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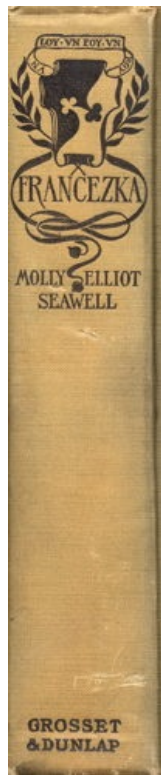
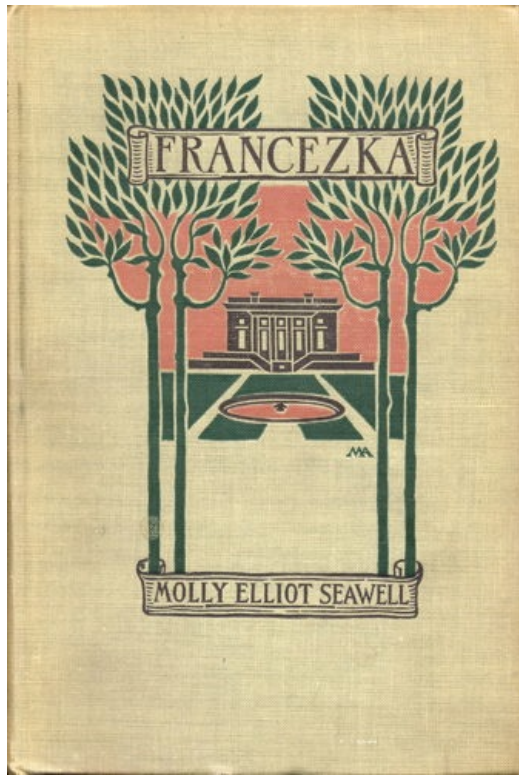
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# FRANCEZKA

BY  
MOLLY ELLIOT SEAWELL

AUTHOR OF  
THE SPRIGHTLY ROMANCE OF MARSAC, THE HISTORY OF THE LADY BETTY STAIR, ETC.

ILLUSTRATED BY  
HARRISON FISHER



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# FRANCEZKA

## CHAPTER I

### IN THE HEART OF PARIS

I maintain that my master, Maurice, Count of Saxe, Marshal-general of France, Duke of Courland and Semigallia, Knight of the Most Noble Order of Merit, Knight of the Most Noble Order of the White Eagle, Knight of St. Louis, Knight of St. Stanislaus, and of many other noble Orders—I maintain him, I say, to be the greatest man, the bravest man, the finest man, the handsomest man, the man most dreaded by his foes, the most loved by his friends, the most incomparable with the ladies, the first soldier of all time—in short, the most superb, the most terrible and the most admirable man who ever lived—and I can prove it.

There are fractious men everywhere who dispute the plainest facts. With these unfortunates I am willing to argue for a time, but if they grow impudent about Alexander the Great, or Julius Cæsar, or any of those men who have made a noise in the world, I bring against them one invincible argument—my sword. I am no great lover of the pistol. My sword is enough, and it never misses fire. I am the most peaceable creature alive, and never but twice did I lose my temper over the matter of Count Saxe's greatness. Once was when a bragging rascal of a pseudo-nobleman from the marches of Brandenburg dared to call this greatness into question, and with offensive words. I gave him his choice of taking a hundred kicks in the stomach or having his ears cut off. He chose the latter, and I sliced one of them off; he begged so hard for the other one that I let it stay on his head.

The second time was with young Gaston Cheverny, who afterward became a devoted adherent of my master—and whose strange story will be told in these pages. I will say, however, it is pretty generally understood when Babache, captain of Count Saxe's body-guard of Uhlans, sometimes known as the Clear-the-way-boys, or the Storm-alongs, and also as the Devil's Own, is in the neighborhood, that Count Saxe is the greatest man that ever lived.

I am supposed to be a Tatar prince, by birth, that is; but in truth the only claim I have to either the race or the title is, that I am very ugly. God could have made an uglier man than I am, because He is omnipotent, but I am sure He never did. I accept my ugliness. I can say as the actor at the Théâtre Français said, when the audience hissed him on account of his ugliness—it will be a great deal easier for people to get used to my face than for me to change it.

As to my birthplace, I was born in the Marais, in the cursed town of Paris, and my father was a notary in a small way. So was the father of Monsieur François Marie Arouet, who now calls himself Voltaire—and Count Saxe always swore I could write tragedies and national epics as well as Arouet had I but tried. Especially, as I ever wrote, with the greatest readiness imaginable, a much better hand than Arouet, or Voltaire, or whatever his name is—we knew the fellow well in Paris. But I never laid claim to more than what the English call mother-wit, the Spanish call freckled grammar, and the French call, being born with one's shirt on. It was, however, my readiness with the pen that first won for me the highest fortune that could befall a man—the patronage, the friendship and the affection of Maurice, Count of Saxe.

I did not turn my hand to writing for money, and paying my court to the great, as Arouet did; but being left penniless and an orphan at fourteen, and his Majesty's recruiting officers coming after me, I went to serve as a foot soldier in Flanders. I carried a musket for twelve years. Of those years I like neither to speak nor to think. At the end of that time came what I supposed would be the end of Babache: standing up before a file of soldiers, to be shot down and to die like a dog, for theft. I was innocent—that I swore on the holy Gospels, and call God to witness—but the money, two crowns, was found on me; and I could not tell how it got there, except that I had been carousing in bad company. Count Saxe being very strict against marauding, I was tried and condemned to be shot.

The whole business, trial and all, was over in a day, and on a summer morning I was led out to be shot on a bastion of the walls of Mons. It was a very beautiful morning, I remember, and also that the buglers, playing the dirge, played horribly out of time, as they always do at military executions. As I was on my way to die, Count Saxe, with a half dozen officers galloping after him, met the procession. I raised my dull eyes and looked him in the face—a thing I would not have done, except that a man who has but a quarter of an hour to live need not be bashful about anything. Count Saxe asked about my case, and the officer in charge said I was to die for stealing two crowns—and that I had been a good soldier. Count Saxe rode up close to me.

"What a fool you were to risk your life for a couple of crowns," he said.

"I risk it every day," I replied, "for a couple of sous. But I am innocent."

"Give him his life," said Count Saxe.

The buglers changed their tune from a dirge to a lively marching air; the drummer beat a couple of ruffles on his drum, and we faced about—I think the honest soldiers who were going to shoot me felt almost as glad as I. Men have to be driven and threatened with punishment to keep them from shirking when it is necessary to shoot a comrade, and there would certainly be a mutiny every time, except that a certain number of muskets have no ball cartridges in them—and every fellow thinks that he has got an empty cartridge.

That same day I wrote a letter to Count Saxe, expressing, as well as I knew how, my thanks for my life. I took it myself to his quarters—and as good luck would have it, while I was begging a pert young aide to give the letter to Count Saxe, the count himself came out of his tent. He read the letter—asked me if I wrote it—and not believing me, told me to come into his tent, sit down at his table, and write at his dictation. I did so, and I have written every line to which his name is signed since, except his love letters. Writing is, in itself, no great accomplishment. Monsieur Voltaire himself has said that a man may have a great deal of esprit and yet write like a cat. Still less important is spelling.

My master would not in his youth give attention to writing and spelling, having more important things to learn, and he had an early quarrel with grammar, which was never made up. Nevertheless, he has written the best book about war yet published—that is to say, he dictated it to me. And the French Academy elected him a member; but he made merry at the expense of the Academicians, saying as he knew not how to spell, much less to write, a seat in the Academy would become him about as well as a ring would become a cat. Also, that if the Academy elected him, it should also elect Marshal Villars, who could neither read nor write; but that I, Babache, was better fitted for an Academician than either.

It is certain, however, that no lady ever refused to accept a love letter from Count Saxe because it was ill spelled and ill written—for that part of his correspondence he attended to strictly himself. I know that certain things concerning the ladies have been urged against him. I know he has been described as "a glorious devil, loving beauty only"—but all I know concerning Count Saxe and the ladies is, the women mobbed him and sent him thousands of love letters. It may be said that I know more than I will admit. Not so. And it may also be said that I could have known all if I had wished. Well, so might I have known astronomy, if I had possessed a taste for the science. But I never liked it. I ever felt small enough anyhow without considering those myriads of suns and worlds which make one feel considerably less than nothing.

One thing I do know about Count Saxe and one lady, in particular; if he had been willing to marry that ugly Duchess of Courland, Anna Iwanowna, now Czarina of Russia, he would have been Duke of Courland *de facto* as well as *de jure*; he would have become "cousin" to the Kings of France and Spain; he would have been "most Illustrious" to the Emperor, and "most Illustrious, most Mighty," to the King of Poland, and what is more, he would have had the right of coining money.

But Count Saxe never put any compulsion on himself in affairs of the heart. And I say this; that with the only two ladies concerning whose relations with him I was familiar—for he was as secretive with me as I could wish about such things—I never knew a man more blameless. And these two ladies were both of them singularly beautiful and charming. One of them was an actress—Mademoiselle Adrienne Lecouvreur, and the other one was Mademoiselle Francezka Capello—that star-like creature whose beauty, whose riches, whose airy high spirit, whose strange, brilliant story, laid her open to peculiar dangers. Yet, toward Mademoiselle Capello, Count Saxe behaved with the most delicate chivalry during the whole of her eventful life. And he forwarded the love of Mademoiselle Capello and Gaston Cheverny with the noblest disinterestedness.

Count Saxe had a taste not common among soldiers. He liked to hear sermons read—good sermons, that is, by the great guns of the pulpit, like Bossuet. I often read them to him, and have been compelled to chastise several persons who thought this matter food for mirth.

It seems to me sometimes as if I had never known but one man and one woman in my life—Count Saxe and Francezka Capello; they alone reached the ideal heights, in my mind—for a Tatar prince and the son of a poor notary has his ideals, just the same as a duke and the son of a duke—and the fact that I was a private soldier before I became a Tatar prince and a captain of Uhlans has nothing to do with the matter. It may be that Mademoiselle Capello, who had a combination of Scotch and Spanish pride, won me with the most delicate flattery in the world by honoring me with her regard—and Babache, the Tatar, was often smiled on, when dukes and marquises were scowled at, terribly. Of course, I knew that the very difference in our rank made this possible; and I had a cross eye which stood as a sentinel in my face, to warn Love away.

Only in my dreams, did I breathe of love to Mademoiselle Capello; and in those soft and splendid visions in the mysterious night and under the earnest stars which seemed then so near and so kind, Francezka often smiled upon me—nay, even kissed me.

But it was only a dream. At all times, though, I was hers, soul and body, with a doglike devotion—and in the end, I was given to her, in a singular manner, by Count Saxe. She lavished upon me, from the beginning, many kind and familiar speeches and acts; and I would have died rather than throw away, by so much as one word of folly, the treasure of her confidence and friendship. I took with thankfulness what she gave me—and was not such a fool as to ask for more.

The very first time I saw Mademoiselle Capello was unforgettable for more reasons than one. It was the first and most serious of those adventures into which her spirit, her talents and her

beauty were perpetually leading her—and it might have been her destruction.

One afternoon about six o'clock in the first days of May, 1726, I was passing along the tangle of streets back of the Quai des Theatines, when I noticed in the walled garden of the great Hôtel Kirkpatrick one of those cheap, open-air theaters of which the Parisians of the humbler classes are so fond. The place itself was retired enough, and only accessible from the maze of back streets of which I spoke. There was a wide, grassy space in the garden where the theater was set, with its rude appliances. On one side, quite screening it from the formal gardens of the hôtel, was an ancient lilac hedge, a forest of bloom and perfume, in those first days of May. There were great clumps of guelder-roses on each side, and syringas, which had grown to be trees, and looked like fountains of white blossoms.

It was so very sweet and peaceful—it being quite deserted at the time—that I stood, looking through the open grille of the huge gateway, and felt the scent of the lilacs and syringas getting into my blood, as the earth scents and earth sights will; for we are all the children of Nature, the mighty mother, whether we be born with only the tiles between us and the stars, or whether our cradle be the ground itself, and in our mother's bosom shall we sleep at last; so that is why the green earth is never strange to us, nor any of its sweetness unfamiliar.

No one would have thought that this old garden—this rich, wild, fair, virginal place—was in the heart of Paris. The sun was well in the west, and the shadows on the velvet grass were long. As I meditated I began to wonder how such a thing as a cheap theater should be set up in the grounds of the chatelaine of this splendid hôtel—who was the renowned, the redoubtable and the indomitable Madame Margarita Riano del Valdozo y Kirkpatrick, Countess of Riano, with many other titles, but who was commonly called Scotch Peg, or Peggy Kirkpatrick, and was as well-known in Paris as the statue of Henri Quatre on the Pont Neuf.

Her history was familiar to all Paris. She was the daughter of a poor Scotch Jacobite, as proud as Lucifer and all hell besides. She had married Count Riano, a Spanish nobleman, five times a grandee of Spain, three times a grandee of Portugal, and God knows what else, with more money than any or all of the Kirkpatricks had ever seen in their lives. He was the meekest, the mildest, the least haughty man on earth, having no more pride in him than the kitchen knife. It was known in every street in Paris that from the day the good man married Peggy Kirkpatrick she never allowed him to forget the enormous honor that a daughter of the penniless, bare-legged clan of Kirkpatrick had done him and the kingdom of Spain, in marrying him. The poor man has long been with the saints in heaven, and few of them deserved the martyr's crown more than he.

Yet Peggy Kirkpatrick was not a bad woman. On the contrary, she was incapable of a mean action, generous with a Spanish, rather than a Scotch, generosity, and although she undoubtedly hastened Count Riano's death by harping upon the glories of the Kirkpatrick family, she paid him great attention in his last illness. As for his funeral, never was there anything so grand.

In Madrid, whither she carried him, events are still dated from the Count Riano's funeral. Madame Riano wished to borrow the catafalque under which Louis le Grand had lain, and was mightily offended when it was refused her. The funeral lasted six weeks from Paris to Madrid. The Spanish Court paid the widow much honor, but not giving due space to the Kirkpatricks in some formal letter of condolence, or matter of that kind, Scotch Peg shook the dust of Spain from her feet and returned to Paris to remain, as she said, until Charles Edward Stuart, the English prince, was restored to the throne of his ancestors.

She was a great, tall woman, as red as a cow, but not unhandsome. She had a stride like an ostrich, and always carried her nose to the wind like a cavalry charger. At her side, in place of a sword, hung a huge fan, which she flourished around very much as if it were the claymore of the Kirkpatricks. Princes of the blood fled before Scotch Peg. Marshals of France turned tail and ran. Cardinals and archbishops quailed at her onslaught. When everybody else in Paris was calling Cardinal Dubois "the devil's cardinal" behind his back, Peggy Kirkpatrick called him so to his face—and she was of the same religion, too. It was she who stalked up to Count Saxe at the king's levee at Fontainebleau, and bawled at him:

"So you are going on a marauding expedition after the crown of Courland!"

"Madame," replied my master, turning red with rage, "I am a candidate for election to the crown of Courland. If elected by that august body, the Diet of Courland, I shall accept, and I shall defend my right."

"August fiddlestick!" cried Peggy. "All of those elective crowns, like that of your father, the King of Poland, are nothing but prey for the strongest highwaymen, and you are not as strong as you think. I predict you will be running back like a drenched hen from Courland before the year is out. However, I will say this of you, Maurice of Saxe, that you are about as good as any of the crown snatchers, or the august Diet, either—and if you would but stop running after the petticoats, you would be a considerable man!"

Count Maurice of Saxe running back from Courland like a drenched hen! And would be a *considerable man*! Maurice of Saxe!

It must be acknowledged, however, that in spite of Scotch Peg being Scotch Peg, the best company in Paris attended her saloons; she had a natural aptitude for affairs which always provided her with more money than those who laughed at her, and she was never known to desert a friend in distress. She was the aunt and guardian of Mademoiselle Francezka Capello.



Francezka's father, a handsome, penniless Scotchman, went to Spain with the Duke of Berwick's army. There, the only daughter of the Marquis Capello fell in love with the Scotch captain. The old marquis fought hard against the marriage, but the Duke of Berwick carried it through. One stipulation was made by the Capellos: that Captain Kirkpatrick should take the name of Capello instead of Kirkpatrick. This he did, much to Scotch Peg's indignation, but he was rewarded with a splendid fortune. With true Scotch thrift, he increased this fortune, and when his only child, Francezka, was doubly orphaned in her first years, she became one of the greatest heiresses in France and the Low Countries—in both of which she had large possessions.

Her father's will, making her sole heiress, gave her complete control of her estates when she was eighteen, and likewise counseled her not to marry until she was at least two years beyond her majority. These facts were well known in Paris, and although, in 1726, Mademoiselle Francezka Capello was only in her fourteenth year, the fortune-hunters were already congregating about her. But her aunt, Madame Riano, was as fierce as a dragon when her niece's marriage was mentioned—although it will be seen, hereafter, that by no means kept she a dragon watch over the young lady.

All these things being of common repute, they naturally came to my mind as I stood, watching the shadows lengthen on the grass of the old garden in the golden afternoon. Presently, from a private entrance, some children and some older persons appeared. The theater was for child actors only, and one of them—a floury baker's boy,—came to the iron gate, and acted as gate-keeper. To him I paid the few copper coins asked for admittance, and entered.

Others followed me, chiefly working people and serving-men and women, but there were some of a class not often seen at these cheap, open-air performances. One man I recognized—Lafarge, an actor of the Comédie Française, and, I think, the poorest actor who ever played in the House of Molière. Something, I know not what, excited suspicion of this man in my mind—I could but wonder what he was doing there. He had a hang-dog countenance, and was almost as ugly as I.

Presently, whom should I see bustling about, and evidently the manager of the enterprise, but Jacques Haret! I own I was astonished to find him doing anything but eating and drinking and riding at somebody else's expense—but there he was, actually at work, and that, too, in a very intelligent manner. There was no doubt about his intelligence, although he was known as a scamp of the first water. His intelligence had not kept him from gambling away a fine patrimony in the Low Countries, where his family had once been great.

He was the handsomest dog imaginable, in spite of all the cardinal sins looking out of his eyes—and he retained certain outward and visible signs of inward and spiritual graces which he had never had since I knew him. I will say of him though, that he was not a coward, nor did I ever hear him utter one word of railing against fate—but what a rascal he was!

As soon as his eye fell upon me he came across the grass and greeted me by clapping me on the back. He wore a shabby old laced coat, woolen stockings, broken shoes, and a splendid velvet hat and feathers; this last probably picked up at random—which some people call stealing. Now, I have never known a specimen of rascal-gentleman like Jacques Haret who could not always stand and sit at ease with all men. I, Babache, an honest fellow, often feel abashed in the presence of the great. I am thinking, if I am too friendly they will remember my origin and think me impudent—and if I be not friendly enough, I fear I am thought to forget whence I sprang. But Jacques Haret and men like him are at their ease with kings and beggars alike. There is certainly something in being born to ride in a coach, even if the coach be gambled away or drunk up.

Jacques Haret greeted me cordially, as I say, but with good-natured condescension. He began to tell me that he had the finest child actress in his troupe he had ever seen. "So tragic, so moving, so graceful, so droll, so natural; she could, in two years more, wrest the laurels from the brow of Mademoiselle Lecouvreur herself!" So he declared, again whacking me on the back.

I was not much interested in his child actress, but bluntly asked him how he got the use of Madame Riano's garden.

"The easiest thing in the world," he said, laughing. "I went to her—proved that in 1456 one Jacques Haret, my ancestor, had married into the noble family of Kirkpatrick, and on the strength of that relationship asked to set up my theater here. She agreed promptly, only stipulating that she should see and hear nothing of it. I told her she could not see without looking, nor hear without listening, and she screeched out laughing and told me to go my ways and try to be respectable."

"I hope you have taken Madame Riano's advice," I said dryly.

"In truth I have been obliged to. There are too many fellows like me in Paris now. I can no longer get clothes and food and wine by telling a merry tale and singing a ribald song. And, besides, I got a hint from Cardinal Fleury, that old busybody, who manages a good deal more than the king's conscience."

"What do you call a hint?" I asked.

"Oh, well, old Fleury sent me word if I did not find some respectable employment he would have me cool my heels a while in the prison of the Châtelet—not the Bastille, mind you, where Voltaire and all the wits and dandies are sent—but to the Châtelet, the prison of the common malefactors. The cardinal's message is what I call a delicate hint. However, I may make my fortune yet. The Duc de Lauzun was a mere provincial like me, and was often in straits—yet he

married the king's niece, and made her pull his boots off for him."

I looked at the fellow in admiration. His evil life had not dimmed his eye or his smile, his courage or his impudence.

The crowd was still increasing, and there must have been a hundred persons present by that time. Lafarge, the bad actor from the Comédie Française was hanging about, and I was the more convinced he was bent on mischief. Jacques Haret had gone off—the performance was about beginning. A white cloth, fastened to two poles was let down upon the stage, just as they do with those songs which the actors at the theaters are forbidden to sing; the orchestra plays the air, and the audience sings the verses which are painted upon these white cloths. In this case, though, the inscription in huge red letters was this:

"The part of *Mariamne*, in *Madame Mariamne and Monsieur Herod*, will be played by

MADemoisELLE ADRIENNE,

the most wonderful child actress in the world, who will one day continue the glory of the name of Adrienne!"

The people shouted with delight at this. Mademoiselle Adrienne Lecouvreur was then the idol of the Parisians, and she was moving all Paris to tears in Monsieur Arouet's—or Voltaire's, for I continually forget—tragedy of *Mariamne*. The present performance, I then knew, was to be a burlesque on the play of the notary's son.

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## CHAPTER II

### THE LITTLE ACTRESS

Just at that moment, a coach came lumbering through the narrow streets and stopped before the gate, where two persons alighted—Mademoiselle Lecouvreur herself and Monsieur Voltaire. I was surprised to see Monsieur Voltaire, because I supposed he was locked up in the Bastille, and would not be let out except to go to England. This man has friends, but I am not one of them. He had a way of sharpening his wit on Count Saxe, behind Count Saxe's back—and besides, Mademoiselle Lecouvreur liked him too well. But that was because he wrote the part of *Mariamne* for her. Nevertheless, I did not make the mistake of belittling him.

Jacques Haret, who knew everybody in Paris, recognized the pair as they entered the garden. He ran forward, refused to let them pay, and escorted mademoiselle to a bench under the purple blooming lilac hedge where she could both see and hear well.

"It is a very great honor, Mademoiselle," said Jacques Haret, "to entertain you in my theater."

Mademoiselle Lecouvreur, with that smile which won all hearts, replied:

"I thank you very much, Monsieur. I can not be indifferent to the actress who is to continue, and probably surpass, the Adrienne of to-day."

She glanced my way, and I bowed to her, and she gave me one of those same sweet smiles. Twenty years before, my father, the notary, and her father, the hatter, lived next each other—and the notary's son and the hatter's daughter often played in the streets together. Now, she was a great actress, and I was a Tatar prince in command of Count Saxe's body-guard. She had graciously remembered our early acquaintance when Count Saxe took me to her house—for he took me everywhere he went—and she treated me with the greatest kindness always; for which I love and thank her forever.

I was sorry to see she looked pale and weary in the strong afternoon light—she was ever frail, and adorned the world only too short a time. She wore neither rouge nor patches, nor was she ever remarkable for beauty; but she was charming as only Adrienne Lecouvreur was charming. As for Monsieur Voltaire, he looked both prosperous and impudent—and when Jacques Haret paid him a compliment he replied with a wink:

"Dear sir, I am not Monsieur Voltaire. That fellow is in the Bastille. I, as you see, am tall and thin and not ill-looking, while Voltaire, it is well known, is short and stout and red of hair—and is the worst poet in France besides."

Jacques Haret winked back.

"Truly," said he, "I was mistaken. As you say, Monsieur Voltaire is a short, red-haired man—but he is not the worst poet in France. The creature has written some things that are not so bad—the *Henriade*, for example—it could not be better if I had done it myself. And I have made a little play after his *Mariamne*, which is not so bad either—my actors will now have pleasure in giving it. What a pity you are not Monsieur Voltaire!"

At this, Monsieur Voltaire laughed—he had a huge laugh and a loud and rich voice, and eyes that glowed like coals of fire. Nobody having once seen this man could forget him, or mistake him for another.

Then, amid a stormy clapping of hands, Jacques Haret gave three great thumps with a stick on the floor of the stage, in imitation of the House of Molière, the curtain was pulled apart and the little play began.

In a few minutes, the child actress advertised as Mademoiselle Adrienne came upon the stage, and was greeted with uproarious applause.

She was no child, but a young girl of thirteen or possibly fourteen, and taller than the cobbler's boy, who played opposite to her. She was not strictly beautiful, but she had a spark of Heaven's own light in her deep, dark eyes—and she had the most eloquent red mouth I ever saw, with a little, bewitching curve in it, that made a faint dimple in her cheek. The blond wig she wore evidently disguised hair of satin blackness. She was slight and unformed, but graceful beyond words. Jacques Haret's version of *Mariamne* was a very good one—what a multiplicity of gifts the fellow had, and his dishonesty made each and all of no avail! But in this young girl whom he called Mademoiselle Adrienne, he had an actress worthy of better work than even he could do.

The part of *Mariamne*—Jacques Haret's *Mariamne*—was a very comic one, especially at the last, which was a burlesque on *Mariamne's* parting from *Herod*. Up to that point, the young actress played with the true spirit of comedy. Her audience shouted with laughter. Even Mademoiselle Lecouvreur laughed as I have never known her to before or since. Monsieur Voltaire, however, sat grave and thoughtful, his chin in his hand. I, too, was serious, and felt little inclination to laugh in spite of the drollness of the young girl's acting. I saw at the first glance she was of a grade entirely different from the cobbler's boy and the other children, and I was troubled at seeing her in that company. Such was the effect produced on me by the first sight I had of Francezka Capello—for it was she and no other.

When she came to the last of all—the burlesque parting—she suddenly transposed it into the key of tragedy. She changed the words into those of Monsieur Voltaire's *Mariamne*, which she spoke with vast force and pathos and passion. She laid her hand on the shoulder of the cobbler's boy, with a gesture so full of love and longing and delicacy and despair, that the boy, seeing a mystery, but not understanding it, was dazed, and forgot his part, which was to seize her around the waist and whirl her off her feet. The laughter had suddenly subsided—the audience, like the boy, was stunned and confused and touched. Francezka, then, with a cry of despair that rang through the still, soft May evening, thrust the cobbler's boy away and leaned sobbing against the cloth wall of the theater; and the people, after a full minute of delighted amazement, broke into thunders of applause.

Mademoiselle Lecouvreur and Monsieur Voltaire led the hand clapping. The little actress, perfect mistress of herself, turned toward the bench where Mademoiselle Lecouvreur and Monsieur Voltaire sat. Her countenance had changed as if by magic—she showed a mouthful of beautiful teeth in a joyous smile. Then, the exigency of the play requiring her to turn again, instantly she resumed her touching and tragic air, and picking up her part, carried it through triumphantly. Her fellow actor, the cobbler's boy, was disconcerted by the miraculous transformation she had made, and could only stand awkwardly about the stage, and act as a dummy for her to hang her emotions on. Nevertheless, she managed it perfectly, and when the end of the little play came, instead of the two galloping off the stage hand in hand, the young girl bade farewell to the cobbler's boy in an improvised speech which made the cobbler himself, who was in the audience, and several other persons, to weep profusely.

The applause was sharp and loud; the young girl, as if disdaining it, had walked into the little booth used for a dressing room. Then Monsieur Voltaire said in Mademoiselle Lecouvreur's ear:

"I am certain now who it is. She is the young niece of Peggy Kirkpatrick. I have often seen her in Peggy's coach."

"And in such company!" cried Mademoiselle Lecouvreur. "Surely Madame Riano can not know it."

"Certainly she does not know it," replied Monsieur Voltaire, "but this scoundrel of a Jacques Haret knows it. Come here, Jacques Haret."

Jacques advanced, all smiles and holding his fine hat and feathers in front of him to hide his broken linen.

"It is a great pity," said Monsieur Voltaire to him sternly, "that you are such an unmitigated rogue. You have great talents for this sort of thing, and if you had a rag of respectability, you would be capable of managing the Théâtre Français itself."

Jacques Haret grinned, and went cut and thrust at Monsieur Voltaire.

"I beg to differ with you, Monsieur," replied Jacques. "I did not inherit any talent for affairs, my family not having been in trade, nor have I any gift for running after the great, of which the only reward is sometimes a good caning, the dukes and princes pretending to be very sympathetic and meanwhile laughing in their sleeves. Do you suppose, Monsieur, that the oxen did not laugh when the poor toad swelled and burst?"

Now, as all this was a perfectly open reference to Monsieur Voltaire's history and adventures, it bit deep. Monsieur Voltaire turned pale and glared with those wonderful eyes of his at Jacques Haret—but Jacques was no whit abashed. As I said before, those gentlemen-rascals are hard to abash.

There were several persons standing about, listening and understanding, and a smile went around at Monsieur Voltaire's expense. Mademoiselle Lecouvreur looked distressed. Jacques

Haret, seeing his advantage, assumed a patronizing tone to Monsieur Voltaire and said:

"I have always admired your plays and verses very much, Monsieur Voltaire, and your rise in the world has been as remarkable as my fall; but you were born luckier than I—you had no estate to lose. I hope your triumphant career will continue, and that you will be pointed out as a man who was not kept down by want of birth, of fortune, of breeding, of looks—for I always thought you were devilish ugly, Voltaire—but who, by being in love with himself, and admitting no rival, rose to a first place among third rate poets!"

I swear it is humiliating to humanity to know that the Jacques Harets of this world always get the better of the François Marie Voltaires. Jacques Haret had no blushes for his fall, and Voltaire blushed for his rise! But such is the curious way of the world.

And what is quite as curious, the crowd was on the side of the pseudo-gentleman, and was rather pleased that he got the better of the notary's son, who supped with dukes.

"Tell me this," cried Monsieur Voltaire in his loud voice and very angrily, "how comes it that this young girl, whom I know to be the niece of Madame the Countess Riano, should be acting in your trumpery plays?"

He had taken out his snuff-box and opened it to appear calm, and Jacques Haret, before answering, coolly helped himself to the snuff—at which the crowd was lost in admiration.

"Monsieur," answered Jacques Haret, "do you think if Mademoiselle Lecouvreur came sneaking to the manager of the Théâtre Français and asked to act without pay, for the love of the thing, she would be turned away? Well, Monsieur, this young lady is the Adrienne Lecouvreur of her age and class. She is the best child actress I ever saw, and she came to me—not begging, if you please, but haughtily demanding that she be allowed to take, when it pleased her ladyship, the leading parts in the plays I give. I allowed her to try once. Since then, whenever I can get her, she is welcome on the stage of my theater. She asks no pay, but I would give her more than all the child actors in my company get, if I could always command her services."

