible."

"Oh, father, you ask too much. The king would never consent to such a proposal."

"It is he that will propose it."

"And why?"

"Because we shall force him to. It is only thus that all the opposition can be stopped. When it is done, the court will accept it. Until it is done, they will resist it."

"What would you have me do, then, father?"

"Resign the king."

"Resign him!" she turned as pale as a lily, and looked at him in bewilderment.

"It is the best course, madame."

"Ah, father, I might have done it last month, last week, even yesterday morning. But now—oh, it would break my heart!"

"Fear not, madame. We advise you for the best. Go to the king now, at once. Say to him that you have heard that he has been subjected to much annoyance upon your account, that you cannot bear to think that you should be a cause of dissension in his own family, and therefore you will release him from his promise, and will withdraw yourself from the court forever."

"Go now? At once?"

"Yes, without loss of an instant."

She cast a light mantle about her shoulders.

"I follow your advice," she said. "I believe that you are wiser than I. But, oh, if he should take me at my word!"

"He will not take you at your word."

"It is a terrible risk."

"But such an end as this cannot be gained without risks. Go, my child, and may heaven's blessing go with you!"

CHAPTER XIII.

THE KING HAS IDEAS.

The king had remained alone in his cabinet, wrapped in somewhat gloomy thoughts, and pondering over the means by which he might carry out his purpose and yet smooth away the opposition which seemed to be so strenuous and so universal. Suddenly there came a gentle tap at the door, and there was the woman who was in his thoughts, standing in the twilight before him. He sprang to his feet and held out his hands with a smile which would have reassured her had she doubted his constancy.

"Françoise! You here! Then I have at last a welcome visitor, and it is the first one to-day."

"Sire, I fear that you have been troubled."

"I have indeed, Françoise."

"But I have a remedy for it."

"And what is that?"

"I shall leave the court, sire, and you shall think no more of what has passed between us. I have brought discord where I meant to bring peace. Let me retire to St. Cyr, or to the Abbey of Fontevrault, and you will no longer be called upon to make such sacrifices for my sake."

The king turned deathly pale, and clutched at her shawl with a trembling hand, as though he feared that she was about to put her resolution into effect that very instant. For years his mind had accustomed itself to lean upon hers. He had turned to her whenever he needed support, and even when, as in the last week, he had broken away from her for a time, it was still all-important to him to know that she was there, the faithful friend, ever forgiving, ever soothing, waiting for him with her ready counsel and sympathy. But that she should leave him now, leave him altogether, such a thought had never occurred

to him, and it struck him with a chill of surprised alarm.

"You cannot mean it, Françoise," he cried, in a trembling voice. "No, no, it is impossible that you are in earnest."

"It would break my heart to leave you, sire, but it breaks it also to think that for my sake you are estranged from your own family and ministers."

"Tut! Am I not the king? Shall I not take my own course without heed to them? No, no, Françoise, you must not leave me! You must stay with me and be my wife." He could hardly speak for agitation, and he still grasped at her dress to detain her. She had been precious to him before, but was far more so now that there seemed to be a possibility of his losing her. She felt the strength of her position, and used it to the utmost.

"Some time must elapse before our wedding, sire. Yet during all that interval you will be exposed to these annoyances. How can I be happy when I feel that I have

brought upon you so long a period of discomfort?"

"And why should it be so long, Françoise?"

"A day would be too long, sire, for you to be unhappy through my fault. It is a misery to me to think of it. Believe me, it would be better that I should leave you."

"Never! You shall not! Why should we even wait a day, Françoise? I am ready. You are ready. Why should we not be married now?"

"At once! Oh, sire!"

"We shall. It is my wish. It is my order. That is my answer to those who would drive me. They shall know nothing of it until it is done, and then let us see which of them will dare to treat my wife with anything but respect. Let it be done secretly, Françoise. I will send in a trusty messenger this very night for the Archbishop of Paris, and I swear that, if all France stand in the way, he shall make us man and wife before he departs."

"Is it your will, sire?"

"It is; and ah, I can see by your eyes that it is yours also! We shall not lose a moment, Françoise. What a blessed thought of mine, which will silence their tongues forever! When it is ready they may know, but not before. To your room, then, dearest of friends and truest of women! When we meet again, it will be to form a band which all this court and all this kingdom shall not be able to loose."

The king was all on fire with the excitement of this new resolution. He had lost his air of doubt and discontent, and he paced swiftly about the room with a smiling face and shining eyes. Then he touched a small gold bell, which summoned Bontems, his private body-servant.

"What o'clock is it, Bontems?"

"It is nearly six, sire."

"Hum!" The king considered for some moments. "Do you know where Captain de Catinat is, Bontems?"

"He was in the grounds, sire, but I heard that he would ride back to Paris to-night."

"Does he ride alone?"

"He has one friend with him."

"Who is this friend? An officer of the guards?"

"No, sire; it is a stranger from over the seas, from America, as I understand, who has stayed with him of late, and to whom Monsieur de Catinat has been showing the wonders of your Majesty's palace."

"A stranger! So much the better. Go, Bontems, and bring them both to me."

"I trust that they have not started, sire. I will see." He hurried off, and was back in ten minutes in the cabinet once more.

"Well?"

"I have been fortunate, sire. Their horses had been led out and their feet were in the stirrups when I reached them."

"Where are they, then?"

"They await your Majesty's orders in the anteroom."

"Show them in, Bontems, and give admission to none, not even to the minister, until they have left me."

To De Catinat an audience with the monarch was a common incident of his duties, but it was with profound astonishment that he learned from Bontems that his friend and companion was included in the order. He was eagerly endeavouring to whisper into the young American's ear some precepts and warnings as to what to do and what to avoid, when Bontems reappeared and ushered them into the presence.

It was with a feeling of curiosity, not unmixed with awe, that Amos Green, to whom Governor Dongan, of New York, had been the highest embodiment of human power, entered the private chamber of the greatest monarch in Christendom. The magnificence of the antechamber in which he had waited, the velvets, the paintings, the gildings, with the throng of gaily dressed officials and of magnificent guardsmen, had all impressed his

imagination, and had prepared him for some wondrous figure robed and crowned, a fit centre for such a scene. As his eyes fell upon a quietly dressed, bright-eyed man, half a head shorter than himself, with a trim dapper figure and an erect carriage, he could not help glancing round the room to see if this were indeed the monarch, or if it were some other of those endless officials who interposed themselves between him and the outer world. The reverent salute of his companion, however, showed him that this must indeed be the king, so he bowed, and then drew himself erect with the simple dignity of a man who had been trained in nature's school.

"Good-evening, Captain de Catinat," said the king, with a pleasant smile. "Your friend, as I understand, is a stranger to this country. I trust, sir, that you have found something here to interest and to amuse you?"

"Yes, your Majesty. I have seen your great city, and it is a wonderful one. And

my friend has shown me this palace, with its woods and its grounds. When I go back to my own country I will have much to say of what I have seen in your beautiful land."

"You speak French, and yet you are not a Canadian."

"No, sire; I am from the English provinces."

The king looked with interest at the powerful figure, the bold features, and the free bearing of the young foreigner, and his mind flashed back to the dangers which the Comte de Frontenac had foretold from these same colonies. If this were indeed a type of his race, they must in truth be a people whom it would be better to have as friends than as enemies. His mind, however, ran at present on other things than statecraft, and he hastened to give De Catinat his orders for the night.

"You will ride into Paris on my service. Your friend can go with you. Two are safer than one when they bear a message of state.

I wish you, however, to wait until nightfall before you start."

"Yes, sire."

"Let none know your errand, and see that none follow you. You know the house of Archbishop Harlay, prelate of Paris?"

"Yes, sire."

"You will bid him drive out hither and be at the northwest side postern by midnight. Let nothing hold him back. Storm or fine, he must be here to-night. It is of the first importance."

"He shall have your order, sire."

"Very good. Adieu, captain. Adieu, monsieur. I trust that your stay in France may be a pleasant one." He waved his hand, smiling with the fascinating grace which had won so many hearts, and so dismissed the two friends to their new mission.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE LAST CARD.

Madame de Montespan still kept her rooms, uneasy in mind at the king's disappearance, but unwilling to show her anxiety to the court by appearing among them, or by making any inquiry as to what had occurred. While she thus remained in ignorance of the sudden and complete collapse of her fortunes, she had one active and energetic agent who had lost no incident of what had occurred, and who watched her interests with as much zeal as if they were his own. And indeed they were his own; for her brother, Monsieur de Vivonne, had gained everything for which he yearned, money, lands, and preferment, through his sister's notoriety, and he well knew that the fall of her fortunes must be very rapidly followed by that of his own. By

nature bold, unscrupulous, and resourceful, he was not a man to lose the game without playing it out to the very end with all the energy and cunning of which he was capable. Keenly alert to all that passed, he had, from the time that he first heard the rumour of the king's intention, haunted the antechamber and drawn his own conclusions from what he had seen. Nothing had escaped him—the disconsolate faces of Monsieur and of the Dauphin, the visit of Père La Chaise and Bossuet to the lady's room, her return, the triumph which shone in her eyes as she came away from the interview. He had seen Bontems hurry off and summons the guardsman and his friend. He had heard them order their horses to be brought out in a couple of hours' time, and finally, from a spy whom he employed among the servants, he learned that an unwonted bustle was going forward in Madame de Maintenon's room, that Mademoiselle Nanon was half wild with excitement, and that two court milliners had been hastily summoned to

madame's apartment. It was only, however, when he heard from the same servant that a chamber was to be prepared for the reception that night of the Archbishop of Paris that he understood how urgent was the danger.

Madame de Montespan had spent the evening stretched upon a sofa, in the worst possible humour with every one around her. She had read, but had tossed aside the book. She had written, but had torn up the paper. A thousand fears and suspicions chased each other through her head. What had become of the king, then? He had seemed cold yesterday, and his eyes had been forever sliding round to the clock. And to-day he had not come at all. Was it his gout, perhaps? Or was it possible that she was again losing her hold upon him? Surely it could not be that! She turned upon her couch and faced the mirror which flanked the door. The candles had just been lit in her chamber, two score of them, each with silver backs which reflected their light until the room

was as bright as day. There in the mirror was the brilliant chamber, the deep red ottoman, and the single figure in its gauzy dress of white and silver. She leaned upon her elbow, admiring the deep tint of her own eyes with their long dark lashes, the white curve of her throat, and the perfect oval of her face. She examined it all carefully, keenly, as though it were her rival that lay before her, but nowhere could she see a scratch of time's malicious nails. She still had her beauty, then. And if it had once won the king, why should it not suffice to hold him? Of course it would do so. She reproached herself for her fears. Doubtless he was indisposed, or perhaps he would come still. Ha! there was the sound of an opening door and of a quick step in her anteroom. Was it he, or at least his messenger with a note from him?

But no, it was her brother, with the haggard eyes and drawn face of a man who is weighed down with his own evil tidings. He turned as he entered, fastened the door, and

then striding across the room, locked the other one which led to her boudoir.

"We are safe from interruption," he panted. "I have hastened here, for every second may be invaluable. Have you heard anything from the king?"

"Nothing." She had sprung to her feet, and was gazing at him with a face which was as pale as his own.

"The hour has come for action, Françoise. It is the hour at which the Mortemarts have always shown at their best. Do not yield to the blow, then, but gather yourself to meet it."

"What is it?" She tried to speak in her natural tone, but only a whisper came to her dry lips.

"The king is about to marry Madame de Maintenon."

"The *gouvernante!* The widow Scarron! It is impossible!"

"It is certain."

"To marry? Did you say to marry?"

"Yes, he will marry her."

The woman flung out her hands in a gesture of contempt, and laughed loud and bitterly.

"You are easily frightened, brother," said she. "Ah, you do not know your little sister. Perchance if you were not my brother you might rate my powers more highly. Give me a day, only one little day, and you will see Louis, the proud Louis, down at the hem of my dress to ask my pardon for this slight. I tell you that he cannot break the bonds that hold him. One day is all I ask to bring him back."

"But you cannot have it."

"What?"

"The marriage is to-night."

"You are mad, Charles."

"I am certain of it." In a few broken sentences he shot out all that he had seen and heard. She listened with a grim face, and hands which closed ever tighter and tighter as he proceeded. But he had said the truth about the Mortemarts. They came

of a contentious blood, and were ever at their best at a moment of action. Hate rather than dismay filled her heart as she listened, and the whole energy of her nature gathered and quickened to meet the crisis.

"I shall go and see him," she cried, sweeping towards the door.

"No, no, Françoise. Believe me you will ruin everything if you do. Strict orders have been given to the guard to admit no one to the king."

"But I shall insist upon passing them."

"Believe me, sister, it is worse than useless. I have spoken with the officer of the guard, and the command is a stringent one."

"Ah, I shall manage."

"No, you shall not." He put his back against the door. "I know that it is useless, and I will not have my sister make herself the laughing-stock of the court, trying to force her way into the room of a man who repulses her."

His sister's cheeks flushed at the words, and she paused irresolute.

"Had I only a day, Charles, I am sure that I could bring him back to me. There has been some other influence here, that meddlesome Jesuit or the pompous Bossuet, perhaps. Only one day to counteract their wiles! Can I not see them waving hell-fire before his foolish eyes, as one swings a torch before a bull to turn it? Oh, if I could but baulk them to-night! That woman! that cursed woman! The foul viper which I nursed in my bosom! Oh, I had rather see Louis in his grave than married to her! Charles, Charles, it must be stopped; I say it must be stopped! I will give anything, everything, to prevent it!"

"What will you give, my sister?"

She looked at him aghast. "What! you do not wish me to buy you?" she said.

"No; but I wish to buy others."

"Ha! You see a chance, then!"

"One, and one only. But time presses. I want money."

"How much?"

"I cannot have too much. All that you can spare."

With hands which trembled with eagerness she unlocked a secret cupboard in the wall in which she concealed her valuables. A blaze of jewellery met her brother's eyes as he peered over her shoulder. Great rubies, costly emeralds, deep ruddy beryls, glimmering diamonds, were scattered there in one brilliant shimmering many-coloured heap, the harvest which she had reaped from the king's generosity during more than fifteen years. At one side were three drawers, the one over the other. She drew out the lowest one. It was full to the brim of glittering *louis d'ors.*

"Take what you will!" she said. "And now your plan! Quick!"

He stuffed the money in handfuls into the side pockets of his coat. Coins slipped between his fingers and tinkled and wheeled over the floor, but neither cast a glance at them.

"Your plan?" she repeated.

"We must prevent the Archbishop from arriving here. Then the marriage would be postponed until to-morrow night, and you would have time to act."

"But how prevent it?"

"There are a dozen good rapiers about the court which are to be bought for less than I carry in one pocket. There is De la Touche, young Turberville, old Major Despard, Raymond de Carnac, and the four Latours. I will gather them together, and wait on the road."

"And waylay the Archbishop?"

"No; the messengers."

"Oh, excellent! You are a prince of brothers! If no message reach Paris, we are saved. Go; go; do not lose a moment, my dear Charles."

"It is very well, Françoise; but what are we to do with them when we get them? We may lose our heads over the matter, it seems to me. After all, they are the king's messengers, and we can scarce pass our swords through them."

"No?"

"There would be no forgiveness for that."

"But consider that before the matter is looked into I shall have regained my influence with the king."

"All very fine, my little sister, but how long is your influence to last? A pleasant life for us if at every change of favour we have to fly the country! No, no, Françoise; the most that we can do is to detain the messengers."

"Where can you detain them?"

"I have an idea. There is the castle of the Marquis de Montespan at Portillac."

"Of my husband!"

"Precisely."

"Of my most bitter enemy! Oh, Charles, you are not serious."

"On the contrary, I was never more so. The Marquis was away in Paris yesterday, and has not yet returned. Where is the ring with his arms?"

She hunted among her jewels and picked out a gold ring with a broad engraved face.

"This will be our key. When good Marceau, the steward, sees it, every dungeon in the castle will be at our disposal. It is that or nothing. There is no other place where we can hold them safe."

"But when my husband returns?"

"Ah, he may be a little puzzled as to his captives. And the complaisant Marceau may have an evil quarter of an hour. But that may not be for a week, and by that time, my little sister, I have confidence enough in you to think that you really may have finished the campaign. Not another word, for every moment is of value. Adieu, Françoise! We shall not be conquered without a struggle. I will send a message to you to-night to let you know how fortune uses us." He took her fondly in his arms, kissed her, and then hurried from the room.

For hours after his departure she paced up and down with noiseless steps upon the

deep soft carpet, her hands still clenched, her eyes flaming, her whole soul wrapped and consumed with jealousy and hatred of her rival. Ten struck, and eleven, and midnight, but still she waited, fierce and eager, straining her ears for every foot-fall which might be the herald of news. At last it came. She heard the quick step in the passage, the tap at the anteroom door, and the whispering of her black page. Quivering with impatience, she rushed in and took the note herself from the dusty cavalier who had brought it. It was but six words scrawled roughly upon a wisp of dirty paper, but it brought the colour back to her cheeks and the smile to her lips. It was her brother's writing, and it ran, "The Archbishop will not come to-night".