"And when Madame Riano finds it out?" asked Monsieur Voltaire.

"Then, God be my help!"

"But, Monsieur Haret," said Mademoiselle Lecouvreur, "truly, it is not right that a young girl of her condition should be allowed to mix with the class of children you have here."

"Mademoiselle, she does not mix with them. She is the haughtiest little lady you ever saw. Besides, old Peter, the servant who comes with her, watches her with the eye of a hawk."

"It is but this, Haret," continued Monsieur Voltaire, with impatience; "you have got an admirable little actress for nothing. Whether she comes to ruin, you care not; whether it lands you in prison, you are willing to take the chances; you are, in short, a scoundrel. Come, Mademoiselle Lecouvreur."

"Sir," replied Jacques Haret, following them to the gate, "I am in this business for my living, not for my health, which is admirable, thank you. There are risks in all trades—a wit is always liable to get in prison in these days, especially if he cracks his wit on his betters. I believe you have had two sojourns in the Bastille yourself, Monsieur Voltaire. Well, you survive and smile, and I may be as fortunate. Good evening, Monsieur; good evening, Mademoiselle."

Neither Mademoiselle Lecouvreur nor Monsieur Voltaire replied to him, but getting into the coach in which they came, were driven away under a narrow archway and were out of sight in a minute.

Jacques Haret's mention of a serving-man directed my attention to an elderly man in the well-known purple and canary livery of Madame Riano, who stood close to the stage, never budging from his place. He was a respectable looking creature, with faithfulness writ large all over him. Homely, as well as elderly, he had the most speaking and pathetic eyes I have ever seen in any head. Just now, his expression of anxiety would have melted a heart of stone. And if he were in any way responsible for his young mistress's being in that place, he did well to be anxious.

There was still another piece to be given, and the audience was awaiting it impatiently. The rays of the declining sun were level then, and the sweet, green, retired place looked sweeter and greener and more retired than ever. In the midst of the hush the stage was thwacked and the curtain parted. I happened to glance toward Lafarge, the actor. He stealthily raised his hands and brought them noiselessly together. All at once, the garden seemed full of soldiers. Lafarge pointed out Jacques Haret to an officer, who laid a heavy hand on him, saying:

"I arrest you for giving a theatrical performance without a license."

Jacques Haret began to bluster. It was no use. He grew sarcastic.

"This, I presume, is at the instigation of that rascal Lafarge," he cried. "The people passing by here stop and pay a few pence, and see a better performance than can be seen at the Comédie Française, around the corner. So the audiences have been falling off. I hear there is scarcely any one in the house the nights Mademoiselle Lecouvreur does not play."

Nothing availed. The thunder of carts resounded in the narrow streets.

"Come," said the officer. "No matter where the information came from—get you and all your company into the carts outside—and you can sleep on a plank to-night in the prison of the Temple, and to-morrow morning you can give an account of yourself to the Grand Prieur de Vendôme."

There was, of course, a frightful uproar. The soldiers seized the children and carried them toward the carts, the youngsters screaming with terror, especially the cobbler's boy, who was the biggest boy, and yelled the loudest—the parents shouting, crying and protesting. There was a terrible scene.

As soon as the commotion began, I walked toward the old serving-man. The confusion was great, but in the midst of it I heard a calm, imperious little voice saying:

"Peter, come and take me home at once."

It was the young Mademoiselle Capello, standing on the edge of the stage platform. She was very white, but perfectly composed.

Old Peter took her arm respectfully, when up stepped a brawny soldier—one of those stout fellows from Normandy—and catching Mademoiselle Capello by the other arm, said rudely:

"She must go, too!"

I thought old Peter would have dropped dead. As for the young girl, she fixed her eyes intrepidly upon the soldier, but she was trembling in every limb.

I could have felled the man with a single blow, but I saw that to make a brawl with a common soldier about Mademoiselle Capello would be fatal. Old Peter then managed to gasp out:

"This young lady is Mademoiselle Francezka Capello del Medina y Kirkpatrick, niece of the Countess Margarita Riano del Valdozo y Kirkpatrick, and she must be instantly released."

"Well, then," replied the soldier, laughing, "why doesn't the Countess Margarita Riano del Valdozo y Kirkpatrick keep an eye on her niece, Mademoiselle Francezka Capello del Medina y Kirkpatrick, instead of letting her play with these little vagabonds of actors? But, my old cock, I think you are lying—so here goes!"

And he dragged Francezka off toward the carts, in which the rest of the children were being tumbled. Peter turned to me.

"For the love of God—" he began, and could say no more for terror and grief.

"I will follow her," said I, "and no harm shall come to her unless my right hand loses its cunning. No doubt as soon as her identity is known she will be released. But, it must be kept quiet, you understand? Her absence must be concealed if possible."

"O God! O God!"

The misery of old Peter was piteous. First, he would run toward the carts, swearing he would follow them on foot; then he would totter back, crying:

"I must tell Madame Riano!"

Meanwhile I had gone out, had engaged the first coach for hire and followed the odd procession as it started toward the Temple. In the first cart sat, besides the soldier driving, the officer, Jacques Haret, and Lafarge, who was to lodge the information. Jacques Haret and Lafarge got to fighting in the cart, but that was speedily stopped. Then Jacques took to sharpening his wit on Lafarge and his bad acting, and the first thing I saw, the officer and the soldier were near tumbling out of the cart with laughter at their prisoner. I thought this boded ill for Lafarge, as the case would be heard before the Grand Prieur de Vendôme, and this Grand Prieur was not the great grandson of Henri Quatre for nothing—he, too, loved wit as well as wine and women. In the next cart were several children including the cobbler's boy, who continued to yell vociferously and to beg that he should not be hanged. On the plank with the soldier driving sat Francezka Capello.

She wore no hat, and still had on her blond wig, and her fresh cheeks were raddled with paint—she had been unpainted in the first piece. But I could see her pallor under her rouge. She had on a large crimson mantle, which she wrapped around her, and sat perfectly still and silent. After all, she was the only creature in the party who had anything to fear, and yet she was the calmest of them all. The soldier driving, who was a good-natured fellow, began to cheer up the weeping children, and soon had them all smiling except the cobbler's boy and Francezka.

"Come now," he said. "This is nothing but a pleasant ride to a nice place, called the Temple, where there will be plenty of bread and cheese for you, and some nice clean straw for you to sleep on—and early to-morrow morning you will be sent home to your fathers and mothers, and you will each have a penny—or perhaps a whole livre, so don't be crying, but hold on now—"

Then he whipped up the horse so as to give the children a merry jolt, and the youngsters all began to laugh—still excepting the two co-stars of the troupe.

Mademoiselle Capello confessed to me, years afterward, that she fully expected to be executed, although she did not look for the ignominy of hanging, but rather decapitation—and she firmly resolved to die with the courage of the Capellos and the Kirkpatricks. To heighten this, she kept repeating to herself all the names, titles and dignities in her family, and thanked God that she was not as the other children were, or even the cobbler's boy. And to render her exit more dignified, she wiped the paint from her lips and cheeks and managed to throw away her blond wig as the cart rolled under the dark and forbidding archway of the Temple, between the two peaked towers that had frowned there for five centuries.

## CHAPTER III

### THE RESCUE

The prison of the Temple was a huge gloomy building, fronting on two streets. Monsieur, the Grand Prieur de Vendôme, was governor of the prison, and had a whole wing of it fitted up very luxuriously for himself—for the Temple was the very pleasantest quarter of Paris, and the wits, the songs, the plays of the Temple have been celebrated ever since I knew Paris. Mirepoix was the deputy governor—there is always in these places a governor who draws the money and a deputy who does the work. Mirepoix was a great fool—I knew him well.

When the carts rattled under the archway which led into the courtyard on which the great hall of the prison fronted, I had dismissed my coachman and was waiting to see what could be done to screen Mademoiselle Capello. A few minutes after I arrived, old Peter came, breathless and almost speechless. I told him to remain in the courtyard until I should deliver his young mistress into his hands.

The sight of the black archway, the great, silent courtyard dimly lighted with lanterns—for night had fallen by that time—frightened the children. They stopped laughing and some of them began to whimper; the cobbler's boy had never stopped howling a moment.

I stood close and saw Mademoiselle Francezka descend, and I made her a low bow, pointing to old Peter who stood close to me and made her a sign. She understood, and flashed me a tremulous little smile as she led the procession into the vast dark hall of the prison which opens on the courtyard.

I went in too. It was but dimly lighted. Mirepoix was already there—a weak, irresolute man of fifty or thereabouts, completely off his head, listening first to Lafarge, then to Jacques Haret, and seemingly not knowing whether the giving of a theatrical performance without a license was a misdemeanor or high treason. He knew Jacques Haret, however, and his reputation or want of reputation, and was inclined to take Lafarge's side of the case.

The children were in a row, all shivering and trembling, except Francezka Capello, who stood with the pale beauty and virginal majesty of a Joan of Arc at the stake.

Jacques Haret—commend me to the Jacques Harets of this world for knowing all their rights!—seeing what a muddlehead Mirepoix was, cried stoutly:

“I demand to see the governor of the prison, the Grand Prieur de Vendôme.”

Now, this was his right—but Mirepoix proceeded to argue the point with him. The Grand Prieur was having a supper party. The Grand Prieur must not be disturbed—and much else to the same purpose. But all he could get out of Jacques Haret was:

“I demand to see the Grand Prieur. My great grandfather and his ancestor, Henri Quatre, were boon companions. My ancestor fought at Ivry under his ancestor, and my family now possesses a letter from Henri Quatre to Jacques Haret, asking the loan of fifty crowns and a pair of breeches!”

I could have wrung Jacques Haret's neck for his persistence, but I could do nothing but stand and watch and fume, with the young girl's tragic face before me, and old Peter breaking his heart in the courtyard.

A messenger was sent for the Grand Prieur, and Jacques Haret consumed the intervening time in a wordy war with Mirepoix and Lafarge, and he got the better of both of them.

I scarce thought the messenger had got the length of the prison, when the door opened, and the Grand Prieur appeared. He was a very old man, but still handsome and black-browed, very like his brother Marshal, the Duc de Vendôme—but not so dirty, nor did he sleep with dogs in his bed. On the contrary, he was given to luxury, made excellent verses, and was of polished manners.

When he entered the hall I saw that he looked anxious, and peered eagerly into the half darkness that surrounded the company gathered there. Mirepoix plunged into the story, and to justify himself for interrupting the Grand Prieur's supper party, one would have thought the twenty or so children were twenty malefactors and giving a theatrical performance without a license was the unpardonable sin.

The Grand Prieur heard him through and then cried:

“Good God! I thought it was an attempt on the king's life! And for these brats you took me away from the supper table!”

Jacques Haret now came to the front, gravely reminding the Grand Prieur of the connection between their ancestors and the loan of the breeches. The Grand Prieur tried to scowl, but instead, burst out laughing. Jacques Haret then proceeded to give his account of the affair, including his preliminary interview with Madame Riano—or Peggy Kirkpatrick, as he called her—and he acted Peggy to the life so that even the frightened children laughed without understanding it; all laughed, in fact, except Mademoiselle Capello, who scowled tragically at

the game made of her aunt. And not being deficient in sense, Jacques Haret took pretty good care not to hint that his star actress was Madame Riano's niece. The climax came, however, when he apostrophized Lafarge as being the self-constituted protector of Madame Riano's property. This brought down the house, and Lafarge stuttered:

"I—I was not thinking of protecting Madame Riano—it was the majesty of the law that was being outraged—the king—"

"Ah! You were protecting the king, then," cried the Grand Prieur. "Well, I dare say the court and the army and the people and the church, among them, can do that without your help, Lafarge—and Jacques Haret—suppose, since you have spoiled my supper, you recompense me with a performance by this army of young criminals?"

"With the greatest pleasure, Monsieur."

"And by that time, their parents will all be howling in the courtyard, and we can give the criminals each a coin, and let them go."

Some of the parents had indeed already arrived, and word was sent to them that the children would be released as soon as they had given their play.

There were some benches and tables against the walls—for here it was that the guard dined and supped—and these were hauled forth, some scenery was improvised with stools and sheets, and torches were procured to light up the vast dark place. The Grand Prieur had gone back to fetch his guests.

"Come, Mademoiselle," said Jacques Haret to Mademoiselle Capello, "you must act your best, and get us all out of this scrape."

For the first time I saw a look on Mademoiselle Capello's face, indicating shame and humiliation at her position. She had not so far spoken a word that I knew of. She glanced toward me as much as to ask if she should agree—and I nodded. My one idea was to prevent a catastrophe before getting her into old Peter's hands, and I dared not make any disturbance on her account.

"But, Monsieur," she said to Jacques Haret, "you must let Peter, my servant, come to me—he followed me on foot all the distance from the garden."

"I will! I will!"

Jacques Haret ran out and fetched Peter, who was outside the door. Peter dashed in, ran up to Francezka and began to cry:

"Oh, my darling little mistress! Oh, what will madame say to you? What will she do to you?"

I gave him a look of warning, which checked his lamentations. He squeezed himself into a little place back of the improvised stage, and from there I watched his anxious face during what followed.

Jacques Haret mustered the children on the stage, gave them such directions as were necessary, and then the sound of voices and laughter was heard, the door opened, and in came the Grand Prieur and his company of guests. There were thirty or forty of them, all gentlemen of the first quality, wearing their swords, and many of them showed their wine. A crowd of servants bearing candles came after them. These, Jacques Haret ranged as torch-bearers in front of the improvised stage. The guests were provided with benches, and the performance began. It was *Madame Mariamne and Monsieur Herod*.

And then a new and terrible danger presented itself. It was quite possible that among these bewigged and bepowdered gentlemen, with their velvet coats and silk stockings, might be some frequenters of Madame Riano's saloons—and then!

I watched their faces closely, and soon satisfied myself that none of them recognized Mademoiselle Capello, unless it were a young gentleman, Gaston Cheverny by name, who stood near the stage, close to old Peter. Fate delights in mountebank tricks. On the same day, I saw for the first time those two persons with whose lives my life was henceforth bound—Francezka Capello and Gaston Cheverny.

I noticed that this Cheverny was not more than twenty, and was not regularly handsome, although extremely well built and graceful. I took it that he was a youth of parts, or he would not be found, at his age, in the company of the Grand Prieur, who hated dullards. And as fate would have it, I loved Gaston Cheverny the first instant my eyes rested on him.

The performance began, and Mademoiselle Capello came upon the stage, and acted as if inspired. Circumstanced as she was, she was bound to act her best or her worst—and it was her best. She soon had her audience in convulsions of laughter; and when, with ready wit, she took off Lafarge, interjecting some of his foolish remarks into the farcical *Mariamne*, I thought the floor would have come through with the stamping of feet and pounding of jeweled-headed canes, while the laughter became a veritable tempest. And Francezka enjoyed it; that was plain in her kindling eye, and the color that flooded her late pale cheeks and lips.

Through it all, Gaston Cheverny smiled but little, and his face, which was the most expressive I ever saw, not excepting Monsieur Voltaire's, showed pity for this young girl. I felt sure he recognized her.

When the part in the little play came of *Mariamne's* farewell, Mademoiselle Capello changed it to the real *Mariamne*, as subtly as she had done in the afternoon in the garden. Her present audience, far more intelligent than any she had ever played to, instantly caught the beauty, the

wit, the art, of what she was doing. A deathlike silence fell when Francezka, in her sweet, penetrating voice, was bidding the cobbler's boy a last, despairing farewell. The Grand Prieur, leaning forward, put his hand to his ear—he was slightly deaf—and I felt my eyes grow hot with tears, when suddenly Mademoiselle Capello caught Gaston Cheverny's eyes fixed on her. It was as if he had laid a compelling hand upon her. She stopped, hesitated, and walked a few steps toward him. Her rosy face grew pale; she opened her mouth, but was unable to speak a word. Jacques Haret, standing close to her, gave her the cue once—twice—very audibly. Mademoiselle Capello, without heeding him, and moving like a sleep-walker, went still farther toward the edge of the stage where Gaston Cheverny stood—and then covering her face with her mantle she burst into a passion of tears and sobbing.

There was a movement of compassion for her; old Peter on the edge of the crowd was begging, "For God's sake, gentlemen, let me go to my child—she is my daughter—I am but a serving-man—" but no one moved to let him through.

The children on the stage were in confusion—Jacques Haret was in despair. Mademoiselle Capello, with her face still wrapped in her mantle, continued her convulsive sobbing. Gaston Cheverny made a lane with his strong arm through the crowd and called to Peter.

"This way, my man. Come and fetch your daughter."

Peter got through at last, lifted the weeping Francezka down in his arms, and started for the door with her.

I left the hall quickly, in which there was much confusion—the Grand Prieur calling out that the children should have a livre each, except the cobbler's boy and Francezka, who were to have a gold crown.

Outside in the courtyard under the dark, starlit sky, I found Peter with Mademoiselle Capello and Gaston Cheverny. The young girl had regained her composure, and stood silent, pale as death and like a criminal, before Gaston Cheverny. Like most very young men, he liked to reprove, and to assume authority over others but little younger than himself.

"Mademoiselle," he was saying, "you have, perhaps, forgotten me and my brother, Monsieur Regnard Cheverny—you were too young to remember us. But we had the honor of knowing you in Brabant when you were little more than an infant—and our houses have always been friendly. For that, as well as other reasons, I must exact a promise of you. Never repeat this performance. You are but a child yet, and this indiscretion may well be forgotten. But Mademoiselle, you will soon be a woman—and a woman's indiscretions are not forgotten."

All of which would have been very well from a man of forty, but was slightly ridiculous in this peach-faced youth of twenty.

A gleam of spirit—of Madame Riano's spirit—flashed into Mademoiselle Capello's face at this assumption on Gaston Cheverny's part.

"Monsieur Cheverny," she said, "I remember you perfectly well—also, your brother, Monsieur Regnard Cheverny. I am older than you think, perhaps. I even remember that I hated one of you—I can not now recall which one—except that he or you annoyed me, when I was a child in Brabant, at my château of Capello"—oh, the grand air with which she brought out "my château of Capello!"—"and—and—if I act—it is none of your business."

"It will be Madame Riano's business, though," darkly hinted Gaston Cheverny.

At this veiled threat to tell her aunt, Mademoiselle Capello showed she was but a child after all, for she broke down, crying:

"I will promise, Monsieur."

There was but a single coach in sight, and while Gaston Cheverny was haranguing Mademoiselle Capello, I had engaged it to take her home. The coachman drove up, I opened the door and invited mademoiselle to enter. She recognized me at once, and curtsied deeply.

"Thank you, Monsieur," she said with the greatest sweetness in the world. It was the first time she ever spoke to me—and can I ever forget it?

"Thank you, Monsieur; I do not know your name, but I know you followed me to this dreadful place to take care of me—and you have treated me with the utmost respect, Monsieur, and have not dared to reprove or threaten me, and I thank you for that, too!"

She gave a sidelong glance out of her eloquent eyes at Gaston Cheverny, that I would not have had her give me for the best horse in the king's stables. The young man did not relish it, and straightway undertook to make me responsible for his chagrin. He scowled at me when I made my bow to Mademoiselle Capello, and attempted to divide the honor with me of putting her in the coach, which, after all, old Peter did. The door slammed, the coach rattled off, with Peter upon the box, and Mademoiselle Capello sitting in offended majesty within.



## IN BEAUTY'S QUARREL

My young cock-a-hoop and I being left facing each other on the pavement of the court, he said to me, with a terrific scowl in his handsome bright young face:

"Who are you, sir?"

"Babache," said I. "Captain of Uhlans in the body-guard of Count Saxe."

"Well, Babache," continues my young man, twirling his snuff-box as he had probably seen some older man do, "you were infernally in my way just now."

"Was I?" answered I. "Why did you not tell me at the time? I would have gone and jumped into the Seine—" and as I spoke, I flipped the snuff-box out of his hand. I never saw a youngster in a greater rage. Like Mademoiselle Capello, a minute before, he hated to be treated like a child.

"Sir," said he, "you shall eat your words."

"Sir," I replied, "I have supped already; and besides, I never had any appetite for that dish."

With that he whipped out his sword, and I said, holding up my hand:

"My lad, I am willing to fight, if that is what you are after; but being much older and wiser than you, I will tell you that our quarrel must not in any way relate to the young lady who has just been rescued from a very painful predicament. Suppose we quarrel about Count Saxe?"

"With all my heart," responds Gaston Cheverny.

"He is, as you know, the greatest man that ever lived," said I.

"Monsieur," replied my young game chick, very politely, "I thought him a great man up to this very moment and felt honored by his notice—for I know him—but since I hear he is a friend and patron of yours, I swear I think he is the veriest poltroon, the ugliest man, the stupidest oaf I ever saw."

"Thank you," said I. "Kindly name the place and hour where a meeting between us may be arranged."

"Why, here and now is the best time to arrange it. The garden of the Temple is retired enough. The moon is now rising—and with two good lanterns we can see to stick at each other—and we can each find an acquaintance within this very building."

I was astonished at the youth's temerity—but I saw it was not bloodthirstiness, but rather a youthful longing for a pickle-herring tragedy. It was my lady Francezka over again. Having scolded that young lady with the air of a patriarch, for her venturesomeness, Gaston Cheverny proceeded to hunt up adventures of his own. I saw that the notion of fighting by the light of flickering stable lanterns mightily tickled his fancy. So I said, looking at the great clock in the tower of the Temple:

"It is now ten o'clock. Shall we make it in an hour?"

"We can easily meet in half an hour."

"Certainly," I answered. "We must each find a friend and a lantern."

"Done," he cried—and turned off.

I was much more puzzled to find a friend and a lantern than I was at the prospect of crossing swords with young Cheverny. The only human being I could think of at hand was Jacques Haret—and I loathed the thought of having him in that capacity. Just then, Jacques Haret came out of the door and passed through the courtyard. The time was short, so I stopped him, briefly stated the matter, and he accepted my cause, laughing uproariously the meanwhile. I had told him, of course, that Gaston Cheverny and I had quarreled about the greatness of Count Saxe.

"I know Cheverny well," he cried. "When I was a gentleman, I, too, had a place in Brabant. Old Peter, you must know, was a retainer of my family, and served with my father under Marshal Villars, and that is how, my estate being gone—bought by Regnard Cheverny, brother of Gaston—and Peter coming to Paris, he took service with Peggy Kirkpatrick. He had known the Capello family in Brabant."

Jacques Haret commonly told the truth about these things—and so I knew it to be true. He told me he had finally disposed of the children for the night, and proposed to get out of the way as quickly as possible. There was but little money in the theater, he said,—the cobbler's boy, his best actor, was so frightened at the adventures of the evening that he would never be worth anything as an actor again. Francezka would play no more; so he thought, on the whole, he had better cut the entire business, especially as it was possible the matter might come to Peggy Kirkpatrick's ears. Like myself, he regarded the meeting with Gaston Cheverny very lightly. I had my sword with me, and did not need to hire one as my adversary did, for he had on merely a dress sword, unfit for work. We could not lay hands on a surgeon, and I told Jacques Haret it mattered not—I would only be amusing myself with my young man, and he was only for saying that he crossed swords at a moment's warning, about a young lady—and no one was likely to be hurt. We required a lantern, however, and Jacques Haret proposing a wine shop as a place likely to have a lantern for hire, we went in search of one—and speedily found it. And we were also able to secure what I knew would please my young cock mightily—one of those pieces of black cloth which old custom decrees shall be carried to throw over the corpse if either one of the

combatants fall. It was no more likely to be used than a babe's swaddling clothes, but it looked tragic, and I saw that young Cheverny was bent upon being as tragic as possible, under the circumstances.

At the appointed time we were at the rendezvous. The Temple gardens were remote and retired, and at this hour of the night were perfectly deserted, not even a watchman being about.

I found my young friend with another cavalier, some years older than himself—a regular *petit-maitre*, Bellegarde by name, insipid beyond words, and very fretful because Gaston Cheverny had insisted on fighting at such a time.

Jacques Haret went through the affair with the most killing gravity. Monsieur Bellegarde asked if an accommodation was possible. Jacques Haret replied no, except upon the admission that Count Saxe was the greatest man that ever lived. This Bellegarde earnestly besought Gaston Cheverny to agree to, alleging that he knew of several persons who were of that mind, and besides he was then due at a supper party. Cheverny, however, persisted stoutly that Alexander the Great was a more considerable man, and the supper party must wait until after the meeting in question. Then Jacques Haret said there was no time to lose. I never saw a youngster so pleased as Gaston Cheverny was at that. He had come to Paris for adventures and here was one to his exact taste. I think the fighting by the lantern-light filled his boyish soul with rapture.

For myself, I knew I was a good and experienced swordsman; and I meant to use all my skill to give him the right sort and size of cut—not a mere scratch, which would never have satisfied him—but one of those cuts, trifling in themselves, but which produce a good deal of blood, and which enable a fellow to carry his arm in a sling, and so win the sympathy of the ladies. Just as I had loved the youth on first seeing him, so I looked into his soul, and fancied his delight, his swagger, his airs of consequence, at appearing in company with his arm in a sling; and although I felt perfectly sure that he would die rather than reveal the name of the young lady, or rather the child about whom we had fallen out, I felt assured he could not keep to himself that he had fought in beauty's quarrel. And the amusement Count Saxe would have out of it!

We stripped off our coats, our swords were put into our hands, and I went about to oblige my young friend. I found him a fairly good swordsman for his age, but I could have disarmed him at any moment. However, that would have broken his heart. So I clashed away good-naturedly, making him think he was having a devil of a time, until, beginning to feel a little winded, I thought it time to give him the stroke he wanted.

I have a cut in tierce of which I have always had the mastery, and it was this cut I was giving Cheverny, when suddenly the lantern back of him went out. At the same moment his foot slipped; his guard gave way completely, and my sword's point went exactly where I had never meant it to go—into his left side. He dropped like a stone.

I was the first to reach him, and turned him over on his back. Bellegarde, a silly popinjay, lost his head completely, and began to howl for one of those new-fangled screw tourniquets which had been invented by Jean Louis Petit, not so long before. But of course nobody had one, or could get one, or knew how to use it, had it dropped from heaven. Jacques Haret, as usual, kept his wits and disappeared in search of a doctor and a coach.

I bound my mantle around Gaston Cheverny's body, told him to lie still, meanwhile examining him to see if he was about to die. I thought he was. His face was quite green, his extremities grew cold and he was deathly sick. But his eye retained its undimmed brightness; and while he was lying there on the ground, in this sad state, he burst out into a feeble laugh.

"Babache, you are so damned ugly," he whispered.

Was it strange I loved the boy who was so much himself in such circumstances, and would have given my right arm if that cursed lantern had not gone out? I said to him:

"If you open your mouth again, I swear to leave you lying here on the ground; and you will probably die of that hole I made in you."

His own sensations by that time must have shown him the seriousness of his wound. He lay still and silent and greenish-gray and sick and gasping; and I—I could not look at him for very anguish.

It was but half a quarter of an hour before Jacques Haret returned with a physician and one of those sedan chairs which can be made into a litter. The physician, an intelligent looking man, examined the rude bandage I had made for the wounded man, and then silently motioned us to lay him on the litter, which we did. His lodgings were close by, so Bellegarde told us—and we bore our gruesome burden through the street.

Gaston Cheverny's hurt was as much an accident as if it had been a lightning bolt, but no man ever suffered more than I at the thought that I had inflicted it. Arrived at his lodging—an excellent one in the quarter of the Temple—we carried him into his bedchamber, laid him on his bed, got his valet, and, except the valet, we were all ordered to leave by the physician. As I turned away from the bed, Gaston Cheverny managed to hold out his hand to me. I took it, and I am not ashamed to say that, for the second time that night, tears came into my eyes. Outside in the street I watched and waited. The night grew sharp, and the darkness grew dense, and the city's throbbing pulse grew still. I walked up and down the street, and only the watchman's distant cry and my own quiet foot-fall, broke the midnight silence. The inevitable thought came to me, whether, after all, there be any such thing as chance in the world—or, whether all is chance. I had paused that afternoon before the grille of an old garden, softly called to stop by the scent of the lilacs—and because I had ever loved the scent of lilacs a man might die that

night.

No one came out of the house where Gaston Cheverny battled with death. The lights burned steadily in the saloon which communicated with the bedchamber where we had carried the wounded man, and the room remained empty, so I knew Gaston Cheverny still lived. Some time after midnight the valet came out running. I ran after him to ask how his master fared.

"Very bad," replied the poor fellow. "I go for another physician now."

After an hour a coach rumbled up—it was then the first gray and ghastly moment of the dawn. Out of the coach got a court physician whom I knew by sight. He remained a long while within the house, and when he came out looked solemn. I asked him civilly how his patient did, and he gave me the same answer as the valet—"Very bad." He added, however, that the youth was young and strong, untainted by dissipation, and if he lived twenty-four hours, would probably survive. I was never one to give way to despair, and so I dwelt on these hopeful words. I am not ashamed to say I stepped into the church of the Temple, and made a prayer or two as well as I knew how for the young man. There are, as I heard Madame Riano say some years afterward, such things as praying rogues and swearing saints—but though I prayed, I was not a rogue.

It may be imagined that I went not far from Gaston Cheverny's lodgings during that twenty-four hours. I went to the Luxembourg once or twice, where Count Saxe was lodged by the king's order, and I, of course, next him, and asked if I was needed, but each time, Beauvais, the valet, who was a fair writer, told me nay; and leaving word where I was to be found, I returned to my vigil at Gaston Cheverny's door.

On the second sunrise after I had run him through, I heard the welcome news from the physician that the wound was healing with the first intention, that there was no fever, and that he had never known so serious a case progress so well. I returned to the Luxembourg, left word I was not to be called except by Count Saxe, and throwing myself on my bed, slept ten hours without waking. I had dreams in those hours—dreams of Mademoiselle Capello. It was on Friday night that I had come so near giving Gaston Cheverny his death wound—and it was on Sunday evening that I rose, after my sleep and my dreams, shaved, bathed, dressed, and went in search of Count Saxe.

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## CHAPTER V

### THE ELDER BROTHER

I found my master in a room which had been a favorite one of that dead and gone and wicked Duchesse de Berry, who died of drink and debauchery at twenty-four years of age. Poor woman! I often used to fancy her gliding about that room, her pallid face rouged, her eyes on fire, and she, laughing and anxious, studying the faces of the men and women before her, and wishing she could see those behind her. She showed good taste by preferring that apartment, for it was spacious and airy, with three great windows looking upon the green Luxembourg gardens beneath, where the nightingales sang every night. The walls and ceiling of this room were frescoed with the story of the love of Ulysses and Calypso.

No one had occupied this particular room since the Duchesse de Berry, and it contained the same magnificent hangings, chairs, tables, sofas, consoles, girandoles, and what not, that unfortunate woman had used. Count Saxe's belongings always seemed to be swearing at those of the dead and gone duchess. Count Saxe called the room his study; but rather, it should have been called his armory, for, instead of books, he had in it all manner of arms and everything pertaining to a soldier's life. He needed not books, being already instructed by his own mother-wit in all that was of any real value to know. This matter of reading is vastly overrated. There are persons who think it is the mill that makes the water run. It is men like Count Saxe who give occasion for books to be written.

This study, therefore, was a place of arms. On the walls hung all manner of musketoons, fusils, and the like, with drawings of mortars and field and siege artillery, with specimens of horses' bits and saddles and stirrups, and everything relating to the equipment of a soldier. There were a plenty of maps besides. On the great table in the middle of the room was spread a huge map and many dozens of tin manikins, about as high as my thumb; for anybody who thinks that Count Saxe did not study the science of war, knows not the man.

He was at that moment sitting at the table, on which a dozen candles gleamed. He was dressed in black and silver, a dress that showed off his vivid beauty—for he was the most beautiful man who ever lived. Not Francezka Capello's eyes were more brilliant, more soft than those of Maurice of Saxe. Was it to be expected that with his beauty, his figure, his voice, his charm, and above all, his genius, he should be an anchorite? The women would not let him alone—that is the whole truth. If I had been a woman I should have died of love for him.

"I thought you had gone back to Tatory, Babache," he cried, throwing his leg over his chair, pushing away his map, and motioning me to a seat. "Tell me your adventures."

I sat down and told him freely all that had happened from my strolling into Madame Riano's garden until that moment.

"Peggy Kirkpatrick's garden," he said, absently tweaking my ear—a way he had. "That woman is the devil's grandmother. When she is awake the devil sleeps, knowing all his business is well attended to by her. And Peggy Kirkpatrick's niece—I know the chit, and knew her father before her. Scotch and Spanish—it is a fiery mixture. And I know that scoundrel, Jacques Haret. So the young man you came near finishing—Gaston Cheverny—laughed when he seemed a-dying. I wish we could have that young man—for Babache, my Tatar prince from the Marais, we ride for Courland within a fortnight."

I said nothing, it being all one to me where Count Saxe rode so I rode with him. He continued, after a pause:

"It is true, as that devilish old woman Peggy Kirkpatrick says, I go on a marauding expedition, but never must we admit that." He rose as he spoke, his black eyes flashing. "I go in response to a call from the greatest nobles in Courland, to lay my claims respectfully before the august Diet of Courland. But shoot me, if that Diet doesn't elect me, it will live to be sorry for it—that I promise. And if Russia and Prussia want war, they can have it. War is the game of the gods. There is none better." He rose and stood, the picture of a conqueror, smiling at the thought of the great adventures before him.

"It is a large enterprise," I said. "Our necks will be in jeopardy every hour—but that is a small matter."

"A very small matter, my Babache. Do you see yonder stars?" He pointed out of the window where the earnest stars were palpitating in the dark blue heavens. "Look at them but for a moment, and you will see how small a matter it is. But look not at the stars too often or too long—nor look upon graves too much and too deeply—for the contemplation of stars and graves will rob any man of all his ambitions; their silence will drown the shouting of the captains and the rustling of the laurels, through all the ages; the love of glory will die in his breast, and he will curse his doglike fate. Our largest enterprises are so small—so small!"

I perceived he was in one of those reflective moods when a man stops at a certain point in his existence, and, standing upon the lonely peak of the present, surveys the great unfathomed gulfs of the past and future that lie on either side. I have those moments often—but Count Saxe rarely.

He stood thoughtful for a while, then turning to me, said with a bright smile:

"But some things do not diminish even in the light of the stars; one of them is, the pure devotion of a woman. Mademoiselle Adrienne Lecouvreur sent me word this day that if I was resolved on my enterprise for Courland, all she had—her plate and jewels—should be pledged for me. Does not that shine bright even in the light of the stars?"

I answered with something I had once heard old Père Bourdaloue thunder forth from the pulpit in Notre Dame, about good deeds outshining the sun; at which my master laughed, and accused me of wanting to join Monsieur de Rancé in his dumb cloister of La Trappe. Then, as if shaking off the spell cast upon him by the stars, he began to talk of the most trifling things on earth—about Monsieur Voltaire, for example.

"My coach is ordered to take us to Mademoiselle Lecouvreur's," he said. "I dare say that scoundrel of a Voltaire will be there—as you say you saw him with Mademoiselle Lecouvreur in the Hôtel Kirkpatrick garden. But I know he is under orders for England, and I will tickle him with a bunch of brambles by telling him that I shall mention to Cardinal Fleury that I saw him. Babache, I swear I am a little afraid of that thing of madrigals, as I call Voltaire. Those fellows who can write can always make out a case for themselves. I would as soon have Voltaire in London as in Paris—sooner at Constantinople than either."

I went then to see if the coach was ready, and soon we were rolling along toward the Marais. My head was busy with our expedition to Courland, but it did not make me forget for one moment the soft splendor of Mademoiselle Capello's eyes, nor Gaston Cheverny's hurt. I privately resolved to take Gaston Cheverny with us to Courland if the wit of man could compass it.

Mademoiselle Lecouvreur lived then in one of those tall, old houses, not far from the garden in which we had played together as children. When we reached the place and were mounting the stairs, what should we see but Monsieur Voltaire's long legs skipping up ahead of us! So he was still skulking in Paris! I knew the sort of persons I should meet with in that saloon—and they were there. First, Mademoiselle Lecouvreur herself, fresh from the theater; the Marshal, Duc de Noailles, who called my master "My Saxe," and loved him well; old Marshal Villars, the Duc de Richelieu, an actor or two, some fine ladies, a horde of small fry and Monsieur Voltaire.

As he was supposed to be safely locked up in the Bastille until he should leave for England, his presence was a good deal of a surprise, especially to the Duc de Richelieu; but Mademoiselle Lecouvreur's was neutral ground and nobody there would betray Monsieur Voltaire, as he well knew.

I entered the large saloon in the wake of Count Saxe, made my devoirs to Mademoiselle Lecouvreur, and then retired against the wall, as the unimportant do. I was surveying the crowd of the great, and wondering what Mademoiselle Lecouvreur's father, the hatter, and my father, the notary, would say, if they saw the fine company their children kept, when my eyes fell upon my young friend, Gaston Cheverny, who, I supposed, lay in his lodging with a hole in his left

side! The sight so staggered me that I felt my head swim. But there he was, as smiling, as debonaire as man could be, wearing a handsome embroidered satin coat, white silk stockings and red-heeled shoes, his hair powdered and in a bag. I thought him handsomer than before. And that there was no mistake about it, I heard him addressed as Monsieur Cheverny.

I felt myself gaping with astonishment and became altogether lost to what was going on around me, except to this young man. I contrived to move nearer to him, and presently we were touching elbows. There was much laughter and conversation going on, the candles were blazing brightly, Monsieur Voltaire was telling a story in a loud voice, but I saw and heard nothing clearly but this young Cheverny.

Considering our adventures together, I felt justified in addressing him, so I said, as soon as I got close enough:

"Monsieur, I hope you find yourself well?"

"Perfectly," he replied courteously. "And you, Monsieur?"

"The same," I replied. "I am glad to hear of it. I could not have made so large a hole in you as I thought, the night before last."

He looked at me, puzzled for a moment; then his countenance cleared, and he said, laughing:

"It is the common mistake. You take me for my brother, Gaston Cheverny, who now lies at his lodging ill—his complaint probably small-pox or measles—" he winked as he said this. "I am Monsieur Regnard Cheverny, at your service—the elder brother, by three years, of Gaston Cheverny."

I saw, then, on closer examination, that he was indeed the elder, and his seniority was very plain. But in feature, in complexion, in gait, in voice, he was more like his brother than would seem possible. He then went on, affably, to tell of his brother's continued improvement. We talked a while together. Regnard Cheverny, like his brother, was no man of milk and water, and once seen, was likely to be remembered. But I soon perceived that their souls were as unlike as their bodies were like. It is true, I had seen Gaston Cheverny only once, but the circumstances of that meeting were not to be forgotten. I am not given to sudden loves, but I had loved Gaston Cheverny at first sight. I loved him for his foolhardiness, his presumption, in fighting me; I loved him because he loved fighting; I loved him because he could laugh in the face of death—in short, it was one of those strange kinships of the soul which make one man feel of another, the first time he sees him—"We are brothers." And in the same way, I disliked Regnard Cheverny. He was a man strong enough to inspire love or hate. I have myself often heard that writing fellow, the Duc de St. Simon, say that love and hatred spring from the same root, and I believe it.

I also saw that Regnard Cheverny was a man of parts, and so regarded. I found out by the accident of conversation, that he had a head for affairs—a thing rare in his class. It was inherited from some of his Scotch ancestors, no doubt—for the Cheverny family had intermarried with the Scotch Jacobites, and had a large strain of Scotch blood in them. As Jacques Haret had told me, Regnard Cheverny had, during the preceding year, become possessed of the last remnant of Jacques Haret's fortune, in Castle Haret, in Brabant, which had been sold for a song under the accumulated debts of many generations of Harets. I looked with interest at a young man, who, at twenty-three years of age, had so well feathered his nest; for his original patrimony, I inferred at the time, and found afterward to be true, was small. He was handsomer than his brother, being more matured, and there were a thousand subtle differences between them; but it all came down to this—Gaston Cheverny was to be loved—Regnard Cheverny was not.

Presently, supper was announced. It was there, around the table, that wit sparkled. Mademoiselle Lecouvreur sat at the head, with Count Saxe on one hand and Monsieur Voltaire on the other. She loved my master the best of any person in the world—but she knew that Monsieur Voltaire loved her the best of any one in the world—and he was very capable of love.

Monsieur Voltaire, as everybody knew, was to be sent packing to England, but with his usual adroitness, he made out that England was the country of all others he wished to see; that my Lord Bolingbroke—Harry St. John, as Monsieur Voltaire called him—was his dearest friend; and as for Sir Isaac Newton, one would have thought that he and Voltaire had exchanged nightcaps often. The valor of the English nation Monsieur Voltaire could not extol enough. My master listened to this with a grin, and then remarked that the English were in truth a valiant nation, but that the only Englishman he had ever met in hand to hand encounter was a scavenger whom he had no trouble in pitching headforemost out of his own cart. At this, Monsieur Voltaire sighed and said impudently: "Perhaps Count Saxe would favor the company with his story of bending horseshoes with his hands and twisting a farrier's nail into a practicable corkscrew," as if Count Saxe were always telling those things! Then he took another turn—this mischievous Voltaire—and paid Count Saxe most elaborate compliments on his prospects of becoming Duke of Courland.

"It is a great, a splendid destiny," said he. "Fighting every day and hour—but that's to your taste. An unruly people—but you were born to reign. A climate, snow all the winter, rain all the other seasons—but you are robust and can stand it. And a duchess, Anna Iwanowna, with all the graces of a Calmuck Venus, waiting to become your duchess! But you ever adored the ladies, and are the very man to please a Calmuck princess!"

"Monsieur, you are most kind. Thank you for your congratulations," replied Count Saxe, gravely. "If the Calmuck princess fancies me it will only be because she has not seen you. Men of letters

are highly esteemed in Courland—where they are not much known.”

Monsieur Voltaire took snuff meditatively—and I trembled for my master.

“When you are Duke of Courland,” said this tigerish monkey of a Voltaire, “Peggy Kirkpatrick says, you will be ‘cousin’ to the Kings of France and Spain.” Madame Riano had bawled Count Saxe’s affairs and Courland all over Paris. “You will be ‘most Illustrious’ to the Emperor, and ‘most Illustrious and most Mighty’ to the King of Poland.”

The villain stopped and took snuff again. I felt my choler rising, and would have given my sword to have had my hand in his collar at that moment; he had already been caned twice, and ought to have been bastinadoed. Actually, persons were beginning to smile at Count Saxe, who turned red and white both, as Voltaire kept on:

“The Duke of Courland has the right of coining money, which the King of Poland has not. The revenue is three hundred thousand crowns, and the army eighteen thousand men.”

How the devil the fellow knew this, I can not tell.

“He also has the right of raising taxes with the consent of the Diet—and if the Diet is handsomely treated, taxes can be raised as high as the moon. And more.”

Here he paused, and looked about him solemnly. Everybody was on the broad grin, except Count Saxe, Mademoiselle Lecouvreur and myself. I had almost gnawed my under lip off.

“The Duke of Courland is also pope. He is *summus episcopus*—which is Pope of Courland.”

At this—will it be believed?—there was, in spite of Count Saxe’s presence there, a shout of laughter. When it subsided a little, I, who had not laughed at all, had something to say.

“Monsieur Voltaire,” said I, “I have good news, great news for you. This day, in the garden of the Tuileries, I saw two persons—nay, two personages—that, it is well known, you have often expressed a strong desire to see. Both of them were inquiring about you.”

Monsieur Voltaire pricked up his ears; it was well-known that he loved the society of the great. As for myself, the company listened to me, because they had never known me to open my mouth before, at supper, except to put something in it.

“Ah,” said Monsieur Voltaire, putting his snuff-box in his pocket, and speaking debonairly. “It was probably Cardinal Fleury—and the Duc de Bourbon. I have reason to know they would like to make peace with me; but it must be peace on my terms, not theirs!”

“No, Monsieur,” I replied. “They were the Duc de Rohan and Monsieur Beauregard!”

Now, these were the two men who had each caused Voltaire a caning, and whom he had been burning to meet for revenge. When I spoke their names there was a pause—Monsieur Voltaire’s eyes lighted up like two volcanoes. He turned on me a look that would have split a barrel, but did not make me wink an eyelash. Then there was a shout, a brawl of laughter, that rang to the ceiling and made the girandoles dance. I think what made the company laugh so was the notion that I, Babache, captain of Uhlans, should measure my wit against Monsieur Voltaire’s, and whether it were wit at all or not mattered little, for it served its purpose; it drove Monsieur Voltaire away from the supper table. He glared at the laughing faces about him, sat still a moment, then rising, with a half bow, half scowl at Mademoiselle Lecouvreur, stalked out of the room. It was well known that, like most wits, he bore ridicule extremely ill, and could not stand being laughed at. As for Count Saxe, he hugged me, and I had so many compliments made to me that I was alarmed for fear I should be reckoned a wit.

When supper was over, Mademoiselle Lecouvreur, by a sign, indicated that Count Saxe was to remain after the rest had left. All took their departure, including Regnard Cheverny, who bade me a civil adieu. Mademoiselle Lecouvreur took Count Saxe into her boudoir. I went into the saloon, where the candles were dying in their sockets. Presently the two came out of the boudoir. Count Saxe had a casket in his hand, which he gave to me. His eyes were full of tears, and he was silent from emotion. Mademoiselle was smiling—smiling when she said to him:

“Trouble not yourself about returning it. I think I shall not have use for money much longer. I am often ill—more ill than any one supposes—and when I leave the theater I am more dead than alive. So give me in return but an occasional thought—a word of remembrance—it will be enough.”

Count Saxe said something—I know not what; the beauty, the touching sweetness, the majesty of this woman’s love was enough to overcome any man. He kissed her hand and her cheek in farewell; she gave me, as always, some kind words, and we left her, bowing to her with the reverence due a queen.

Count Saxe said not one word to me on our way to the Luxembourg. I believe he shed some tears as he sat back in the corner of the coach.

## ON THE BALCONY

The hour of action was at hand, however. The next day came the storm and stress of preparation. Count Saxe was besieged with persons wishing to go to Courland with him, chiefly gentlemen out at elbows who had nothing to lose; men of a doubtful past, men who had failed at everything else and thought themselves fitted to conquer a kingdom. Out of these and others Count Saxe selected three hundred men, whom he armed and equipped as Uhlans, and who were added to the body-guard I had under me before. There were other troops promised, and these Uhlans were meant to be the human rampart between Count Saxe and harm.

Monsieur Voltaire had gone to England, his departure hastened, so Count Saxe declared, laughing uproariously, by his dread of encountering Babache, the rival wit.

I found time, in the midst of running about from one end of Paris to the other, to call daily at Gaston Cheverny's lodgings and ask after the young man. His improvement continued rapidly and steadily. I did not once see the young girl, Mademoiselle Capello, who had brought about all this fine coil, but she was not out of my mind for a moment. I may be, as I am, the ugliest man on earth, without riches and not wanting them, humbly born and not disguising it, but yet I can have my dreams as well as any man. I often passed the great Hôtel Kirkpatrick in those days, and longed to know how Mademoiselle Capello fared, and whether her escapade had come to Madame Riano's ears or not. Several times I caught sight of old Peter, who seemed to be majordomo of the establishment. The man's face always arrested my attention. He was an ordinary looking elderly man, still retaining something of his soldier's life about him, but the look in his eyes always went to the heart like a poniard. Afterward I heard why this was so. I saw Madame Riano often enough driving in or out of her courtyard in her great purple and gold coach, with her purple and canary postilions and four cream-colored horses. When she went to court she had six horses.

The days on which I saw Mademoiselle Capello were well marked in my memory. I never forgot the hour, nor the place, nor whether the sun shone, nor if she looked well or ill. Once on a soft and lovely evening I saw her sitting opposite Madame Riano in the coach, as it rolled over the Pont Neuf. The young lady leaned forward and smiled and bowed to me. Another time I saw her walking in the garden of the Hôtel Kirkpatrick. It was morning then, a May morning, and she was bare-headed, the sun kissing freely her dark rich hair, with the little rings around her milk-white brow and throat. Another day, toward sunset, when a great thunder storm was brewing, I passed the back part of the garden where the theater had been set up, and I saw her walking there alone. As I watched Mademoiselle Capello's pensive face—for that day she seemed to be in a reflective mood—the rain suddenly descended in sheets. She ran laughing toward the hôtel. Her face, her flying figure, her unconscious grace, were all childlike that day, and after all she was only fourteen; but maids were married often at fourteen.

On the twelfth day after I had made a hole in Gaston Cheverny's carcass I was admitted to see him; we then thought ourselves on the verge of our departure for Courland. It was in the evening, and I was ushered into Gaston Cheverny's saloon, where he sat in a great chair. He was pale and thin and showed his sufferings, but his eye was undimmed and full of light and laughter. With him sat Jacques Haret, dressed in Gaston Cheverny's coat, waistcoat, breeches, stockings, and everything from his skin. He greeted me with the utmost cheerfulness and complaisance. In parting with most of his virtues he had retained two of the greatest—cheerfulness and courage.

"Good evening, Captain Babache," cried Gaston, in a pleasant, though weak voice. "I swear to you by all the great gods of Olympus that from the moment I felt your sword sticking into me I have believed Count Saxe to be greater than Hannibal, Cæsar, Alexander the Great, St. Louis and the Cid Campeador, rolled in one."

"That is most wise of you," I replied, sitting down by him. "Believe that always and you will keep out of trouble."

Here Jacques Haret, who was lolling in a chair, said:

"Our friend has been much concerned to know what has become of my late leading lady, Mademoiselle Capello. It is in vain that I have reminded him of that old Spanish malediction on an enemy: 'May you marry an only child; may you have a law suit, win it, and have to pay the lawyers!'"

A flush came into Gaston Cheverny's pale face, and he looked displeased, as well he might, at hearing Mademoiselle Capello's name in Jacques Haret's mouth. I took no notice of his question, but began to tell Gaston Cheverny of our plans for Courland. His eyes kindled as I spoke, and at last he filled my heart with rapture by asking, eagerly:

"Do you think Count Saxe would take me with him?"

"With great joy!" I answered, for that was exactly what I was leading up to. And, to tell the truth, there were very few men of Gaston Cheverny's character and standing among us.

Jacques Haret got up and whistled.

"I must leave you now, my friend," he said to Gaston; "I am going for a promenade. I wish you would have your shoes made of Spanish leather—I don't like these at all. And a gentleman should always wear silk stockings. That rascal of a valet of yours has twice brought me woolen ones. I am a patient man, but I can't stand everything."

To this Gaston replied: "Go to the devil."

Jacques Haret went out.

Gaston Cheverny and I talked long and earnestly together. I did everything in my power to induce him to cast his fortunes with us. At every moment the sympathy between us grew keener. At last he said, blushing like a girl, and fingering the love locks that hung from his temple:

"To tell you the truth, Babache, I am set upon some adventure, out of which glory and fortune may be wrung. For I love a young lady, not indeed above me in rank, but as far beyond me in fortune as in merit, and I must bridge the gulf between us before I can aspire to her. It is—it is—Mademoiselle—"

"Francezka Capello," I said.

He was very much surprised at my guess, but the young always think their elders have no eyes. Then he burst forth, as young men of twenty do, raving over her beauty, her wit, her grace, lamenting her venturesomeness as if he were Solomon and Methuselah in one. I felt not one pang of jealousy. Francezka Capello was not for me, nor I for her—but that was no reason why I should not love her as one loves a star.

"And why does not Madame Riano keep a closer watch over her?" he demanded angrily, as if I had something to do with it. "Jacques Haret says that because Madame Riano always ruled her father, her husband, her confessor, her lawyers, and her doctors, she thinks to rule this girl by mere precept; but Francezka has the spirit of a fiery Scot and a hot Spaniard in her, and no one can rule her except by gentleness and persuasion. Then she is a lamb."

He then told me all about the château of Capello in Brabant. It was a superb estate, and his own modest country house was within sight of it. Castle Haret, which Regnard Cheverny had so cleverly acquired, was some distance off in the same province. In Francezka's childhood, during her parents' lifetime, she had lived at the château, where Gaston and his brother had often played with her as a little girl. Since she had been in Peggy Kirkpatrick's care she had lived in Paris. But it was known that her Brabant estate was dearer to her than any or all of her possessions, and the Brabant people said that when she was her own mistress she would live in Brabant. The night at the Temple, Gaston Cheverny had gradually recognized his little playmate of years gone by, and from that moment, he confessed, with shining eyes, he had thought only of her.

"And now, in this expedition to Courland, I see the road to honor and fortune and Francezka open," cried my young game chick, and I assured him so it was.

I remained with him the best part of two hours. The last thing he said to me was:

"The surgeon says I may mount my horse in a fortnight, but you say the word, and I mount and ride for Courland to-morrow!"

When I walked back to the Luxembourg, through the dark and quiet streets, I bethought myself that this young man, take him all in all, was the best recruit we had yet got. And so I told Count Saxe that very night.

There were unlooked-for vexatious delays about starting. We had thought to leave at any hour, when I spoke to Gaston Cheverny, but my master was summoned to Versailles, and there was much parleying about nothing; for after all, it came to what we could do in Courland of ourselves.

Cardinal Fleury must see Count Saxe, that the rights of the Church be guarded. The king must talk with him about the rights of the ex-King of Poland, his father-in-law. It was all very futile. Every one of us knew that Peggy Kirkpatrick told the truth when she said we were going upon a marauding expedition after the crown of Courland; but the Russians were bent on the same errand, as were the Holsteiners and the Hessians, and it was a case of every man for himself, and the devil take the hindmost. I knew Count Saxe could beat them all to rags, and he could probably govern Courland as well as any of the other buccaneers after the crown. But I own from the beginning, I thought Count Saxe's genius lay in war, not in peace. This thought gave me great content, for if we succeeded, it was well—if we failed, it was well. War is the game of the gods, as Count Saxe had said, and in that he had not then a peer.

It was on the morning of the last day of May, 1726, that we left Paris. It was a golden morning. The river ran silver, the fountains played gold in the sun, the heavens were a cloudless blue. I was in command of the battalion of Uhlans, and we made a gallant show, in our scarlet dolmans, our lances, with their scarlet pennons, catching the sun like points of fire. Gaston Cheverny rode with Count Saxe as aide-de-camp. He looked pale, but sat his horse firmly. We wore, according to the custom on opening a campaign, a little sprig of laurel in our helmets, but Gaston Cheverny wore also a deep red rose. As for Count Saxe, I will not speak of him, except to say that he looked like Mars himself.

Great crowds lined the streets, and we were very heartily cheered. Many persons of distinction were out, notably old Marshal de Noailles, who, as I said before, always called my master "My Saxe." The marshal rode with us, his white hair floating over his shoulders. Numerous coaches were at the Port Royal, where we crossed the river. Among them was the coach of Mademoiselle Lecouvreur. She gave us her own heavenly smile. Count Saxe bowed to his saddlebow, and his eyes did her homage.

A little farther on we passed the great Hôtel Kirkpatrick. At the sound of our horses' hoofs



clanging, Madame Riano came out on her balcony to see us. She waved at Count Saxe her great green and gold fan, without which she never budged, and actually laughed in his face and shook her head derisively when he bowed to her. That woman was enough to drive any man to drink. There was no sign of Mademoiselle Capello, but when we had passed the front of the hôtel we espied a little balcony on the side, overlooking the garden. She stood on that balcony; I remember she wore a crimson bodice and skirt and a crimson ribbon was in her unpowdered hair. Her eyes outshone the sun. She returned our bows with the lowest of curtsies. Gaston Cheverny's eyes were glued to that balcony until Mademoiselle Capello was no longer visible. His face was glowing with delight. When we were well out beyond the barriers and in the fair open country, he rode up beside me. His face was all smiles and blushes, like a girl's.

"Did you see Mademoiselle Francezka?" he asked.

I nodded, and he continued:

"Last night Madame Riano had one of her great routs. I went to it with my brother—our first visit to her since we have been in Paris. She received us well, and so did that angel, Francezka, who said she remembered us from her childhood. Ah, Babache, she was so kind to me. It seems she knew all about our little fracas—she had got the whole story out of old Peter—and was full of the sweetest regrets. She even begged my pardon—the darling!—for having been so rude to me the night of our first encounter. I think she is now awake to the imprudence of her conduct, and most anxious for it not to be known, instead of being defiant, as she was at the time. She asked me to give you her thanks and her remembrance."

"It is enough," said I; "if I can but always merit her thanks and her remembrance I shall be satisfied. It is for men placed like you to aspire for more."

"Babache," he cried, "you are an honest fellow, and I am glad you made that hole in me, if it won me your friendship."

"I did not wish to make a hole in you," I replied. "What has your brother to say to your going with us?"

"He tried to dissuade me from going. I tried to persuade him into going. Regnard has more of that beggarly virtue of prudence than I. But, Babache, here is the devil to pay; my brother fell desperately in love with Mademoiselle Capello at first sight."

"That is nothing," said I, unfeelingly. "You are so much alike it can matter but little to her which one she may love."

"Out, rascal! But—but—mademoiselle was much kinder to me than to Regnard. Indeed, she was not kind at all to him."

"Oh, poor brother! How that must have pained you!"

"No! no! My brother and I are nearer to each other than most brothers, but when a young lady is concerned we are as man to man. So I was rather pleased not to have my brother for a rival."

"He will be in Paris while you are away, and may make his hay in your absence."

Gaston's face was flooded with laughter and color as he replied:

"Well—under the rose, remember—Mademoiselle Capello will not be in Paris long. She confided to me that her aunt was setting out upon her travels shortly, meaning to go as far north as Russia. Then, on their return, they will stop in Brabant, probably until mademoiselle attains her majority. It will go hard with me if I am not at my own house for a little while at least, while Mademoiselle Capello is my neighbor. And Babache!" he rode closer and whispered in my ear: "She told me last night she would be watching on a certain balcony when we passed, and I asked her what color of gown she would wear, because I should wear a flower of that color, and she said crimson, and here I have a crimson rose in my helmet."

His boyish eyes were radiant with joy and triumph. His was a spirit daring in love as in war, and surely Francezka Capello had the spirit of ten good men in her young soul. I began to wonder what two such eaglets would contrive between them.

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## CHAPTER VII

### AN UGLY DUCHESS

The town of Mitau is an ugly place, built near a dull and sluggish river, rudely spanned by a bridge of boats at the market-place. The palace, however, is a fine building, and there dwelt the ugly Duchess Anna Iwanowna—bad luck forever to her!—and there could have dwelt Count Saxe if he would but have obliged the duchess by marrying her. But he could not swallow the pill.

We were in Mitau from June, 1726, when those rascally Courlanders pretended they meant to make Count Saxe Duke of Courland, until August, 1727, when we made our way out of the place—only twenty of us; and not without trouble, either, of which I shall speak presently.

To this rag of a remnant of twenty was Count Saxe's following reduced. It is true my master had three hundred men, many of them my Uhlans, the "Clear-the-way-boys," intrenched on the island in the Lake of Uzmaiz, five days' march away, where they stood guard over a military chest of considerable value, and a large quantity of arms and ammunition. Our enemies would have given their ears to know where our money and arms were—for they knew Count Saxe had both—and it finally took near five thousand Russians a month to find them.

I reckon those fourteen months in Mitau as going far to atone for our sins. It was a time of negotiations, contentions, bickerings, proclamations and counter proclamations, Count Saxe on the one side, and the Russian Empire on the other; the Courlanders in between, handing out lies by the shovelful, with equal impartiality on either hand! What liars they were! There was an open green field near the town, where the Diet met in those summers of 1726 and 1727, which Count Saxe called the Field of Lies, after the celebrated spot in France, where the heirs of Charlemagne met to divide the empire. I am sure more lies were told about the duchy of Courland than were told about the division of the empire of Charlemagne. We had promises enough, and even votes enough to elect Count Saxe Duke of Courland, if only he could have put his hand on ten thousand stout soldiers, to make the election good. The Russians very rightly paid no attention to the pretensions of the Holsteiners, and the Hessians, and the rest of the crown snatchers, as Madame Riano had called them. They were but lath and plaster; but Count Saxe was a man well fashioned by nature of her strongest metal, and him the Russians reckoned with, and him only.

We had but one piece of good luck in Mitau, and that was the place in which we were lodged. It was an old stone schloss near the river, and had been the residence of the dukes of Courland until they screwed the money from their miserable people with which to build the fine palace. They had made themselves secure from their lieges in case the lieges should rise against their masters; for the walls of the old schloss were nine feet thick, with mere slits for windows, and it was surrounded by a moat, with a drawbridge. Moreover, there was a brick tunnel a half of a quarter of a mile long, which debouched at the river's edge. The market-place, however, had sprung up at that point, and also, the bridge of boats, so that it was no longer available for the escape of armed men.

We did not reckon upon either defense or escape, until it was too late—the first, the last, and the only time Count Saxe was ever caught napping by his enemies. And it was by my forethought—I say it with diffidence—that the drawbridge was put in working order. It came about in this manner.