CHAPTER XV.

THE MIDNIGHT MISSION.

De Catinat in the meanwhile was perfectly aware of the importance of the mission which had been assigned to him. The secrecy which had been enjoined by the king, his evident excitement, and the nature of his orders, all confirmed the rumours which were already beginning to buzz round the court. He knew enough of the intrigues and antagonisms with which the court was full to understand that every precaution was necessary in carrying out his instructions. He waited, therefore, until night had fallen before ordering his soldier-servant to bring round the two horses to one of the less public gates of the grounds. As he and his friend walked together to the spot, he gave the young American a rapid sketch of the situation at

the court, and of the chance that this nocturnal ride might be an event which would affect the future history of France.

"I like your king," said Amos Green, "and I am glad to ride in his service. He is a slip of a man to be the head of a great nation, but he has the eye of a chief. If one met him alone in a Maine forest, one would know him as a man who was different to his fellows. Well, I am glad that he is going to marry again, though it's a great house for any woman to have to look after."

De Catinat smiled at his comrade's idea of a queen's duties.

"Are you armed?" he asked. "You have no sword or pistols?"

"No; if I may not carry my gun, I had rather not be troubled by tools that I have never learned to use. I have my knife. But why do you ask?"

"Because there may be danger."

"And how?"

"Many have an interest in stopping this

marriage. All the first men of the kingdom are bitterly against it. If they could stop *us*, they would stop *it*, for to-night at least."

"But I thought it was a secret?"

"There is no such thing at a court. There is the Dauphin, or the king's brother, either of them, or any of their friends, would be right glad that we should be in the Seine before we reached the Archbishop's house this night. But who is this?"

A burly figure had loomed up through the gloom on the path upon which they were going. As it approached, a coloured lamp dangling from one of the trees shone upon the blue and silver of an officer of the guards. It was Major de Brissac, of De Catinat's own regiment.

"Hullo! Whither away?" he asked.

"To Paris, major."

"I go there myself within an hour. Will you not wait, that we may go together?"

"I am sorry, but I ride on a matter of urgency. I must not lose a minute."

"Very good. Good-night, and a pleasant ride."

"Is he a trusty man, our friend the major?" asked Amos Green, glancing back.

"True as steel."

"Then I would have a word with him." The American hurried back along the way they had come, while De Catinat stood chafing at this unnecessary delay. It was a full five minutes before his companion joined him, and the fiery blood of the French soldier was hot with impatience and anger.

"I think that perhaps you had best ride into Paris at your leisure, my friend," said he. "If I go upon the king's service I cannot be delayed whenever the whim takes you."

"I am sorry," answered the other, quietly. "I had something to say to your major, and I thought that maybe I might not see him again."

"Well, here are the horses," said the guardsman as he pushed open the postern-gate. "Have you fed and watered them, Jacques?"

"Yes, my captain," answered the man who stood at their head.

"Boot and saddle, then, friend Green, and we shall not draw rein again until we see the lights of Paris in front of us."

The soldier-groom peered through the darkness after them with a sardonic smile upon his face. "You won't draw rein, won't you?" he muttered as he turned away. "Well, we shall see about that, my captain; we shall see about that."

For a mile or more the comrades galloped along, neck to neck and knee to knee. A wind had sprung up from the westward, and the heavens were covered with heavy gray clouds, which drifted swiftly across, a crescent moon peeping fitfully from time to time between the rifts. Even during these moments of brightness the road, shadowed as it was by heavy trees, was very dark, but when the light was shut off it was hard, but for the loom upon either side, to tell where it lay. De Catinat at least found it so, and he peered anxiously over

his horse's ears, and stooped his face to the mane in his efforts to see his way.

"What do you make of the road?" he asked at last.

"It looks as if a good many carriage wheels had passed over it to-day."

"What! *Mon Dieu!* Do you mean to say that you can see carriage wheels there?"

"Certainly. Why not?"

"Why, man, I cannot see the road at all."

Amos Green laughed heartily. "When you have travelled in the woods by night as often as I have," said he, "when to show a light may mean to lose your hair, one comes to learn to use one's eyes."

"Then you had best ride on, and I shall keep just behind you. So! *Hola!* What is the matter now?"

There had been the sudden sharp snap of something breaking, and the American had reeled for an instant in the saddle.

"It's one of my stirrup leathers. It has fallen."

"Can you find it?"

"Yes; but I can ride as well without it. Let us push on."

"Very good. I can just see you now."

They had galloped for about five minutes in this fashion, De Catinat's horse's head within a few feet of the other's tail, when there was a second snap, and the guardsman rolled out of the saddle on to the ground. He kept his grip of the reins, however, and was up in an instant at his horse's head, sputtering out oaths as only an angry Frenchman can.

"A thousand thunders of heaven!" he cried. "What was it that happened then?"

"Your leather has gone too."

"Two stirrup leathers in five minutes? It is not possible."

"It is not possible that it should be chance," said the American, gravely, swinging himself off his horse. "Why, what is this? My other leather is cut, and hangs only by a thread."

"And so does mine. I can feel it when I pass my hand along. Have you a tinder-box? Let us strike a light."

"No, no; the man who is in the dark is in safety. I let the other folk strike lights. We can see all that is needful to us."

"My rein is cut also."

"And so is mine."

"And the girth of my saddle."

"It is a wonder that we came so far with whole bones. Now, who has played us this little trick?"

"Who could it be but that rogue, Jacques! He has had the horses in his charge. By my faith, he shall know what the strappado means when I see Versailles again."

"But why should he do it?"

"Ah, he has been set on to it. He has been a tool in the hands of those who wished to hinder our journey."

"Very like. But they must have had some reason behind. They knew well that to cut our straps would not prevent us from reaching

Paris, since we could ride bareback, or, for that matter, could run it if need be."

"They hoped to break our necks."

"One neck they might break, but scarce those of two, since the fate of the one would warn the other."

"Well, then, what do you think that they meant?" cried De Catinat, impatiently. "For heaven's sake, let us come to some conclusion, for every minute is of importance."

But the other was not to be hurried out of his cool, methodical fashion of speech and of thought.

"They could not have thought to stop us," said he. "What did they mean, then? They could only have meant to delay us. And why should they wish to delay us? What could it matter to them if we gave our message an hour or two sooner or an hour or two later? It could not matter."

"For heaven's sake ——" broke in De Catinat, impetuously.

But Amos Green went on hammering the matter slowly out.

"Why should they wish to delay us, then? There's only one reason that I can see. In order to give other folk time to get in front of us and stop us. That is it, captain. I'd lay you a beaver-skin to a rabbit-pelt that I'm on the track. There's been a party of a dozen horsemen along this ground since the dew began to fall. If we were delayed, they would have time to form their plans before we came."

"By my faith, you may be right," said De Catinat, thoughtfully. "What would you propose?"

"That we ride back, and go by some less direct way."

"It is impossible. We should have to ride back to Meudon cross roads, and then it would add ten miles to our journey."

"It is better to get there an hour later than not to get there at all."

"Pshaw! we are surely not to be turned from our path by a mere guess. There is the

St. Germain cross-road about a mile below. When we reach it we can strike to the right along the south side of the river, and so change our course."

"But we may not reach it."

"If any one bars our way we shall know how to treat with them."

"You would fight, then?"

"Yes."

"What! with a dozen of them?"

"A hundred, if we are on the king's errand."

Amos Green shrugged his shoulders.

"You are surely not afraid?"

"Yes, I am, mighty afraid. Fighting's good enough when there's no help for it. But I call it a fool's plan to ride straight into a trap when you might go round it."

"You may do what you like," said De Catinat angrily. "My father was a gentleman, the owner of a thousand arpents of land, and his son is not going to flinch in the king's service."

"My father," answered Amos Green, "was a merchant, the owner of a thousand skunk-skins, and his son knows a fool when he sees one."

"You are insolent, sir," cried the guardsman. "We can settle this matter at some more fitting opportunity. At present I continue my mission, and you are very welcome to turn back to Versailles if you are so inclined." He raised his hat with punctilious politeness, sprang on to his horse, and rode on down the road.

Amos Green hesitated a little, and then mounting, he soon overtook his companion. The latter, however, was still in no very sweet temper, and rode with a rigid neck without a glance or a word for his comrade. Suddenly his eyes caught something in the gloom which brought a smile back to his face. Away in front of them, between two dark tree clumps, lay a vast number of shimmering, glittering yellow points, as thick as flowers in a garden. They were the lights of Paris.

"See!" he cried, pointing. "There is the city, and close here must be the St. Germain road. We shall take it, so as to avoid any danger."

"Very good! But you should not ride too fast, when your girth may break at any moment."

"Nay, come on; we are close to our journey's end. The St. Germain road opens just round this corner, and then we shall see our way, for the lights will guide us."

He cut his horse with his whip, and they galloped together round the curve. Next instant they were both down in one wild heap of tossing heads and struggling hoofs, De Catinat partly covered by his horse, and his comrade hurled twenty paces, where he lay silent and motionless in the centre of the road.

CHAPTER XVI.

"WHEN THE DEVIL DRIVES."

Monsieur de Vivonne had laid his ambuscade with discretion. With a closed carriage and a band of chosen ruffians he had left the palace a good half-hour before the king's messengers and by the aid of his sister's gold he had managed that their journey should not be a very rapid one. On reaching the branch road he had ordered the coachman to drive some little distance along it, and had tethered all the horses to a fence under his charge. He had then stationed one of the band as a sentinel some distance up the main highway to flash a light when the two couriers were approaching. A stout cord had been fastened eighteen inches from the ground to the trunk of a way-side sapling, and on receiving the signal the other end was tied to a gate-post

upon the further side. The two cavaliers could not possibly see it, coming as it did at the very curve of the road, and as a consequence their horses fell heavily to the ground, and brought them down with them. In an instant the dozen ruffians, who had lurked in the shadow of the trees, sprang out upon them, sword in hand; but there was no movement from either of their victims. De Catinat lay breathing heavily, one leg under his horse's neck, and the blood trickling in a thin stream down his pale face, and falling, drop by drop on to his silver shoulder-straps. Amos Green was unwounded, but his injured girth had given way in the fall, and he had been hurled from his horse on to the hard road with a violence which had driven every particle of breath from his body.

Monsieur de Vivonne lit a lantern, and flashed it upon the faces of the two unconscious men. "This is bad business, Major Despard," said he to the man next him. "I believe that they are both gone."

"Tut! tut! By my soul, men did not die like that when I was young!" answered the other, leaning forward his fierce grizzled face into the light of the lantern. "I've been cast from my horse as often as there are tags to my doublet, but, save for the snap of a bone or two, I never had any harm from it. Pass your rapier under the third rib of the horses, De la Touche; they will never be fit to set hoof to ground again." Two sobbing gasps, and the thud of their straining necks falling back to earth told that the two steeds had come to the end of their troubles.

"Where is Latour?" asked Monsieur de Vivonne. "Achille Latour has studied medicine at Montpellier. Where is he?"

"Here I am, your excellency. It is not for me to boast, but I am as handy a man with a lancet as with a rapier, and it was an evil day for some sick folk when I first took to buff and bandolier. Which would you have me look to?"

"This one in the road."

The trooper bent over Amos Green. "He is not long for this world," said he. "I can tell it by the catch of his breath."

"And what is his injury?"

"A subluxation of the epigastrium. Ah, the words of learning will still come to my tongue, but it is hard to put into common terms. Methinks that it were well for me to pass my dagger through his throat, for his end is very near."

"Not for your life!" cried the leader. "If he die without wound, they cannot lay it to our charge. Turn now to the other."

The man bent over De Catinat, and placed his hand upon his heart. As he did so the soldier heaved a long sigh, opened his eyes, and gazed about him with the face of one who knows neither where he is nor how he came there. De Vivonne, who had drawn his hat down over his eyes, and muffled the lower part of his face in his mantle, took out his flask, and poured a little of the contents down the injured man's throat. In an instant

a dash of colour had come back into the guardsman's bloodless cheeks, and the light of memory into his eyes. He struggled up on to his feet, and strove furiously to push away those who held him. But his head still swam, and he could scarce hold himself erect.

"I must to Paris!" he gasped; "I must to Paris! It is the king's mission. You stop me at your peril!"

"He has no hurt save a scratch," said the ex-doctor.

"Then hold him fast. And first carry the dying man to the carriage."

The lantern threw but a small ring of yellow light, so that when it had been carried over to De Catinat, Amos Green was left lying in the shadow. Now they brought the light back to where the young man lay. But there was no sign of him. He was gone.

For a moment the little group of ruffians stood staring, the light of their lantern streaming up upon their plumed hats, their fierce

eyes, and savage faces. Then a burst of oaths broke from them, and De Vivonne caught the false doctor by the throat, and hurling him down, would have choked him upon the spot, had the others not dragged them apart.

"You lying dog!" he cried. "Is this your skill? The man has fled, and we are ruined!"

"He has done it in his death-struggle," gasped the other, hoarsely, sitting up and rubbing his throat. "I tell you that he was *in extremis*. He cannot be far off."

"That is true. He cannot be far off," cried De Vivonne. "He has neither horse nor arms. You, Despard and Raymond de Carnac, guard the other, that he play us no trick. Do you, Latour, and you, Turberville, ride down the road, and wait by the south gate. If he enter Paris at all, he must come in that way. If you get him, tie him before you on your horse, and bring him to the rendezvous. In any case, it matters little, for he is a stranger, this fellow, and only here

by chance. Now lead the other to the carriage, and we shall get away before an alarm is given."

The two horsemen rode off in pursuit of the fugitive, and De Catinat, still struggling desperately to escape, was dragged down the St. Germain road and thrust into the carriage, which had waited at some distance while these incidents were being enacted. Three of the horsemen rode ahead, the coachman was curtly ordered to follow them, and De Vivonne, having despatched one of the band with a note to his sister, followed after the coach with the remainder of his desperadoes.

The unfortunate guardsman had now entirely recovered his senses, and found himself with a strap round his ankles, and another round his wrists, a captive inside a moving prison which lumbered heavily along the country road. He had been stunned by the shock of his fall, and his leg was badly bruised by the weight of his horse; but the

cut on his forehead was a mere trifle, and the bleeding had already ceased. His mind, however, pained him more than his body. He sank his head into his pinioned hands, and stamped madly with his feet, rocking himself to and fro in his despair. What a fool, a treble fool, he had been! He, an old soldier, who had seen something of war, to walk with open eyes into such a trap! The king had chosen him, of all men, as a trusty messenger, and yet he had failed him—and failed him so ignominiously, without shot fired or sword drawn. He was warned, too, warned by a young man who knew nothing of court intrigue, and who was guided only by the wits which nature had given him. De Catinat dashed himself down upon the leather cushion in the agony of his thoughts.

But then came a return of that common-sense which lies so very closely beneath the impetuosity of the Celt. The matter was done now, and he must see if it could not be mended. Amos Green had escaped. That

was one grand point in his favour. And Amos Green had heard the king's message, and realised its importance. It was true that he knew nothing of Paris, but surely a man who could pick his way at night through the for estsof Maine would not be baulked in finding so well-known a house as that of the Archbishop of Paris. But then there came a sudden thought which turned De Catinat's heart to lead. The city gates were locked at eight o'clock in the evening. It was now nearly nine. It would have been easy for him, whose uniform was a voucher for his message, to gain his way through. But how could Amos Green, a foreigner and a civilian, hope to pass? It was impossible, clearly impossible. And yet, somehow, in spite of the impossibility, he still clung to a vague hope that a man so full of energy and resource might find some way out of the difficulty.

And then the thought of escape occurred to his mind. Might he not even now be in

time, perhaps, to carry his own message? Who were these men who had seized him? They had said nothing to give him a hint as to whose tools they were. Monsieur and the Dauphin occurred to his mind. Probably one or the other. He had only recognised one of them, old Major Despard, a man who frequented the low wine-shops of Versailles, and whose sword was ever at the disposal of the longest purse. And where were these people taking him to? It might be to his death. But if they wished to do away with him, why should they have brought him back to consciousness? and why this carriage and drive? Full of curiosity, he peered out of the windows.

A horseman was riding close up on either side; but there was glass in front of the carriage, and through this he could gain some idea as to his whereabouts. The clouds had cleared now, and the moon was shining brightly, bathing the whole wide landscape in its shimmering light. To the right lay the

open country, broad plains with clumps of woodland, and the towers of castles pricking out from above the groves. A heavy bell was ringing in some monastery, and its dull booming came and went with the breeze. On the left, but far away, lay the glimmer of Paris. They were leaving it rapidly behind. Whatever his destination, it was neither the capital nor Versailles. Then he began to count the chances of escape. His sword had been removed, and his pistols were still in the holsters beside his unfortunate horse. He was unarmed, then, even if he could free himself, and his captors were at least a dozen in number. There were three on ahead, riding abreast along the white moonlit road. Then there was one on each side, and he should judge by the clatter of hoofs that there could not be fewer than half a dozen behind. That would make exactly twelve, including the coachman, too many, surely, for an unarmed man to hope to baffle. At the thought of the coachman he had glanced

through the glass front at the broad back of the man, and he had suddenly, in the glimmer of the carriage lamp, observed something which struck him with horror.

The man was evidently desperately wounded. It was strange indeed that he could still sit there and flick his whip with so terrible an injury. In the back of his great red coat, just under the left shoulder-blade, was a gash in the cloth, where some weapon had passed, and all round was a wide patch of dark scarlet which told its own tale. Nor was this all. As he raised his whip, the moonlight shone upon his hand, and De Catinat saw with a shudder that it also was splashed and clogged with blood. The guardsman craned his neck to catch a glimpse of the man's face; but his broad-brimmed hat was drawn low, and the high collar of his driving-coat was raised, so that his features were in the shadow. This silent man in front of him, with the horrible marks upon his person, sent a chill to De Catinat's valiant heart, and he

muttered over one of Marot's Huguenot psalms; for who but the foul fiend himself would drive a coach with those crimsoned hands and with a sword driven through his body?

And now they had come to a spot where the main road ran onwards, but a smaller side track wound away down the steep slope of a hill, and so in the direction of the Seine. The advance-guard had kept to the main road, and the two horsemen on either side were trotting in the same direction, when, to De Catinat's amazement, the carriage suddenly swerved to one side, and in an instant plunged down the steep incline, the two stout horses galloping at their topmost speed, the coachman standing up and lashing furiously at them, and the clumsy old vehicle bounding along in a way which threw him backwards and forwards from one seat to the other. Behind him he could hear a shout of consternation from the escort, and then the rush of galloping hoofs. Away they flew, the road-

side poplars dancing past at either window, the horses thundering along with their stomachs to the earth, and that demon driver still waving those horrible red hands in the moonlight and screaming out to the maddened steeds. Sometimes the carriage jolted one way, sometimes another, swaying furiously, and running on two side wheels as though it must every instant go over. And yet, fast as they went, their pursuers went faster still. The rattle of their hoofs was at their very backs, and suddenly at one of the windows there came into view the red distended nostrils of a horse. Slowly it drew forward, the muzzle, the eye, the ears, the mane, coming into sight as the rider still gained upon them, and then above them the fierce face of Despard and the gleam of a brass pistol barrel.

"At the horse, Despard, at the horse!" cried an authoritative voice from behind.

The pistol flashed, and the coach lurched over as one of the horses gave a convulsive

spring. But the driver still shrieked and lashed with his whip, while the carriage bounded onwards.

But now the road turned a sudden curve, and there, right in front of them, not a hundred paces away, was the Seine, running cold and still in the moonshine. The bank on either side of the highway ran straight down without any break to the water's edge. There was no sign of a bridge, and a black shadow in the centre of the stream showed where the ferry-boat was returning after conveying some belated travellers across. The driver never hesitated, but gathering up the reins, he urged the frightened creatures into the river. They hesitated, however, when they first felt the cold water about their hocks, and even as they did so one of them, with a low moan, fell over upon her side. Despard's bullet had found its mark. Like a flash the coachman hurled himself from the box and plunged into the stream; but the pursuing horsemen were all round him be-

fore this, and half a dozen hands had seized him ere he could reach deep water, and had dragged him to the bank. His broad hat had been struck off in the struggle, and De Catinat saw his face in the moonshine. Great heavens! It was Amos Green.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE DUNGEON OF PORTILLAC.

THE desperadoes were as much astonished as was De Catinat when they found that they had recaptured in this extraordinary manner the messenger whom they had given up for lost. A volley of oaths and exclamations broke from them as, on tearing off the huge red coat of the coachman, they disclosed the sombre dress of the young American.

"A thousand thunders!" cried one. "And this is the man whom that devil's brat Latour would make out to be dead!"

"And how came he here?"

"And where is Étienne Arnaud?"

"He has stabbed Étienne. See the great cut in the coat!"

"Ay; and see the colour of his hand! He has stabbed him, and taken his coat and hat."

"What! while we were all within stone's cast!"

"Ay; there is no other way out of it."

"By my soul!" cried old Despard, "I had never much love for old Étienne, but I have emptied a cup of wine with him before now, and I shall see that he has justice. Let us cast these reins round the fellow's neck and hang him upon this tree."

Several pairs of hands were already unbuckling the harness of the dead horse, when De Vivonne pushed his way into the little group, and with a few curt words checked their intended violence.

"It is as much as your lives are worth to touch him," said he.

"But he has slain Étienne Arnaud."

"That score may be settled afterwards. To-night he is the king's messenger. Is the other all safe?"

"Yes, he is here."

"Tie this man, and put him in beside him. Unbuckle the traces of the dead horse. So!

Now, De Carnac, put your own into the harness. You can mount the box and drive, for we have not very far to go."

The changes were rapidly made; Amos Green was thrust in beside De Catinat, and the carriage was soon toiling up the steep incline which it had come down so precipitately. The American had said not a word since his capture, and had remained absolutely stolid, with his hands crossed over his chest whilst his fate was under discussion. Now that he was alone once more with his comrade, however, he frowned and muttered like a man who feels that fortune has used him badly.

"Those infernal horses!" he grumbled. "Why, an American horse would have taken to the water like a duck. Many a time have I swum my old stallion Sagamore across the Hudson. Once over the river, we should have had a clear lead to Paris."

"My dear friend," cried De Catinat, laying his manacled hands upon those of his comrade,

"can you forgive me for speaking as I did upon the way from Versailles?"

"Tut, man! I never gave it a thought."

"You were right a thousand times, and I was, as you said, a fool—a blind, obstinate fool. How nobly you have stood by me! But how came you there? Never in my life have I been so astonished as when I saw your face."

Amos Green chuckled to himself. "I thought that maybe it would be a surprise to you if you knew who was driving you," said he. "When I was thrown from my horse I lay quiet, partly because I wanted to get a grip of my breath, and partly because it seemed to me to be more healthy to lie than to stand with all those swords clinking in my ears. Then they all got round you, and I rolled into the ditch, crept along it, got on the cross-road in the shadow of the trees, and was beside the carriage before ever they knew that I was gone. I saw in a flash that there was only one way by which I could be

of use to you. The coachman was leaning round with his head turned to see what was going on behind him. I out with my knife, sprang up on the front wheel, and stopped his tongue forever."

"What! without a sound!"

"I have not lived among the Indians for nothing."

"And then?"

"I pulled him down into the ditch, and I got into his coat and his hat. I did not scalp him."

"Scalp him? Great heavens! Such things are only done among savages."

"Ah! I thought that maybe it was not the custom of the country. I am glad now that I did not do it. I had hardly got the reins before they were all back and bundled you into the coach. I was not afraid of their seeing me, but I was scared lest I should not know which road to take, and so set them on the trail. But they made it easy to me by sending some of their riders in front,

so I did well until I saw that by-track and made a run for it. We'd have got away, too, if that rogue hadn't shot the horse, and if the beasts had faced the water."

The guardsman again pressed his comrade's hands. "You have been as true to me as hilt to blade," said he. "It was a bold thought and a bold deed."

"And what now?" asked the American.

"I do not know who these men are, and I do not know whither they are taking us."

"To their villages, likely, to burn us."

De Catinat laughed in spite of his anxiety. "You will have it that we are back in America again," said he. "They don't do things in that way in France."

"They seem free enough with hanging in France. I tell you, I felt like a smoked-out 'coon when that trace was round my neck."

"I fancy that they are taking us to some place where they can shut us up until this business blows over."

"Well, they'll need to be smart about it."

"Why?"

"Else maybe they won't find us when they want us."

"What do you mean?"

For answer, the American, with a twist and a wriggle, drew his two hands apart, and held them in front of his comrade's face.

"Bless you, it is the first thing they teach the pappooses in an Indian wigwam. I've got out of a Huron's thongs of rawhide before now, and it ain't very likely that a stiff stirrup leather will hold me. Put your hands out." With a few dexterous twists he loosened De Catinat's bonds, until he also was able to slip his hands free. "Now for your feet, if you'll put them up. They'll find that we are easier to catch than to hold."

But at that moment the carriage began to slow down, and the clank of the hoofs of the riders in front of them died suddenly away. Peeping through the windows, the prisoners saw a huge dark building stretching in front of them, so high and so broad that the night

shrouded it in upon every side. A great archway hung above them, and the lamps shone on the rude wooden gate, studded with ponderous clamps and nails. In the upper part of the door was a small square iron grating, and through this they could catch a glimpse of the gleam of a lantern and of a bearded face which looked out at them. De Vivonne, standing in his stirrups, craned his head up towards the grating, so that the two men most interested could hear little of the conversation which followed. They saw only that the horseman held a gold ring up in the air, and that the face above, which had begun by shaking and frowning, was now nodding and smiling. An instant later the head disappeared, the door swung open upon screaming hinges, and the carriage drove on into the courtyard beyond, leaving the escort, with the exception of De Vivonne, outside. As the horses pulled up, a knot of rough fellows clustered round, and the two prisoners were dragged roughly out. In the light of the

torches which flared around them they could see that they were hemmed in by high turreted walls upon every side. A bulky man with a bearded face, the same whom they had seen at the grating, was standing in the centre of the group of armed men issuing his orders.

"To the upper dungeon, Simon!" he cried. "And see that they have two bundles of straw and a loaf of bread until we learn our master's will."

"I know not who your master may be," said De Catinat, "but I would ask you by what warrant he dares to stop two messengers of the king while travelling in his service?"

"By St. Denis, if my master play the king a trick, it will be but tie and tie," the stout man answered, with a grin. "But no more talk! Away with them, Simon, and you answer to me for their safe-keeping."

It was in vain that De Catinat raved and threatened, invoking the most terrible menaces upon all who were concerned in detaining

him. Two stout knaves thrusting him from behind and one dragging in front forced him through a narrow gate and along a stone-flagged passage, a small man in black buckram with a bunch of keys in one hand and a swinging lantern in the other leading the way. Their ankles had been so tied that they could but take steps of a foot in length. Shuffling along, they made their way down three successive corridors and through three doors, each of which was locked and barred behind them. Then they ascended a winding stone stair, hollowed out in the centre by the feet of generations of prisoners and of jailers, and finally they were thrust into a small square dungeon, and two trusses of straw were thrown in after them. An instant later a heavy key turned in the lock, and they were left to their own meditations.

Very grim and dark those meditations were in the case of De Catinat. A stroke of good luck had made him at court, and now this other of ill fortune had destroyed him. It

would be in vain that he should plead his own powerlessness. He knew his royal master well. He was a man who was munificent when his orders were obeyed, and inexorable when they miscarried. No excuse availed with him. An unlucky man was as abhorrent to him as a negligent one. In this great crisis the king had trusted him with an all-important message, and that message had not been delivered. What could save him now from disgrace and from ruin? He cared nothing for the dim dungeon in which he found himself, nor for the uncertain fate which hung over his head, but his heart turned to lead when he thought of his blasted career, and of the triumph of those whose jealousy had been aroused by his rapid promotion. There were his people in Paris, too—his sweet Adèle, his old uncle, who had been as good as a father to him. What protector would they have in their troubles now that he had lost the power that might have shielded them? How long would it be before they were

exposed once more to the brutalities of Dalbert and his dragoons? He clenched his teeth at the thought, and threw himself down with a groan upon the litter of straw dimly visible in the faint light which streamed through the single window.

But his energetic comrade had yielded to no feeling of despondency. The instant that the clang of the prison door had assured him that he was safe from interruption he had slipped off the bonds which held him and had felt all round the walls and flooring to see what manner of place this might be. His search had ended in the discovery of a small fireplace at one corner, and of two great clumsy billets of wood, which seemed to have been left there to serve as pillows for the prisoners. Having satisfied himself that the chimney was so small that it was utterly impossible to pass even his head up it, he drew the two blocks of wood over to the window, and was able, by placing one above the other and standing on tiptoe on the highest, to reach the bars which

guarded it. Drawing himself up, and fixing one toe in an inequality of the wall, he managed to look out on to the court-yard which they had just quitted. The carriage and De Vivonne were passing out through the gate as he looked, and he heard a moment later the slam of the heavy door and the clatter of hoofs from the troop of horsemen outside. The seneschal and his retainers had disappeared; the torches, too, were gone, and, save for the measured tread of a pair of sentinels in the yard twenty feet beneath him, all was silent throughout the great castle.

And a very great castle it was. Even as he hung there with straining hands his eyes were running in admiration and amazement over the huge wall in front of him, with its fringe of turrets and pinnacles and battlements all lying so still and cold in the moonlight. Strange thoughts will slip into a man's head at the most unlikely moments. He remembered suddenly a bright summer day over the water when first he had come down from

Albany, and how his father had met him on the wharf by the Hudson, and had taken him through the water-gate to see Peter Stuyvesant's house, as a sign of how great this city was which had passed from the Dutch to the English. Why, Peter Stuyvesant's house and Peter Stuyvesant's Bowery villa put together would not make one wing of this huge pile, which was itself a mere dog-kennel beside the mighty palace at Versailles. He would that his father were here now; and then, on second thoughts, he would not, for it came back to him that he was a prisoner in a far land, and that his sight-seeing was being done through the bars of a dungeon window.

The window was large enough to pass his body through if it were not for those bars. He shook them and hung his weight upon them, but they were as thick as his thumb and firmly welded. Then, getting some strong hold for his other foot, he supported himself by one hand while he picked with his knife at the setting of the iron. It was cement,

as smooth as glass and as hard as marble. His knife turned when he tried to loosen it. But there was still the stone. It was sandstone, not so very hard. If he could cut grooves in it, he might be able to draw out bars, cement, and all. He sprang down to the floor again, and was thinking how he should best set to work, when a groan drew his attention to his companion.

"You seem sick, friend," said he.

"Sick in mind," moaned the other. "Oh, the cursed fool that I have been! It maddens me!"

"Something on your mind?" said Amos Green, sitting down upon his billets of wood. "What was it, then?"

The guardsman made a movement of impatience. "What was it? How can you ask me, when you know as well as I do the wretched failure of my mission. It was the king's wish that the archbishop should marry them. The king's wish is the law. It must be the archbishop or none. He should have

been at the palace by now. Ah, my God! I can see the king's cabinet, I can see him waiting, I can see madame waiting, I can hear them speak of the unhappy De Catinat ——" He buried his face in his hands once more.

"I see all that," said the American, stolidly, "and I see something more."

"What, then?"

"I see the archbishop tying them up together."

"The archbishop! You are raving."

"Maybe. But I see him."

"He could not be at the palace."

"On the contrary, he reached the palace about half an hour ago."

De Catinat sprang to his feet. "At the palace!" he screamed. "Then who gave him the message?"

"I did," said Amos Green.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A NIGHT OF SURPRISES.

If the American had expected to surprise or delight his companion by this curt announcement he was woefully disappointed, for De Catinat approached him with a face which was full of sympathy and trouble, and laid his hand caressingly upon his shoulder.

"My dear friend," said he, "I have been selfish and thoughtless. I have made too much of my own little troubles and too little of what you have gone through for me. That fall from your horse has shaken you more than you think. Lie down upon this straw, and see if a little sleep may not ——"

"I tell you that the bishop is there!" cried Amos Green, impatiently.

"Quite so. There is water in this jug, and

if I dip my scarf into it and tie it round your brow ——"

"Man alive! Don't you hear me! The bishop is there."

"He is, he is," said De Catinat, soothingly. "He is most certainly there. I trust that you have no pain?"

The American waved in the air with his knotted fists. "You think that I'm crazed," he cried, "and, by the eternal, you are enough to make me so! When I say that I sent the bishop, I mean that I saw to the job. You remember when I stepped back to your friend the major?"

It was the soldier's turn to grow excited now. "Well?" he cried, gripping the other's arm.

"Well, when we send a scout into the woods, if the matter is worth it, we send a second one at another hour, and so one or other comes back with his hair on. That's the Iroquois fashion, and a good fashion too."

"My God! I believe that you have saved me!"

"You needn't grip on to my arm like a fish-eagle on a trout! I went back to the major, then, and I asked him when he was in Paris to pass by the archbishop's door."

"Well? Well?"

"I showed him this lump of chalk. 'If we've been there,' said I, 'you'll see a great cross on the left side of the door-post. If there's no cross, then pull the latch and ask the bishop if he'll come up to the palace as quick as his horses can bring him.' The major started an hour after us; he would be in Paris by half past ten; the bishop would be in his carriage by eleven, and he would reach Versailles half an hour ago, that is to say, about half past twelve. By the Lord, I think I've driven him off his head!"

It was no wonder that the young woodsman was alarmed at the effect of his own announcement. His slow and steady nature was incapable of the quick, violent variations of the fiery Frenchman. De Catinat, who had thrown off his bonds before he had lain

down, spun round the cell now, waving his arms and his legs, with his shadow capering up the wall behind him, all distorted in the moonlight. Finally he threw himself into his comrade's arms with a torrent of thanks and ejaculations and praises and promises, patting him with his hands and hugging him to his breast.