The ugly duchess, having fallen in love with Count Saxe the first time she saw him, as all the women did, poor souls, they could not help themselves—invited him to lodge with his suite at the palace, instead of at the old schloss with the rats. Never were there such rats. We used to have regular battues of rats, killing them with our swords. But Count Saxe was wary—he had no mind to be lodged too far away from his horses. As it was, our stabling was at an inconvenient distance from the schloss. But how to get away from the pressing attentions of a lady is a problem; all will admit that.

One morning, however, a placard was found affixed to the palace gates, making light of Count Saxe's alleged intention to take up his quarters at the palace. He happened to arrive just as a great crowd had assembled, laughing and jeering. He rode up, dismounted, tore the placard from the iron gateway, cuffed half a dozen grinning fellows, and like a walking volcano marched into the palace. He demanded instantly to see the duchess, and after tearing the placard to shreds in her presence, declared that nothing would induce him to subject her to such indignities; consequently he would remain at the schloss with the rats. The duchess glared at him, and in her turn cuffed a saucy page that laughed behind his hand; and from that hour she was his enemy. No woman ever forgives a man for being more prudent than she, and although I swear I know nothing of Count Saxe's affairs with the ladies, I will admit this, that he was not reckoned a prudish man exactly.

When he returned to the schloss, and with mirth and heartfelt joy told me of the thing, my reply was to go and examine the drawbridge. Our arms and accoutrements were always kept in perfect order, so there was no need to inspect them. The chains and blocks of the drawbridge were rusty and moss-grown, but I speedily got them in working order, well oiled, and the drawbridge moved up and down as smoothly as my lady's fan opening and shutting. Count Saxe, seeing me at work, with several men, came to find out what we were doing.

"I am putting the drawbridge in order, sir, because you were so extremely decorous with the duchess," I said to him; at which he shouted with laughter, but owned I was right.

There was an open plaza in front of the schloss, with several mean streets making off from it. Within was a courtyard of some extent, with a few dismal trees growing, and around us was the stagnant green water of the moat. Oh, what a dreary place that was!

I had mountains of writing to do, those devilish Courlanders presenting endless petitions, protests, pieces, justifications, and other rubbish, all of which had to be answered civilly. We kept up a brisk correspondence with France when we could; but the Courlanders have no notion that a courier is a sacred object, so a vast number of our letters never got farther than Mitau.

Our communication from the rest of the world was scant and uncertain. Even Mademoiselle Lecouvreur's letters rarely reached us, although we knew she wrote faithfully and often to Count Saxe. We knew scarce anything that was happening outside, except that Monsieur Voltaire was in England, and Count Saxe hoped he would remain there.

There was one person of whom I thought daily and hourly, but could hear no word of—Mademoiselle Francezka Capello. All I knew was that she and Madame Riano had set forth from Paris, in great state, on their travels. I was not the only person athirst for news of Francezka. Gaston Cheverny was as eager. He wrote continually to his brother Regnard imploring and demanding to know of Mademoiselle Capello's welfare; but he admitted, with the utmost chagrin, that Regnard, in those of his letters which were received, never so much as mentioned Mademoiselle Capello's name, which led me to infer that Regnard Cheverny knew all about her.

I have never known a man who early acquired a fortune that was not a calculator and an acute reckoner of his own and other men's chances. But Gaston Cheverny was not a calculator in the mean sense. The motto of his house well described him. It ran, in the old French—*Un Loy, Un Foy, Un Roy*. One faith was Gaston Cheverny's in all things. He was full of youthful spirits, of ridiculous young daring, always wanting to achieve the impossible, and of the sort, when he could not conquer the world, to beat the watch. But those men are to be loved. Gaston Cheverny had great capacity for love and romance. The image of Francezka Capello had been deeply graven on his heart, and I saw what one does not often see in a young man barely one and twenty—a real devotion to an ideal, a faithfulness that can and will endure.

He was not one of the loose-tongued sort, who tell all to everybody. I think he never spoke of Mademoiselle Capello to any one but to me, and occasionally to Count Saxe. At night, when I sat in my room reading by a single candle, before I went to bed, Gaston Cheverny would come in, throw himself on my bed, and begin to rave over Francezka. He would go back to his earliest childhood, and aided by a very active imagination, prove that he had loved her ever since she was born. He explained this to me very ingeniously, saying he was in love with Francezka before he saw her, because he was in love with a dream, of which Francezka was the reality. I listened smiling and with a good heart. Knowing Gaston Cheverny well, I thought him worthy, if any man was, of Francezka Capello. Sometimes he would rave over her beauty, and would threaten to run me through when I ventured to say that it was her wit and charm which made her beautiful. Again, he was full of adoration for her lofty, high spirit; and then bewailed it, as likely to lead her into unnumbered dangers, from which Madame Riano was small protection—for Scotch Peg loved adventures as a cat loves cream.

Gaston Cheverny was of a bookish turn, and was the first one who quoted to me the saying about books: "In winter, you may read them, *ad ignem*, by the fireside; and in summer, *ad umbram*, under some shady tree; and therewith pass away the tedious hours." We passed away some of our tedious hours at Mitau in this manner, but we had few books. Among them luckily was a volume of Bourdaloue's sermons, of which Count Saxe always made me read one whenever the Courlanders were more devilish than usual in giving us fair words of emptiness for truth; and my master always fitted the preacher's denunciations to his enemies.

Gaston Cheverny and I made bold to correct Count Saxe's theology, but he called us a couple of cheek turners, and declared he knew that the Psalmist, as well as Bourdaloue, had the Courlanders in mind when he denounced liars and hypocrites. Next to sermons my master liked the verses and songs of that rogue of rogues, François Villon. Gaston Cheverny sang these songs of Villon's very agreeably, accompanying himself on the viol, and so whiled away some of our heaviest hours. These diversions, together with our rat-killings, were the sum of our amusements, for I do not reckon the balls at the palace as amusements. Count Saxe would occasionally insist on taking me to the palace, although I objected to going on the ground that the duchess had said I was ugly. But this was reckoned a witticism of mine. Anyhow, as Count Saxe remarked, I could return the compliment to the lady. The entertainments there were dull, and besides, every Russian we saw scowled at us—and there was a Russian at every turn. All the court officials were Russian, and they took good care that we should not find Mitau agreeable.

Ah, it was a dreary, weary time, especially after the winter set in. In the spring it was scarcely more cheerful. Count Saxe's chances were dwindling, there was no doubt about that. But he bore the gradual fading of his hopes with the gaiety of heart which was his own.

And the Russians grew more numerous. They seemed to be enveloping us; and from day to day we awaited the catastrophe which, I think, all of us expected—but not exactly in the guise in which it came.

In August, things were looking black for my master, and one night, he and I and Gaston Cheverny, being seated at supper, with Beauvais serving us—an honest and devoted fellow, Beauvais is, with a squint almost as bad as my cross eye—I said to Count Saxe:

"Sir, when shall we leave Mitau?"

Count Saxe looked hard at me, putting down his glass. Then he asked, in a cool voice:

"Do you think it time, Babache, to beat the chamade?"

I remained silent. Gaston Cheverny scowled at me; he was at the age when prudence seems but a beggarly virtue at best. Only Beauvais winked at me approvingly, and Count Saxe saw him in a mirror opposite. He was a very humble fellow, as brave as Julius Cæsar, devoted to Count Saxe, and understood nothing on earth about war or politics; but Count Saxe knew, when the men of the Beauvais stamp see it is time to march, that events have already marched.

"Beauvais," cried Count Saxe, "what think you of giving up the game now?"

"Monsieur," replied Beauvais, "I promised my old father, when next we returned to Paris, to have sixteen trumpeters ahead of us when we crossed the Pont Royal, but I am afraid I was a liar."

Count Saxe laughed at this, and swore very melodiously at the Courlanders; but being quick to decide, he gave orders that we should prepare to leave Mitau within three days. Thence we should retire to Uzmaiz, whence we hoped to give the Russians such a bone to pick that they would not soon forget it.

When Count Saxe was through with swearing at his Courland subjects I reminded him there was a court ball that night, and that he must go and smile on the ugly duchess.

At this he swore again, and for the only time I ever knew of, plotted revenge against a lady.

"Gaston Cheverny," he cried, "do you, when you go with me to the palace to-night, take pains to inform some of the ladies of the court that I admit the duchess is not handsome, but she is worthy. Be sure and insist upon her worth—that is a form of praise hated by women; they know if a man praises their worth it is at the expense of their beauty. So, forget it not!"

We sat not long at table after that. I had to begin to plan our departure, and Count Saxe and Gaston Cheverny wished to arrive early at the palace, so as to leave before midnight. It was still daylight when they rode away into the town—daylight lasts long in those far northern regions. Two gentlemen rode with them as escorts.

After attending to what was necessary, I watched from the courtyard the sun go down in darksome glory. The sky was full of coppery clouds, and bad weather was brewing. Of course I thought of the difference between our confident departure from Paris and our crestfallen return; and Madame Riano's simile of the drenched hen plagued me much. And Monsieur Voltaire—how I hoped the king's ministers would see the usefulness of keeping him out of France! And Mademoiselle Lecouvreur—how sweet and generous she would be—and then came the ever-haunting thought of Francezka Capello. Where was she at this moment? Under Italian skies, or among the peaks of the Swiss mountains, or in some distant German city; at all events far, far from me—so thought I.

The darkness came down suddenly, with copper clouds grown dusky and scurrying across the night sky. The lights vanished from the shabby town, but afar off the palace windows gleamed. All was darkness and silence, but all was not peaceful. As I stood on the drawbridge, under the light of the lantern swinging overhead, it seemed to me that the town was full of moving shadows. There would be a dark mass away in the distance, and while I was looking, it would noiselessly dissolve. Then the mass would become serpentine, appearing and disappearing silently and mysteriously. I had made up my mind that these softly moving shadows, like the shapes in a dream, were not dream shapes, but solid Russians, with arms in their hands; and I congratulated myself that every moment since we entered the schloss two men with loaded muskets had kept their eyes fixed on the entrance to the courtyard. They were not sentries—oh, no—it was a mere guard of honor suitable to Count Saxe's rank; but they were not wholly ornamental.

Suddenly hoofbeats sounded out of the darkness, and Count Saxe himself, with his two gentlemen, clattered over the drawbridge. He flung himself off his horse and said to me:

"You were right, Babache. This night must we ride for Uzmaiz."

Our horses were stabled some little distance away toward the river side. I sent four men after them, with orders to bring them as quietly as possible.

"And Gaston Cheverny, sir?" I asked of Count Saxe.

There was that in his present circumstances which would have quenched mirth in most men, but Count Saxe was one of those men who could laugh in the face of fate.

"Gone to fetch Peggy Kirkpatrick," he said. "We arrived at the ball—everything hostile to us—the duchess uglier than I ever saw her, and the Russians elbowing us at every turn. The first person my eyes rested on was General Bibikoff. I wondered what an officer of his rank was doing at Mitau just now. I surmised, however, that it was not for his health, and that he was not alone. And whom, think you, was he talking with—Peggy Kirkpatrick! She arrived at Mitau to-day on her way to France. She had with her that charming young creature, Mademoiselle Capello, grown wonderfully handsome, and splendidly dressed. I thought Gaston Cheverny would die of delight, he was so joyful to see her. Peggy was a blaze of jewels and feathers, and looked more like an ostrich than ever. By heaven! If I had ten thousand men like Scotch Peg I could conquer Europe. But she did me one of the greatest services of my life. She took the first chance to speak to me aside.

"The Russians are after you,' she said, 'eight hundred of them under Bibikoff. A fool, Bibikoff; a dozen of the Kirkpatricks are worth, for fighting, his whole eight hundred. But mind you, General Lacy is behind him with four thousand, and Lacy is a Scotchman, so you need to beware of him.'

"Madame,' said I, 'we march before daylight—every hoof and toe of us.' For I knew her information was sound. Then, after I had expressed my everlasting thanks, what do you think she said? 'If, then, you are so eternally grateful to me, you will kindly allow me and my niece to travel to France with you.' I told her I was not going to France yet—still holding some cards in my hand—but to the island in Lake Uzmaiz, where I proposed to make a stand. That delighted her. To Uzmaiz she would go, and for very shame, I could not refuse, after the service she had just done me, for she had taken not only trouble, but risk, to find out about Lacy. She desired that I let Gaston Cheverny go to her lodgings with her to make ready for her departure, and the young fool was charmed, of course. They left before the end of the ball. I remained to the last, so as to avoid the appearance of running away—but where are the horses?"

There had scarcely been time enough for them to be brought, but I saw my four men come running back along the dusky street; and they brought the alarming news that our horses, stablemen, and all had disappeared.

This put another face on our affairs. We had exactly three horses champing quietly in the courtyard, and nineteen men, not counting Gaston Cheverny, needing to ride to save their skins.

And before we could draw breath, the open place in front of the drawbridge grew black with men; the restless, serpentine shadows were, in truth, Bibikoff's Russians.

In half a minute our men were tugging at the chains of the drawbridge. They had raised it about a foot when out of the gloomy night rode a horseman, straight upon the drawbridge. The weight of man and horse slowly brought the bridge down again. It was Gaston Cheverny. He turned his horse's head toward the town, and sat motionless, holding the bridge down. There had been no moon until that moment, when softly and quickly the murky clouds parted, and a great, white moon glared out, making all things light as day. Then we saw plainly the Russian soldiers duly ranked, with their officers. The moonlight fell full upon Gaston Cheverny sitting upon his horse. The only sounds that broke the silence were the horse's pawing gently on the bridge and a growl from our men that the bridge was held down.

But presently another sound was heard—a very dreadful and menacing sound, though faint and muffled—that of a hundred muskets raised and leveled upon the man and the horse, which made the finest target in the world. When Gaston Cheverny saw the gleam of the musket barrels in the moonlight I believe he thought his hour had come, and determined to meet it as a man who knows how to die; for he brought his sword to the salute, so that he might meet the Great Commander as became an officer and a gentleman. And as I have seen a hundred times and known of a thousand times, the coolness of his courage was his shield and breastplate; for no man among the Russians could slay so brave a man. Even the murmuring among our own men at his holding the drawbridge down ceased, when they saw Gaston Cheverny standing at salute as if the king were passing.

I knew instantly why Gaston Cheverny waited, in such imminent peril; it was for Francezka Capello, and, incidentally, Madame Riano. It was but a scant five minutes by Count Saxe's watch that he had to wait for them, but it was the longest five minutes I had known for many a day.

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## CHAPTER VIII

### OUR CITY OF REFUGE

At last the rumbling of wheels was heard and a large traveling chaise appeared. It was at once stopped by a Russian officer, but we saw that he permitted Madame Riano to alight, and another person—a slim young figure in a crimson mantle—and that, I knew, was Francezka Capello.

There was a parley between Madame Riano and the officer, but he escorted her and Mademoiselle Capello to the drawbridge, Gaston Cheverny standing his ground until the ladies were well in the courtyard. Then he dismounted, and advancing, bent and whispered in Mademoiselle Capello's ear, as she followed Madame Riano, who stalked ahead. The Russian officer remained on the farther edge of the bridge. I could not see Francezka's face clearly, as it was shaded by her large black hat and she kept her eyes downcast. I think she was not without embarrassment at the position in which she found herself, for Madame Riano was insisting on accompanying Count Saxe in his retreat to Uzmaiz. These were her words as she marched up to him:

"Well, Maurice of Saxe, I told you long ago, that this Courland business was an egg that would never hatch. Lacy, the old fox, will bag you yet, if you are not very sharp. I warned you to beware of him—for he is a Scotchman, is Lacy—and his great-great aunt married the wife's cousin of an ancestor of mine. However, I don't care to trust myself to those blessed Russians and Courlanders, and I have determined to cast my lot, and my niece's, and my man Peter, and my two waiting maids, and my chaise, and my horses, with you."

Here was a pretty addition to men supposed to be in the lightest possible marching order, and expecting to flee for their lives. I never saw Count Saxe disconcerted by any woman except Madame Riano—but she could disconcert a graven image.

"But, Madame," said my master lamely, "we shall be running great risks; we have a fight on our hands at this moment; for we shall not be allowed to depart in peace."

"No Kirkpatrick has ever yet avoided a fight," replied Madame Riano, firmly. "Life with us was ever a battle."

"But, Madame, it is not only a fight but a flight, I am looking for."

"Well, the Kirkpatricks were ever better at fighting than running away, but I will agree to stand

my ground, so as to give you a chance to run!"

This she said to Count Saxe, the greatest warrior in the world! And she looked like Bellona as she spoke.

"The Russian officer allowed me to speak with you," she continued, "upon my promise to return; so I must go back, but only for a moment. I will have the traveling chaise brought here, but, if need be, both my niece and myself can ride a-horseback."

With that, she turned back, and walked across the drawbridge, Count Saxe accompanying her to the middle of it, where the Russian officer met her, and escorted her to where the chaise still stood.

Meanwhile, Francezka and Gaston had withdrawn into the shadow of the courtyard wall, where Gaston continued to whisper in her ear. Count Saxe, however, speaking to me by name, Francezka glanced up, and instantly coming toward me, laid her hand on my arm.

"This is my good friend Babache," she said, smiling into my face.

"Yes, Mademoiselle," I answered, "this is your good friend Babache."

I saw her face plainly by the light of the lantern swinging overhead. She was handsomer than she had been the year before, her features having lost the sharp outline of immaturity; her eyes were wells of light, her eloquent red mouth wore a charming smile; the child had become a woman.

"It seems my destiny always to trouble you," she said, smiling, and yet blushing a little; for her pride was offended at being thus thrown upon us, as it were.

I replied as well as I could, and then we heard Madame Riano's voice raised on the other side of the drawbridge. She was giving the Russian officer the worst rating in her repertoire. Everything Russian, from their religion to their cookery, she heaped anathema on, when, suddenly, this farce became a tragedy. The Russians closed about her; her voice ran high, and then suddenly stopped as if she had been gagged. We saw her thrust into the chaise; a Russian soldier jumped on the box, and it rattled off.

And, at the same moment, there was a rush for the drawbridge, but we were too quick for them; it was up and fast before they knew it. Count Saxe then turned to Mademoiselle Capello, and offering her his hand as if he were at the king's levee, said:

"Mademoiselle, permit me to conduct you to a place of comfort—I will not say safety, for all is safe here; the walls are nine feet thick and our friends, the Russians, have nothing but musketry."

Francezka's face grew very pale, but her eyes did not falter. Her courage was in truth greater than Madame Riano's, for madame loved battle; Francezka did not love it, neither did she fear it.

She accepted Count Saxe's hand, and he led her across the courtyard and up the stairway, where she disappeared within the door, first making a curtsy to us all as well as to Count Saxe.

My master came down the stairway three steps at a time.

"The Russians are but poor tacticians," he said, "or they would never have freed us from Peggy Kirkpatrick. As it is, we must not be captured with this fair girl among us. Fancy what story of it would go forth to the world. No; we must save her or die with her."

"Yes," repeated Gaston Cheverny, standing near us, "we must save her or die with her."

For, in spite of Count Saxe's reassuring words to Mademoiselle Capello, that was really the sum of it. The Russians had begun a heavy fusillade which, in truth, was no more than hail against our nine feet of stone walls. Could we but exist without ammunition and food, and could we do without sleep, we twenty men could laugh at the eight hundred Russians. But, unluckily, men must eat and sleep. I was turning this over in my mind while our men were replying briskly out of the loopholes—and with effect, for soon cries went up to the heavens; our bullets had found their billets. At the first sight of blood the Russians howled like hungry wolves. I believe they would have torn us limb from limb could they have caught us. There is nothing on earth more horrible, or more terrifying, than a great and loud cry for blood.

I, Babache, a soldier from my fourteenth year, trembled behind nine feet of stone, at this yell from the beast in man. Nor is it without its effect on the most seasoned soldiers. They, the common men, laugh at it at first, but it soon penetrates to the marrow of their bones, and they perform miracles of valor under the spur of *fear*—for it is as often fear as courage that drives a storming party into the breach. I have read in the essays of Monsieur Michel Eyquem de Montaigne, of Périgord, that he feared nothing but *fear*—and it is a wise saying of that Périgord gentleman. So it was in the schloss at Mitau that August night—we were afraid of nothing but fear, for we were certainly not afraid to meet death in any shape. There was plenty for all of us to do, Count Saxe himself shouldering a musket, and firing through the slits of windows; but I knew that he was not the man to be trapped like a rat in a hole, and I made sure he had some scheme in his head by which we were to be saved from hoisting a handkerchief on a ramrod—and waited for him to tell us what it was.

Meanwhile, the demoniac yelling kept up, together with the volleys of musketry. The Russians had not then learned to transport light guns on wheels, the King of Prussia having to teach them that trick near twenty years later; so that we knew, what men do not often know in our circumstances, exactly what we had to contend against. After an hour of this volleying and

yelling on the part of the Russians to which we replied by putting leaden bullets in them, Count Saxe came up to me. It was then after one o'clock—in those latitudes a time that is neither day nor night, nor morning, nor evening, but a ghostlike hour, in which all shapes, all things, the very sky and earth, are strange to human beings. I saw by the faint half-light a smile on my master's face; he was ever the handsomest man alive, and when he had the light of battle in his eye, he was more beautiful than Apollo, lord of the unerring bow. He was still in his court costume, but there was a great rent in his velvet coat made by the musket he had occasionally used, his gem-embroidered waistcoat was soiled with powder, and his lace cravat and ruffles were in rags.

"Babache," said he, "I have it. Do you see yonder brick wall to the left where the Russians have just tethered thirty or forty horses? The moon is sinking fast,—and as soon as it fades, the drawbridge goes down like lightning; you and I and Beauvais on horseback dash across it to the left, the other sixteen men rush after us, seize each man a horse, and make for the highway to Uzmaiz, not a quarter of a mile away. I believe every man of us stands a good chance to escape."

"And Mademoiselle Capello and Gaston Cheverny?" I asked.

"They must go by way of the tunnel. It will bring them out at the market-place, where there will be a crowd long before sunrise and they may easily escape notice. Gaston will take Mademoiselle Capello to the palace, and presenting himself boldly, ask refuge for her, which could hardly be refused. As for himself, he may be thrown in prison, he may be torn limb from limb; he must take his desperate chance, as the rest of us take ours."

"He takes it cheerfully," said Gaston, at my elbow. He was grimed with powder, and was rubbing his shoulder, which his piece had greatly bruised, but I never saw a more smiling countenance. At the idea of being charged with Mademoiselle Capello's safety, he looked as if he had just come into a great estate.

Count Saxe then gave him a pocket map, and took him within to give him a considerable sum of money. When they were gone, I heard a soft voice behind me whispering my name, and, turning, I saw Francezka's fair face at a lower window, near to me.

"So we have met but to part," she said, leaning out of the window, her delicate round chin on her hand.

"We shall perhaps meet again, Mademoiselle," said I. "I think it will not be long before you will be setting out for Paris with Madame Riano. This, no doubt, will cure Madame Riano of traveling for the present."

Francezka shook her head. "You do not know my aunt. As long as she can have adventures, she is in heaven. And I like adventures, too. I have heard of some one who said he cared not much which way the coach was going, so it went at a rattling gait and he was inside. So do I feel."

"If you like adventures, Mademoiselle, you will always have them," I replied.

"Do you think," she said, after a pause, "that in taking care of me Monsieur Cheverny is running a greater risk than any of you?"

"No, Mademoiselle. His chance seems to me rather the better. At best, he can demand to be sent to the palace, while for us, we must run the gantlet of the Russians; sixteen men must take their chances of getting horses, and we must travel in company. But Count Saxe is with us, and he is the favorite of fortune as well as of nature."

She remained silent a while, then spoke again:

"So this may be the last time we shall speak together in this world."

"I hope not, Mademoiselle," I replied. "I hope to have the honor of speaking to you in Paris before the year is out."

"No, not Paris, but at my château of Capello. It is only twelve miles from the highroad between Brussels and Paris. I would not be boastful, but it is the charmingest place, at the foot of the Ardennes. I have not seen it since I was a child. Monsieur Gaston Cheverny remembers it better than I. He says he even remembers me, a little child but six years old, and so did Monsieur Regnard Cheverny tell me that at Paris last year. I think I remember Monsieur Gaston Cheverny a little—perhaps because he is nearer my age."

"Then," said I, humoring her as a child, "we shall stop and dine with you on our way to Paris, for, of course, I can not go anywhere unless my master, Count Saxe, be asked, too."

"He will be asked, never fear. Good fortune will attend us all, no doubt. I do not feel the least afraid of what is before me, unless the tunnel be damp, and there be toads in it, then I shall die of fright, for all that I am a Kirkpatrick."

How light-hearted she was, in the midst of things terrifying to most women!

Count Saxe, wishing to spare her the sight of our outrush, then returned with Gaston Cheverny, who had received his money and instructions. Gaston wore a black hat and cloak of Count Saxe's; and, since the count is a very tall man, and Gaston only of the middle height, the cloak hung down upon his heels, and we could but smile at the figure he made. Yet he looked not ungraceful. Then Mademoiselle Capello came out, wearing her hat and mantle. She said to Count Saxe, very earnestly:

"Monsieur, you may depend upon it, that whatever dangers encompass Monsieur Cheverny and

me, I will not play the coward."

"I am sure of it, Mademoiselle," replied Count Saxe, smiling, "but I do not look for any dangers for either of you."

This was not strictly true, for there was great danger for Gaston Cheverny, although little, if any, for Mademoiselle Capello, as we then thought.

"Do you mean, Monsieur," asked Francezka, "you think we shall be suffered to walk quietly from the market-place to the palace?"

"Yes, Mademoiselle."

"And if we reach the palace, there will not be a price put upon our heads?"

"No, indeed, Mademoiselle. I think you will find Madame Riano at the palace, and may resume your journey to-morrow."

"Then," cried Francezka, rather crossly, "the only real danger seems to be from the toads in the tunnel! Come, Monsieur Cheverny, let us begin our promenade."

"Certainly, Mademoiselle," said Gaston, and then to Count Saxe: "Monsieur, may we meet at Uzmaiz, and may we return in triumph to Mitau, to take our own. Good by, Babache—the next time I see you I hope your face will be washed, for it is like a blackamoor's now, with burnt powder."

Mademoiselle curtsied low to Count Saxe, and said sweetly, as if in amends for her pettishness:

"Good by, and a thousand thanks for your goodness, Monsieur de Saxe. My house of Capello is yours whenever you are in its neighborhood. Good by, Captain Babache. When my eyes rest on you again, you will be the welcomest sight in the world."

If I had been a ready man, like François Marie Voltaire, for example, I could have replied to this kind speech with something handsome. But being only Babache, a Tatar prince from the Marais, all I could think of to say was:

"Good by, Mademoiselle; may God help you."

I saw them depart and my heart was heavy. True, it would require some ingenuity on their part to get them into trouble, but I suspected both of them had talents as well as a taste in that line.

But now we had serious business of our own on hand. Beauvais brought us the three horses, which had been tethered in the courtyard. Everything was arranged; the firing kept up to the last, although our last was done with bits of broken nails and of silver pieces of money. At last the great dusky moon showed only a rim upon the far horizon, and then seemed suddenly engulfed in a great abyss of darkness.

At a signal, the drawbridge fell with a crash. We were already on horseback, and dashed across the bridge into the open place and toward the brick wall. Every man of ours was at our heels. The Russians were completely dazed. Half of them rushed into the courtyard only to find it empty. The rest ran hither and thither, afraid to fire in the darkness, and before they could rally, or could find out what we were really after, every man of us was mounted and away. We had a good twenty minutes' start, for the noise among the Russians drowned the sound of our hoofbeats. We had only one street of the town to traverse before we struck the highway. The Russians had no inkling that we were making for Uzmaiz, and not half an hour from the time we started came a deluge of rain, the welcomest imaginable; for in that downpour the Russians lost us and never found us again. We fared on, knowing every foot of the way, for Count Saxe had made himself thoroughly familiar with this road to his island fortress. Bridges were down, and the roads were mere quagmires, but these were small difficulties to nineteen seasoned men, riding for their lives.

We bivouacked that night, and for four other nights, in those rocky and almost impassable woods with which that country abounds, and which seem devised for the security of the hunted. It was easy enough to get food and forage, for we were well supplied with money. The argument of gold was supplemented by another argument of death, if the seller was disobliging; we had twenty good horse pistols, and their united reasoning never failed to convince. From the first day until the last but one of our flight, the weather was bad: torrents of rain, wild winds roaring, nature in a tumult night and day. At last the air grew soft, the sun shone, and on a heavenly August evening, after passing through a country green with deep-embosoming woods, and with sunny, verdant slopes and many trickling crystal waters, we came upon a great mirror of a lake, with a fair, wooded island in the midst of it; and that was our city of refuge—the lake and island of Uzmaiz.

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## CHAPTER IX

### A CRIMSON MANTLE



I shall never forget the August evening when first we saw that island of enchanted beauty in Lake Uzmaiz. The lake lay blue and still, with an opaline sky, shot with gold, reflected in it. The green island, fringed with trees, and with a small, half-ruined castle on a gentle knoll in the middle, was mirrored in that fair expanse. There were two towers of the castle left standing, and they gave upon a broad terrace of which the escarpment was gone to soft decay, moss-grown and beautiful. There was a little point of land, rock-fringed, against which the water lapped like a mother crooning to her babe, and opposite to it, a point on the mainland, grassy and bordered with alder bushes. It was still and quiet and placid, like a dream of peace. Over all, the declining sun shone golden, bathing the wooded peaks afar with soft splendor. The beauty and the peacefulness of it went to the heart of one. Oh, what loveliness there was in that lake, that island, that darkly blue horizon, that sunset sky, glowing with amethyst and pale green!

But there were beauties other than those of nature on the island. The first I reckon to be our three hundred stout fellows, who owned as much ragged valor as any three hundred soldiers in the world. They were delighted to see Count Saxe, and each man had a kind of leathern grin upon his countenance that was as satisfactory to us as beauty's most bewitching smile. They had not lost a day in intrenching, and the natural strength of the island was such that Count Saxe declared, if he could have but a few weeks, even with his small force, he could intrench himself so that it would take ten thousand to dislodge him.

We had great stores of arms and ammunition, together with some heavy guns—these last conveyed to the island by a miracle of ingenuity and determination—and we had victuals in abundance. It began to look as if we could give Bibikoff and his Russians, and even Lacy, some trouble yet to get us out of Courland.

Count Saxe, on landing, went straight to refresh himself in the old castle, where two or three rooms in the towers, at each end of the terrace, were still habitable. The terrace was overgrown with ivy and periwinkle, and some ancient rose trees were still living and blooming. On this terrace, which seemed steeped in age and tranquillity, Count Saxe determined to mount two of his four great guns which had been transported to Uzmaiz.