"Oh, if I could but do something for you!" he exclaimed. "If I could do something for you!"

"You can, then. Lie down on that straw and go to sleep."

"And to think that I sneered at you! I! Oh, you have had your revenge!"

"For the Lord's sake, lie down and go to sleep!" By persuasions and a little pushing he got his delighted companion on to his couch again, and heaped the straw over him to serve as a blanket. De Catinat was wearied out by the excitements of the day, and this last great reaction seemed to have absorbed all his remaining strength. His lids

drooped heavily over his eyes, his head sank deeper into the soft straw, and his last remembrance was that the tireless American was seated cross-legged in the moonlight, working furiously with his long knife upon one of the billets of wood.

So weary was the young guardsman that it was long past noon, and the sun was shining out of a cloudless blue sky, before he awoke. For a moment, enveloped as he was in straw, and with the rude arch of the dungeon meeting in four rough-hewn groinings above his head, he stared about him in bewilderment. Then in an instant the doings of the day before, his mission, the ambuscade, his imprisonment, all flashed back to him, and he sprang to his feet. His comrade, who had been dozing in the corner, jumped up also at the first movement, with his hand on his knife, and a sinister glance directed towards the door.

"Oh, it's you, is it?" said he. "I thought it was the man."

"Has some one been in, then?"

"Yes; they brought those two loaves and a jug of water, just about dawn, when I was settling down for a rest."

"And did he say anything?"

"No; it was the little black one."

"Simon, they called him."

"The same. He laid the things down and was gone. I thought that maybe if he came again we might get him to stop."

"How, then?"

"Maybe if we got these stirrup leathers round his ankles he would not get them off quite as easy as we have done."

"And what then?"

"Well, he would tell us where we are, and what is to be done with us."

"Pshaw! what does it matter, since our mission is done?"

"It may not matter to you—there's no accounting for tastes—but it matters a good deal to me. I'm not used to sitting in a hole, like a bear in a trap, waiting for what other

folks choose to do with me. It's new to me. I found Paris a pretty close sort of place, but it's a prairie compared to this. It don't suit a man of my habits, and I am going to come out of it."

"There's no help but patience, my friend."

"I don't know that. I'd get more help out of a bar and a few pegs." He opened his coat, and took out a short piece of rusted iron, and three small thick pieces of wood, sharpened at one end.

"Where did you get those, then?"

"These are my night's work. The bar is the top one of the grate. I had a job to loosen it, but there it is. The pegs I whittled out of that log."

"And what are they for?"

"Well, you see, peg number one goes in here, where I have picked a hole between the stones. Then I've made this other log into a mallet, and with two cracks there it is firm fixed, so that you can put your weight on it. Now these two go in the same way

into the holes above here. So! Now, you see, you can stand up there and look out of that window without asking too much of your toe joint. Try it."

De Catinat sprang up and looked eagerly out between the bars.

"I do not know the place," said he, shaking his head. "It may be any one of thirty castles which lie upon the south side of Paris, and within six or seven leagues of it. Which can it be? And who has any interest in treating us so? I would that I could see a coat of arms, which might help us. Ah! there is one yonder in the centre of the mullion of the window. But I can scarce read it at the distance. I warrant that your eyes are better than mine, Amos, and that you can read what is on yonder escutcheon."

"On what?"

"On the stone slab in the centre window."

"Yes, I see it plain enough. It looks to me like three turkey-buzzards sitting on a barrel of molasses."

"Three allurions in chief over a tower proper, maybe. Those are the arms of the Provence De Hautevilles. But it cannot be that. They have no château within a hundred leagues. No, I cannot tell where we are."

He was dropping back to the floor, and put his weight upon the bar. To his amazement, it came away in his hand.

"Look, Amos, look!" he cried.

"Ah, you've found it out! Well, I did that during the night."

"And how? With your knife?"

"No; I could make no way with my knife; but when I got the bar out of the grate, I managed faster. I'll put this one back now, or some of those folks down below may notice that we have got it loose."

"Are they all loose?"

"Only the one at present, but we'll get the other two out during the night. You can take that bar out and work with it, while I use my own picker at the other. You see,

the stone is soft, and by grinding it you soon make a grove along which you can slip the bar. It will be mighty queer if we can't clear a road for ourselves before morning."

"Well, but even if we could get out into the court-yard, where could we turn to then?"

"One thing at a time, friend. You might as well stick at the Kennebec because you could not see how you would cross the Penobscot. Anyway, there is more air in the yard than in here, and when the window is clear we shall soon plan out the rest."

The two comrades did not dare to do any work during the day, for fear they should be surprised by the jailer, or observed from without. No one came near them, but they ate their loaves and drank their water with the appetite of men who had often known what it was to be without even such simple food as that. The instant that night fell they were both up upon the pegs, grinding away at the hard stone and tugging at the bars. It was a rainy night, and there was a sharp

thunder-storm, but they could see very well, while the shadow of the arched window prevented their being seen. Before midnight they had loosened one bar, and the other was just beginning to give, when some slight noise made them turn their heads, and there was their jailer standing, open-mouthed, in the middle of the cell, staring up at them.

It was De Catinat who observed him first, and he sprang down at him in an instant with his bar; but at his movement the man rushed for the door, and drew it after him just as the American's tool whizzed past his ear and down the passage. As the door slammed, the two comrades looked at each other. The guardsman shrugged his shoulders and the other whistled.

"It is scarce worth while to go on," said De Catinat.

"We may as well be doing that as anything else. If my picker had been an inch lower I'd have had him. Well, maybe he'll get a stroke, or break his neck down those stairs.

I've nothing to work with now, but a few rubs with your bar will finish the job. Ah, dear! You are right, and we are fairly treed!"

A great bell had begun to ring in the château, and there was a loud buzz of voices and a clatter of feet upon the stones. Hoarse orders were shouted, and there was the sound of turning keys. All this coming suddenly in the midst of the stillness of the night showed only too certainly that the alarm had been given. Amos Green threw himself down in the straw, with his hands in his pockets, and De Catinat leaned sulkily against the wall, waiting for whatever might come to him. Five minutes passed, however, and yet another five minutes, without any one appearing. The hubbub in the court-yard continued, but there was no sound in the corridor which led to their cell.

"Well, I'll have that bar out, after all," said the American at last, rising and stepping over to the window. "Anyhow, we'll see what all

this caterwauling is about." He climbed up on his pegs as he spoke, and peeped out.

"Come up!" he cried excitedly to his comrade. "They've got some other game going on here, and they are all a deal too busy to bother their heads about us."

De Catinat clambered up beside him, and the two stood staring down into the courtyard. A brazier had been lit at each corner, and the place was thronged with men, many of whom carried torches. The yellow glare played fitfully over the grim gray walls, flickering up sometimes until the highest turrets shone golden against the black sky, and then, as the wind caught them, dying away until they scarce threw a glow upon the cheek of their bearer. The main gate was open, and a carriage, which had apparently just driven in, was standing at a small door immediately in front of their window. The wheels and sides were brown with mud, and the two horses were reeking and heavy-headed, as though their journey had been both swift and long. A

man wearing a plumed hat and enveloped in a riding-coat had stepped from the carriage, and then, turning round, had dragged a second person out after him. There was a scuffle, a cry, a push, and the two figures had vanished through the door. As it closed, the carriage drove away, the torches and braziers were extinguished, the main gate was closed once more, and all was as quiet as before this sudden interruption.

"Well!" gasped De Catinat. "Is this another king's messenger they've got?"

"There will be lodgings for two more here in a short time," said Amos Green. "If they only leave us alone, this cell won't hold us long."

"I wonder where that jailer has gone?"

"He may go where he likes, as long as he keeps away from here. Give me your bar again. This thing is giving. It won't take us long to have it out." He set to work furiously, trying to deepen the groove in the stone, through which he hoped to drag the

staple. Suddenly he ceased, and strained his ears.

"By thunder!" said he, "there's some one working on the other side."

They both stood listening. There were the thud of hammers, the rasping of a saw, and the clatter of wood from the other side of the wall.

"What can they be doing?"

"I can't think."

"Can you see them?"

"They are too near the wall."

"I think I can manage," said De Catinat. "I am slighter than you." He pushed his head and neck and half of one shoulder through the gap between the bars, and there he remained until his friend thought that perhaps he had stuck, and pulled at his legs to extricate him. He writhed back, however, without any difficulty.

"They are building something," he whispered.

"Building!"

"Yes; there are four of them, with a lantern."

"What can they be building, then?"

"It's a shed, I think. I can see four sockets in the ground, and they are fixing four uprights into them."

"Well, we can't get away as long as there are four men just under our window."

"Impossible."

"But we may as well finish our work, for all that."

The gentle scrapings of his iron were drowned amid the noise which swelled ever louder from without. The bar loosened at the end, and he drew it slowly towards him. At that instant, however, just as he was disengaging it, a round head appeared between him and the moonlight, a head with a great shock of tangled hair, and a woollen cap upon the top of it. So astonished was Amos Green at the sudden apparition that he let go his grip upon the bar, which, falling outwards, toppled over the edge of the window-sill.

"You great fool!" shrieked a voice from below, "are your fingers ever to be thumbs, then, that you should fumble your tools so? A thousand thunders of heaven! You have broken my shoulder."

"What is it, then?" cried the other. "My faith, Pierre, if your fingers went as fast as your tongue, you would be the first joiner in France."

"What is it, you ape! You have dropped your tool upon me."

"I! I have dropped nothing."

"Idiot! Would you have me believe that iron falls from the sky? I say that you have struck me, you foolish, clumsy-fingered lout."

"I have not struck you yet," cried the other, "but, by the Virgin, if I have more of this I will come down the ladder to you!"

"Silence, you good-for-naughts!" said a third voice, sternly. "If the work be not done by daybreak, there will be a heavy reckoning for somebody."

And again the steady hammering and saw-

ing went forward. The head still passed and repassed, its owner walking apparently upon some platform which they had constructed beneath their window, but never giving a glance or a thought to the black square opening beside him. It was early morning, and the first cold light was beginning to steal over the court-yard, before the work was at last finished and the workmen had left. Then at last the prisoners dared to climb up and to see what it was which had been constructed during the night. It gave them a catch of the breath as they looked at it. It was a scaffold.

There it lay, the ill-omened platform of dark greasy boards newly fastened together, but evidently used often before for the same purpose. It was buttressed up against their wall, and extended a clear twenty feet out, with a broad wooden stair leading down from the further side. In the centre stood a headsman's block, all haggled at the top, and smeared with rust-coloured stains.

"I think it is time that we left," said Amos Green.

"Our work is all in vain, Amos," said De Catinat, sadly. "Whatever our fate may be—and this looks ill enough—we can but submit to it like brave men."

"Tut, man; the window is clear! Let us make a rush for it."

"It is useless. I can see a line of armed men along the further side of the yard."

"A line! At this hour!"

"Yes; and here come more. See, at the centre gate! Now what in the name of heaven is this?"

As he spoke the door which faced them opened, and a singular procession filed out. First came two dozen footmen, walking in pairs, all carrying halberds, and clad in the same maroon-coloured liveries. After them a huge bearded man, with his tunic off, and the sleeves of his coarse shirt rolled up over his elbows, strode along with a great axe over his left shoulder. Behind him, a priest with

an open missal pattered forth prayers, and in his shadow was a woman, clad in black, her neck bared, and a black shawl cast over her head and drooping in front of her bowed face. Within grip of her walked a tall, thin, fierce-faced man, with harsh red features, and a great jutting nose. He wore a flat velvet cap with a single eagle feather fastened into it by a diamond clasp, which gleamed in the morning light. But bright as was his gem, his dark eyes were brighter still, and sparkled from under his bushy brows with a mad brilliancy which bore with it something of menace and of terror. His limbs jerked as he walked, his features twisted, and he carried himself like a man who strives hard to hold himself in when his whole soul is aflame with exultation. Behind him again twelve more maroon-clad retainers brought up the rear of this singular procession.

The woman had faltered at the foot of the scaffold, but the man behind her had thrust her forward with such force that she stumbled

over the lower step, and would have fallen had she not clutched at the arm of the priest. At the top of the ladder her eyes met the dreadful block, and she burst into a scream, and shrunk backwards. But again the man thrust her on, and two of the followers caught her by either wrist and dragged her forwards.

"Oh, Maurice! Maurice!" she screamed. "I am not fit to die! Oh, forgive me, Maurice, as you hope for forgiveness yourself! Maurice! Maurice!" She strove to get towards him, to clutch at his wrist, at his sleeve, but he stood with his hand on his sword, gazing at her with a face which was all wreathed and contorted with merriment. At the sight of that dreadful mocking face the prayers froze upon her lips. As well pray for mercy to the dropping stone or to the rushing stream. She turned away, and threw back the mantle which had shrouded her features.

"Ah, sire!" she cried. Sire! If you could see me now!"

And at the cry and at the sight of that

fair pale face, De Catinat, looking down from the window, was stricken as though by a dagger; for there standing beside the headsman's block was she who had been the most powerful, as well as the wittiest and the fairest, of the women of France—none other than Françoise de Montespan, so lately the favourite of the king.

CHAPTER XIX.

IN THE KING'S CABINET.

On the night upon which such strange chances had befallen his messengers, the king sat alone in his cabinet. Over his head a perfumed lamp, held up by four little flying Cupids of crystal, who dangled by golden chains from the painted ceiling, cast a brilliant light upon the chamber, which was flashed back twenty-fold by the mirrors upon the wall. The ebony and silver furniture, the dainty carpet of La Savonnière, the silks of Tours, the tapestries of the Gobelins, the gold-work and the delicate china-ware of Sèvres—the best of all that France could produce was centred between these four walls. Nothing had ever passed through that door which was not a masterpiece of its kind. And amid all this brilliance the master of it sat, his chin

resting upon his hands, his elbows upon the table, with eyes which stared vacantly at the wall, a moody and a solemn man.

But though his dark eyes were fixed upon the wall, they saw nothing of it. They looked rather down the long vista of his own life, away to those early years when what we dream and what we do shade so mistily into one another. Was it a dream or was it a fact, those two men who used to stoop over his baby crib, the one with the dark coat and the star upon his breast, whom he had been taught to call father, and the other one with the long red gown and the little twinkling eyes? Even now, after more than forty years, that wicked, astute, powerful face flashed up, and he saw once more old Richelieu, the great unanointed king of France. And then that other cardinal, the long lean one who had taken his pocket-money, and had grudged him his food, and had dressed him in old clothes. How well he could recall the day when Mazarin had

rouged himself for the last time, and how the court had danced with joy at the news that he was no more! And his mother, too, how beautiful she was, and how masterful! Could he not remember how bravely she had borne herself during that war in which the power of the great nobles had been broken, and how she had at last lain down to die, imploring the priests not to stain her cap-strings with their holy oils! And then he thought of what he had done himself, how he had shorn down his great subjects until, instead of being like a tree among saplings, he had been alone, far above all others, with his shadow covering the whole land. Then there were his wars and his laws and his treaties. Under his care France had overflowed her frontiers both on the north and on the east, and yet had been so welded together internally that she had but one voice, with which she spoke through him. And then there was that line of beautiful faces which wavered up in front of him. There was Olympe de Mancini, whose Italian

eyes had first taught him that there is a power which can rule over a king; her sister, too, Marie de Mancini; his wife, with her dark little sunbrowned face; Henrietta of England, whose death had first shown him the horrors which lie in life; La Vallière, Montespan, Fontanges. Some were dead; some were in convents. Some who had been wicked and beautiful were now only wicked. And what had been the outcome of all this troubled, striving life of his? He was already at the outer verge of his middle years; he had lost his taste for the pleasures of his youth; gout and vertigo were ever at his foot and at his head to remind him that between them lay a kingdom which he could not hope to govern. And after all these years he had not won a single true friend, not one, in his family, in his court, in his country, save only this woman whom he was to wed that night. And she, how patient she was, how good, how lofty! With her he might hope to wipe off by the true glory of his remaining years all the

sin and the folly of the past. Would that the archbishop might come, that he might feel that she was indeed his, that he held her with hooks of steel which would bind them as long as life should last!

There came a tap at the door. He sprang up eagerly, thinking that the ecclesiastic might have arrived. It was, however, only his personal attendant, to say that Louvois would crave an interview. Close at his heels came the minister himself, high-nosed and heavy-chinned. Two leather bags were dangling from his hand.

"Sire," said he, when Bontems had retired, "I trust that I do not intrude upon you."

"No, no, Louvois. My thoughts were in truth beginning to be very indifferent company, and I am glad to be rid of them."

"Your Majesty's thoughts can never, I am sure, be anything but pleasant," said the courtier. "But I have brought you here something which I trust may make them even more so."

"Ah! What is that?"

"When so many of our young nobles went into Germany and Hungary, you were pleased in your wisdom to say that you would like well to see what reports they sent home to their friends; also what news was sent out from the court to them."

"Yes."

"I have them here—all that the courier has brought in, and all that are gathered to go out, each in its own bag. The wax has been softened in spirit, the fastenings have been steamed, and they are now open."

The king took out a handful of the letters and glanced at the addresses.

"I should indeed like to read the hearts of these people," said he. "Thus only can I tell the true thoughts of those who bow and simper before my face. I suppose," with a sudden flash of suspicion from his eyes, "that you have not yourself looked into these?"

"Oh, sire, I had rather die!"

"You swear it?"

"As I hope for salvation!"

"Hum! There is one among these which I see is from your own son."

Louvois changed colour, and stammered as he looked at the envelope. "Your Majesty will find that he is as loyal out of your presence as in it, else he is no son of mine," said he.

"Then we shall begin with his. Ha! it is but ten lines long. 'Dearest Achille, how I long for you to come back! The court is as dull as a cloister now that you are gone. My ridiculous father still struts about like a turkey-cock, as if all his medals and crosses could cover the fact that he is but a head lackey, with no more real power than I have. He wheedles a good deal out of the king, but what he does with it I cannot imagine, for little comes my way. I still owe those ten thousand livres to the man in the Rue Orfévre. Unless I have some luck at lansquenet, I shall have to come out soon and join you.' Hem! I did you an injustice, Louvois. I see that you have *not* looked over these letters."

The minister had sat with a face which was the colour of beet root, and eyes which projected from his head, while this epistle was being read. It was with relief that he came to the end of it, for at least there was nothing which compromised him seriously with the king; but every nerve in his great body tingled with rage as he thought of the way in which his young scapegrace had alluded to him. "The viper!" he cried. "Oh, the foul snake in the grass! I will make him curse the day that he was born."

"Tut, tut, Louvois!" said the king. "You are a man who has seen much of life, and you should be a philosopher. Hot-headed youth says ever more than it means. Think no more of the matter. But what have we here? A letter from my dearest girl to her husband, the Prince de Conti. I would pick her writing out of a thousand. Ah, dear soul, she little thought that my eyes would see her artless prattle! Why should I read it, since I already know every thought of her innocent

heart?" He unfolded the sheet of pink scented paper with a fond smile upon his face, but it faded away as his eyes glanced down the page, and he sprang to his feet with a snarl of anger, his hand over his heart and his eyes still glued to the paper. "Minx!" he cried, in a choking voice. "Impertinent, heartless minx! Louvois, you know what I have done for the princess. You know that she has been the apple of my eye. What have I ever grudged her? What have I ever denied her?"

"You have been goodness itself, sire," said Louvois, whose own wounds smarted less now that he saw his master writhing.

"Hear what she says of me: 'Old Father Grumpy is much as usual, save that he gives a little at the knees. You remember how we used to laugh at his airs and graces! Well, he has given up all that, and though he still struts about on great high heels, like a Landes peasant on his stilts, he has no brightness at all in his clothes. Of course, all the court

follow his example, so you can imagine what a nightmare-place this is. Then this woman still keeps in favour, and her frocks are as dismal as Grumpy's coats; so when you come back we shall go into the country together, and you shall dress in red velvet, and I shall wear blue silk, and we shall have a little coloured court of our own in spite of my majestic papa.'"

Louis sank his face in his hands.

"You hear how she speaks of me, Louvois."

"It is infamous, sire; infamous!"

"She calls me names—*me*, Louvois!"

"Atrocious, sire."

"And my knees! One would think that I was an old man!"

"Scandalous. But, sire, I would beg to say that it is a case in which your majesty's philosophy may well soften your anger. Youth is ever hot-headed, and says more than it means. Think no more of the matter."

"You speak like a fool, Louvois. The child that I have loved turns upon me, and you ask

me to think no more of it. Ah, it is one more lesson that a king can trust least of all those who have his own blood in their veins. What writing is this? It is the good Cardinal de Bouillon. One may not have faith in one's own kin, but this sainted man loves me, not only because I have placed him where he is, but because it is his nature to look up and to love those whom God has placed above him. I will read you his letter, Louvois, to show you that there is still such a thing as loyalty and gratitude in France. 'My dear Prince de la Roche-sur-Yon.' Ah, it is to him he writes. 'I promised when you left that I would let you know from time to time how things were going at court, as you consulted me about bringing your daughter up from Anjou, in the hope that she might catch the king's fancy.' What! What! Louvois! What villany is this? 'The sultan goes from bad to worse. The Fontanges was at least the prettiest woman in France, though between ourselves there was just a shade too

much of the red in her hair—an excellent colour in a cardinal's gown, my dear duke, but nothing brighter than chestnut is permissible in a lady. The Montespan, too, was a fine woman in her day, but fancy his picking up now with a widow who is older than himself, a woman, too, who does not even try to make herself attractive, but kneels at her *prie-dieu* or works at her tapestry from morning to night. They say that December and May make a bad match, but my own opinion is that two Novembers make an even worse one.' Louvois! Louvois! I can read no more! Have you a *lettre de cachet?*"

"There is one here, sire."

"For the Bastille?"

"No; for Vincennes."

"That will do very well. Fill it up, Louvois! Put this villain's name in it! Let him be arrested to-night, and taken there in his own calèche. The shameless, ungrateful, foul-mouthed villain! Why did you bring me these letters, Louvois? Oh, why did you

yield to my foolish whim? My God, is there no truth, or honour, or loyalty in the world!" He stamped his feet, and shook his clenched hands in the air in the frenzy of his anger and disappointment.

"Shall I, then, put back the others?" asked Louvois, eagerly. He had been on thorns since the king had begun to read them, not knowing what disclosures might come next.

"Put them back, but keep the bag."

"Both bags?"

"Ah! I had forgot the other one. Perhaps if I have hypocrites around me, I have at least some honest subjects at a distance. Let us take one haphazard. Who is this from? Ah! it is from the Duc de la Rochefoucauld. He has ever seemed to be a modest and dutiful young man. What has he to say? The Danube—Belgrade—the grand vizier —— Ah!" He gave a cry as if he had been stabbed.

"What, then, sire?" The minister had

taken a step forward, for he was frightened by the expression upon the king's face.

"Take them away, Louvois! Take them away!" he cried, pushing the pile of papers away from him. "I would that I had never seen them! I will look at them no more! He gibes even at my courage, I who was in the trenches when he was in his cradle! 'This war would not suit the king,' he says. 'For there are battles, and none of the nice little safe sieges which are so dear to him.' By God, he shall pay to me with his head for that jest! Ay, Louvois, it will be a dear gibe to him. But take them away. I have seen as much as I can bear."

The minister was thrusting them back into the bag when suddenly his eye caught the bold, clear writing of Madame de Maintenon upon one of the letters. Some demon whispered to him that here was a weapon which had been placed in his hands, with which he might strike one whose very name filled him with jealousy and hatred. Had she been

guilty of some indiscretion in this note, then he might even now, at this last hour, turn the king's heart against her. He was an astute man, and in an instant he had seen his chance and grasped it.

"Ha!" said he, "it was hardly necessary to open this one."

"Which, Louvois? Whose is it?"

The minister pushed forward the letter, and Louis started as his eyes fell upon it.

"Madame's writing!" he gasped.

"Yes; it is to her nephew in Germany."

Louis took it in his hand. Then, with a sudden motion, he threw it down among the others, and then yet again his hand stole towards it. His face was gray and haggard, and beads of moisture had broken out upon his brow. If this too were to prove to be as the others! He was shaken to the soul at the very thought. Twice he tried to pluck it out, and twice his trembling fingers fumbled with the paper. Then he tossed it over to Louvois. "Read it to me," said he.

The minister opened the letter out and flattened it upon the table, with a malicious light dancing in his eyes, which might have cost him his position had the king but read it aright.

"'My dear nephew,'" he read, "'what you ask me in your last is absolutely impossible. I have never abused the king's favour so far as to ask for any profit for myself, and I should be equally sorry to solicit any advance for my relatives. No one would rejoice more than I to see you rise to be major in your regiment, but your valour and your loyalty must be the cause, and you must not hope to do it through any word of mine. To serve such a man as the king is its own reward, and I am sure that whether you remain a cornet or rise to some higher rank, you will be equally zealous in his cause. He is surrounded, unhappily, by many base parasites. Some of these are mere fools, like Lauzun; others are knaves, like the late Fouquet; and some seem to be both fools

and knaves, like Louvois, the minister of war.'" Here the reader choked with rage, and sat gurgling and drumming his fingers upon the table.

"Go on, Louvois, go on," said Louis smiling up at the ceiling.

"'These are the clouds which surround the sun, my dear nephew; but the sun is, believe me, shining brightly behind them. For years I have known that noble nature as few others can know it, and I can tell you that his virtues are his own, but that if ever his glory is for an instant dimmed over, it is because his kindness of heart has allowed him to be swayed by those who are about him. We hope soon to see you back at Versailles, staggering under the weight of your laurels. Meanwhile accept my love and every wish for your speedy promotion, although it cannot be obtained in the way which you suggest.'"

"Ah," cried the king, his love shining in his eyes, "how could I for an instant doubt her!

And yet I had been so shaken by the others! Françoise is as true as steel. Was it not a beautiful letter, Louvois?"

"Madame is a very clever woman," said the minister, evasively.

"And such a reader of hearts! Has she not seen my character aright?"

"At least she has not read mine, sire."

There was a tap at the door, and Bontems peeped in. "The archbishop has arrived, sire."

"Very well, Bontems. Ask madame to be so good as to step this way. And order the witnesses to assemble in the anteroom."

As the valet hastened away, Louis turned to his minister: "I wish you to be one of the witnesses, Louvois."

"To what, sire?"

"To my marriage."

The minister started. "What, sire! Already?"

"Now, Louvois; within five minutes."

"Very good, sire." The unhappy courtier strove hard to assume a more festive manner;

but the night had been full of vexation to him, and to be condemned to assist in making this woman the king's wife was the most bitter drop of all.

"Put these letters away, Louvois. The last one has made up for all the rest. But these rascals shall smart for it, all the same. By-the-way, there is that young nephew to whom madame wrote. Gérard d'Aubigny is his name, is it not?"

"Yes, sire."

"Make him out a colonel's commission, and give him the next vacancy, Louvois."

"A colonel, sire! Why, he is not yet twenty."

"Ay, Louvois. Pray am I the chief of the army, or are you? Take care, Louvois! I have warned you once before. I tell you, man, that if I choose to promote one of my jack-boots to be the head of a brigade, you shall not hesitate to make out the papers. Now go into the anteroom, and wait with the other witnesses until you are wanted."

There had meanwhile been busy goings-on in the small room where the red lamp burned in front of the Virgin. Françoise de Maintenon stood in the centre, a little flush of excitement on her cheeks, and an unwonted light in her placid gray eyes. She was clad in a dress of shining white brocade, trimmed and slashed with silver serge, and fringed at the throat and arms with costly point-lace. Three women, grouped around her, rose and stooped and swayed, putting a touch here and a touch there, gathering in, looping up, and altering until all was to their taste.

"There!" said the head dressmaker, giving a final pat to a rosette of gray silk;" I think that will do, your majes—that is to say, madame."

The lady smiled at the adroit slip of the courtier dressmaker.

"My tastes lean little towards dress," said she, "yet I would fain look as he would wish me to look."

"Ah, it is easy to dress madame. Madame has a figure. Madame has a carriage. What costume would not look well with such a neck and waist and arm to set it off? But, ah, madame, what are we to do when we have to make the figure as well as the dress? There was the Princess Charlotte Elizabeth. It was but yesterday that we cut her gown. She was short, madame, but thick. Oh, it is incredible how thick she was! She uses more cloth than madame, though she is two hand-breadths shorter. Ah, I am sure that the good God never meant people to be as thick as that. But then, of course, she is Bavarian, and not French."

But madame was paying little heed to the gossip of the dressmaker. Her eyes were fixed upon the statue in the corner, and her lips were moving in prayer—prayer that she might be worthy of this great destiny which had come so suddenly upon her, a poor governess; that she might walk straight among the pitfalls which surrounded her upon every side;

that this night's work might bring a blessing upon France and upon the man whom she loved. There came a discreet tap at the door to break in upon her prayer.

"It is Bontems, madame," said Mademoiselle Nanon. "He says that the king is ready."

"Then we shall not keep him waiting. Come, mademoiselle, and may God shed His blessing upon what we are about to do!"

The little party assembled in the king's anteroom, and started from there to the private chapel. In front walked the portly bishop, clad in a green vestment, puffed out with the importance of the function, his missal in his hand, and his fingers between the pages at the service *de matrimoniis.* Beside him strode his almoner, and two little servitors of the court in crimson cassocks bearing lighted torches. The king and Madame de Maintenon walked side by side, she quiet and composed, with gentle bearing and down-

cast eyes, he with a flush on his dark cheeks, and a nervous furtive look in his eyes, like a man who knows that he is in the midst of one of the great crises of his life. Behind them, in solemn silence, followed a little group of chosen witnesses, the lean, silent Père La Chaise, Louvois, scowling heavily at the bride, the Marquis de Charmarante, Bontems, and Mademoiselle Nanon.

The torches shed a strong yellow light upon this small band as they advanced slowly through the corridors and *salons* which led to the chapel, and they threw a garish glare upon the painted walls and ceilings, flashing back from gold-work and from mirror, but leaving long trailing shadows in the corners. The king glanced nervously at these black recesses, and at the portraits of his ancestors and relations which lined the walls. As he passed that of his late Queen, Maria Theresa, he started and gasped with horror.

"My God!" he whispered; "she frowned and spat at me!"

Madame laid her cool hand upon his wrist. "It is nothing, sire," she murmured, in her soothing voice. "It was but the light flickering over the picture."

Her words had their usual effect upon him. The startled look died away from his eyes, and taking her hand in his, he walked resolutely forwards. A minute later they were before the altar, and the words were being read which should bind them forever together. As they turned away again, her new ring blazing upon her finger, there was a buzz of congratulation around her. The king only said nothing, but he looked at her, and she had no wish that he should say more. She was still calm and pale, but the blood throbbed in her temples. "You are Queen of France, now," it seemed to be humming—"queen, queen, queen!"

But a sudden shadow had fallen across her, and a low voice was in her ear. "Remember

your promise to the Church," it whispered. She started, and turned to see the pale eager face of the Jesuit beside her.

"Your hand has turned cold, Françoise," said Louis. "Let us go, dearest. We have been too long in this dismal church."

CHAPTER XX.

THE TWO FRANÇOISES.

MADAME DE MONTESPAN had retired to rest, easy in her mind, after receiving the message from her brother. She knew Louis as few others knew him, and she was well aware of that obstinacy in trifles which was one of his characteristics. If he had said that he would be married by the archbishop, then the archbishop it must be; to-night, at least, there should be no marriage. To-morrow was a new day, and if it did not shake the king's plans, then indeed she must have lost her wit as well as her beauty.

She dressed herself with care in the morning, putting on her powder, her little touch of rouge, her one patch near the dimple of her cheek, her loose robe of violet velvet, and her casconet of pearls with all the solicitude of a

warrior who is bracing on his arms for a life and death contest. No news had come to her of the great event of the previous night, although the court already rang with it, for her haughtiness and her bitter tongue had left her without a friend or intimate. She rose, therefore, in the best of spirits, with her mind set on the one question as to how best she should gain an audience with the king.

She was still in her boudoir putting the last touches to her toilet when her page announced to her that the king was waiting in her *salon.* Madame de Montespan could hardly believe in such good fortune. She had racked her brain all morning as to how she should win her way to him, and here he was waiting for her. With a last glance at the mirror, she hastened to meet him.

He was standing with his back turned, looking up at one of Snyders's paintings, when she entered; but as she closed the door, he turned and took two steps towards her. She had run forward with a pretty little cry of joy, her

white arms outstretched, and love shining on her face; but he put out his hand, gently and yet with decision, with a gesture which checked her approach. Her hands dropped to her side, her lip trembled, and she stood looking at him with her grief and her fears all speaking loudly from her eyes. There was a look upon his features which she had never seen before, and already something was whispering at the back of her soul that to-day at least his spirit was stronger than her own.

"You are angry with me again," she cried.

He had come with every intention of beginning the interview by telling her bluntly of his marriage; but now, as he looked upon her beauty and her love, he felt that it would have been less brutal to strike her down at his feet. Let some one else tell her, then. She would know soon enough. Besides, there would be less chance then of a scene, which was a thing abhorrent to his soul. His task was, in any case, quite difficult enough. All this ran swiftly through his mind, and she

as swiftly read it off in the brown eyes which gazed at her.

"You have something you came to say, and now you have not the heart to say it. God bless the kindly heart which checks the cruel tongue!"

"No, no, madame," said Louis; "I would not be cruel. I cannot forget that my life has been brightened and my court made brilliant during all these years by your wit and your beauty. But times change, madame, and I owe a duty to the world which overrides my own personal inclinations. For every reason I think that it is best that we should arrange in the way which we discussed the other day, and that you should withdraw yourself from the court."