Our rest was short before we set to work, with pick and shovel, every man of us. Count Saxe did not disdain to show us how to work. We labored day and night, with but short intervals for sleep. Sleeping or working, however, my mind was always full of Francezka. With discretion on Gaston Cheverny's part there was no reason to fear for her; but although his wit and courage were above cavil, his discretion was an unknown quantity. For him, much as I loved him, I felt no immediate concern. He was a soldier, whose trade was danger, and he had known a plenty of it since leaving France; but for Francezka, that delicately nurtured creature, who had never slept but in a soft bed, who was accustomed to waiting maids and valets, who was so young and so charming, so adventurous—what of her?

We scarcely reckoned upon hearing from Gaston Cheverny very promptly, still there was room for anxiety when a whole week passed and we heard nothing. Gaston was amply supplied with money, and Count Saxe had charged him to lose no time in communicating with us, nor was he likely to delay—so that the failure to hear from him was slightly disquieting.

One week went by, and then another, and we heard nothing of Francezka and Gaston. We had other things to give us thought, for we got news that Bibikoff was looking for us, with four thousand Russians, and, as soon as we were found, General Lacy was to step in and finish us—if he could. This only put more strength into our thews and sinews, for if the Russians caught us before our defenses were completed, it would go hard with us. So we had enough to think about. But it did not diminish our courage or our industry. If only Mademoiselle Capello were safe! That was the thought in my heart.

On the fifteenth day after our arrival, about noon, as I stood on the terrace making some changes, under Count Saxe's eye, for one of the guns to be planted there, I happened to glance toward the point of the mainland, and saw a strange figure standing there waving a crimson mantle by way of a signal; and it was Francezka's mantle.

Count Saxe saw it as soon as I, and recognized it.

"Go you at once, with a boat," he said, and I lost no time.

When I stepped out of the boat on the mainland, the fellow who had been signaling came up to me. He was barelegged, and wore the tattered uniform of a Russian foot soldier, with a sheepskin mantle, but he spoke remarkably good French for a foot soldier.

"I have a letter," he said in French, "for Count Saxe."

"You mean," I replied, "for his Highness, the Duke of Courland. Give it me then, and, also, that mantle." And I shoved a gold piece into his hand. He grinned and gave up both the mantle and the letter.

With them, I returned to the island. Count Saxe met me at the landing place, and I handed him the letter, which was from Gaston Cheverny. It read:

*Your Highness:*

*Here I am with my young brother François, in the hands of the Russians. François is young and delicate, and must be succored. A ransom of ten thousand crowns is asked for us both—nor will the Russians agree to part with one of us without the other. François must be succored, I say. My estate in France is not great, but it is ten thousand crowns at least, and I think the ransom not excessive. François, I repeat, must be succored. Your Highness's ever faithful*

Count Saxe looked at me reflectively, after I had read the letter.

"Of course, she must be succored. Ten thousand crowns is a large sum for some purposes; not large to pay as ransom for a lady."

"Not for some ladies," I answered. "Not for Mademoiselle Capello."

"Babache, you are a Tatar and have the sentiments of a Tatar," said my master; and then he got with me into the boat and we pulled across the bright blue water to where the rascal awaited us, sunning himself with great enjoyment in the August noon.

Count Saxe saw through the fellow's disguise at once. He liked not to deal with rascals, but knew how to perfectly, and said at once in French:

"What will be done to Monsieur Cheverny and the lad if we decline to pay the ransom?"

For answer the fellow grinned, and drew his hand, as an executioner draws his sword, across his neck.

Count Saxe said not a word in reply, but went through the pantomime of a platoon of soldiers firing at the order "One! Two! Three!" upon the condemned.

The Russian understood very well, and laughed.

"But we have not yet come to that," said Count Saxe. "Here is a man, Captain Babache, who will go with you and see the young man and the lad. On his report depends whether we shall pay anything or not."

"He must take the ten thousand crowns with him," said the fellow. "It would be a pity to shoot the lad, François. He is such a brave lad. We marched him far and fast; he was footsore and weary, but he marched, and not a moan escaped him."

At that my heart was like to burst. I could see Francezka—that pale, beautiful face—those eyes, so seductive, yet so undaunted—that lofty spirit which made her soul the captain of her body. And surely, Gaston must have committed some great folly to have brought them to that pass. All this went galloping through my mind while Count Saxe was saying:

"My friend, I see you are a determined rascal, and that you know the boy at least must be ransomed. So, Babache here will return with you, and ten trusty men shall carry the ten thousand crowns. But I warn you that you are dealing with Maurice of Saxe, and if harm comes to a hair of the heads of those prisoners, or of Babache and his men, I will give over the pursuit of the crown of Courland, until every soul of you rests in Abraham's bosom. Do you hear me?"

"Yes, and know you and believe you," replied the fellow. "We will do them no harm. We are gentlemen, if you please; I, myself, have danced with the lady, Anna Iwanowna, whom you, Count Saxe, refused to marry, and though you have not asked my views upon political affairs in this my native land of Courland, I will say to you that you will rest in Abraham's bosom before you become Duke of Courland."

"Ah," replied Count Saxe, coolly, "may I take you as a fair representative of Courland?"

"Hardly," replied he of the bare legs; "but your objects, most noble Count, and mine and those of my comrades, are not unlike. Your Highness comes to Courland, and tells us to make you Duke of Courland, or you will give us our fill of civil war. It is stand and deliver in either case."

To my amazement Count Saxe actually laughed!

For my part, the picture conjured up of Francezka tramping wearily through the fields and forests, in the company of cutthroats, her tender feet aching and wounded, put all thoughts of laughter out of my head. I was impatient only to be gone, and Count Saxe saw it.

Ten thousand crowns is a great sum of money, I think. It made a hole in Count Saxe's military chest to pay it; but when was he ever backward in handing out money when he had it, or could get it from some one else? And the services of eleven men, when time was so precious to us, could ill be spared; but Count Saxe took no note of these things.

He talked a little longer with the Russian, who had a German name, Schnelling. This Schnelling had the impudence to claim to be a part of Bibikoff's force, and when Count Saxe asked him what he was doing holding prisoners for ransom, the rascal replied that the money was to be applied for a fund of defense against Count Saxe!

At this my master could not help laughing, and expressed himself as being entirely at ease about a single crown of his money going to the fund for driving him out of Courland.

On being asked, Schnelling told us his encampment, as he called it, was three days' march from Uzmaiz.

Now Count Saxe was a good judge of whether a man was telling the truth or not. He had enjoyed remarkable opportunities for more than a year of studying the Courland vintage of lies—for every nation has its own style of lies. A Frenchman lies not like a German. A Courlander lies—however, it has been said that the devil and ninety-nine Courlanders make a hundred liars.

Count Saxe replied to this last lie of Schnelling's by saying:

"You are a marvelous soldier, to travel three days without escort of commissariat, for the village hen-roosts can not always be depended on. I guarantee that your prisoners are not half a day's march from here."

"Monsieur," said our bare-legged captain, in a tone and manner not unworthy of Jacques Haret, "I take no offense at your calling me a liar, by implication; in war, lies are stratagems. But your allusion to village hen-roosts is exceedingly painful to a gentleman like myself, who has danced at a court ball with the Duchess Anna Iwanowna. However, passing that over, I will admit that we are just half a day's march from here and looking for General Bibikoff every hour."

"Pray make General Bibikoff my compliments when you meet him," replied Count Saxe, gravely. "And since your prisoners can be reached to-night, not a moment must be lost in setting out."

It was high noon when we had perceived Schnelling, and by two o'clock all the arrangements were made, the money was put in two leather bags, I had picked out ten men and had started. I had not much fear of treachery on the part of our Russian-Courland friends. They knew Maurice of Saxe too well to try any tricks on him. We struck out through a green, well-wooded country, avoiding the highroads and ever going deeper into the forests of larch and fir that led toward the west from Uzmaiz. If my heart had not been full of Francezka, I should have enjoyed the conversation of that rascal, Schnelling. He frankly gave up his attempt to pass for a private soldier and appeared like a genuine fine gentleman, in spite of his bare legs and sheepskin cloak. He had known many adventures in the world, and told of them, laughing uproariously at things that I would have killed any man for, had he told them on Captain Babache.

I did not wish to speak of Mademoiselle Capello to him, but in spite of me the words came out. I asked him, trying meanwhile to look unconcerned, about the boy François. He glanced at me sidewise, and I believe he read my heart, and delighted in torturing me.

"A lad of fine spirit, but delicate in many ways. The elder—Monsieur Gaston Cheverny—could not take better care of him if he were a sister instead of a brother. Monsieur Gaston never leaves him by day, and by night watches him. It would have been as easy, as far as Monsieur Gaston was concerned, to have got twenty thousand crowns as ten thousand."

We trudged for five hours, and the sun sank, and there was no moon. I walked on like a blind man. Schnelling seemed to know his way perfectly, but occasionally he stopped and struck his flint; when by that small, pale gleam, the abysses of darkness seemed vaster and more menacing. At last, toward ten o'clock at night, there came, on the faintly stirring dense air, the odor of smoke, of burning boughs. Then a twinkle of light was visible, and the next minute we came upon an open space, in which a huge fire of resinous wood blazed and roared. There were pickets about. This precious gang of rascals, who impudently claimed to be a part of General Bibikoff's force, had all served some time or other as soldiers, all wore uniforms, and knew perfectly well how to take care of themselves—nay, how to make themselves at ease, as far as their circumstances permitted. It is, after all, a wonderful thing that man does not seem able to rid himself wholly of either sense or virtue. These rogues were brave, and as Count Saxe anticipated, they kept their word scrupulously about their prisoners.

As soon as my eyes became accustomed to the glare of light, I looked about me for Francezka, but saw no sign of either her or Gaston Cheverny. Schnelling walked up to a man in a colonel's uniform, and saluting, said:

"Colonel Pintsch, this gentleman, Captain Babache, brings you ten thousand crowns, with the compliments of Count Saxe, and is prepared to receive the prisoners."

Colonel Pintsch—whether he was a colonel or not, I never knew—bowed politely, and said:

"I am ready to deliver the prisoners on the spot and to receipt for the money."

I thought it best to hand the money over at once, knowing if they wished to play us false it was as easy to do it at one time as another; for it was clear that we could not undertake to return until daylight came to assist us. We were obliged to trust them partly, and I thought it best to trust them wholly. Therefore I had my men bring forward the two leathern bags. Colonel Pintsch wrote a receipt, meanwhile gravely assuring me that the money would go to the defense fund for Courland, and he would certainly inform General Bibikoff of the whole affair. I listened, longing to throttle him, and he concluded by saying to Schnelling:

"Show Captain Babache our guests."

Guests they were now, no longer prisoners. What rags of politeness will sometimes cling to the worst of villains!

Schnelling led me a little way toward the edge of the open space, where the forest closed in its dark ramparts. There was a kind of screen formed by fir boughs stuck into the ground, and behind these a smaller fire was blazing. Under a low hanging larch tree was a bed of boughs, and on it lay Francezka, sleeping. The huge black cloak given Gaston Cheverny by Count Saxe was thrown over her, covering her completely, except her delicate, clear-cut face.

The young and the innocent always look like infants when they are asleep. Although Francezka was then nearly sixteen, she looked like the merest child, with her long lashes lying on her cheek, and the little rings of damp hair on her forehead. I gazed upon her one moment in rapture, and then turned away in reverence. Gaston Cheverny, who had been sitting by the fire, had sprung up and was giving me an embrace which all but cracked my ribs.

"Babache," he said, in a low voice, so that Francezka would not be awakened, "I can say, like the patriarch of old, 'Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace.'"

I shook myself free from his embrace.

"Come," said I, "tell me what particular folly brought you to this pass?"

He scowled at me for a moment and then said hotly—and I suppose I had spoken angrily—

“My report shall be made to Count Saxe. I—” And then we both smiled involuntarily.

“Babache,” continued Gaston in the meekest tone, “I swear to you, I can not now recall one thing I have done since we parted in the courtyard of the schloss at Mitau, that seems to me on reflection rash, or ill-considered. Listen and I believe you will agree that I am in no way to blame for what has come to pass.”

Schnelling interrupted us to say that food was being prepared for us; but, had it been before me, I could not have eaten nor drunk until Gaston had told me his story. He spoke softly, glancing often toward the spot under the larch tree where Francezka’s face, like a lily flower, lay.

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## CHAPTER X

### A PILGRIM AND A WAYFARER

“We passed through the tunnel easily enough, except that Francezka”—he spoke her name unconsciously—“was frightened to tears by the toads. She, a Kirkpatrick, wept with terror at a harmless toad, but when it comes to real danger, she is as brave as my sword. We got to the market-place, just as the drenching rain came down. There was an inn near-by, and we ran to that for shelter. We were well received, no one suspecting anything, and ordered breakfast in a private room. We heard the people about the inn discussing Count Saxe’s escape, and we concluded he had got away safely. It lifted a load from our hearts. We were very merry while we were at breakfast. It seemed no more than a delightful escapade, and we spoke of how we should tell it in the saloons of Paris. We were afraid, however, it would sound very tame.”

This was the way these two young people took their predicament to heart—a predicament which involved the reputation of the one and the life of the other!

“After we had breakfasted, Francezka retired to a room to rest, and I slipped into the town to learn something of Madame Riano. It was then about six o’clock, and cataracts of rain poured. I went straight to the palace. Just as I came near it, a traveling chaise with an escort of dragoons rolled out of the gates. On the box of the chaise sat old Peter, Madame Riano’s man, and within was Madame Riano, alone. She had her head out of the chaise window, haranguing the dragoon officer upon the iniquity of so treating a Kirkpatrick, the widow of a grandee of Spain five times over, of the Ricos Hombres, whatever that may be—whom the Queen of Spain rose to greet, and much more of the same sort. To this the dragoon officer paid no attention, and the party rattled and clattered off.

“Here was a predicament, was it not? I managed to get speech of some of the servants in the palace, and found that Madame Riano’s tongue had got her in serious trouble with the Russians, with whom the Duchess Anna Iwanowna had taken sides vigorously, and Madame Riano was being escorted to the Russian frontier in consequence. I doubted if they really meant to be so severe on her, but that was not the question. It was how to put Francezka under proper protection, according to Count Saxe’s directions. I managed, by bribing the servants, to be smuggled into the palace. I did not suppose the duchess to be out of her bed, but I found she had not been in it since the ball closed. She was bent on being revenged on Count Saxe. I had done his bidding only too well, having told at least a dozen ladies of his high regard for the duchess’s worth—and she longed then for news of his capture. Instead of that, she had found out that he had got away.

“She stormed like fury at that, and in the midst of it Madame Riano was brought in. I judge the meeting between the two ladies was like an irresistible force meeting with an immovable body. The very rooks on the palace roofs soared away, cawing in terror, and the dogs in the kitchens, with their tails between their legs, skulked into hiding places. You may imagine this was not an auspicious time for me to appear with a request that the duchess take charge of Madame Riano’s niece. I own that when I at last succeeded in getting into the duchess’s august presence I thought she would eat me up, crunching my bones and lapping my blood. However, I ventured to ask protection for Mademoiselle Capello, and the duchess swore like a trooper—yes, actually swore. She demanded I should tell her where Count Saxe proposed to take refuge. I refused. She said:

“‘Sir, you shall tell or you shall hang.’

“‘Madame,’ said I, ‘I will neither tell nor hang.’

“Then, seeing it was time for adieu, I ran for it; a great hue and cry was raised after me, but I managed to get out of the palace by an open window on the ground floor, and by doubling and twisting like a hare, I got back, unmolested, to the inn. Now, Babache, was there any indiscretion there?”

I was forced to admit that I could not name any fault he had committed; for surely, his not

betraying Count Saxe was not a fault.

"The torrents of rain still continued, and it seemed to me best that we should not lose a moment in getting out of Mitau; and so I told Francezka. I proposed to her that we should cross the river by the bridge of boats. This she at once agreed to; in fact, she proved the most docile creature imaginable in moments of real danger. The crossing of the bridge was not easy, the boats being rickety, and the wind and rain making our footing insecure; but she accomplished it without a sign of alarm—even with gaiety. Once on the other side of the river, we walked briskly, our cloaks protecting us well, and kept to the highroad. I thought it likely the town of Mitau would be well searched for me before the seekers crossed the river. And presently the rains ceased and the sun came out. It seemed as if good fortune had adopted us, and we fared along gaily enough."

Yes, the two no doubt were in great spirits and much laughter, still thinking it a mere escapade.

"Toward noon we reached a considerable village with a good inn and posting house, and going boldly to the inn, I demanded horses. The people seemed to be touched by our youth; they thought—" here a flush showed under Gaston's tan and sunburn—"they thought we were a couple running away to be married, and their sympathy for us was not diminished by the liberal way in which I paid for all I wanted. Here Francezka rested for an hour or two, and I worked out my plan for reaching Uzmaiz with her, as that was our only refuge. I told her all the risks we ran, and offered to follow any other plan which seemed good to her. But she assured me of her confidence in me, and, in truth, there was but one thing for us to do—to make for Uzmaiz. While she was resting I had gone out and bought a handsome riding suit for her; for it was clearly best that she should travel as my young brother François. When I produced the riding suit, and told her gently the necessity for wearing it, she turned pale and burst into tears. What strange creatures women are, after all!

"She made no objection, however, and the only thing she showed obstinacy about was that her own garments should be carried with us. I believe she would have flatly refused to go if I had not agreed to this; and when I suggested to her that it would be well to leave her laced hat behind, she wept again. The laced hat has accompanied us on all our travels, and it is in my charge now. Our friend Schnelling took possession of her other clothes, and we must manage to get them from him; he does not seem to be an ill-natured dog, and will, no doubt, give them up without trouble. To go back to our travels. We got the best post-horses in the village and started for Uzmaiz. Francezka made the prettiest boy imaginable—" here we both glanced toward the sleeping Francezka—"with her locks curling upon her shoulders. I gave out that she was my brother, but nevertheless suspicion was excited by all who saw her. Such grace and beauty as hers can not be disguised."

"Especially as you treated this alleged boy as if she were a princess," I said.

"Would not you have done the same? At all events, we got three days' travel away from Mitau, when, on the evening of the third day, we were apprehended by these rogues. They professed to be a part of General Bibikoff's army, but I knew from the beginning that they were merely highwaymen. They sent the post-chaise back, and forced us to march on foot with them. This was nothing to me; but oh, Babache—the spectacle of the woman you love forced to tramp in the company of scoundrels like these! A woman softly nurtured, whose delicate feet were bruised with stones, with rough climbing, bearing it all courageously, never an impatient or sorrowful word—no tears then—taking all the blame for our situation upon herself—you can not imagine my sufferings!"

Perhaps I understood those sufferings better than he dreamed.

"No insult was offered to Francezka. I told them that if any were many lives should pay for it; but I think they never contemplated that; we were held for vulgar ransom, and that only. Ten days ago we were brought to this place. I knew we were near Uzmaiz, although Schnelling stoutly denied it. I do not know how the days have passed; only, the strangest thing in the world has happened—Francezka told me to-day she had not been really unhappy a moment since we left Mitau. The time with both of us has flown fast. No one has molested us. We have spent the hours together in these wild forests, watched, it is true, but still virtually alone. At night Francezka has slept soundly on her bed of boughs, while I watched; and she has risen at dawn, while I slept."

"And she watched," I said.

Gaston blushed deeply and made no reply.

The fire was flaming redly; all else black—black sky, black earth, black trees. My eyes turned again to the larch tree under which Francezka slept. She had wakened, and raising herself upon her arm, was gazing at me with those eloquent eyes of hers. I went over toward her. She sat up on the edge of her bed of boughs, and disposing her cloak about her, so as to hide her masculine dress, she said, smiling:

"I knew you would come, and I thank you with all my heart. When do we depart?"

"To-morrow morning, Mademoiselle," I replied.

"And why not to-night?" she asked, turning to Gaston Cheverny, who had also approached.

"It would be difficult for us men to travel through these wilds by night, and for you it would be impossible."

Then Francezka said to me, most earnestly:

"It is I, and I alone, who should be blamed for this. I should have made Monsieur Cheverny leave me in the market-place at Mitau. I could have taken care of myself, and I should not have brought all this trouble and anxiety on Monsieur Cheverny or you, Captain Babache, and on Count Saxe—unfortunate that I am."

"You could not have made me leave you, Mademoiselle," replied Gaston. "And, besides, it is extremely dangerous in Mitau now for any one who is supposed to be connected with Count Saxe. No, Mademoiselle, no one is to blame, except these ruffians. Perhaps Madame Riano might have been more prudent, but Madame Riano can scarcely be reckoned a prudent woman."

Francezka smiled again.

"You are right. My Aunt Peggy has the spirit of forty men, and Kirkpatricks at that, in her; and no risk has ever daunted her yet. She is not likely, at her time of life, to learn prudence."

"But," cried Gaston, hotly, "she may well take risks for herself; but for you—pardon, Mademoiselle—"

Francezka raised her hand warningly.

"My aunt takes no risks for me that she takes not for herself. God made her entirely without fear, and so must we quarrel, not with her, but with God, for making her what she is."

Francezka rose and came toward the little fire we had made. I noticed some of Schnelling's rascals watching us through the screen of boughs, but there was nothing to see except the three of us, sitting around the fire under the solemn larches and firs, and our voices were kept low.

We told her our only plan was to take her to Uzmaiz, and from thence try to communicate with Madame Riano. None of us believed that any very severe measures would be taken against Madame Riano, and we spoke cheerfully of Francezka's speedily rejoining her. To this Francezka listened attentively.

For an hour we sat thus, in the light of the fire's red blaze. Francezka kept her mantle about her so that her masculine dress was concealed; with her cavalier's hat upon her head, and her rich hair curling upon her shoulders, as Gaston had described, she made a beautiful boy—but one bound to excite suspicion. The innate coquetry of her glance, the frequent changes of color, the sudden frowns and smiles made any real masculine disguise impossible.

It was the first time I had really any conversation with Francezka. How far removed in every way from the scene of our first meeting—the ancient, well ordered garden of a splendid Paris hôtel. But there is certainly a subtle fascination in these singular and unexpected meetings. No one with a taste for the wine of life, but relishes the unusual, least of all Francezka; for I saw plainly, under all her softness, a soul like Peggy Kirkpatrick's. And the more I knew of her in after years, the more I knew that she had the courage of a Crusader only partly concealed by a pretty, affected shyness. After she had done her will, she trembled, hesitated, blushed, looked down in timidity, looked up for approval—and was very ready with tears, when she required them.

We three sat together for an hour, Francezka doing most of the speaking. She told us something of her travels with Madame Riano. They had set out from Paris very shortly after Count Saxe's departure, and had spent nearly a year in visiting the various German courts. She was unflinchingly loyal to her aunt, but she would have been more or less than human could she have told without laughing of Madame Riano's adventures, and Francezka was, herself, a wit, and a child of laughter. She told us some of the most vivid events of their scamperings over Europe—Francezka looking away meanwhile to avoid seeing me smile, and sometimes covering her face with her mantle to smother her merriment.

Scotch Peg had caused panics, earthquakes and convulsions at every court she had visited, especially the smaller German ones, where the pettiness, the rigidity and the absurdity of things were manifest to others besides Peggy Kirkpatrick. She had hectored over grand dukes, had flouted their mistresses, gibed at their prime ministers, and argued with their ecclesiastics. All this would have been easily checked in an ordinary woman; but Madame the Countess Riano del Valdozo y Kirkpatrick, with a vast fortune, with a powerful backing at the courts of France and Spain—for she never lacked friends—was a considerable person, and as Francezka told us, with dancing eyes, Madame Riano had made good her promise never to leave any place until she was ready.

When the fire was dying to a bed of coals, Francezka rose to leave us. She thanked me with tears in her eyes for coming after her; stipulated that Schnelling must give up her clothes—I believe she would have lived and died in that forest if she could not have got her garments and her laced hat—and then, making us a curtsy, as if she were in her aunt's great saloon at Paris, retired to her bed of boughs. Then I had some supper. Gaston Cheverny, wrapping himself in his cloak, lay down at Francezka's feet. I slept, sitting with my back against the trunk of a tree; and though I had marched long and hard that day, I envied the two their quiet and unbroken slumber from then until daylight came.

We were up with the lark. The flush of dawn was in the pearly sky, but under the thick black fir trees all was darkly shadowed still. We went in search of Schnelling, who was already stirring. I had meant to ask him civilly for Mademoiselle Capello's clothes, but this is the way Gaston Cheverny, with the hot blood of twenty, went about getting them:

"Schnelling," he said, "give us Mademoiselle Capello's clothes."

"Or what?" asked Schnelling laughing.

"There are two of us who will have your heart's blood!"

Schnelling, to my surprise, laughed again, and chose to accede to the request with mock humility; but no doubt he saw that it was actually the part of wisdom to give them up. Gaston Cheverny told me afterward that when he took the clothes to Francezka she was overjoyed, and only consented to wear her masculine attire after his representing to her that she would tear her skirts to shreds in our march to Uzmaiz.

I was taken to Colonel Pintsch, who reiterated to me his story about being a part of Bibikoff's force, which was a lie on the face of it, and a Courland lie at that. And then, some breakfast having been given us, we were suffered to depart. Schnelling went with us to guide us through the gloomy mazes of the forest. It was a brilliant August day, but all was dark in that melancholy region of chasms, rocks and hardy trees of the North. Francezka walked between Gaston Cheverny and me. We helped her as we could, over the rough places, but she was singularly active, and made her way lightly along. Happiness shone in her face. I began to fear that the lucky result of this catastrophe would not go far toward teaching her prudence.

When we reached, by degrees, the open champaign country, Schnelling bade us farewell, courteously. He had behaved handsomely about the clothes, so Francezka bade him the friendliest possible adieu. Then, with gaiety of heart, we fared on, at our leisure. When the forests were left behind, we had before us green fields, sweet streams, mills and homesteads, and a pleasant highroad. We marched slowly on Francezka's account. Toward noon we passed a cottage, before which a peasant was feeding a stout cart-horse. At the cottage door stood a pleasant-faced woman, with a little army of bright-eyed children around her. By an inspiration it came to me to offer the peasant a gold piece for the use of his horse for Mademoiselle Capello, as far as Uzmaiz. He gaped with delight at the sight of the money. Then, Francezka, blushing, proposed to go into the cottage and put on her own clothes. When she came out, dressed in her handsome robe of brown cloth, richly embroidered, her crimson mantle, and her laced hat, the little children all set up a cry of "Beautiful lady!" Francezka was openly charmed by such innocent flattery. Even our old clear-the-way boys paid her the tribute of an admiring grin; and Gaston Cheverny, like a young fool, showed his rapture.

But in truth she seemed to me as beautiful then as the rosy dawn. We perched her upon her charger, and put off again. Francezka was in the highest spirits, and was a fountain of laughter, like a child. She had seemed completely the woman up to this time, and now she seemed nothing more than a joyful, unthinking child. Never was any merrier journey than the last few miles, before we reached Uzmaiz. I judged that the payment of the ten thousand crowns would about swallow up Gaston Cheverny's modest estate; but apparently he gave no more thought to it than he did to last year's birds' nests.

It was in the middle of the glorious summer afternoon that the fair blue lake of Uzmaiz came into view. As soon as we reached the shore of the lake we were perceived, and boats were sent for us. Count Saxe awaited us at the landing on the island. When Francezka stepped ashore he greeted her as if he had not paid ten thousand crowns out of his military chest for her, so great was the chivalry and gallantry of the man. Nor did he give the smallest indication of the cruel embarrassment it was for a man in his position to have charge of a young and beautiful girl, an heiress of high quality. Francezka herself realized that and spoke to me of it later, with tears in her eyes; but the helplessness of her situation swallowed up, with every man of us, all thought of inconvenience.

The most habitable of the two or three rooms in the old tower had been made ready for her. Count Saxe had given up his own paillasse. Beauvais, who was the prince of valets, had got together such rude comforts as the stores on the island permitted. It is astonishing how much comfort can be achieved by simple means—so said Francezka, when Count Saxe led her into her apartment. It had a window giving upon the old terrace, where the rose trees were now in bloom and the ivy and periwinkle shone darkly green upon the crumbling parapet. From this window, where Beauvais had hung a blanket by way of a curtain, could be seen the blue lake lying between the terrace and the sunset. On one side were the far-off black gorges and purple forests we had left; and on the other, the rich, green-knolled cultivated country, with fields and orchards ripening under the August sun.

Francezka's arrival scarcely for a moment interrupted the work of intrenching the island. As to her fate, or ours, no one could tell. We waited and worked from day to day, thinking every morning might see the Russians swarming toward us, and our great guns, of which we had four good loud bellowers, to say nothing of smaller pieces, pouring death from their iron throats upon every man who attempted to cross that narrow blue strip of placid water. But yet, the Russians came not.

Francezka to me, in those days, was a marvel. This girl, so rash, and with a secret taste for danger, proved herself to be the most prudent as well as the most modest of women when thrown upon herself. In this she showed that vein of sound sense—Scotch sense, probably—that distinguished Madame Riano in spite of her vagaries. At the end of all Madame Riano's outlandish proceedings she generally came out victorious with colors flying; or, if she was defeated, she, like Count Saxe, sold her defeats so dearly that the victor was nigh ruined.

Francezka kept herself as much as possible from the gaze of the three hundred and twenty men who were her sole companions on this island. The only time she showed herself was in the purple evening, when she would come out upon the terrace and take the air. That was at the

hour when a little time of rest from our labors was given to us. Most of the men spent it in sleep, but not all of us. Count Saxe always took the occasion to go upon the terrace and pay Francezka his respects. So would Gaston Cheverny and a few of the other gentlemen with us. I never went unless I was sent for, but Francezka seldom let an evening pass without beckoning to me, or sending for me to speak a few kind words to me. There was nothing childish about her then. Not the most experienced lady of the great Paris world could have surpassed her in dignity. But withal, she was too guileless to conceal wholly her preference for Gaston Cheverny. They had passed through such adventures together; they had lived a whole lifetime in those weeks of wandering, and it was not strange they had much to say to each other.

At this time, after Francezka had talked with Count Saxe and others a little, she would retire to her room in the half ruined tower. Then Gaston would bring his viol and, sitting near her window in the twilight, would sing to his own accompaniment. The singing helped us all. It made us forget for a while our solitary and dangerous situation—for we looked to be fighting for our lives and dying in the last ditch at any moment. It seemed to make us once more members of the great human family which lives peaceably and tranquilly, and whose breath is not war and conquest and defeat and war again.

One of Gaston's favorite songs was that old, old one, *O Richard, O mon roi, l'univers t'abandonne*. There was some mutual understanding about this song between Francezka and Gaston Cheverny. They had sung it together sometimes in those black wastes and wilds where they had spent their time together. Gaston had several names besides Gaston—Richard was one of them; so this song appeared to refer particularly to him. When he sang it I noticed Francezka was always listening at her window, and although the curtain was drawn, and the room dark within, there would be some faint sign, such as a movement of the curtain, which showed that the singer was heard and attended to.