"Withdraw, sire! For how long?"

"It must be a permanent withdrawal, madame."

She stood with clenched hands and a pale face staring at him.

"I need not say that I shall make your

retirement a happy one as far as in me lies. Your allowance shall be fixed by yourself; a palace shall be erected for you in whatever part of France you may prefer, provided that it is twenty miles from Paris. An estate also ——"

"Oh, sire, how can you think that such things as these would compensate me for the loss of your love?" Her heart had turned to lead within her breast. Had he spoken hotly and angrily she might have hoped to turn him as she had done before; but this gentle and yet firm bearing was new to him, and she felt that all her arts were vain against it. His coolness enraged her, and yet she strove to choke down her passion and to preserve the humble attitude which was least natural to her haughty and vehement spirit; but soon the effort became too much for her.

"Madame," said he, "I have thought well over this matter, and it must be as I say. There is no other way at all. Since we must part, the parting had best be short and sharp.

Believe me, it is no pleasant matter for me either. I have ordered your brother to have his carriage at the postern at nine o'clock, for I thought that perhaps you would wish to retire after nightfall."

"To hide my shame from a laughing court! It was thoughtful of you, sire. And yet, perhaps, this too was a duty, since we hear so much of duties nowadays, for who was it but you ——"

"I know, madame, I know. I confess it. I have wronged you deeply. Believe me that every atonement which is in my power shall be made. Nay, do not look so angrily at me, I beg. Let our last sight of each other be one which may leave a pleasant memory behind it."

"A pleasant memory!" All the gentleness and humility had fallen from her now, and her voice had the hard ring of contempt and of anger. "A pleasant memory! It may well be pleasant to you, who are released from the woman whom you ruined, who can turn now

to another without any pale face to be seen within the *salons* of your court to remind you of your perfidy. But to me, pining in some lonely country house, spurned by my husband, despised by my family, the scorn and jest of France, far from all which gave a charm to life, far from the man for whose love I have sacrificed everything—this will be a very pleasant memory to me, you may be sure!"

The king's eyes had caught the angry gleam which shot from hers, and yet he strove hard to set a curb upon his temper. When such a matter had to be discussed between the proudest man and the haughtiest woman in all France, one or the other must yield a point. He felt that it was for him to do so, and yet it did not come kindly to his imperious nature.

"There is nothing to be gained, madame," said he, "by using words which are neither seemly for your tongue nor for my ears. You will do me the justice to confess that where I might command I am now entreating, and

that instead of ordering you as my subject, I am persuading you as my friend."

"Oh, you show too much consideration, sire! Our relations of twenty years or so can scarce suffice to explain such forbearance from you. I should indeed be grateful that you have not set your archers of the guard upon me, or marched me from the palace between a file of your musketeers. Sire, how can I thank you for this forbearance?" She courtesied low, with her face set in a mocking smile.

"Your words are bitter, madame."

"My heart is bitter, sire."

"Nay, Françoise, be reasonable, I implore you. We have both left our youth behind."

"The allusion to my years comes gracefully from your lips."

"Ah, you distort my words. Then I shall say no more. You may not see me again, madame. Is there no question which you would wish to ask me before I go?"

"Good God!" she cried; "is this a man?

Has it a heart? Are these the lips which have told me so often that he loved me? Are these the eyes which have looked so fondly into mine? Can you then thrust away a woman whose life has been yours as you put away the St. Germain palace when a more showy one was ready for you? And this is the end of all those vows, those sweet whispers, those persuasions, those promises —— This!"

"Nay, madame, this is painful to both of us."

"Pain! Where is the pain in your face? I see anger in it because I have dared to speak truth; I see joy in it because you feel that your vile task is done. But where is the pain? Ah, when I am gone all will be so easy to you—will it not? You can go back then to your governess ——"

"Madame!"

"Yes, yes, you cannot frighten me! What do I care for all that you can do? But I know all. Do not think that I am blind.

And so you would even have married her! You the descendant of St. Louis, and she the Scarron widow, the poor drudge whom in charity I took into my household! Ah, how your courtiers will smile! how the little poets will scribble! how the wits will whisper! You do not hear of these things, of course, but they are a little painful for your friends."

"My patience can bear no more," cried the king furiously. "I leave you, madame, and forever."

But her fury had swept all fear and discretion from her mind. She stepped between the door and him, her face flushed, her eyes blazing, her face thrust a little forward, one small white satin slipper tapping upon the carpet.

"You are in haste, sire! She is waiting for you, doubtless."

"Let me past, madame."

"But it was a disappointment last night, was it not, my poor sire? Ah, and for the governess, what a blow! Great Heaven, what

a blow! No archbishop! No marriage! All the pretty plan gone wrong! Was it not cruel?"

Louis gazed at the beautiful furious face in bewilderment, and it flashed across his mind that perhaps her grief had turned her brain. What else could be the meaning of this wild talk of the archbishop and the disappointment? It would be unworthy of him to speak harshly to one who was so afflicted. He must sooth her, and, above all, he must get away from her.

"You have had the keeping of a good many of my family jewels," said he. "I beg that you will still retain them as a small sign of my regard."

He had hoped to please her and to calm her, but in an instant she was over at her treasure-cupboard hurling double handfuls of precious stones down at his feet. They clinked and rattled, the little pellets of red and yellow and green, rolling, glinting over the floor and rapping up against the oak panels at the base of the walls.

"They will do for the governess if the archbishop comes at last," she cried.

He was more convinced than ever that she had lost her wits. A thought struck him by which he might appeal to all that was softer and more gentle in her nature. He stepped swiftly to the door, pushed it half open, and gave a whispered order. A youth with long golden hair waving down over his black velvet doublet entered the room. It was her youngest son, the Count of Toulouse.

"I thought that you would wish to bid him farewell," said Louis.

She stood staring as though unable to realise the significance of his words. Then it was borne suddenly in upon her that her children as well as her lover were to be taken from her, that this other woman should see them and speak with them and win their love while she was far away. All that was evil and bitter in the woman flashed suddenly up in her, until for the instant she was what the king had thought her. If her son was not

for her, then he should be for none. A jewelled knife lay among her treasures, ready to her hand. She caught it up and rushed at the cowering lad. Louis screamed and ran forward to stop her; but another had been swifter than he. A woman had darted through the open door, and had caught the upraised wrist. There was a moment's struggle, two queenly figures swayed and strained, and the knife dropped between their feet. The frightened Louis caught it up, and seizing his little son by the wrist, he rushed from the apartment. Françoise de Montespan staggered back against the ottoman to find herself confronted by the steady eyes and set face of that other Françoise, the woman whose presence fell like a shadow at every turn of her life.

"I have saved you, madame, from doing that which you would have been the first to bewail."

"Saved me! It is you who have driven me to this!"

The fallen favourite leaned against the high back of the ottoman, her hands resting behind her upon the curve of the velvet. Her lids were half closed on her flashing eyes, and her lips just parted to show a gleam of her white teeth. Here was the true Françoise de Montespan, a feline creature crouching for a spring, very far from that humble and soft-spoken Françoise who had won the king back by her gentle words. Madame de Maintenon's hand had been cut in the struggle, and the blood was dripping down from the end of her fingers, but neither woman had time to spare a thought upon that. Her firm gray eyes were fixed upon her former rival as one fixes them upon some weak and treacherous creature who may be dominated by a stronger will.

"Yes, it is you who have driven me to this —you, whom I picked up when you were hard pressed for a crust of bread or a cup of sour wine. What had you? You had nothing—nothing except a name which was a laughing-stock. And what did I give you? I gave

you everything. You know that I gave you everything. Money, position, the entrance to the court. You had them all from me. And now you mock me!"

"Madame, I do not mock you. I pity you from the bottom of my heart."

"Pity? Ha! ha! A Mortemart is pitied by the widow Scarron! Your pity may go where your gratitude is, and where your character is. We shall be troubled with it no longer then."

"Your words do not pain me."

"I can believe that you are not sensitive."

"Not when my conscience is at ease."

"Ah! it has not troubled you, then?"

"Not upon this point, madame."

"My God! How terrible must those other points have been!"

"I have never had an evil thought towards you."

"None towards me? Oh, woman, woman!"

"What have I done, then? The king came to my room to see the children taught. He

staid. He talked. He asked my opinion on this and that. Could I be silent? or could I say other than what I thought?"

"You turned him against me!"

"I should be proud indeed if I thought that I had turned him to virtue."

"The word comes well from your lips."

"I would that I heard it upon yours."

"And so, by your own confession, you stole the king's love from me, most virtuous of widows!"

"I had all gratitude and kindly thought for you. You have, as you have so often reminded me, been my benefactress. It was not necessary for you to say it, for I had never for an instant forgotten it. Yet if the king has asked me what I thought, I will not deny to you that I have said that sin is sin, and that he would be a worthier man if he shook off the guilty bonds which held him."

"Or exchanged them for others."

"For those of duty."

"Pah! Your hypocrisy sickens me! If

you pretend to be a nun, why are you not where the nuns are? You would have the best of two worlds—would you not?—have all that the court can give, and yet ape the manners of the cloister. But you need not do it with me! I know you as your inmost heart knows you. I was honest, and what I did, I did before the world. You, behind your priests and your directors and your *prie-dieus* and your missals—do you think that you deceive me, as you deceive others?"

Her antagonist's grey eyes sparkled for the first time, and she took a quick step forward, with one white hand half lifted in rebuke.

"You may speak as you will of me," said she. "To me it is no more than the foolish paroquet that chatters in your anteroom. But do not touch upon things which are sacred. Ah, if you would but raise your own thoughts to such things—if you would but turn them inwards, and see, before it is too late, how vile and foul is this life which you have led! What might you not have done?

His soul was in your hands like clay for the potter. If you had raised him up, if you had led him on the higher path, if you had brought out all that was noble and good within him, how your name would have been loved and blessed, from the château to the cottage! But no; you dragged him down; you wasted his youth; you drew him from his wife; you marred his manhood. A crime in one so high begets a thousand others in those who look to him for an example; and all, all are upon your soul. Take heed, madame, for God's sake take heed ere it be too late! For all your beauty, there can be for you, as for me, a few short years of life. Then, when that brown hair is white, when that white cheek is sunken, when that bright eye is dimmed—ah, then God pity the sin-stained soul of Françoise de Montespan!"

Her rival had sunk her head for the moment before the solemn words and the beautiful eyes. For an instant she stood silent, cowed for the first time in all her life;

but then the mocking, defiant spirit came back to her, and she glanced up with a curling lip.

"I am already provided with a spiritual director, thank you," said she. "Oh, madame, you must not think to throw dust in my eyes! I know you, and know you well!"

"On the contrary, you seem to know less than I had expected. If you know me so well, pray what am I?"

All her rival's bitterness and hatred rang in the tones of her answer. "You are," said she, "the governess of my children, and the secret mistress of the king."

"You are mistaken," answered Madame de Maintenon, serenely. "I am the governess of your children, and I am the king's wife."

CHAPTER XXI.

THE MAN IN THE CALÈCHE.

Often had De Montespan feigned a faint in the days when she wished to disarm the anger of the king. So she had drawn his arms round her, and won the pity which is the twin sister of love. But now she knew what it was to have the senses struck out of her by a word. She could not doubt the truth of what she heard. There was that in her rival's face, in her steady eye, in her quiet voice, which carried absolute conviction with it. She stood stunned for an instant, panting, her outstretched hands feeling at the air, her defiant eyes dulling and glazing. Then, with a short sharp cry, the wail of one who has fought hard and yet knows that she can fight no more, her proud head drooped,

and she fell forwards senseless at the feet of her rival.

Madame de Maintenon stooped and raised her up in her strong white arms. There were true grief and pity in her eyes as she looked down at the snow-pale face which lay against her bosom, all the bitterness and pride gone out of it, and nothing left save the tear which sparkled under the dark lashes, and the petulant droop of the lip, like that of a child which had wept itself to sleep. She laid her on the ottoman and placed a silken cushion under her head. Then she gathered together and put back into the open cupboard all the jewels which were scattered about the carpet. Having locked it, and placed the key on a table where its owner's eye would readily fall upon it, she struck a gong, which summoned the little black page.

"Your mistress is indisposed," said she. "Go and bring her maids to her." And so, having done all that lay with her to do, she turned away from the great silent room,

where, amid the velvet and the gilding, her beautiful rival lay like a crushed flower, helpless and hopeless.

Helpless enough, for what could she do? and hopeless too, for how could fortune aid her? The instant that her senses had come back to her she had sent away her waiting-women, and lay with clasped hands and a drawn face planning out her own weary future. She must go; that was certain. Not merely because it was the king's order, but because only misery and mockery remained for her now in the palace where she had reigned supreme. It was true that she had held her position against the queen before, but all her hatred could not blind her to the fact that her rival was a very different woman to poor meek little Maria Theresa. No; her spirit was broken at last. She must accept defeat, and she must go.

She rose from the couch, feeling that she had aged ten years in an hour. There was much to be done, and little time in which to

do it. She had cast down her jewels when the king had spoken as though they would atone for the loss of his love; but now that the love was gone, there was no reason why the jewels should be lost too. If she had ceased to be the most powerful, she might still be the richest woman in France. There was her pension, of course. That would be a munificent one, for Louis was always generous. And then there was all the spoil which she had collected during these long years, the jewels, the pearls, the gold, the vases, the pictures, the crucifixes, the watches, the trinkets—together they represented many millions of livres. With her own hands she packed away the more precious and portable of them, while she arranged with her brother for the safe-keeping of the others. All day she was at work in a mood of feverish energy, doing anything and everything which might distract her thoughts from her own defeat and her rival's victory. By evening all was ready, and she had arranged that her property

should be sent after her to Petit Bourg, to which castle she intended to retire.

It wanted half an hour of the time fixed for her departure, when a young cavalier, whose face was strange to her, was ushered into her room.

He came with a message from her brother.

"Monsieur de Vivonne regrets, madame, that the rumour of your departure has got abroad among the court."

"What do I care for that, monsieur?" she retorted, with all her old spirit.

"He says, madame, that the courtiers may assemble at the west gate to see you go; that Madame de Neuilly will be there, and the Duchesse de Chambord, and Mademoiselle de Rohan, and ——"

The lady shrunk with horror at the thought of such an ordeal. To drive away from the palace, where she had been more than queen, under the scornful eyes and bitter gibes of so many personal enemies! After all the humiliations of the day, that would be the

crowning cup of sorrow. Her nerve was broken. She could not face it.

"Tell my brother, monsieur, that I should be much obliged if he would make fresh arrangements, by which my departure might be private."

"He bade me say that he had done so, madame."

"Ah! at what hour, then?"

"Now. As soon as possible."

"I am ready. At the west gate, then?"

"No; at the east. The carriage waits."

"And where is my brother?"

"We are to pick him up at the park gate."

"And why that?"

"Because he is watched; and were he seen beside the carriage, all would be known."

"Very good. Then, monsieur, if you will take my cloak and this casket we may start at once."

They made their way by a circuitous route through the less-used corridors, she hurrying on like a guilty creature, a hood drawn over

her face, and her heart in a flutter at every stray footfall. But fortune stood her friend. She met no one, and soon found herself at the eastern postern-gate. A couple of phlegmatic Swiss guardsmen leaned upon their muskets upon either side, and the lamp above shone upon the carriage which awaited her. The door was open, and a tall cavalier swathed in a black cloak handed her into it. He then took the seat opposite to her, slammed the door, and the calèche rattled away down the main drive.

It had not surprised her that this man should join her inside the coach, for it was usual to have a guard there, and he was doubtless taking the place which her brother would afterwards occupy. That was all natural enough. But when ten minutes passed by, and he had neither moved nor spoken, she peered at him through the gloom with some curiosity. In the glance which she had of him, as he handed her in, she had seen that he was dressed like a gentleman, and

there was that in his bow and wave as he did it which told her experienced senses that he was a man of courtly manners. But courtiers, as she had known them, were gallant and garrulous, and this man was so very quiet and still. Again she strained her eyes through the gloom. His hat was pulled down and his cloak was still drawn across his mouth, but from out of the shadow she seemed to get a glimpse of two eyes which peered at her even as she did at him.

At last the silence impressed her with a vague uneasiness. It was time to bring it to an end.

"Surely, monsieur, we have passed the park gate where we were to pick up my brother."

Her companion neither answered nor moved. She thought that perhaps the rumble of the heavy calèche had drowned her voice.

"I say, monsieur," she repeated, leaning forwards, "that we have passed the place

where we were to meet Monsieur de Vivonne."

He took no notice.

"Monsieur," she cried, "I again remark that we have passed the gates."

There was no answer.

A thrill ran through her nerves. Who or what could he be, this silent man? Then suddenly it struck her that he might be dumb.

"Perhaps monsieur is afflicted," she said. "Perhaps monsieur cannot speak. If that be the cause of your silence, will you raise your hand, and I shall understand." He sat rigid and silent.

Then a sudden mad fear came upon her, shut up in the dark with this dreadful voiceless thing. She screamed in her terror, and strove to pull down the window and open the door. But a grip of steel closed suddenly round her wrist and forced her back into her seat. And yet the man's body had not moved, and there was no sound save the lurching and

rasping of the carriage and the clatter of the flying horses. They were already out on the country roads far beyond Versailles. It was darker than before, heavy clouds had banked over the heavens, and the rumbling of thunder was heard low down on the horizon.

The lady lay back panting upon the leather cushions of the carriage. She was a brave woman, and yet this sudden strange horror coming upon her at the moment when she was weakest had shaken her to the soul. She crouched in the corner, staring across with eyes which were dilated with terror at the figure on the other side. If he would but say something! Any revelation, any menace, was better than this silence. It was so dark now that she could hardly see his vague outline, and every instant, as the storm gathered, it became still darker. The wind was blowing in little short angry puffs, and still there was that far-off rattle and rumble. Again the strain of the silence was unbearable. She must break it at any cost.

"Sir," said she, "there is some mistake here. I do not know by what right you prevent me from pulling down the window and giving my directions to the coachman."

He said nothing.

"I repeat, sir, that there is some mistake. This is the carriage of my brother, Monsieur de Vivonne, and he is not a man who will allow his sister to be treated uncourteously."

A few heavy drops of rain splashed against one window. The clouds were lower and denser. She had quite lost sight of that motionless figure, but it was all the more terrible to her now that it was unseen. She screamed with sheer terror, but her scream availed no more than her words.

"Sir," she cried, clutching forward with her hands and grasping his sleeve, "you frighten me. You terrify me. I have never harmed you. Why should you wish to hurt an unfortunate woman? Oh, speak to me; for God's sake, speak!"

Still the patter of rain upon the window,

and no other sound save her own sharp breathing.

"Perhaps you do not know who I am!" she continued, endeavouring to assume her usual tone of command, and talking now to an absolute and impenetrable darkness. "You may learn when it is too late that you have chosen the wrong person for this pleasantry. I am the Marquise de Montespan, and I am not one who forgets a slight. If you know anything of the court, you must know that my word has some weight with the king. You may carry me away in this carriage, but I am not a person who can disappear without speedy inquiry, and speedy vengeance if I have been wronged. If you would —— Oh, Jesus! Have mercy!"

A livid flash of lightning had burst from the heart of the cloud, and, for an instant, the whole country-side and the interior of the calèche were as light as day. The man's face was within a hand's-breadth of her own, his mouth wide open, his eyes mere shining

slits, convulsed with silent merriment. Every detail flashed out clear in that vivid light—his red quivering tongue, the lighter pink beneath it, the broad white teeth, the short brown beard cut into a peak and bristling forward.

But it was not the sudden flash, it was not the laughing, cruel face, which shot an ice-cold shudder through Françoise de Montespan. It was that, of all men upon earth, this was he whom she most dreaded, and whom she had least thought to see.

"Maurice!" she screamed. "Maurice! it is you!"

"Yes, little wifie, it is I. We are restored to each other's arms, you see, after this interval."

"Oh, Maurice, how you have frightened me! How could you be so cruel? Why would you not speak to me?"

"Because it was so sweet to sit in silence and to think that I really had you to myself after all these years, with none to come be-

tween. Ah, little wifie, I have often longed for this hour."

"I have wronged you, Maurice; I have wronged you! Forgive me!"

"We do not forgive in our family, my darling Françoise. Is it not like old days to find ourselves driving together? And in this carriage, too. It is the very one which bore us back from the cathedral where you made your vows so prettily. I sat as I sit now, and you sat there, and I took your hand like this, and I pressed it, and ——"

"Oh, villain, you have twisted my wrist! You have broken my arm!"

"Oh, surely not, my little wifie! And then you remember that, as you told me how truly you would love me, I leaned forward to your lips, and ——"

"Oh, help! Brute, you have cut my mouth! You have struck me with your ring."

"Struck you! Now who would have thought that spring day when we planned

out our futures, that this also was in the future waiting for me and you? And this! and this!"

He struck savagely at her face in the darkness. She threw herself down, her head pressed against the cushions. With the strength and fury of a maniac he showered his blows above her, thudding upon the leather or crashing upon the wood-work, heedless of his own splintered hands.

"So I have silenced you," said he at last. "I have stopped your words with my kisses before now. But the world goes on, Françoise, and times change, and women grow false, and men grow stern."

"You may kill me if you will," she moaned.

"I will," said he, simply.

Still the carriage flew along, jolting and staggering in the deeply-rutted country roads. The storm had passed, but the growl of the thunder and the far-off glint of a lightning-flash were to be heard and seen on the other

side of the heavens. The moon shone out with its clear cold light, silvering the broad, hedgeless, poplar-fringed plains, and shining through the window of the carriage upon the crouching figure and her terrible companion. He leaned back now, his arms folded upon his chest, his eyes gloating upon the abject misery of the woman who had wronged him.

"Where are you taking me?" she asked at last.

"To Portillac, my little wifie."

"And why there? What would you do to me?"

"I would silence that little lying tongue forever. It shall deceive no more men."

"You would murder me?"

"If you call it that."

"You have a stone for a heart."

"My other was given to a woman."

"Oh, my sins are indeed punished."

"Rest assured that they will be."

"Can I do nothing to atone?"

"I will see that you atone."

"You have a sword by your side, Maurice. Why do you not kill me, then, if you are so bitter against me? Why do you not pass it through my heart?"

"Rest assured that I would have done so had I not an excellent reason."

"Why, then?"

"I will tell you. At Portillac I have the right of the high justice, the middle, and the low. I am seigneur there, and can try, condemn, and execute. It is my lawful privilege. This pitiful king will not even know how to avenge you, for the right is mine, and he cannot gainsay it without making an enemy of every seigneur in France."

He opened his mouth again and laughed at his own device, while she, shivering in every limb, turned away from his cruel face and glowing eyes, and buried her face in her hands. Once more she prayed God to forgive her for her poor sinful life. So they whirled through the night behind the clattering horses,

the husband and the wife, saying nothing, but with hatred and fear raging in their hearts, until a brazier fire shone down upon them from the angle of a keep, and the shadow of the huge pile loomed vaguely up in front of them in the darkness. It was the Castle of Portillac.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE SCAFFOLD OF PORTILLAC.

And thus it was that Amory de Catinat and Amos Green saw from their dungeon window the midnight carriage which discharged its prisoner before their eyes. Hence, too, came that ominous planking and that strange procession in the early morning. And thus it also happened that they found themselves looking down upon Françoise de Montespan as she was led to her death, and that they heard that last piteous cry for aid at the instant when the heavy hand of the ruffian with the axe fell upon her shoulder, and she was forced down upon her knees beside the block. She shrank screaming from the dreadful red-stained, greasy billet of wood, but the butcher heaved up his weapon, and the seigneur had taken a step forward with hand outstretched

to seize the long auburn hair and to drag the dainty head down with it, when suddenly he was struck motionless with astonishment, and stood with his foot advanced and his hand still out, his mouth half open, and his eyes fixed in front him.

And, indeed, what he had seen was enough to fill any man with amazement. Out of the small square window which faced him a man had suddenly shot head-foremost, pitching on to his outstretched hands and then bounding to his feet. Within a foot of his heels came the head of a second one, who fell more heavily than the first, and yet recovered himself as quickly. The one wore the blue coat and silver facings of the king's guard; the second had the dark coat and clean-shaven face of a man of peace; but each carried a short rusty iron bar in his hand. Not a word did either of them say, but the soldier took two quick steps forward and struck at the headsman while he was still poising himself for a blow at the victim. There was a thud,

with a crackle like a breaking egg, and the bar flew into pieces. The headsman gave a dreadful cry, and dropped his axe, clapped his two hands to his head, and running zigzag across the scaflold, fell over, a dead man, into the court-yard beneath.

Quick as a flash De Catinat had caught up the axe, and faced De Montespan with the heavy weapon slung over his shoulder and a challenge in his eyes.

"Now!" said he.

The seigneur had for the instant been too astounded to speak. Now he understood at least that these strangers had come between him and his prey.

"Seize these men!" he shrieked, turning to his followers.

"One moment!" cried De Catinat, with a voice and manner which commanded attention. "You see by my coat what I am. I am the body-servant of the king. Who touches me touches him. Have a care to yourselves. It is a dangerous game!"

"On, you cowards!" roared De Montespan.

But the men-at-arms hesitated, for the fear of the king was as a great shadow which hung over all France. De Catinat saw their indecision, and he followed up his advantage.

"This woman," he cried, "is the king's own favourite, and if any harm come to a lock of her hair, I tell you that there is not a living soul within this portalice who will not die a death of torture. Fools, will you gasp out your lives upon the rack, or writhe in boiling oil, at the bidding of this madman?"

"Who are these men, Marceau?" cried the seigneur, furiously.

"They are prisoners, your excellency."

"Prisoners! Whose prisoners?"

"Yours, your excellency."

"Who ordered you to detain them?"

"You did. The escort brought your signet-ring."

"I never saw the men. There is devilry in this. But they shall not beard me in my own castle, nor stand between me and my

own wife. No, *par dieu!* they shall not and live! You men, Marceau, Étienne, Gilbert, Jean, Pierre, all you who have eaten my bread, on to them, I say!"

He glanced round with furious eyes, but they fell only upon hung heads and averted faces. With a hideous curse he flashed out his sword and rushed at his wife, who knelt half insensible beside the block. De Catinat sprang between them to protect her; but Marceau, the bearded seneschal, had already seized his master round the waist. With the strength of a maniac, his teeth clenched and the foam churning from the corners of his lips, De Montespan writhed round in the man's grasp, and shortening his sword, he thrust it through the brown beard and deep into the throat behind it. Marceau fell back with a choking cry, the blood bubbling from his mouth and his wound; but before his murderer could disengage his weapon, De Catinat and the American, aided by a dozen of the retainers, had dragged him down on to

the scaffold, and Amos Green had pinioned him so securely that he could but move his eyes and his lips, with which he lay glaring and spitting at them. So savage were his own followers against him—for Marceau was well loved amongst them—that, with axe and block so ready, justice might very swiftly have had her way, had not a long clear bugle call, rising and falling in a thousand little twirls and flourishes, clanged out suddenly in the still morning air. De Catinat pricked up his ears at the sound of it like a hound at the huntsman's call.

"Did you hear, Amos?"

"It was a trumpet."

"It was the guards' bugle call. You, there, hasten to the gate! Throw up the portcullis and drop the drawbridge! Stir yourselves, or even now you may suffer for your master's sins! It has been a narrow escape, Amos!"

"You may say so, friend. I saw him put out his hand to her hair, even as you sprang from the window. Another instant

and he would have had her scalped. But she is a fair woman, the fairest that ever my eyes rested upon, and it is not fit that she should kneel here upon these boards." He dragged her husband's long black cloak from him, and made a pillow for the senseless woman with a tenderness and delicacy which came strangly from a man of his build and bearing.

He was still stooping over her when there came the clang of the falling bridge, and an instant later the clatter of the hoofs of a troop of cavalry, who swept with wave of plumes, toss of manes, and jingle of steel into the court-yard. At the head was a tall horseman in the full dress of the guards, with a curling feather in his hat, high buff gloves, and his sword gleaming in the sunlight. He cantered forward towards the scaffold, his keen dark eyes taking in every detail of the group which awaited him there. De Catinat's face brightened at the sight of him, and he was down in an instant beside his stirrup.

"De Brissac!"

"De Catinat! Now where in the name of wonder did you come from?"

"I have been a prisoner. Tell me, De Brissac, did you leave the message in Paris?"

"Certainly I did."

"And the archbishop came?"

"He did."

"And the marriage?"

"Took place as arranged. That is why this poor woman whom I see yonder has had to leave the palace."

"I thought as much."

"I trust that no harm has come to her?"

"My friend and I were just in time to save her. Her husband lies there. He is a fiend, De Brissac."

"Very likely; but an angel might have grown bitter had he had the same treatment."

"We have him pinioned here. He has slain a man, and I have slain another."

"On my word, you have been busy."

"How did you know that we were here?"

"Nay, that is an unexpected pleasure."

"You did not come for us, then?"

"No; we came for the lady."

"And how did this fellow get hold of her?"

"Her brother was to have taken her in his carriage. Her husband learned it, and by a lying message he coaxed her into his own, which was at another door. When De Vivonne found that she did not come, and that her rooms were empty, he made inquires, and soon learned how she had gone. De Montespan's arms had been seen on the panel, and so the king sent me here with my troop as fast as we could gallop."

"Ah, and you would have come too late had a strange chance not brought us here. I know not who it was who waylaid us, for this man seemed to know nothing of the matter. However, all that will be clearer afterwards. What is to be done now?"

"I have my own orders. Madame is to be sent to Petit Bourg, and any who are concerned in offering her violence are to be

kept until the king's pleasure is known. The castle, too, must be held for the king. But you, De Catinat, you have nothing to do now?"

"Nothing, save that I would like well to ride into Paris to see that all is right with my uncle and his daughter."

"Ah, that sweet little cousin of thine! By my soul, I do not wonder that the folk know you well in the Rue St. Martin. Well, I have carried a message for you once, and you shall do as much for me now."

"With all my heart. And whither?"

"To Versailles. The king will be on fire to know how we have fared. You have the best right to tell him, since without you and your friend yonder it would have been but a sorry tale."

"I will be there in two hours."

"Have you horses?"

"Ours were slain."

"You will find some in the stables here. Pick the best, since you have lost your own in the king's service."

The advice was too good to be overlooked. De Catinat, beckoning to Amos Green, hurried away with him to the stables, while De Brissac, with a few short sharp orders disarmed the retainers, stationed his guardsmen all over the castle, and arranged for the removal of the lady and for the custody of her husband. An hour later the two friends were riding swiftly down the country road, inhaling the sweet air, which seemed the fresher for their late experience of the dank foul vapours of their dungeon. Far behind them a little dark pinnacle jutting over a grove of trees marked the château which they had left, while on the extreme horizon to the west there came a quick shimmer and sparkle where the level rays of the early sun gleamed upon the magnificent palace which was their goal.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE FALL OF THE CATINATS.

Two days after Madame de Maintenon's marriage to the king there was held within the humble walls of her little room a meeting which was destined to cause untold misery to many hundreds of thousands of people, and yet, in the wisdom of Providence, to be an instrument in carrying French arts and French ingenuity and French sprightliness among those heavier Teutonic peoples who have been the stronger and the better ever since for the leaven which they then received. For in history great evils have sometimes arisen from a virtue, and most beneficent results have often followed hard upon a crime.

The time had come when the Church was to claim her promise from madame, and her

pale cheek and sad eyes showed how vain it had been for her to try and drown the pleadings of her tender heart by the arguments of the bigots around her. She knew the Huguenots of France. Who could know them better, seeing that she was herself from their stock, and had been brought up in their faith? She knew their patience, their nobility, their independence, their tenacity. What chance was there that they would conform to the king's wish? A few great nobles might, but the others would laugh at the galleys, the jail, or even the gallows when the faith of their fathers was at stake. If their creed were no longer tolerated, then, and if they remained true to it, they must either fly from the country or spend a living death tugging at an oar or working in a chain-gang upon the roads. It was a dreadful alternative to present to a people who were so numerous that they made a small nation in themselves. And most dreadful of all that she who was of their own blood should cast her voice against them.

And yet her promise had been given, and now the time had come when it must be redeemed.

The eloquent Bishop Bossuet was there, with Louvois, the minister of war, and the famous Jesuit, Father La Chaise, each piling argument upon argument to overcome the reluctance of the king. Beside them stood another priest, so thin and so pale that he might have risen from his bed of death, but with a fierce light burning in his large dark eyes, and with a terrible resolution in his drawn brows and in the set of his grim, lanky jaw. Madame bent over her tapestry and weaved her coloured silks in silence, while the king leaned upon his hand and listened with the face of a man who knows that he is driven, and yet can hardly turn against the goads. On the low table lay a paper, with pen and ink beside it. It was the order for the revocation, and it only needed the king's signature to make it the law of the land.

"And so, father, you are of opinion that if

I stamp out heresy in this fashion I shall assure my own salvation in the next world?" he asked.

"You will have merited a reward."

"And you think so too, Monsieur Bishop?"

"Assuredly, sire."

"And you, Abbé du Chayla?"

The emaciated priest spoke for the first time, a tinge of colour creeping into his corpse-like cheeks, and a more lurid light in his deep-set eyes.

"I know not about assuring your salvation, sire. I think it would take very much more to do that. But there cannot be a doubt as to your damnation if you do not do it."

The king started angrily, and frowned at the speaker.

"Your words are somewhat more curt than I am accustomed to," he remarked.

"In such a matter it were cruel indeed to leave you in doubt. I say again that your soul's fate hangs upon the balance. Heresy is a mortal sin. Thousands of heretics would

turn to the Church if you did but give the word. Therefore these thousands of mortal sins are all upon your soul. What hope for it then, if you do not amend?"