And so the days passed on. Every hour we improved our position, and at last the day came, when Count Saxe said to us:

"One more week of work, and we can stay here as long as this island stays."

But those last days were the most important of all. Work relaxed not, and our time of rest in the evening was to be shortened still more. And on this evening, as Gaston Cheverny sat in the twilight on the terrace, all of us listening to his singing, after a day of labor, and a night of toil to come, Gaston stopped suddenly, rising to his feet—and so rose Count Saxe and all of us. For in the gray evening we saw on the mainland a moving mass, like a huge black serpent, unfolding itself from the distant woods and boscage upon the open country. The Russians were upon us.

Instantly all was life and movement. Count Saxe did not, even in that moment, forget Francezka, for tapping at her window, he said, when she appeared:

"Mademoiselle, here are our friends, the Russians. Be not alarmed; there is a place of safety for you below the terrace if there should be fighting."

"I am not alarmed, Monsieur," quietly replied Francezka. She had been reading by the light of a single candle that volume of Villon which Gaston Cheverny had carried in his pocket or at his saddle bow ever since we left France. She kept her finger at the page, and spoke in a calm voice, although she grew a little pale. "Whenever and wherever you will have me go, I am ready."

As Gaston Cheverny said, she was the most docile creature alive when real danger was at hand. She knew how to obey like a soldier, and as she came of good soldierly stock, this was not strange.

The Russians, however, having now got within hearing of us, sounded a parley on the trumpet. Count Saxe instantly determined to send Gaston Cheverny to the parley. Gaston had picked up some understanding of the Russian language while we were at Mitau, and especially while he was with Pintsch's highwaymen, and had been artful enough to conceal it. So, Gaston, with a small escort, put off in a boat to meet the Russian envoys. The main body had halted about a mile from the shore, while we could see, by the starlight, a considerable number of them, presumably officers, making for the point of land which dipped into the lake.

We were all at our posts awaiting the outcome quietly. But one more week, and we should have been secure! Now, we were very far from secure; and we waited for Gaston Cheverny's return and the news he might bring to know whether we should have a chance to fight, or be marched off to Russian prisons—as we supposed. As for Francezka—it was not yet time for her to seek a safe place—she came to the window and stood there in the half darkness, her one candle being out.

I made bold for once to go up and speak to her without being invited.

"Mademoiselle," said I, "you may see your château of Capello sooner than you think, for surely the Russians will not detain you, but will provide you with a suitable escort and take you to a place of safety."

"It will be as God wills," replied Francezka, as coolly as you please.

We waited an hour before Gaston Cheverny's return. Count Saxe took him into the other half-ruined tower room, where there were pens and ink, and a candle in a bottle. I was prepared to write anything required.

Gaston Cheverny had a queer look on his face, like a man who has seen for the first time, and unexpectedly, something hideous.



"It is General Bibikoff," he said to Count Saxe, "with twelve hundred men, and he desires to speak with you, Monsieur, in person; and begs that you will come to the parley; but by my knack of understanding the Russian tongue, I found out that it is a ruse to get you away from the island and carry you off. Twelve hundred against one man—and that man, Count Saxe!"

Never saw I Maurice of Saxe in such a rage as at this scandalous breach of military honor. He roared out his wrath like a wild bull—oh, the lion voice of him! The old towers and escarpments echoed with it. When he grew a little calm he said to Gaston Cheverny:

"Bring Bibikoff to me. I warrant this traitor will not hesitate to trust my word."

Which was true; and I ever thought it the highest tribute to Count Saxe's honor that this treacherous general who himself had no honor knew that Maurice of Saxe had—and to it trusted his life and all his fortunes.

Gaston Cheverny again crossed to the mainland. The evening was clear, though moonless, and the pitying stars came out in the eastern sky, while the west glowed warmly with the great sinking sun, that left a track of glory behind it. In half an hour Gaston returned with Bibikoff. Count Saxe awaited them in the tower room. The Russian was, of course, blindfolded. He was a great bear of a man, with a goatlike face, very dirty and unshaven, but splendidly dressed.

There was present at that interview no one except Count Saxe, General Bibikoff, Gaston Cheverny and myself. When Bibikoff's bandage over the eyes was removed he found himself standing before Count Saxe, from whose eyes sparks seemed to be flying. And then in a voice that would have shriveled up an honest man as if he were a dead leaf, Count Saxe said:

"If I were not more generous than you I would poniard you on the spot. You would have enticed me to a place where I should have been bagged like a bird. Twelve hundred men against one! Thank you, my friend. Tell that to your commanding general, Lacy, and see what he will say to it."

Bibikoff, barbarian that he was, withered under this reproof.

Count Saxe, however, controlled his anger enough to fool Bibikoff to the top of his bent. He pretended to be ready to surrender; asked for ten days in which to remove his baggage and ammunition—and Bibikoff consented. As a matter of fact, seven days more of work would have made us secure in that place for a year against any force that could be sent against us.

Bibikoff agreed, and actually looked ashamed when Count Saxe stipulated in writing that General Lacy's signature should be secured before the agreement was binding, for he was not the man to trust to a scoundrel. Bibikoff also consented to that. General Lacy, he said, was two days' march behind him, and that gave us two days more. Men have done marvels in two days.

We breathed freer. It was by that time near eleven o'clock. The sun takes long to sink in those far northern regions, and it was yet twilight. We dared not resume our work until it grew darker; there were about four good hours of darkness between sun and sun.

While we were still standing on the terrace we saw a commotion on the mainland, and heard the trampling of many horses' hoofs, as a body of cavalry appeared on the undulating plain; and there was a darker and more slowly moving mass of foot soldiers behind them.

Our hearts, that had been suddenly raised to heights of joy, sank to depths of woe. Such is war—one moment changes the face of all things. Then we heard the Russian trumpets calling to us again. For the third time that night Gaston Cheverny was sent across the lake. He returned with a letter from General Lacy; for he had overtaken Bibikoff, and was on the heels of him when supposed to be two days' march behind.

Count Saxe read this letter in the same tower room where he had talked with Bibikoff. General Lacy knew Maurice of Saxe well. He knew that, give him ten days' time and all the Russians, aided by Satan himself, could not make him surrender. So he wrote that Bibikoff's arrangement was void; that Count Saxe must retire at daylight; that he, Lacy, declared upon his honor he had four thousand men at hand, and if compelled to attack, no quarter would be given. But Count Saxe was at liberty to retire, with a suite of not more than four persons; and in that case all his people would be paroled and would be allowed their personal arms and effects. General Lacy was a Scotchman, as Madame Riano had said, and was as shrewd as his countrymen generally are. He did not want the custody of Maurice of Saxe—to hold him was like holding a wolf by the ears; and the best possible means were taken to induce Count Saxe to depart quietly—that threat of no quarter for his followers. Count Saxe read this letter without a change of countenance. In good fortune he was great; in evil fortune he was sublime. He was fleeing from a kingdom where he had expected to rule; he had to meet the laughter of that infernal town of Paris; he had to face, at some time, Monsieur Voltaire; but he was as cool, as smiling, as debonair, as ever I saw him. He merely said to us:

"General Lacy is a man of his word. We may believe all he says. If it were for the cause of honor, well might we all remain here, and die as becomes men. But the cause is the crown of Courland. For that, I can not see brave men put to the sword. I am for surrendering and departing."

Not a word was spoken by any of us present, but we gave a silent acquiescence. I wrote and Count Saxe signed a few lines accepting General Lacy's terms, and this was at once despatched.

Count Saxe assembled all of his followers upon the terrace, gave each man a sum of money and appointed a rendezvous in Königsberg. I think there was but one man who did not fully expect to return to Courland the next year in triumph. I was that one man. I had ever believed Count Saxe's star led him not to statecraft, but to war.

He named me first to go with him, Gaston Cheverny and Beauvais, and, of course, Mademoiselle Capello. He told me to represent to Francezka it would be better for her to assume her boy's dress on our retreat.

I went to the other end of the terrace, to Francezka's tower, and knocked softly on the window. She opened it, and I told her in a few words of our plans. She received my communication without blenching. To tell the truth, anything might well have seemed better to her than imprisonment in that half ruined tower, for that is what it really came to. When I told her she must resume her brown riding suit, she sighed, and her soft, pensive eyes filled with tears; but she made no protest, and said she would be ready to start at any moment. By heaven, she was a soldier!

In the golden dawn of the morning we saw Uzmaiz for the last time. An odorous wind blew from the pine forests. The lake was like molten silver as we pulled across it. Francezka sat silent and composed and beautiful in the boat. She wore her riding suit, and her crimson mantle, which, luckily, was sexless, was wrapped about her. I wondered what eager, tumultuous thoughts were in her mind, for now she was setting forth again, a pilgrim and a wayfarer. But the lives of four men, without fear, stood between her and harm.

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## CHAPTER XI

### A LOST CAUSE

There is something in having a good horse under one which mightily uplifts a weary heart. It is like meat and drink, a consolation that rises in the blood and makes its way to the seat of the soul, which goes soaring. So it was with us on that September morning when we left Uzmaiz. We had been cooped up for over a month on the island, and every moment of our waking time had been full of labor and anxiety. Now, the worst had befallen us; and there is something of relief in the thought that there are no more bolts to fall. I believe that Count Saxe carried no delusions away from Uzmaiz. He did not at once give up his cause as lost, but I think he saw the game was not worth the winning. But for courage and smiling patience, one might have thought he had won the day, instead of being driven out, like a vagrant dog, from a strange fireside.

We mounted, and set forth in the dewy morning—the Russians civil enough, but General Lacy keeping out of sight for very shame at Bibikoff's conduct, with which he was perfectly well acquainted. They gave us good horses. Count Saxe rode ahead, with Mademoiselle Capello, Gaston Cheverny and me following, and Beauvais behind. Gaston Cheverny had a portmanteau strapped to his saddle, and in it was a treasure most precious to Francezka—her woman's clothes. I had one equally valued by Count Saxe—his rescript of election by the Diet to the crown of Courland. I hid it between my skin and my shirt. For Francezka's clothes and Count Saxe's rescript we were ready to be hanged, drowned, or shot.

Count Saxe meant to make leisurely for our rendezvous at Königsberg. There was no need for rapid travel, as our three hundred and odd men could not reach there for some days after us, as they had to make the entire distance on foot. For ourselves, the presence of Mademoiselle Capello necessarily delayed us, for although hardy for a woman, she could by no means make a day's ride like old campaigners such as we were.

Almost from the first hour of our journey Francezka began to importune Count Saxe to get her a woman's saddle and let her resume her own dress. To this Count Saxe soon agreed, Francezka pleading with wet eyes and quivering lips, as if for her life. In truth, her disguise was very incomplete; her long hair, her every look and motion betrayed her sex.

When Francezka had carried this point her spirits rose. She dismounted joyfully at the first roadside inn, and disappearing as a very pretty boy, came out again, as Mademoiselle Capello, her rich locks curled and plaited, and her beloved laced hat, which had cost her so many tears, anxieties and palpitations, set upon her graceful head. Our complications with regard to her would end as soon as we reached Königsberg. Once there it would be easy to make suitable arrangements for her, and until then she was the charge of us all, any one of whom would have laid down his life for her.

Thanks to the smallness of our party, no one suspected who we were. Count Saxe, from motives of prudence, gave himself out as Count Moritz. The weather was sunny, although the September air was sharp, but that only made our blood leap the faster. The roads were good, and the country far from tedious. Our road led us for a time toward the Baltic Sea, whose loud booming we could sometimes hear in the midnight silences.

We were seven days upon the road to Königsberg. They were not the unhappiest days of my life, for I was enabled to do something for Francezka. She turned to me for help in many of those small needs of a woman. It was agreed, when she resumed her own dress, that the best thing to do was to say she was a young lady of rank, accidentally separated from her family and going to meet them at Königsberg. This, and the extreme respect with which we treated her, secured her

from the unpleasant comment of the vulgar. Beauvais always served her in her room at the inns where we stopped, and I think, on the whole, she made the journey with ease of mind and comfort of body.

On the seventh evening, toward sunset, we rode into Königsberg, across the new bridge, and up to the best inn of the town, The Rose. And as we rode through the narrow streets, with their tall gabled houses, and into the courtyard of the inn, we saw there the welcomest sight our eyes could have rested on—the traveling chaise of Madame Riano, with old Peter on the box, and Madame Riano herself descending from the chaise. And she was assisted by Regnard Cheverny!

Francezka uttered a cry of joy when she recognized Madame Riano, sprang from her horse before any one of us could give her a hand, and ran to her; then laying her head upon Madame Riano's arm, burst into tears, but not tears of pain. Madame Riano held her close and kissed her. I think the two were at heart passionately attached to each other. I saw tears also in Madame Riano's handsome, intrepid, tawny eyes, and her usually loud and determined voice broke when she thanked Count Saxe for his goodness to Mademoiselle Capello.

I was staggered at the sight of Regnard Cheverny, having thought him many hundreds of leagues away; but there he was, in the life, and as handsome and debonair a young gentleman as one would wish to see. He and Gaston embraced with unusual affection even for brothers. Whatever their rivalry might be, there could be no question that each bore love for the other.

Francezka having recovered a little from her agitation, Regnard came forward to greet her, and I saw that in his eye which showed me that he had traveled from Paris to Königsberg for the sight of her. Gaston showed his admiration more openly.

We went into the inn, were shown the best room, and then exchanged the story of our adventures. As Gaston surmised, the Russians had not meant to be very severe on Madame Riano, and after detaining her a month at a small village not far from Mitau had let her go. Holding Madame Riano was as I have said of Count Saxe—it was the holding of a wolf by the ears. Meanwhile, Regnard Cheverny had arrived at Mitau, and hearing of the lady's mishaps, went to her, in the little town where she was under nominal surveillance. Madame Riano, with her usual acuteness had pitched upon Königsberg as the likeliest place to await news from Francezka, for she had found out that Count Saxe was at Uzmaiz, and concluded that Francezka was there or in that neighborhood. And so, all had fallen out fortunately, and here we were, with whole skins, sitting at ease at the inn, and like all people who have passed through agitating times, disposed to rejoice in our present peace.

Almost the first thing Francezka, womanlike, asked of Madame Riano was, whether she had saved their boxes. This, madame had been fortunate enough to do. Francezka, with sparkling eyes, called her maid, Elizabeth—an elderly woman, sister of Peter, and who seemed as happy to see her as was Madame Riano—and the two disappeared together. When Francezka came out again she was dressed in a robe of pale blue stuff, with a gauze kerchief folded across her beautiful white neck, and looked like a rose in bloom. No wonder neither of the Chevernys could keep his eyes from her!

Supper was served in Madame Riano's room, and we were a merry party, for runaways. Madame Riano was more considerate of Count Saxe than I had ever known her to be before, and indulged in no flouts or gibes. We sang at table, according to the French custom, and Gaston Cheverny, who was easily master of us all in that craft, sang a song of the Cardinal de Rohan and sang it with meaning in his voice—a meaning which brought deep blushes to Francezka's cheek, a scowl to Regnard Cheverny's face, and smiles to the rest of us.

There was an ancient and rickety harpsichord in the room, on which mademoiselle played with much skill, and with a dainty hand. Then Madame Riano made us all sing Jacobite songs, joining in herself, with a voice like the rasping of a saw, and forcing us all to rise and pay royal honors to the name of Prince Charles Edward Stuart; and the evening went cheerfully, with music and pleasant conversation.

When mademoiselle had retired, Madame Riano called a council of war. The first thing to settle was the matter of the ransom of ten thousand crowns. Gaston Cheverny, like a youngster of spirit, talked as if ten thousand crowns was a mere bagatelle, although we all knew it was enough to swallow up his whole estate. He would pay it all—yes, he would—and would run any man through who dared hint anything else. Madame Riano, however, and Count Saxe, getting him between them, fairly intimidated him, and he was finally brought to consent, sulky and fuming, to paying only one-half of the money, the other half being due, by common honesty, from Mademoiselle Capello's great estates. Count Saxe meant, of course, to make the payment of Gaston's part as easy as possible to him. This point settled, Madame Riano proposed that we should travel together through Germany, and on reaching Brabant we should stop and rest ourselves for a month before going to Paris.

"For," she said to Count Saxe, "let them in Paris get done with their lampooning and verses and jokes upon you, Maurice of Saxe. I wager that long-legged, lightning-eyed Voltaire will have something to say about you, before you get to Paris. But give those Paris people one month, and they will forget all about you."

To which, Count Saxe, grinding his teeth, was obliged to agree. It was certainly true that Arouet, the notary's son, would crack some of his infernal jokes upon our unhappy expedition. Then Madame Riano urged us to stop at Capello, which was directly upon our road from Brussels to Paris. Mademoiselle Capello, from the time she had first fallen into our hands, had never ceased to picture the pleasure she would one day have of our company at her château of

Capello, and so Count Saxe thankfully accepted Madame Riano's invitation. Gaston Chevernys's house, a simple manor house, was in sight of the château of Capello, as Gaston had told us many times, while Castle Haret, which Regnard had so cleverly acquired, was some distance away.

We spent four days in Königsberg before the remainder of our poor fellows caught up with us. Count Saxe, on their arrival, harangued them, and promised to take them all into his service at Paris, where he proposed to buy a regiment. He gave them their wages and something handsome besides, provided the officers with money and horses, and they took their several ways, to meet at Paris the first of the year 1728.

Königsberg is a quaint place—I have seen few quainter in my time. It was explored thoroughly by Madame Riano, Mademoiselle Capello, and the two Chevernys. Regnard's errand became plainer every day, but plainly, also, it was not well received by Francezka. She had the art, in a remarkable degree, of combining perfect civility with the most discouraging coldness. I have often noticed that women need but little training or experience in the way of treating men. They seem to divine it all. This young girl had already mastered the whole art of managing the other sex, and she had scarcely passed her sixteenth birthday. She seemed to graduate her kindness by a novel rule. She was most sweet to me in words and looks, calling me her good Babache. To Gaston Chevernys, a younger brother, and by no means so great in estate and consideration as Regnard Chevernys, she was next in kindness. While to Regnard, who declared his passion for her in every look, she was smilingly distant, cool and radiant, like a full moon on a December night.

On the fifth day after our arrival in Königsberg we set out on our long journey toward Brabant. Madame Riano and Mademoiselle Capello, with their two waiting maids, were in the traveling chaise, with old Peter on the box. Sometimes we could get a good saddle horse for Mademoiselle Capello and then she often did the whole day's travel on horseback. Count Saxe, the Chevernys and I were the escort, with Beauvais and Regnard Chevernys's servant behind.

The season was remarkably fine, and we made the journey in extreme comfort. How wise it is, when one has had an irreparable loss, to prescribe travel as a means of resting the tired heart! The ever present necessities of the hour, the quick and constant changes, the dangers—for there are many dangers on the highways of the kingdoms—the good or bad inn which awaits one—all these small things fill up a great horizon. All the politics of Europe sank into nothing when it became a question of supper and beds at the end of a hard day's journey.

Madame Riano proved herself, as always, to have a basis of good sense, and much liberality. She never haggled over anything, albeit she was a Scot; was good-humored generally, or if ill-humored was diverting to everybody except the victim of her wrath. I noticed she was much less dictatorial to Mademoiselle Capello than one would expect; and I shrewdly suspected that Madame Riano knew Francezka was of a nature not to be driven, and chose rather to abate some of her arrogance before this young girl. One thing was plain: Mademoiselle Capello assumed all the honors of the chatelaine of her Brabant château, and gave us to understand that she was mistress there, *de facto* if not *de jure*; for she would not become actual mistress of her estates or herself until her eighteenth birthday. Madame Riano, talking once with Count Saxe and me in the garden of an inn, on a pleasant morning, before it was time to start, told us some particulars of these matters.

"My niece and all her estates were left in my charge by my brother—God rest his soul. And I think neither has been mismanaged. But the Kirkpatricks are all given sense to manage themselves at a very early age—God having decreed it so. And especially is this true with Francezka. Seeing her bent on managing herself, at least, I have withdrawn some of my authority, for it is better that she should know what responsibility means, before herself and her fortune lie in her own hand. I am much mistaken if the chit does not spend a good part of her time speculating on what she will do when she is her own mistress absolutely. My brother, in his will, recommended his daughter not to marry for at least two years after reaching her majority, and she professes to regard this as a solemn command. Oh, she means to have a fling or two, before she puts her head in the marriage noose! So, I am in control of my niece, very much as you, Count Saxe, are Duke of Courland: we both have the papers—that is, if Babache still has your rescript under his shirt, but neither one of us could precisely enforce our authority."

This was the only gibe Madame Riano threw at us during the whole journey.

Often, when Mademoiselle Capello rode, she called me to her side. Gaston Chevernys was satisfied at this, reckoning me, and truly, as his friend. Regnard, on the contrary, was ill-pleased. Yet he showed excellent temper and judgment, always. It was to be a long chase, that of Mademoiselle Capello; and Regnard's qualities, persistence, cheerfulness under defeat, and airy, indomitable spirit, often tell in the end.

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## CHAPTER XII

### ONLY THE SUNNY HOURS

In those days of riding together along sunny highways, through wild forests, and upon barren moorlands, Mademoiselle Capello came to speak to me with the charming frankness that was a part of her nature. Madame Riano was right in saying that much of Francezka's time was spent in speculation upon what she should do when she had a perfectly free hand. It was impossible for it to be otherwise, or that she should fail to be a little intoxicated at the splendid vista opening before her—youth, beauty, great riches and liberty, such as no French woman knew. Outwardly, Francezka was a French woman; inwardly, she was quite unlike a French woman. That mixture of Scotch and Spanish blood is a hot and riotous brew. But she was ever lofty, pure of heart, and with that modicum of strong Scotch sense that marked Madame Riano.

Francezka could but see the devotion of the two Chevernys to her. She quietly disregarded Regnard, and though it was plain that Gaston had touched her fancy, if not her heart, she sometimes gave herself the airs of a princess toward him, which Gaston hotly resented; the more so, as her fortune would seem to put her out of his reach. This invariably ended by Francezka's bringing the whole battery of her smiles and even her tears to bear on him, so that he was obliged to make an unconditional surrender.

The resemblance between the Chevernys had grown stronger, as Gaston lost his boyish look and became more the man of the world. The rest of us often mistook one for the other of them, coming upon them in dark places, or at a little distance; and sometimes by changing clothes and horses, they diverted themselves at our expense; but Francezka always knew them apart, and never once mistook one for the other.

Old Peter seemed to feel a secret grudge against Regnard Cheverny for acquiring Castle Haret. The old serving-man's devotion to Jacques Haret was touching.

"Sometimes it is years that I do not see him," he said to me; "but always, when I do, it is the same greeting—'Well, Peter, my man, here is your old master's son,' and a real embrace, such as gentlefolk give each other."

"And if you happen to have any money about you, do you not hand it over to Jacques Haret?" I asked.

Peter started, looked at me suspiciously and relapsed into sullen silence. I made no doubt that these few careless words of kindness and that condescending embrace were paid for in good, round, solid, yellow gold pieces, for Peter got good wages and was saving of them.

He talked with me often about his niece, Lisa, and told me a pitiful tale of having brought up two of Lisa's sisters—beautiful, unstable creatures, who might have married well, in their own humble class, but who went to the bad, each before her eighteenth year. The saddest part of it was that this old man reproached himself continually with some fancied carelessness on his part, that had driven these girls to ruin. But I believe the only fault he could reproach himself with was the same spirit of uncalculating devotion which had made him help Francezka in her escapade in the open-air theater, and made him hand over his humble wages to that rascal, Jacques Haret. Whenever I taxed him with this, he feebly denied the gift, calling it a loan; but loans to the Jacques Harets of this world are compulsory gifts.

Of Lisa, however, all good things were expected. He was never weary of telling me of her goodness, her gentleness, the impossibility that she should follow the road after her sisters. She was not, like them, fatally gifted with beauty. She was not beautiful at all, old Peter said. And he had kept her secluded in Brabant instead of taking her with him to Paris. The old man's longing to see this girl, whom he had not seen for two years, was enough to make one weep.

And so we fared along, through North Germany, with its shaggy forests, its wild moors, its rugged mountains, into the softer air of South Germany, of well-tilled fields, handsome towns, bright-flowing rivers, its castles and country houses, until we reached the Rhine country. Thence we followed the great river until we came opposite Coblenz, where we crossed, and the town being pleasant, and the weather continuing clear and mild, we spent some days of rest and pleasure.

Count Saxe also wished to get a chance to study the great rock fortress on the other side of the river. He still passed as Count Moritz—he was not looking for company then. As there were many officers about, it was far from certain that he could preserve his incognito, but, by great good fortune, he was not recognized.

On a misty evening—we were to leave Coblenz on the morrow—as I stood watching the fiercely flowing river, and the rich vine country around it, I saw an apparition—Jacques Haret. What he was doing in Coblenz, I neither knew nor cared. He came up, greeted me with effusion, and asked me if Count Saxe was going to visit his brother, the King of France, as Henry of England had visited Francis the First—and this with a grin which was most distasteful to me. I desired to fling the fellow into the ditch near-by, but I have lived long enough in this world not to provoke a battle with a wit, if I can help it. So, I referred him to Count Saxe for information; and even Jacques Haret dared not bell the Saxe cat. I turned to go to the inn where Count Saxe and his party were lodged, and Jacques Haret accompanied me, as if I had invited him.

When we reached the inn, it was near supper time, and leaving him very unceremoniously, I went to Count Saxe. He was about to join Madame Riano at supper in her rooms, for we usually dined and supped as one party, and we proceeded thither. Madame Riano, Francezka and the two Chevernys awaited us. The cloth was laid, and by accident, so it seemed, Peter had put an additional place at the table. I mentioned that I had come across Jacques Haret, for I made no doubt the fellow would intrude himself upon us, and I wished to prepare Mademoiselle Capello

for his advent. By my advice and Gaston Cheverny's, she had not mentioned to Madame Riano her acting in Jacques Haret's company in the garden. There was no telling to what heights Madame Riano's wrath might rise; she would be capable of wringing Jacques Haret's neck if she had a good mind to, and as the thing was not suspected by any except a few persons who had seen the last performance, it was undoubtedly best to keep it quiet.

Francezka blushed a little at the mention of Jacques Haret's name. She was fully sensible of her folly and danger in acting in his company, but the follies of a young girl of fourteen are easily excused. Scarcely had I spoken of Jacques Haret, when the door opened and the gentleman himself appeared. He had come to pay his respects to Madame Riano, to tell her the latest news of Paris, and, incidentally, to get his supper. I understood why old Peter had put the extra place at the table.

Jacques was better dressed than usual, and, as always, handsome and at his ease. Madame Riano, who had ever a sneaking tolerance for the fellow, received him civilly, as did the others present. Jacques Haret speedily made it known that he had a whole budget of Paris news, but would by no means tell one single item, until Madame Riano, driven thereto by a raging curiosity, invited him to join us at supper. Madame Riano could not forbear asking him. Jacques accepted with the finest air in the world, seated himself with us and unfolded his napkin. Old Peter's face shone with joy, and his usually melancholy eyes were full of delight.

Once certain of a good supper, with excellent wine, Jacques Haret opened his bundle of news. He told us everything that had happened at Versailles. Old Cardinal Fleury's fall from power was much to Jacques Haret's relief, and the cardinal's successor, Jacques thought, would make no trouble about his coming to Paris, and if he were clapped in prison, there would be at least a *lettre de cachet* and the Bastille, as became a gentleman and a remote connection of the Kirkpatricks, and not the common prison of Paris; at which Madame Riano desired Peter to see that Monsieur Haret's glass was kept filled. The king was getting tired of being virtuous, Jacques told us, and now the cardinal was out of the way, we might look for some gay doings. Mademoiselle Lecouvreur was winning all hearts as ever at the Comédie Française, but her health was visibly breaking. My master questioned him closely on this point and found, as usual, Jacques Haret knew what he was talking about. Monsieur Voltaire was still in England, but he was expected to return to Paris shortly, his exile being reckoned at an end. I made no doubt privately that the creature would be on hand in plenty of time to write some pasquinades about my master.

Many other things Jacques Haret told us; and for people who have once lived in Paris and have been away for a year and a half, it may be supposed there was much we wished to hear—I, least of all, because I always thought Paris a diabolical sort of place, and expected to like it none the better for what it would have to say about Count Saxe's expedition to Courland.

Jacques was good-humoredly polite to Mademoiselle Francezka, who was a little embarrassed in his company. The two Chevernys regarded him with the tolerance of youth for an entertaining fellow, and he seemed to have neither grudge nor envy of Regnard Cheverny's possession of Castle Haret.

We sat late, and, before we parted, Jacques Haret had arranged to travel with us, riding one of the lead horses. I knew not how it came about, but the whole company submitted, as always, to being taxed for Jacques Haret's benefit. And, as he had got a horse out of somebody, I made no doubt he would get his tavern bills paid and perhaps a complete new outfit by the same sort of diplomacy.

Next morning we resumed our journey. Francezka, that day, rode a-horseback. She had not much fancy for Jacques Haret's society, as soon as her appetite for news was satisfied, so one or the other of the Chevernys rode with her the whole day.

From the Rhine at Coblenz to Brussels is a short and easy road, and from thence we entered that rich country of Brabant, which famine never touches, which war can not ruin, and which is always fruitful and blessed of Heaven. And at last, on a fair October afternoon, we came within sight of the château of Capello.

For the last stage or two, Francezka had been so eager to get forward that her spirit far outran her body. Old Peter had been sent ahead to make the château ready for company. Mademoiselle Capello took horse on that last day, and choosing me to ride with her, galloped furiously ahead. Regnard Cheverny had no mind to be left behind, and he joined us. For once, Francezka was openly rude to him. She checked her horse and turning to him said, in that soft and insinuating tone with which she veiled all of her impertinences:

"Monsieur, will you kindly ride back and ask your brother, Monsieur Gaston, to give me the pleasure of his company?"

No man could disguise his choler better than Regnard Cheverny, but that he was angry, his eyes and his face showed. He replied, however, with much smoothness, to her:

"Mademoiselle, I am the poorest hand in the world at delivering messages from a lady to a gentleman. I always forget them, or get them wrong. So, I will ride back, but if you wish my brother's company, you will be compelled to find another messenger."

And he rode back.

Francezka turned to me, her face sparkling with smiles. Our horses were at a standstill on the highway, the chaise and the rest of the party a good mile behind us already.

"Good Babache, was I not clever to get rid of him?" she said.

"Very clever, Mademoiselle," I said. "But why should you choose to get rid of him? He is a well-appearing man, of great accomplishments, and good estate. Why were you so severe with him?"

"Do you really wish to know why?" She moved her horse up close to me so she could whisper in my ear. "Because he is always seeking my company; and because, in truth, I have more than enough of his now."

"Is that ground for ill-treating a man?" I asked.

"Assuredly, if a woman dislikes him as I dislike Monsieur Regnard Cheverny."

"But you show great good-will toward Monsieur Gaston Cheverny—and they are as like as two peas."

"Outwardly, yes. Inwardly, never were two men so unlike. Come now, Babache, do you not love Monsieur Gaston?"

"Yes, with all my heart."

"And do you not love Monsieur Regnard?"

I saw whither she was leading me, but I could only say:

"No—I do not love him."

"Well—they are as like as two peas."

She turned her head at the sound of galloping hoofs. Gaston was riding toward us. The blood that poured into Francezka's cheeks, the light that shone in her eyes, showed plainly how welcome was his society. I afterward asked Gaston if Regnard had given him a message from Francezka. He said no; but seeing Regnard return with a black countenance, he thought to try his luck with mademoiselle—and was rewarded for so doing.

We went forward at a smart pace. Every foot of the way recalled to Francezka and Gaston their childish days, and they talked with the greatest animation.

We were skirting the forest and heights of the Ardennes, and at last, the highway bringing us upon a broad open plateau, the château of Capello lay before us in all its beauty. At the sight, Francezka stopped her horse, and, putting her hands to her face, fairly burst into tears of joy.

Little did I think how I should come to know that place; of what I should see and do and suffer there. I only saw in it the pleasantest abode that man ever contrived for himself.

The château itself reminded one much of the Grand Trianon, which I have often seen in the park of Versailles. It had the same form but was larger. There was the graceful façade with its sweeping wings, the curving marble balustrade of the terrace, the windows, large and many, on which the autumn sun shone red. But the situation of the château of Capello had far more of natural beauty than the Trianon. It lay in the lap of the distant Ardennes, whose blue heights and rich woods marked the horizon. Below the château the ground sloped gradually toward a vast meadow-land, with many beautiful groves of aspens, and tall ranked Lombardy poplars. On the slope lay the park and pleasure grounds of the château. A silvery river made its devious way about this fair domain. It washed one side of the château, where it had been turned into a canal built like those of Venice, with a marble banquette ornamented with statues and an ornate bridge; but after thus playing the court lady for a short space, the river again became a woodland nymph and ran away, laughing, to the woods and fields. On one side of the château a rose garden was laid out, not too primly, and many other gardens; while on the other side, overlooking the hedgeway and quite screened from the château by groves of linden trees, and by great clumps, almost groves, of huge old lilacs, was a plaisance, in the formal Italian style.

These Italian gardens are common enough, and all much alike, but in some strange manner, this one at Capello seemed to me to arrest attention at once. Perhaps it was because it appeared solitary, although in reality it was near the château. It had several falls, with marble steps bordered with box, with many yew trees, and statues of nymphs and fauns. At the very top was placed a statue of Petrarch, and on one side of it was a moss-grown marble bench, and on the other, an ancient sun-dial. The whole scene might have been transported from Petrarch's land.

Below this garden lay a little lake, still and dark and cool. Tall cedars of Lebanon fringed its banks both on the east and the west, so neither at morning nor at evening did the waters shine and glow, but always lay somber and with a melancholy loveliness, in the midst of that joyful landscape. As I looked at this distant still lake and garden, a poignant feeling came upon me that I had seen them before, and that they held for me a story—oh me! oh me! It was as if my soul had visited them in dreams—those dreams when I told Francezka of my love and she listened to me—yes, listened to me. I had to force myself to turn my eyes from that enchanted garden and lake of pensive beauty.

We were riding forward rapidly, and when we came within close view of this garden, Francezka clapped her hands wildly.

"There, there, just as I have seen it in my dreams!" she cried. "I never dreamed of Capello in my life that I did not dream of the lake and the Italian garden—and I have not seen them since I was six years old! That statue is Petrarch's—and on the base is an inscription from the sonnet,

*La vita fugge, e non s'aretta un ora,—*

I forget the rest."

"I remember," said Gaston, riding by her side.

*"E la morte vien dietro a gran giornate.*

I recall that statue well."

Whether he really remembered it, or being well learned in poetry, took up the thread from memory, I know not, but it delighted Francezka. She turned to him two lambent eyes. They both laughed with delight; neither one of them seemed to understand the gloom of the words they spoke so lightly. Francezka continued in a voice half laughter and half tears:

"And around the sun-dial are the words:

*Horas non numero nisi serenas—*

I read it—'Only the sunny hours I mark.' Oh, what serene and sunny hours shall I have in that garden! There is no spot at Capello I love so well—no spot in the world I love so well. It shall not be touched—it shall remain green and mossy and secluded just as it is now. Much of my life shall be lived in that old garden."

Her enthusiasm was quite extraordinary. The rich blood was mounting to her cheek, her vivid face became more vivid. It seemed to me as if even her dark hair glowed more deeply.

We entered the great park of the château by an avenue of horse chestnuts. The path was singularly varied and charming. Although it was autumn and the woods were bare and the earth was brown, the beauty of the spot seemed only delicately veiled. I have seen many grander places, although this was grand for a private person; but for sweetness of air, for soft repose, for a calm and penetrating beauty, always I prefer this château of Capello. The Scotch gentleman, Francezka's father, must have had uncommon skill in choice. We rode up the broad esplanade in front of the château. Smoke was coming from the chimneys, the great doors were wide open, and old Peter, smiling with pleasure, was standing there with a respectable staff of servants he had collected. Francezka sprang from her horse, ran up the marble steps, Gaston Cheverny hotly pursuing, and entered under her own roof, crying, with smiles and tears:

"This is my *Joyeuse Entrée*, as the old Brabantians had it! Welcome, welcome—Monsieur Cheverny and my own good Babache!"

We entered a magnificent hall, with many suites of rooms. On the left, was a handsome red saloon, and on this side, overlooking the bright waters of the canal was a gallery of Diana, with the story of Actæon torn by his dogs told in panels on the walls. Beyond this still was a small yellow saloon, with a large fireplace in it. Francezka's father, it would appear, did not take kindly to the huge porcelain stoves of the region, and followed the custom of his country in having fireplaces in which great logs of wood were burned. Francezka ran from room to room, Gaston Cheverny following her. I walked after them, examining things at my leisure; among others, in the red saloon, recognizing the portraits of Francezka's parents. Both of them had died early, and their portraits were those of youth. Francezka was a mingled likeness of both. She had not the exact and classic beauty of her mother, for Francezka's beauty was highly irregular; but I fancy it was the more seductive. And she had, in a great degree, the esprit and the high-sparkling glance of the Scotch captain.

Among the servants and dependents who had assembled for the great occasion, old Peter did not fail to point out to me his niece, Lisa. She was a quiet-footed, slim little creature. She was not homely at all, contrary to my expectations, and had very soft shy eyes, that looked at one like the eyes of a bird that is shot.

In a little while the rest of the party arrived. Francezka met Madame Riano and Count Saxe at the entrance to the château, assuming, from the beginning, the air of being chatelaine of her own house—and she scarce sixteen! And with such grace, such intelligence! She was extremely polite now to Regnard Cheverny, being in her own bailiwick, and he seemed to cherish no memory of her past behavior. She was equally polite to Jacques Haret, for whom old Peter had reserved two of the best rooms in the château. All of us, however, were well lodged, and Count Saxe was given the apartment in which Louis le Grand had once been quartered.

My master was full of compliments on the château, as well he might be. We retired to our rooms when it was growing dusk, and in an hour supper was announced. It was served in the little yellow saloon, which was a favorite one of Francezka's father, and was likely to be favored by her, too. It was a merry supper table, with white waxlights and red firelight shining on it, and we had the wine of the gods. The Scotch gentleman had provided his cellars with vintages worth the housing.

Francezka chose to appear at supper in a dress new to us—the dress of Brabant, with the lace lappets falling over her hair, the lace apron, and red-heeled shoes, with clocked stockings. Whether she was bewitching or not, one may judge.

We sat long at table. Gaston Cheverny sang songs, then we sang in chorus. Jacques Haret, the rogue, was a pleasant table companion, and exerted himself to make the time pass joyfully. It was late before we parted, and then, in good spirits. My chamber, as always, was next Count Saxe's. I tumbled into bed, and for the first time since I had crossed the French frontier, eighteen months before, I slept with both eyes shut. There was no need to keep one's pistol within reach, no need to rise through the night to be sure the horses were not stolen, no need to sleep with a part of one's clothes on, for fear of fighting or running before morning. One could sleep in peace. So slept I, and so snored I that Count Saxe waked me up with swearing at me in the middle of the night from the next room.



## CHAPTER XIII

### HIS GRACE AND PEGGY

Although it was not necessary for me to rise early at this place of peace and beauty, the château of Capello, yet, long habit was upon me, and, by sunrise, I was up and dressed and out in the fair, fresh autumn morning. I made straight for the Italian garden, and was not surprised to find Francezka there before me.

She was sitting on the bench by the statue of Petrarch. The hoar frost glittered on the ground, just touched by the shafts of light which were to grow into the great sun. The air was soft and mild, and Francezka had no hat upon her dark hair, but sat wrapped in her crimson mantle.

She was gravely studying the inscription on the statue of Petrarch.

"Life flies apace and tarries not an hour," she said, translating to me. "Monsieur Gaston Cheverny was mistaken in saying the next line is here—about Death following Life with huge strides. I am glad it is not here—it would be too sad."

"Whoever placed the inscription here had looked into the serious face of Life which always confronts us," I said.

Francezka turned on me two laughing eyes.

"Life turns a face all smiles to me now," she said. "I am glad I am not complete mistress of myself and my possessions yet. One should sip and taste of pleasure before drinking a full draft. My father, you must know, did not have the French idea of marrying me out of hand; and I mean not to marry until I find a man I can not live without. It will be time enough then. And as for being timid—only look at my Aunt Peggy! She does as she likes and has done so all her life; and instead of being herself afraid, everybody is afraid of her—and she is very much esteemed by all who know her."

I had seen, for long, that Madame Riano's example was not wasted on her niece, but Francezka, like most young spirits—or rather, all young spirits—knew not how to weigh and compare. Madame Riano had never enjoyed the beauty or the fortune of this young girl, and her youth was safe from the dangers that lie in the path of beauty and riches.

"But one thing I am resolved upon," said Francezka. "However happy I may be—and I am at this moment so happy I can scarcely forbear to sing—I danced this morning in my bedroom for very joy—I say no matter how happy I may be, I shall try to do some good in the world. At least I can make gifts."

"Yes," I answered, "that is the cheapest form of goodness. You give away what would else be in your way." An ungallant speech, but made with a purpose.

Francezka looked at me angrily for a moment, then smiled and took my hand in her two velvet palms.

"Babache, you are like a chestnut bur, sometimes—but I love you—and I shall always heed what you tell me. Can I do more?"

She then rose and we walked about the garden, and looked down at the lake, still darkly shaded by the cedars on the brink, although the sun was now blazing in the east. We spoke not much. Francezka's joy seemed to have grown quieter, if more intense. In the pauses of our talk, I found the lake had a voice—a voice like itself, sad. There was some subterranean outlet which gave a motion and a sound to the water, and this sound was a mournful one. Francezka stopped and called my attention to it.

"I remember that moan of the lake," she said—"or I think I remember it—as Monsieur Gaston Cheverny thought he remembered the inscription on the statue."

"Yonder comes Gaston, now," I said.

"No," said she, sweeping her glance toward a figure afar off, descending the steps of the terrace. "It is Monsieur Regnard Cheverny."

"And here is the other Cheverny," said Gaston's voice behind us.

He did not look particularly happy; the splendors of the château of Capello were in marked contrast to his own modest house, the Manoir Cheverny, which lay a mile or two away.

Gaston pointed toward it—a low-lying building, of moderate size, with a carved stone gateway opening into a courtyard, and with a fair-sized pleasure ground around it. There was both comfort and beauty about it, but nothing in the least to compare with Capello.

"It is good enough for a bachelor," said Gaston, grimly. "There shall I end my lonely old age."

I have observed that when a man is deeply in love, he is apt to threaten the lady of his love with the suggestion of losing him.

To this Francezka replied, demurely:

"I shall be happy to have company; for, perhaps, I shall die a spinster."

The whole rich and peaceful landscape lay before us—the red-tiled village, the little stone church, the windmills—all singularly pleasant to look upon, giving one a sense of the well-being of the people; and to one who has seen the gardens of the world ravaged by fire and sword, this means much. Gaston assured us that as soon as his house was in order, he would have me to stay with him, thereby abandoning Count Saxe for the time; and Francezka diverted herself with asking me, if she and Count Saxe were in a burning building and I could only save one of them, which would it be—and other pleasantries.

Regnard Cheverny had evidently been looking for Mademoiselle Capello, and presently joined us, and by that time we were called to the château for breakfast. The parish priest, a modest, homely, shabby little man, named Benart, was already at the château, to pay his respects to the ladies. He remained to breakfast, and I formed a high opinion of his judgment by the respect he paid to Count Saxe, although purposely kept in ignorance of my master's rank and condition. The little priest mentioned that his brother, the Bishop of Louvain, would soon be coming to visit him, at which Madame Riano snorted like a war-horse. I suspected that she and the bishop did not deeply love each other, and Jacques Haret afterward enlightened us on the subject. I began to wonder where Jacques Haret would bestow himself, for I suspected that Mademoiselle Capello would not permit her hospitality to be imposed upon. This was settled by the action of Gaston Cheverny, who told me before breakfast, when we had a word in private, that he intended to ask Jacques Haret to the Manoir Cheverny.

"Otherwise he will remain here to Mademoiselle Capello's annoyance, and that I wish to spare her," he said to me.

When he had risen from table, Gaston therefore announced that he and his brother and Jacques Haret would be quartered at the Manoir Cheverny, but he hoped to see much of the ladies at the château of Capello, and also of Count Saxe and Captain Babache—which we all suitably acknowledged. Then, meaning to give the ladies time to rest, Count Saxe and myself accepted Gaston's invitation to accompany him to his own house. This we did, walking across the park in the bright autumn morning. Jacques Haret diverted us on the way by his history of the bloody warfare which had raged for thirty years between the Bishop of Louvain and Madame Riano.

"The bishop," said Jacques Haret, as we strolled along, "is one of those ecclesiastics who expect to appear in full canonicals—velvet robe, jeweled crozier and shining miter—before the judgment seat of God. Peggy Kirkpatrick thinks the Archangel Michael keeps the family tree of the Kirkpatricks always in mind. You may imagine how Peggy and the bishop agree. They were well acquainted in their youth before the bishop took orders, and Peggy has got a notion in her head that the bishop was once in love with her, when it is well known that he hated her like perdition from their childhood. The bishop is as militant as Peggy, and I believe either one of them would travel twenty leagues for a bout. You will see that the bishop will shortly appear in these parts. He can not let his old enemy dwell in peace, and Peggy will welcome him joyfully. That woman reckons that day a holiday, when she meets an enemy in fight."

So, with pleasant converse, we reached Gaston Cheverny's house. Over the gateway was inscribed the arms and motto of the Chevernys, *Un Loy, Un Foy, Un Roy*.

The old stone house, of a story and a half, was plain, but spacious. Within it was an abundance of good furniture, linen and plate. Unlike most bachelors' houses, there was no need to apologize for anything.

At the Manoir Cheverny, therefore, Gaston Cheverny took up his abode, with his brother and Jacques Haret as guests. Regnard showed no disposition to live at Castle Haret, alleging that he must furnish it and equip it from Brussels, which he proceeded to do; but I think he meant not to leave Gaston alone so close to the château of Capello. Regnard had two servants, and four horses quartered on his brother, and he bought another horse, giving three hundred good crowns for it. I never saw the least want of hospitality or affection for Regnard on Gaston's part. He was as generous a soul as I ever knew.

As for Jacques Haret, he openly said he had only given up his quarters at the château of Capello because he could not wear the clothes of either Madame Riano or Mademoiselle Capello. He wore, however, both Gaston and Regnard Cheverny's clothes, until the two brothers presented him with a complete outfit, as the price for letting their wardrobes alone.

I think all of us, after our adventures and disappointments and travels, enjoyed to the full this short season of peace and rest. We apprehended great influx of company, for which Count Saxe had, at present, no taste. But the weather suddenly turning very harsh, the roads became bad, and we saw but few guests. Among them was Count Bellegarde, the young man who had been Gaston Cheverny's friend at our first meeting. He was the same handsome, stupid, watery, no-ideaed fellow as that night in the Temple gardens. His family had put the notion into his head that he would do well to marry Mademoiselle Capello. He thought that a sight of his beauty was enough to accomplish his object. We had much diversion out of him, Jacques Haret and the two Chevernys slyly putting him up to many follies.

Our days and evenings, however, were in general spent together without other guests, and naturally there was a bond amongst us. The better we came to know Madame Riano the more we saw to esteem in her, in spite of her extraordinary pride and everlasting blowing of the trumpet of the Kirkpatricks and her general desire to dominate the universe. And it was easy to see, in Francezka, those same sterling qualities of integrity, courage and generosity which

distinguished Madame Riano, and with them infinitely more tact and suavity. The rains and the snows made all of us haunt the firesides of Capello. Every one of us felt that relaxing of the mind and body which accompanies a period of rest after action. Softer pleasures appealed to us. Our days slipped away, I knew not how, and our evenings were given to cards, conversation and music. Madame Riano was an inveterate card player, and well-nigh invincible, so we often had cards for diversion.

Mademoiselle Capello played charmingly on the harpsichord and Gaston Cheverny sang often to her accompaniment, which was not calculated to please Regnard, though he took it cheerfully. Jacques Haret was the very soul of entertainment. I have never known a man whose mind was always so much at ease as Jacques Haret's. The most virtuous person that ever lived might envy this rogue his cheerful acquiescence in fate.

About a fortnight after our arrival the news came that the Bishop of Louvain intended to visit his brother, the little priest, and likewise proposed to pay his respects to the ladies of the château of Capello. Jacques Haret assured us that the parish priest's larder was not of the sort to satisfy this particular bishop very long.

Madame Riano marshaled her forces to meet the bishop. The Chevernys were to be at hand, likewise Jacques Haret, who was a valuable ally on the present occasion.

Nobody looked forward to the meeting between Madame Riano and the bishop more than Count Saxe, who declared that he expected to learn much of the art of war from the two belligerents. His incognito was to be strictly observed even with the bishop.

On the day named for his Grace's arrival, precisely at six o'clock, the hour named by the bishop, his chariot all gilding and coats of arms, and drawn by four horses, drew up before the great entrance of the château. Madame Riano, with the light of battle in her eye, sustained Francezka, who was to receive the bishop in her quality of chatelaine for the first time. Count Saxe was in the background, and behind him stood Jacques Haret and myself. The two Chevernys were also present, awaiting the bishop on the terrace. When the bishop's coach came rumbling up, the Chevernys dutifully opened the coach door to assist his Grace to alight. First stepped out the little parish priest, the bishop's brother, dressed in a shabby surtout. That silent little man was a humorist of the first water. He seemed to love his brother, but not one single absurdity of the bishop's escaped him.

After Father Benart came the bishop, a fine, large, well-built, handsome man, enveloped in a huge purple velvet mantle. He stepped gingerly as if afraid of giving his dignity a jolt. The two Chevernys greeted him respectfully, to which the bishop replied with amiable condescension. Then came the meeting with his arch enemy, Madame Riano, which was highly courteous on the bishop's side, but a little brusque on the part of Madame Riano. The sight of the bishop's coach and velvet mantle and grand airs seemed to stir the Scotch lady's blood instantly to the boiling point.

Francezka was all youthful grace and courtesy, and no man not an ogre could fail to be charmed with her. Then Count Saxe as Count Moritz was presented to the bishop, and myself later; Jacques Haret had known him always and assumed a hail-fellow-well-met air with this pompous ecclesiastic, which was evidently disconcerting to him. But the bishop was no match for Jacques.

As I am to be judged at the last day, I will swear that the bishop was no more impressed by Count Saxe than if that immortal man had been the cat's aunt, as the peasants say; passed him by with a negligent nod, to which Count Saxe returned a bow so low and with such a sparkling light of laughter in his eyes that only a wind-blown dullard like this bishop would have failed to perceive that he was a man of consequence in disguise. The little priest had seen all along that Count Saxe was a personage, and treated him always with the greatest deference.

The bishop was escorted to the red saloon and placed in a large gilt chair—he was the sort of man to like large gilt chairs. Madame Riano seated herself on one side of him, and Francezka, beautifully demure and well behaved, sat on the other side. The rest of us grouped ourselves around in a half moon. The bishop, after having formally inquired after Madame Riano's health, with the air of a Christian and a martyr blessing his enemies, turned to Francezka with the most entire change of countenance, benignance shining forth effulgent, and asked after her welfare and travels. To this Francezka responded properly. Then both of the belligerents, unable to restrain their martial ardor longer, broke the truce. Here is the conversation that ensued between the bishop and Madame Riano, the rest of us maintaining our composure and a strict neutrality.

The bishop: "Madame Riano, I hope, under God, you are well and in good case."

Madame Riano (flaunting her fan savagely): "Thanks be to God, I am well, your Grace. Your Grace looks a little peaked. I hope your Grace has not been ill."

Now his Grace was in the bloom of health, and nothing vexed him so much as any hint that he was otherwise. So he answered tartly that he was very well, and then, addressing Gaston Cheverny, his Grace asked a question which made us all jump in our chairs.

"Monsieur, to touch upon things in which the ladies probably take little interest—what is the news from Count Saxe in Courland? I hear that he has turned tail and is running for his life!"

At the bishop's intimation that the subject he wished to discuss was above the feminine comprehension, thunder sat upon Madame Riano's brow; but when he plunged into the abyss her countenance cleared as if by magic, her mouth came wide open. I believe she would not have taken a thousand crowns for that moment's pleasure.

Count Saxe did not change countenance one whit. The rest of us grew pale, except Jacques Haret, who turned and winked rapturously at Madame Riano, wagging her head-dress of feathers in an ecstasy of delight. As for Gaston Cheverny, he did me then and there the only disservice of his life. Pointing to me, he said with the most debonair manner in the world:

"There, your Grace, sits Captain Babache, who commands Count Saxe's body-guard. It would not become me, nor any one else, to speak of Count Saxe's affairs in the presence of Captain Babache."

Yes, the rascal said that, and sat there smiling and stroking the lace upon his wrists, while I yearned to give him a clip over the head with my strong right arm. And Count Saxe appeared to enjoy my discomfiture, and actually laughed in my face. However, I summoned all my composure and replied to that fool of a bishop that Count Saxe was the undoubted choice of the Diet and the nobility, and still held the rescript of election. And the Duchess of Courland, Anna Iwanowna, a brisk and homely widow, wished to marry Count Saxe, and as he had no mind to put his head in the noose, he had abandoned his enterprise for the present, to be resumed when convenient.

The bishop, with Count Saxe for his text, launched into a criticism of all the campaigns of the ancients and the moderns, and the blunders he committed gave Madame Riano and us the most acute enjoyment. I saw the little priest's eyes twinkle as the oration proceeded. Nobody interrupted the bishop, and he closed by pointing out all the mistakes of the English at Agincourt, where there is no doubt they drubbed the French handsomely.

It was then time for supper, which was announced by Peter, and we proceeded to the dining saloon. It was an agreeable supper. The bishop's harangue had put us all in a mirthful humor, and the wine of Ximenes was of the sort described in the Scriptures, as making glad the heart of man. Although the bishop knew nothing about war, he was an excellent judge of wine, and had due respect for the Ximenes. There was skirmishing all during supper between his Grace and Madame Riano, but it was understood that no pitched battle would take place until we went to cards, the field of the cloth of green having been their chosen battle-ground for thirty years. Madame Riano was the very devil at cards, and the bishop was not far behind her.

It being cold in the great red saloon, we sat, for cards, in the little yellow room, where a huge fire blazed. We were at primero, the whole party of us. The stakes were small, but the fire and fury with which the bishop and Madame Riano played against each other was something remarkable. Charges and counter charges, sarcasm, ridicule and innuendo were freely bandied between them. Victory perched first on one banner and then on the other, but I must say the lady got rather the best of it. I should say that the bishop was the better strategist; but for determined, head-long valor, Madame Riano surpassed him.

We had been playing over an hour, when a sudden wild, loud roaring was heard in the chimney, the door was burst open, and a swarm of frightened servants rushed in, crying the house was afire. At once, each of us, except Madame Riano, laid down his cards, in some consternation; but the Scotch lady, without so much as taking her eyes off her hand, remarked coolly:

"'Tis nothing but the chimney catching afire, a common enough thing in Scotland. But these foolish Brabant people know nothing about fireplaces, and are frightened at every blaze they see."

It turned out to be truly nothing but the blazing soot in the chimney, accompanied by a great roaring, with flames coming out of the chimney's mouth and sparks flying. The roofs being tiled, there was no real danger, but as Madame Riano said truly, the people in the Low Countries, knowing nothing of open fireplaces with blazing fires, were in a state of wild alarm. Nevertheless, we could not sit still under the circumstances, but proposed to investigate. Francezka went with us. She was pale, but collected. The bishop was for going with us, being frightened, if ever I saw a man—he was a Netherlander and as ignorant of open fireplaces as the rest of his countrymen—but Madame Riano gibing at him for his pusillanimity, he resumed his cards with such composure as he could, and Madame Riano proposed they should play the game out together. We left them, therefore, seated at the table, Madame Riano quite unconcerned at the commotion, and the bishop, a little white about the chops, but standing to his game like a man.

Meanwhile, in our absence from the room, the excited and panic-stricken servants had, without any authority, opened a vast tank of water, which was on the top of the house, and a flood began to pour down the chimney of the little yellow room, where Madame Riano held her unwilling enemy. Quite unconscious of this, Count Saxe and the rest of us watched the fire burn itself out harmlessly enough; old Peter managed to quiet the frantic servants, and we returned to the yellow room. Then the sight that met our eyes can never be forgotten by any of us. The burning soot had tumbled down the chimney, and if the bishop and Madame Riano had left their play long enough there would have been no damage done to anything.

I do not believe Madame Riano was so absorbed in her game as not to know what was going on, but I am pretty sure she had in mind the punishment of the bishop. A strong odor of burning wood pervaded the room; before the flood came down the chimney there had been many falling cinders, and these had set the wainscoting smoldering just behind the bishop's chair. The floor had been flooded, and Madame Riano, her skirts tucked about her, had drawn up her feet to the seat of her chair and sat there as cool as any warrior on the eve of battle. The bishop's feet were in the water. He held his cards tightly, but his eye roved around and lighted up when he saw us enter, Count Saxe and Francezka in the lead. Just as we came in the smoldering wainscoting

blazed up brightly. Gaston Cheverny, with his hat, dipped up water enough to put out the blaze. The bishop started and turned half round, but was recalled by Madame Riano, saying in a voice of menace and of mockery:

"Come, your Grace. It is your play. Don't be scared by a trifle like this. My faith, you would make but a poor figure in Scotland, where we never stop our game for such trifles as fire and flood."

At that moment Regnard Cheverny earned the bishop's undying good-will. Taking a jug of water from one of the distracted servants, who was still running about wildly in the corridor, he emptied it full upon the card table, on which a spark or two had dropped. The bishop, too, got a drenching—for which I saw gratitude writ large on his face.

"Madame," he said, to his antagonist, "I, too, have but slight regard for fire and flood when it interrupts a game, but necessity and my rheumatics compel me to retire and change my garments." Which he did, and appeared no more that night.

When the bishop had taken himself and his bedraggled dignity off we burst involuntarily into laughter, Count Saxe and Francezka leading. Even the little parish priest joined us. Madame Riano scowled at our laughter, until Count Saxe, with his usual good judgment, told her we were laughing at the bishop, at which she screeched with delight.

I was not surprised next morning to find that the bishop was leaving earlier than he expected. He departed in the same state in which he arrived, but I was irresistibly reminded of a conquered enemy who has been accorded the honors of war.

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## CHAPTER XIV

### THE DRENCHED HEN

We remained the rest of the month at the château, being minded to depart the first week in December. The time passed as before with satisfaction to all. Gaston Cheverny was to remain in Brabant until the new year, when he was to join us in Paris. We knew not what Regnard's plans were; if he knew them he kept them to himself. I had rather expected Regnard Cheverny to travel with us, and made sure that Jacques Haret would never lose the chance of getting to Paris free of charge, as he might have done with us, for Count Saxe traveled splendidly, with led horses, and one more person would make but little difference. But to my amazement he made no proposition to go with us. There might be good reasons for Regnard Cheverny's determination to stay where he was. He, with his two servants and five horses, was quartered at Gaston's house; and very pleasant quarters they were, for Regnard had every privilege of the master of the house and no responsibilities whatever. His furnishing of Castle Haret was an excellent excuse to keep him near Mademoiselle Capello. He asked Count Saxe to apply for additional leave for him, which was easy enough to get; but a young officer who wished promotion as much as Regnard Cheverny did, and no more aspiring man ever lived, was likely to be forgotten if he remained away from Paris too long. So, I took it, he had a strong motive for staying in Brabant.

I often wondered what Jacques Haret's feelings must be, when Regnard, as he often did, talked openly about the new plans for Castle Haret. But Jacques showed his usual cool and unruffled front. It is astonishing how many good and even great qualities a man may possess and still be a scoundrel of the first water. Jacques would sometimes take a laughing but advisory tone with Regnard.

"Do not, my dear fellow," he would say, "be eaten up with ambition to shine before kings. I remember once, in my childhood, the Duc d'Orleans, the king's brother, came to Brabant, and was to dine at Castle Haret. All sorts of things were to be done. In the lake there was to be an island, from which concealed music played. But this island, mind you, was to move about. It was a thing of poles and beams extending from a boat, with twelve stout rowers, who were hidden by plants and vines. Old Peter here, then a young man, contrived it, and my father expected to receive a court appointment for that island. Well, the duke came, was entertained at dinner, ate the wing of a chicken, was taken to the lake and did not notice the island moved until my father in an agony called his attention to it. Then the duke went back, slept until supper time, looked for about ten minutes at some fireworks that my father had ordered all the way from Paris and had near ruined himself by—and left the next morning, with an influenza, which his Highness swore he had got at Castle Haret. My father got nothing except the influenza, for all his money and pains. So do not you, my young friend, try your luck with princes."

Regnard did not like this speech, and replied tartly that the Chevernys had generally succeeded where the Harets had failed; which was true enough.