"My father and my grandfather tolerated them."

"Then, without some special extension of the grace of God, your father and your grandfather are burning in hell."

"Insolent!" The king sprang from his seat.

"Sire, I will say what I hold to be the truth were you fifty times a king. What care I for any man when I know that I speak for the King of kings? See; are these the limbs of one who would shrink from testifying to truth?" With a sudden movement he threw back the long sleeves of his gown and shot out his white fleshless arms. The bones were all knotted and bent and screwed into the most fantastic shapes. Even Louvois, the hardened man of the court, and his two brother priests, shuddered at the sight of

those dreadful limbs. He raised them above his head and turned his burning eyes upwards.

"Heaven has chosen me to testify for the faith before now," said he. "I heard that blood was wanted to nourish the young church of Siam, and so to Siam I journeyed. They tore me open; they crucified me; they wrenched and split my bones. I was left as a dead man, yet God has breathed the breath of life back into me that I may help in this great work of the regeneration of France."

"Your sufferings, father," said Louis, resuming his seat, "give you every claim, both upon the Church and upon me, who am its special champion and protector. What would you counsel, then, father, in the case of those Huguenots who refuse to change?"

"They would change," cried Du Chayla, with a drawn smile upon his ghastly face. "They must bend or they must break. What matter if they be ground to powder, if we can but build up a complete Church in the land?"

His deep-set eyes glowed with ferocity, and he shook one bony hand in savage wrath above his head.

"The cruelty with which you have been used, then, has not taught you to be more tender to others."

"Tender! To heretics! No, sire, my own pains have taught me that the world and the flesh are as nothing, and that the truest charity to another is to capture his soul at all risks to his vile body. I should have these Huguenot souls, sire, though I turned France into a shambles to gain them."

Louis was evidently deeply impressed by the fearless words and the wild earnestness of the speaker. He leaned his head upon his hand for a little time, and remained sunk in the deepest thought.

"Besides, sire," said Père La Chaise softly, "there would be little need for these stronger measures of which the good Abbé speaks. As I have already remarked to you, you are so beloved in your kingdom that the mere assur-

ance that you had expressed your will upon the subject would be enough to turn them all to the true faith."

"I wish that I could think so, father, I wish that I could think so. But what is this?"

It was his valet who had half opened the door.

"Captain de Catinat is here, who desires to see you at once, sire."

"Ask the captain to enter. Ah!" A happy thought seemed to have struck him. "We shall see what love for me will do in such a matter, for if it is anywhere to be found it must be among my own body servants."

The guardsman had arrived that instant from his long ride, and leaving Amos Green with the horses, he had come on at once, all dusty and travel-stained, to carry his message to the king. He entered now, and stood with the quiet ease of a man who is used to such scenes, his hand raised in a salute.

"What news, captain?"

"Major de Brissac bade me tell you, sire,

that he held the castle of Portillac, that the lady is safe, and that her husband is a prisoner."

Louis and his wife exchanged a quick glance of relief.

"That is well," said he. "By-the-way, captain, you have served me in many ways of late, and always with success. I hear, Louvois, that De la Salle is dead of the small-pox."

"He died yesterday, sire."

"Then I desire that you make out the vacant commission of major to Monsieur de Catinat. Let me be the first to congratulate you, major, upon your promotion, though you will need to exchange the blue coat for the pearl and gray of the mousquetaires. We cannot spare you from the household, you see."

De Catinat kissed the hand which the monarch held out to him.

"May I be worthy of your kindness, sire!"

"You would do what you could to serve me, would you not?"

"My life is yours, sire."

"Very good Then I shall put your fidelity to the proof."

"I am ready for any proof."

"It is not a very severe one. You see this paper upon the table. It is an order that all the Huguenots in my dominions shall give up their errors, under pain of banishment or captivity. Now I have hopes that there are many of my faithful subjects who are at fault in this matter, but who will abjure it when they learn that it is my clearly expressed wish that they should do so. It would be a great joy to me to find that it was so, for it would be a pain to me to use force against any man who bears the name of Frenchman. Do you follow me?"

"Yes, sire." The young man had turned deadly pale, and he shifted his feet, and opened and clasped his hands. He had faced death a dozen times and under many different forms, but never had he felt such a sinking of the heart as came over him now.

"You are yourself a Huguenot, I understand. I would gladly have you, then, as the first fruit of this great measure. Let us hear from your own lips that you, for one, are ready to follow the lead of your king in this as in other things."

The young guardsman still hesitated, though his doubts were rather as to how he should frame his reply than as to what its substance should be. He felt that in an instant Fortune had wiped out all the good turns which she had done him during his past life, and that now, far from being in her debt, he held a heavy score against her. The king arched his eye-brows and drummed his fingers impatiently as he glanced at the downcast face and dejected bearing.

"Why all this thought?" he cried. "You are a man whom I have raised and whom I will raise. He who has a major's epaulets at thirty may carry a marshal's bâton at fifty. Your past is mine, and your future shall be no less so. What other hopes have you?"

"I have none, sire, outside your service."

"Why this silence, then? Why do you not give the assurance which I demand?"

"I cannot do it, sire."

"You cannot do it!"

"It is impossible. I should have no more peace in my mind, or respect for myself, if I knew that for the sake of position or wealth I had given up the faith of my fathers."

"Man, you are surely mad! There is all that a man could covet upon one side, and what is there upon the other?"

"There is my honour."

"And is it, then, a dishonour to embrace my religion?"

"It would be a dishonour to me to embrace it for the sake of gain without believing in it."

"Then believe it."

"Alas, sire, a man cannot force himself to believe. Belief is a thing which must come to him, not he to it."

"On my word, father," said Louis, glancing

with a bitter smile at his Jesuit confessor, "I shall have to pick the cadets of the household from your seminary, since my officers have turned casuists and theologians. So, for the last time, you refuse to obey my request?"

"Oh, sire ——" De Catinat took a step forward with outstretched hands and tears in his eyes.

But the king checked him with a gesture. "I desire no protestations," said he. "I judge a man by his acts. Do you abjure or not?"

"I cannot, sire."

"You see," said Louis, turning again to the Jesuit, "it will not be as easy as you think."

"This man is obstinate, it is true, but many others will be more yielding."

The king shook his head. "I would that I knew what to do," said he. "Madame, I know that you, at least, will ever give me the best advice. You have heard all that has been said. What do you recommend?"

She kept her eyes still fixed upon her tapestry, but her voice was firm and clear as she answered:

"You have yourself said that you are the eldest son of the Church. If the eldest son desert her, then who will do her bidding? And there is truth, too, in what the holy Abbé has said. You may imperil your own soul by condoning this sin of heresy. It grows and flourishes, and if it be not rooted out now, it may choke the truth as weeds and briers choke the wheat."

"There are districts in France now," said Bossuet, "where a church is not to be seen in a day's journey, and where all the folk, from the nobles to the peasants, are of the same accursed faith. So it is in the Cévennes, where the people are as fierce and rugged as their own mountains. Heaven guard the priests who have to bring them back from their errors"

"Whom should I send on so perilous a task?" asked Louis.

The Abbé du Chayla was down in an instant upon his knees with his gaunt hands outstretched. "Send me, sire! Me!" he cried. "I have never asked a favour of you, and never will again. But I am the man who could break these people. Send me with your message to the people of the Cévennes."

"God help the people of the Cévennes!" muttered Louis, as he looked with mingled respect and loathing at the emaciated face and fiery eyes of the fanatic. "Very well, Abbé," he added aloud; "you shall go to the Cévennes."

Perhaps for an instant there came upon the stern priest some premonition of that dreadful morning when, as he crouched in a corner of his burning home, fifty daggers were to rasp against each other in his body. He sunk his face in his hands, and a shudder passed over his gaunt frame. Then he rose, and folding his arms, he resumed his impassive attitude. Louis took up the pen from the table, and drew the paper towards him.

"I have the same counsel, then, from all of you," said he—"from you, bishop; from you, father; from you, madame; from you, abbé; and from you, Louvois. Well, if ill come from it, may it not be visited upon me! But what is this?"

De Catinat had taken a step forward with his hand outstretched. His ardent, impetuous nature had suddenly broken down all the barriers of caution, and he seemed for the instant to see that countless throng of men, women, and children of his own faith, all unable to say a word for themselves, and all looking to him as their champion and spokesman. He had thought little of such matters when all was well, but now, when danger threatened, the deeper side of his nature was moved, and he felt how light a thing is life and fortune when weighed against a great abiding cause and principle.

"Do not sign it, sire," he cried. "You will live to wish that your hand had withered ere it grasped that pen. I know it, sire; I am

sure of it. Consider all these helpless folk —the little children, the young girls, the old and the feeble. Their creed is themselves. As well ask the leaves to change the twigs on which they grow. They could not change. At most you could but hope to turn them from honest folk into hypocrites. And why should you do it? They honour you. They love you. They harm none. They are proud to serve in your armies, to fight for you, to work for you, to build up the greatness of your kingdom. I implore you, sire, to think again before you sign an order which will bring misery and desolation to so many."

For a moment the king had hesitated as he listened to the short abrupt sentences in which the soldier pleaded for his fellows, but his face hardened again as he remembered how even his own personal entreaty had been unable to prevail with this young dandy of the court.

"France's religion should be that of France's

king," said he, "and if my own guardsmen thwart me in such a matter, I must find others who will be more faithful. That major's commission in the mousquetaires must go to Captain de Belmont, Louvois."

"Very good, sire."

"And De Catinat's commission may be transferred to Lieutenant Labadoyère."

"Very good, sire."

"And I am to serve you no longer?"

"You are too dainty for my service."

De Catinat's arms fell listlessly to his side, and his head sunk forward upon his breast. Then, as he realised the ruin of all the hopes of his life, and the cruel injustice with which he had been treated, he broke into a cry of despair, and rushed from the room with the hot tears of impotent anger running down his face. So, sobbing, gesticulating, with coat unbuttoned and hat awry, he burst into the stable where placid Amos Green was smoking his pipe and watching with critical eyes the grooming of the horses.

"What in thunder is the matter now?" he asked, holding his pipe by the bowl, while the blue wreaths curled up from his lips.

"This sword," cried the Frenchman —— "I have no right to wear it! I shall break it!"

"Well, and I'll break my knife too if it will hearten you up."

"And these," cried De Catinat, tugging at his silver shoulder-straps, "they must go."

"Ah, you draw ahead of me there, for I never had any. But come, friend, let me know the trouble, that I may see if it may not be mended."

"To Paris! to Paris!" shouted the guardsman, frantically. "If I am ruined, I may yet be in time to save them. The horses, quick!"

It was clear to the American that some sudden calamity had befallen, so he aided his comrade and the grooms to saddle and bridle.

Five minutes later they were flying upon their way, and in little more than an hour

their steeds, all reeking and foam-flecked, were pulled up outside the high house in the Rue St. Martin. De Catinat sprang from his saddle and rushed up stairs, while Amos followed in his own leisurely fashion.

The old Huguenot and his beautiful daughter were seated at one side of the great fireplace, her hand in his, and they sprang up together, she to throw herself with a glad cry into the arms of her lover, and he to grasp the hand which his nephew held out to him.

At the other side of the fireplace, with a very long pipe in his mouth and a cup of wine upon a settle beside him, sat a strange-looking man, with grizzled hair and beard, a fleshy red projecting nose, and two little gray eyes, which twinkled out from under huge brindled brows. His long thin face was laced and seamed with wrinkles, crossing and recrossing everywhere, but fanning out in hundreds from the corners of his eyes. It was set in an unchanging expression, and as it was of the

same colour all over, as dark as the darkest walnut, it might have been some quaint figure-head cut out of a coarse-grained wood. He was clad in a blue serge jacket, a pair of red breeches smeared at the knees with tar, clean gray worsted stockings, large steel buckles over his coarse square-toed shoes, and beside him, balanced upon the top of a thick oaken cudgel, was a weather-stained silver-laced hat. His gray-shot hair was gathered up behind into a short stiff tail, and a seaman's hanger, with a brass handle, was girded to his waist by a tarnished leather belt.

De Catinat had been too occupied to take notice of this singular individual, but Amos Green gave a shout of delight at the sight of him, and ran forward to greet him. The other's wooden face relaxed so far as to show two tobacco-stained fangs, and, without rising, he held out a great red hand, of the size and shape of a moderate spade.

"Why, Captain Ephraim," cried Amos in English, "who ever would have thought of

finding you here? De Catinat, this is my old friend Ephraim Savage, under whose charge I came here."

"Anchor's apeak, lad, and the hatches down," said the stranger, in the peculiar drawling voice which the New-Englanders had retained from their ancestors, the English Puritans.

"And when do you sail?"

"As soon as your foot is on her deck, if Providence serve us with wind and tide. And how has all gone with thee, Amos?"

"Right well. I have much to tell you of."

"I trust that you have held yourself apart from all their popish devilry."

"Yes, yes, Ephraim."

"And have had no truck with the scarlet woman."

"No, no; but what is it now?"

The grizzled hair was bristling with rage, and the little gray eyes were gleaming from under the heavy tufts. Amos, following their

gaze, saw that De Catinat was seated with his arm round Adèle, while her head rested upon his shoulder.

"Ah, if I but knew their snip-snap, lippetty-chippetty lingo! Saw one ever such a sight! Amos, lad, what is the French for a 'shameless hussy'?"

"Nay, nay, Ephraim. Surely one may see such a sight, and think no harm of it, on our side of the water.

"Never, Amos. In no godly country."

"Tut! I have seen folks courting in New York."

"Ah, New York! I said in no godly country. I cannot answer for New York or Virginia. South of Cape Cod, or of New Haven at the furthest, there is no saying what folk will do. Very sure I am that in Boston or Salem or Plymouth she would see the bridewell and he the stocks for half as much. Ah!" He shook his head and bent his brows at the guilty couple.

But they and their old relative were far too

engrossed with their own affairs to give a thought to the Puritan seaman. De Catinat had told his tale in a few short, bitter sentences, the injustice that had been done to him, his dismissal from the king's service, and the ruin which had come upon the Huguenots of France. Adèle, as is the angel instinct of woman, thought only of her lover and his misfortunes as she listened to his story, but the old merchant tottered to his feet when he heard of the revocation of the edict, and stood with shaking limbs, staring about him in bewilderment.

"What am I to do?" he cried. "What am I to do? I am too old to begin my life again."

"Never fear, uncle," said De Catinat, heartily. "There are other lands beyond France."

"But not for me. No, no; I am too old. Lord, but Thy hand is heavy upon Thy servants. Now is the vial opened, and the carved work of the sanctuary thrown down.

Ah, what shall I do, and whither shall I turn?" He wrung his hands in his perplexity.

"What is amiss with him, then, Amos?" asked the seaman. "Though I know nothing of what he says, yet I can see that he flies a distress signal."

"He and his must leave the country, Ephraim."

"And why?"

"Because they are Protestants, and the king will not abide their creed."

Ephraim Savage was across the room in an instant, and had enclosed the old merchant's thin hand in his own great knotted fist. There was a brotherly sympathy in his strong grip and rugged weather-stained face which held up the other's courage as no words could have done.

"What is the French for 'the scarlet woman,' Amos?" he asked, glancing over his shoulder. "Tell this man that we shall see him through. Tell him that we've got a

country where he'll just fit in like a bung in a barrel. Tell him that religion is free to all there, and not a papist nearer than Baltimore or the Capuchins of the Penobscot. Tell him that if he wants to come, the *Golden Rod* is waiting with her anchor apeak and her cargo aboard. Tell him what you like, so long as you make him come."

"Then we must come at once," said De Catinat, as he listened to the cordial message which was conveyed to his uncle. "To-night the orders will be out, and to-morrow it may be too late."

"But my business!" cried the merchant.

"Take what valuables you can and leave the rest. Better that than lose all, and liberty into the bargain."

And so at last it was arranged. That very night, within five minutes of the closing of the gates, there passed out of Paris a small party of five, three upon horseback, and two in a closed carriage which bore several weighty boxes upon the top. They were the first

leaves flying before the hurricane, the earliest of that great multitude who were within the next few months to stream along every road which led from France, finding their journey's end too often in galley, dungeon, and torture chamber, and yet flooding over the frontiers in numbers sufficient to change the industries and modify the characters of all the neighbouring peoples. Like the Israelites of old, they had been driven from their homes at the bidding of an angry king, who, even while he exiled them, threw every difficulty in the way of their departure. Like them, too, there were none of them who could hope to reach their promised land without grievous wanderings, penniless, friendless, and destitute. What passages befell these pilgrims in their travels, what dangers they met and overcame in the land of the Swiss, on the Rhine, among the Walloons, in England, in Ireland, in Berlin, and even in far-off Russia, has still to be written. This one little group, however, whom we know, we may follow in their

venturesome journey, and see the chances which befell them upon that great continent which had lain fallow for so long, sown only with the weeds of humanity, but which was now at last about to quicken into such a glorious life.

END OF VOL. II.

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