I continued to be puzzled to know why Jacques Haret should remain. Gentlemen of his kidney need a great town to operate in, not a far-off province. And what would he live on? For Gaston Cheverny, however hospitable he might be, would not allow Jacques Haret a permanent footing

at the Manoir Cheverny; and besides, Gaston would shortly follow us to Paris—and he was not a rich enough man to pay for Jacques Haret's company on the way. There was little question about Jacques Haret's means of livelihood for the present, for we knew well enough that the excellent wages paid old Peter found their way into Jacques Haret's pocket. And not only that, but one day, going to Peter's cottage, to make some inquiry about our horses, I noted Lisa, the dove-eyed girl, at work upon a fine cambric shirt—finer than any I, Babache, ever wore, or expect to wear. It was not for old Peter certainly; and if not for him, it must be for Jacques Haret—and my surmise turned out to be true.

At last the time came for us to say goodbye to the château of Capello, and to start for Paris, that town of many devils, some of them women.

On the evening before our departure, all of us who had left Königsberg together, and Jacques Haret, assembled at the château. Count Saxe and I were to take the road for Paris at daylight. All expressed regret at our separation; we had been associated closely for three months, in battle, in siege, in flight, and in sweet repose; and we parted with those feelings of regard that our mutual vicissitudes would naturally inspire. We had an evening of pleasant converse; Gaston Cheverny sang for us, not forgetting the song that he and Francezka loved so much—*O Richard, O mon roi*—and Francezka accompanied Gaston on the harpsichord. Jacques Haret was, as usual, the life of the company, and Regnard Cheverny was not eclipsed by any one present.

Our last farewells took place in the red saloon. Madame Riano paid us the handsomest compliments possible, and expressed the hope, or rather the conviction, that she would have the pleasure some day of entertaining us at her ancestral seat in Scotland, under the rule of Scotland's lawful king—for so she called Prince Charles Edward Stuart. She represented that this ancestral seat, somewhere in the wilds of Scotland, was a far more magnificent place than the château of Capello, or the Hôtel Kirkpatrick. Madame Riano always pictured Scotland to us as a land flowing with milk and honey, of unparalleled richness and splendor, of stupendous wealth lavishly expended. I have sometimes been told the contrary of this. Our healths were drunk, to which Count Saxe responded as only he could respond. We toasted the ladies, drank to our reunion, and when the clocks were striking twelve, we said adieu.

I can never forget Mademoiselle Capello on that night: her beauty, in which archness and pensiveness alternated, her cheerful hope of meeting, together with her sincere regret at parting, the shining of her dark eyes, the rope of pearls round her milk-white throat, the shimmer of her yellow satin gown—all—all were in my mind waking and sleeping, for long afterwards. She gave me her hand to kiss in farewell, and then, holding my rough palm in her two velvety ones, she said to Count Saxe:

“Will you promise me, Count Saxe, if ever I need Babache, you will let me have him?”

“I promise you, Mademoiselle,” gallantly replied Count Saxe. “I could not refuse you even the most valuable thing I have; and if that day comes, I only ask that Babache may serve you as faithfully as he has served me.”

All of which was sweet music to my ears.

At daylight next morning we were in the saddle. As we rode out of the courtyard in the pale December dawn I saw a light in Francezka's chamber.

We took the familiar road past the Italian garden, the statues showing ghostlike in the cold gray light, the lake a sheet of ice. Soon the château of Capello was behind us. The two Chevernys joined us a mile from the château and rode with us a stage. Count Saxe was cheerful, as always, and spoke with enthusiasm of again seeing Mademoiselle Adrienne Lecouvreur. She was one whose money a man might lose, and if honorably lost, might safely face. Is not that high praise?

At the end of the first stage the Chevernys bade us adieu. It was but for a brief time with Gaston, for however he might cherish a lady in his heart, his duty as a man came first; and with a small estate, it behooved him to be very active in his profession of arms, that he might not be known as a laggard and sluggard. Count Saxe contemplated the buying of a regiment as soon as a fit opportunity came—he shortly after bought the regiment of Spar—and Gaston Cheverny must needs be on the spot, if he wished, as he needed, promotion. Regnard's ampler fortune made him freer than Gaston, but he was not a man likely to forget his own advancement. We saw them depart with regret, and then increased our own pace. We traveled rapidly, and on the third evening after leaving the château of Capello, our horses' hoofs clattered against the stones of Paris. Oh, that fateful town! I have always had a fear of it—a dread of its fierce people, women as well as men; and though I was born there, I think I never spent a comfortable day there after I cut my milk-teeth.

Instead of going to the Luxembourg, where it was understood quarters were reserved for Count Saxe, he went to a small inn and preserved his incognito for the present. As soon as we had supped, Count Saxe sent me to see Mademoiselle Lecouvreur, to ask for an interview. I went to the Théâtre Français, and being recognized—for it is not easy to forget so ugly a man as I am—I was permitted behind the scenes.

The play was that very *Herod and Mariamne* of Monsieur Voltaire's that Mademoiselle Lecouvreur had played two years before, which Jacques Haret had so cleverly burlesqued, and in which Mademoiselle Capello had been so rashly brilliant. From the wings I watched the house—well lighted, for the king's Majesty was there, looking frightfully bored in the royal box—and a mob of fine people. I presumed, from seeing Voltaire's piece played, that he was at last home from England, and sure enough, there he was, sitting in a box. He had but lately arrived, as I afterward learned. He looked well dressed, well fed and very impudent. The people seemed to

relish his presence, for after the second act there were cries for him, to which he responded. He was sitting with some ladies of rank—catch that notary's son appearing in public except with the great! But I admit he wrote some good things.

I was distressed to see the changes that two years had made in Mademoiselle Lecouvreur. She was paler and slighter than ever, and although she acted her part with sublime fire and energy, it was plain that the soul within her was driving her frail body as the spur drives a tired horse.

At the end of the second act, after the people had shouted themselves hoarse with delight, I asked to be shown to Madame Lecouvreur's dressing room—for she was no longer able to go to the foyer during the interval between the acts, so a snuffy old box keeper told me. I knocked at her door and she bade me enter.

She lay on a couch, and was panting with fatigue. The paint on her face made her look ghastly at close range. By her sat Monsieur Voltaire; and I will say that I felt a softening of the heart toward him at that moment which I had never known before. Those fiery eyes of his were full of tenderness and soft pity; he had left his fine friends for Mademoiselle Lecouvreur, and sat by her, fanning her. And when he spoke to her his voice had more of the human in it than one could have thought.

"Come, come, Mademoiselle," he was saying, "you must not imagine yourself ill. If you do, what will become of me? Who will make the world believe I can write plays, if Adrienne can no longer act them?"

A mournful little smile came upon Mademoiselle Lecouvreur's reddened lips, and she answered:

"You do not need me, Monsieur, to prove that you can write comedies or tragedies or anything else. All the muses adopted you at your birth, and if ever Adrienne Lecouvreur is remembered it will be because she was chosen by you sometimes to play the immortal parts you created."

There was not one word of flattery in this, I knew; each uttered the eternal verities.

Then I appeared.

When Mademoiselle Lecouvreur saw me she sprang up with a miraculous strength—she knew that I was the *avant-courier* of Maurice of Saxe. I had no mind to deliver my master's message in Monsieur Voltaire's ears, but he knew what my coming meant, and scowled at me. He was furiously jealous of my master with Mademoiselle Lecouvreur.

I thanked Mademoiselle Lecouvreur for her kind greeting; her poor hands trembled so when she took the note my master had sent that she dropped it. Monsieur Voltaire handed it to her, and saw plainly the awkward writing in it—for I make no pretense that Count Saxe could have earned his living as a writing master. But although Voltaire must have guessed it all, he forbore to gibe at the letter. Love and pity had made him almost human.

There was, however, no room for him or me either in the room then. Mademoiselle Lecouvreur longed to be alone with her treasure of a few scrawled lines, and both of us went out. The door passed, we were in the foyer. That door shut out our truce, and Monsieur Voltaire, in the presence of a number of persons, undertook to make me his butt on Count Saxe's account.

"So, Captain Babache," he said, "we hear that Count Saxe is on his way from Courland, and he is probably in Paris now."

This put me in a cruel predicament, for Count Saxe did not wish his arrival known until he had seen the king; but Monsieur Voltaire was the man for putting people in cruel predicaments.

I mumbled something and looked about me for an avenue of escape. I never was ashamed to run away from an enemy too strong for me. But Voltaire blocked the way for me, his eyes blazing with merriment—those eyes that burned a hole in one—and a number of persons collected about us. The foyer was crowded, and wherever Monsieur Voltaire was he became a beacon light; no one could help watching him or listening to him, unless, of course, Count Saxe was present.

"I am considering," said Monsieur Voltaire, with a wicked grin, "of making a new comedy—something on the order of a roaring farce. Count Saxe's expedition to Courland will make excellent material. First act: Count Saxe going forth with Captain Babache and three hundred Uhlans, to conquer the universe. Second act: Count Saxe conquering the universe and getting clapped into a closet in the Grand Duchess Anna Iwanowna's palace at Mitau, where, I hear, she and her waiting maids and a little dog kept him prisoner for a month, from whence Peggy Kirkpatrick at last released him. Third act: Count Saxe arrives in Paris. Is sent for to relate his adventures to his Majesty. Majesty weeps—that is to say, laughs until he cries. Count Saxe begs to be sent to the Bastille until the town is done laughing at him. Majesty cruelly refuses. Count Saxe threatens to kill himself, and goes and eats a couple of cold fowls. Epilogue: spoken by Babache in the character of Bombastes Furioso. Messieurs, you will see that I am a prophet."

"Monsieur, if you are a prophet," I replied, near choking with chagrin, "you may recall your own definition of a prophet. When the first knave met the first fool, then there was the first prophet!"

There was laughter at that, but greater laughter still when Monsieur Voltaire proceeded to inform the crowd that Mademoiselle Lecouvreur had taught Count Saxe all he knew, except war, of which no one could teach him anything, and spelling, which he never could learn. He also chose to quote my master as saying that in his youth he was exactly like the devil, as he always learned what he was not told to learn; and the people present continued to laugh uproariously. They were of that class of persons who would have laughed just as readily at Monsieur Voltaire had my master been there to hang the notary's son on the peg where he

belonged.

In the midst of it the door to Mademoiselle Lecouvreur's room opened, and she herself softly called me to her. I went, still smarting at the laughter and the heartless banter of those Paris people who thought it fine to laugh at Monsieur Voltaire's gibes at Count Saxe. Oh, what I have not suffered for my master through that upstart son of a notary! And yet, I can not deny that the fellow had great parts and shining wit!

Mademoiselle Lecouvreur bade me to tell Count Saxe to come to her house after the theater. With her usual goodness she asked concerning my health and welfare. No gentler, kinder heart ever beat than Mademoiselle Lecouvreur's.

I slipped back to the inn and gave Count Saxe the message sent him by Mademoiselle Lecouvreur. He had an interview with her that night at her house. When he returned he looked more serious than he had done at the prospect of losing Courland, for he saw that the world would soon have to part with that true heart and noble artist, Adrienne Lecouvreur. He said only a few words about her, but they came from his heart of hearts. I am aware that some people say he had no heart, but I, Babache, know better; else would I have died like a felon the day I first spoke with him face to face.

Presently, as we sat together in his dingy room at the inn, after the midnight bells had spoken, he said:

"Babache, I have found out enough since I have been in Paris to show me that I must see the king before twenty-four hours are over. The court goes to Versailles early to-morrow morning. Arrange that we go there to-morrow afternoon in good state."

With that he tumbled into bed. I was up at daylight, preparing for the journey. I wished for Gaston Cheverny then—he would have been of infinite service to me. My master had a magnificent gilt coach stored in Paris, and also twenty liveries of green and gold. I had to get these things out, have them dusted and overhauled, find six horses for the coach, and others for the outriders—in short, do the work of a week in a day. But it was done nevertheless; and at two o'clock on the next day Count Saxe set forth with an equipage and retinue worthy of him. I rode in the coach with him, and we reached Versailles before sunset.

It was a cold, bright, December afternoon, the sun near sinking—we were determined to arrive before sunset, lest our enemies should say we had sneaked in by night to avoid being seen. But we rolled up to the foot of the grand staircase, with a rattle and a roar, and a color and a shining which showed that Maurice of Saxe was not avoiding any man's eyes—or woman's, either.

Now, my master had what is called the grand entrée; that is to say, he could go to the king whenever he wished. So, without saying "by your leave" to anybody, he stepped out of his coach and began ascending the grand staircase. There were numbers of people about, and all of them stared at him, and many spoke, Count Saxe returning their salutations cordially. We mounted leisurely. Midway the stairs we met Cardinal Fleury, with his private chaplain, descending. The cardinal was a mild-mannered old man, and seeing Count Saxe, he stopped and spoke to him.

"You are back from Courland, then, Monsieur," said the cardinal, politely. "No doubt you are pleased to be once more among polite persons. I hear the Courlanders are very wild and wicked people, with no fear of God."

"Your Eminence, we are all of us great sinners, as well as the Courlanders, that is the truth," answered Count Saxe, "and I will leave your Eminence to meditate upon that grand truth. Good evening." And with that he went clamping up the staircase. I saw, out of the tail of my eye, the cardinal stop and laugh to himself. The story flew all about Versailles, and people were chary after that in offering real or pretended condolences to Count Saxe.

We reached the king's anteroom, where the usual crowd of do-nothings and good-for-nothings was assembled. The women at Versailles always reminded me of butterflies and humming-birds. They crowded about Count Saxe like bees about a honeysuckle, but he artfully excused himself, and made for the king's door with such an air of command that the lackeys thought he was sent for by the king. Of course he was instantly admitted, and he directed that I follow him, which I did.

The king was waiting for the queen to go to supper, and looked bored and impatient. He was a handsome, stolid, *laissez-faire* man, who, by not doing anything, contrived to get as much evil done as the worst king that ever lived; but he was rather a respectable sort of man at that time. Several gentlemen were in the room when he entered, and none of them dared open his mouth for fear of adding to the king's irritation. The instant, however, my master appeared, the king's countenance cleared. He greeted Count Saxe in the warmest manner, and asked that he would come to the royal closet as soon as supper was over that he might hear of all that had happened in Courland. My master thanked him in suitable terms. Then the queen entered, and her greeting was as cordial as the king's. If the queen, poor soul, hated anybody, it was the Russians, whom she reckoned the despoiler of her father, the King of Poland. So there was much of painful interest to her in what Count Saxe had to tell.

It was then time to go to supper. Imagine the feelings of those people who wished to see Count Saxe humiliated, when they beheld him walking along the grand gallery, the king talking to him with the greatest animation! The queen claimed him of the king at supper, and he was treated more like an Alexander returning victorious than as a drenched hen as the old Scotchwoman had predicted.

My master told me that the king, in the private interview, asked concerning Madame Riano and



Mademoiselle Capello, and was mightily diverted with the story of Madame Riano and the bishop. His Majesty was not well pleased that so great an heiress as Mademoiselle Capello should remain away from his court.

We stayed the night at Versailles, and next morning when we returned to Paris, it was to take up our old quarters at the Luxembourg. It was not exactly a pleasant home coming. Count Saxe had looked for another sort. But he was the last man in the world to repine at fate.

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## CHAPTER XV

### THE LOST SHEEP

On the first of January, 1728, my master again took up his abode in his old quarters at the palace of the Luxembourg.

And how did he employ himself? Chiefly with *amusettes*, as far as I know. This answer I have made many thousands of times. I always have to explain what *amusettes* are. They are not young ladies of the ballet, or anything of the sort, but very complete military toys, with which many scientific experiments may be made. Count Saxe was the first man to do this, and he had whole cabinets full of small brass cannon, and toy arms of every description, with which he made useful and serious improvements. And these toys were his *amusettes*. But was that all he did? For I have been asked that also many times. Well, he studied much—more out of books than was commonly thought; and he went often to the theater, and only occasionally to court, albeit the king doted on him so far as Louis XV could dote on any man. Philippe de Comines has said that there is but one thing more severe on a man than the favor of kings, and that is their enmity. This is a great truth, and my master acknowledged it when I read it out of the book of Philippe de Comines.

The king would not let Count Saxe out of France except with extreme reluctance, and for short periods; but kept him, for five mortal years, standing, as Count Saxe said, like an equestrian statue, with one foot always uplifted to march, but never marching. Now, if any one wishes to know what else Count Saxe was doing during those five long years, let him ask some one who knew him better and was more in his company than Babache, his captain of the body-guard of Uhlans. I swear I knew nothing on earth of anything concerning Count Saxe, except what is put down in this book. I know that the women ran after him enough to drive him to drink, had he been so inclined. How much attention Count Saxe paid them in return I have not the slightest notion, and I never was the man to pretend to know what I did not know.

In January of 1728 Gaston Cheverny joined us. We had scarcely established ourselves in our old quarters at the Luxembourg, when one evening, while the snow lay deep on the streets of Paris, the door to my room, next Count Saxe's, burst open, and Gaston Cheverny, gay and bold, dashed in.

I was rejoiced to see him again, and only grumbled that he had not arrived before to aid me in many troublesome matters, like that of providing an equipage for Count Saxe at a night's notice; but he took my rating with laughter. The evening was cold, and a fire blazed upon the hearth, before which Gaston stretched his legs and pulled off his boots, replacing them with fine shoes of Spanish leather. We had only been separated four weeks, but we had many questions to ask of each other. Gaston, as a soldier, was eager to know of Count Saxe's plans. I told him of the project to buy the regiment of Spar, which was shortly after carried through, and of the king's evident determination to keep Count Saxe in his service.

"Good!" cried Gaston; "I knew I made no mistake when I cast my fortunes with Count Saxe. Let but the drum beat on the Rhine, in the Pyrenees, or in Savoy, and we shall be on the march within twenty-four hours."

Such is the way ardent young men talk.

Then I asked what had been burning on my tongue ever since he entered the room. What of the ladies at the château of Capello—meaning Francezka, but naming Madame Riano first.

"Madame Riano is the same Peggy Kirkpatrick. The warfare between her and the Bishop of Louvain is grown more bloody and desperate than ever. Quarter is neither asked nor given. Madame Riano has told the story of the bishop being near frightened out of his wits by the burning out of a chimney, and declares he was so panic-stricken he had to take to his bed that minute. The bishop preaches openly at Madame Riano, doing everything but calling her by name from the pulpit."

And then I spoke the word both of us had longed to hear.

"And Mademoiselle Capello?"

It was as if the sun had blazed out of twilight, Gaston Cheverny's face glowed so.

"She is in great beauty, perfect health and happiness. She desired me to ask of you not to forget

her; that she remembered you daily.”

So did I remember her daily.

“And you have gone away and left the field to your brother and rival?” I said.

“Babache,” replied Gaston, coming and sitting on the arm of my chair, his arm about my neck, “the afternoon before I left I sat with Francezka—I call her that to you, but to no other man—I sat with Francezka in the Italian garden at the foot of Petrarch’s statue. I had a volume of Petrarch, and read to her that sonnet from the poet’s heart beginning:

*Sweet bird, that singest on thy airy way.*

“I had often read it to her in that spot—and I reminded her that it was the last, last time for long—perhaps forever—that we should sit in that place and read that book of enchantment together, when—Babache, will you promise me on your sword never to breathe what I tell you?”

I promised; lovers can not keep their own secrets, but expect others to do it.

“When I had finished reading the sonnet, Francezka remained silent. I looked at her, and the big, beautiful tears were dropping upon her cheeks. Babache, can you imagine the exquisite rapturous pain of seeing the woman you love weeping at the thought of parting from you?”

He got up and walked about the room, and sat down, this time opposite me.

“You understand, Babache, she is not yet quite seventeen. In another year she will be her own mistress; but I think she regards as sacred her father’s injunction not to marry for two years after her majority. Nay, I believe she wants those two years of freedom. All this does not frighten me—but—her fortune will be very great, and that frightens me. Mine is but small. Had we but succeeded in Courland! If I could but give her glory in exchange for wealth. And—Babache—the kindness of her eyes—those tears were for me—” he got up again and walked about frantically, like your young lover. I saw he was not really very miserable, but had persuaded himself that he was.

“You will not find many men balking at her fortune,” said I. “And remember: Mademoiselle Capello is in danger of sharing the usual wretched fate of heiresses, to be sold like a slave in the market. You, at least, love her.”

“Love her—” he pranced about wildly, protesting his love. He was but two and twenty, after all; but under this effervescence, I saw a deep and true passion that possessed him body and soul.

Presently he calmed himself and talked seriously of Francezka. I had no doubt, although he preserved a manly modesty about it, that Francezka, impetuous like himself, wilful, proud, but loving, had given him much greater encouragement than a tear or two at his reading a sonnet of Petrarch’s to her. But with that strain of sober sense, and that mastery of the will which I had so often noticed in Francezka’s wildest dreams, and which I always attributed to her Scotch blood, she meant not to throw away her liberty rashly. She might lap her soul in Elysium, and dream dreams, and entertain love with magnificence, but she always knew where her footing was, and what she actually did would not be waited on by repentance.

Then I made inquiry about Regnard Cheverny.

“My brother, I think, has made up his mind to take service with the Austrians under Prince Eugene, and I believe he will in time become an Austrian. He is still at Castle Haret, and Jacques Haret—ah, the scoundrel! I can scarcely tell you without swearing of his latest villainy. Lisa—poor old Peter’s niece—”

“Has he carried off the old man’s one ewe lamb?” I cried.

“Yes—that poor, submissive girl.”

Of all the villainies I had ever known up to that time, this of Jacques Haret seemed to me the worst. I had seen the seamy side of human nature often—too often. I had seen the rapine of camps, the iniquities of a great city; but this action of Jacques Haret’s shone hideous alongside all I had ever known.

Gaston Cheverny continued, his wrath and disgust speaking in his face and voice.



"I wondered why Jacques Haret should remain in Brabant. I allowed him to stay at my house—may God forgive me! I thought he could not find much evil to his hand; but it seems, like Satan's darling, as he is, he made evil. For the girl was perfectly correct until he met her, and there was not the slightest suspicion of any wrong-doing until, one morning, less than a fortnight ago, when old Peter arose, he found she had gone. He ran at once to my house, having had, I fancy, some latent fear of Jacques Haret. I was wakened from sleep in the wintry dawn by the sound of the old man's crying and moaning at my door. He had gone to Jacques Haret's room and found he had decamped.

"I opened the door, and there stood the old man—he would have fallen but that I held him up. He could utter but one name, the tears meanwhile drenching his poor, wrinkled face:

"'Lisa! Lisa! My little Lisa!'

"Some intuition came to me. I said:

"'And Jacques Haret?'

"The old man nodded, and then fell against the doorpost. I asked if anything could be done. I would myself with pistols pursue Jacques Haret if required. I was likewise enraged on my own account that so vile a use should have been made of my hospitality.

"'Nothing can be done,' replied the old man, in a terrible voice—terrible because of its echo of despair. 'It is I—I who am to blame. All said that my other two nieces were bad—that they, and not I, were to blame—but now it is proved that it is I who should be judged. I made Monsieur Jacques welcome in my poor house. I made Lisa tend him. Now who, knowing his power over a poor and ignorant girl like my Lisa, can fail to see that it is I—I—who am the great sinner. I made the temptation for them—if Lisa's soul is lost, it is I who should be everlastingly punished.'

"What could one say to that, from a broken-hearted poor old creature? However, I promised him and myself, too, that if ever I met Jacques Haret, if it were at the gates of hell, or if it were in the presence of St. Peter, I would have one good blow at him. Then the old man's grief took on the aspect of strong despair. I walked with him through the fields to the château of Capello, for he was not really able to go alone. When we reached the terrace, there was Mademoiselle Capello. She was ever an early riser. She ran toward us, and Peter uttered but two words, 'Jacques Haret—my Lisa,' and all was known. Mademoiselle Capello put her arm about the old man's neck—yes, the faithful old serving-man was embraced by that tender, loving heart.

"'Dear Peter,' she said, 'Lisa will come back—she will repent—doubt not that—and she shall be welcomed as the lost sheep who was found by the Good Shepherd, and restored to the sheepfold. But, for Jacques Haret, there shall be no mercy. Peter, I declare to you, I feel strong enough at this moment to fly at Jacques Haret's throat and strangle him—and do God service thereby.'

"'Mademoiselle,' said I, 'command me. This old man is not the only person Jacques Haret has injured. I, too, have a mortal injury to avenge—for he was my guest.'

"'Avenge it, then,' she said, her eyes sparkling—'vengeance is mine, saith the Lord—but I take it, God selects His instruments from among men. And I shall also ask that Captain Babache keep an eye open for that wicked man—'

"I will," I interrupted.

“‘And it shall go hard if he be not punished,’ she said.

“When Madame Riano heard of it she was for mounting a-horseback and going in search of Jacques Haret. One thing, however, we may reasonably count on—that Jacques Haret shall one day pay for this.”

“Undoubtedly,” I replied.

We spoke more on this melancholy business, and talked on other things, and then Gaston Cheverny went to pay his respects to Count Saxe in his room; but Count Saxe was out—gone in pursuit of knowledge and virtue, I fancy.

In that month of January began a life of tedium for us which had few mitigations. A young man, like Gaston Cheverny, full of spirit but with little money, was under many disabilities at Paris. His wit and fine person made him to be sought after by those who knew him already, but he was not by nature a carpet knight. No soldier of Hannibal enjoyed Mantua more than Gaston Cheverny would have enjoyed Paris in winter after a summer’s campaigning; but to sit, kicking his heels day after day, was irksome to him. Being a proud man, it did not please him to expose the smallness of his fortune when it could be helped, so he, with me, lived a life which we often compared to that of the monks of La Trappe. We read much—Gaston, in especial I believe, mastered by heart every poem on love printed in the French language and many in the Italian, Spanish and English languages. He likewise achieved a great number of songs, and actually composed some himself; but of these last, I have heard better, I must acknowledge.

The Hôtel Kirkpatrick was unoccupied and closed, the entrances and windows boarded up. There was no talk during all that year of Madame Riano and Mademoiselle Capello returning to Paris. I heard often of them through persons passing from Brussels to Paris. Mademoiselle Capello, out of her abundant kindness, often sent me messages of good-will—nay, even a pair of gloves wrought with her own hand—a favor I never heard of her doing to any gentleman; for she was chary of her favors to the great. She told me, years afterward, that standing so much alone in the world as she was, and the hunted of fortune seekers, from the first she ever relied upon me as one of her truest friends. And she was justified.

Gaston Cheverny kept up a constant correspondence with his brother, for never at any time did their rivalry for Francezka seem to interrupt the brotherly intercourse between the two Chevernys. They were very far from being Mademoiselle Capello’s only suitors, that I knew. Gentlemen went in search of her and her fortune, from Paris, from Brussels, even from London and Vienna; but all came back chopfallen.

So crept away the winter, the spring, the summer, the autumn. And so went another year, and 1730 dawned, a year memorable for the loss of Mademoiselle Lecouvreur. She, too, showed me a condescension beautiful and worthy of her. She did not lack for friends among the greatest during her fading away. Besides my master and Monsieur Voltaire, was my Lord Peterborough, a great, tall devil of an Englishman, with a head on his shoulders and a heart in his bosom, who made some fine campaigns in Spain. Count Saxe and Monsieur Voltaire had a tacit agreement to visit Mademoiselle Lecouvreur on different days, although I believe the sense that she would soon be lost to both of them softened their feelings one to the other. All this time Mademoiselle Lecouvreur could still act, three times a week; but when she was not at the theater she was usually in her bed—and always patient, gentle and smiling. She had not always been so patient. I have been told that, her sister once impudently demanding money of her, Mademoiselle Lecouvreur threw both shoes at her. But as some one has said, “Death lights up a terrible flambeau in which the aspect of all things is changed.”

Great crowds attended all of Mademoiselle Lecouvreur’s performances at the Théâtre Français; and in spite of her weakness, the fire of genius carried her through her parts with a supernatural strength. When it was over, though, she was no more the great artist, but poor, ailing, dying Adrienne Lecouvreur. On the days when she lay on her couch in her chamber, she was sometimes kind enough to ask for me. When I would go in I would be asked to take a chair within the *ruelle* and she would talk to me with her old kindness. Often her mind went back to her childhood days; for this woman was far above the paltriness of being ashamed of her origin, as Monsieur Voltaire was. She once said to me, Count Saxe sitting by:

“Babache, how merry we were as children—though we were often ragged, and I, for one, had not always as much as I would have liked to eat. But we were not troubled with governesses or masters, were we, Babache?” She laughed as she said this, her beautiful tired eyes lighting up.

“Indeed we were not, Mademoiselle, and I believe the children of the poor are, in general, happier than the children of the rich,” I answered.

Count Saxe, a king’s son, who had been brought up at court, listened to the recitals of us, the children of the poor, and I believe, learned some things he had not known before.

Not even Mademoiselle Lecouvreur’s sad situation could disarm the jealousy of the women who envied her Count Saxe’s devotion. There was one of them, the Duchesse de Bouillon, who, like Jacques Haret, was one of the devil’s darlings, and kept shop for him. Every night that Mademoiselle Lecouvreur acted, during that last winter, Madame de Bouillon was present blazing with jewels, and with the air of gloating over the great artist who was already serenely looking into the quiet land. This duchess was a handsome creature, and a Circe; she turned men into beasts.

Whenever Mademoiselle Lecouvreur played, there was always a great attendance of her friends—although for that matter, all Paris was her friend. It was amazing how this woman’s spirit

mastered her body. When she would be carried to and from her coach, tottering as she stepped upon the stage, the very first sight of the sea of sympathizing faces, the roar of many approving voices, seemed to pour life into her veins. She would become erect and smiling—at once Art and Genius appeared like sustaining angels to her—and she would resume her power as a queen assumes her scepter.

Toward the end of February it was plain she was going fast. Monsieur Voltaire and Count Saxe were with her every day, now only choosing separate hours for their visits. One mild March evening, at the door of her house in the Marais, I met Count Saxe coming out. He had a strange look on his face. I asked if Mademoiselle Lecouvreur would be able to act that night.

“No,” he said. “She will act no more.”

He passed on, without another word. I noticed how pale he was. He walked to the corner of the street, where a splendid coach was waiting—Madame de Bouillon’s coach. That woman watched for him and waylaid him on his way from Adrienne’s house.

I turned and walked away. The night was bright and mild, and the stars were out. A short distance off, I came face to face with Monsieur Voltaire. I had never liked this man, but in one aspect, and that was his earnest devotion to Mademoiselle Lecouvreur. Something like sympathy made me stop him and say to him that Mademoiselle Lecouvreur would not act that night—nor any more I feared.

He gazed at me with those black, burning eyes of his, and then as if speaking to himself, repeated those lines of Ronsard’s about Mary Stuart:

*Elle était de ce monde où les plus belles choses  
Ont le pire destin;  
Et, rose, elle a vécu ce que vivent les roses,  
L’espace d’un matin.*

His voice was music when he spoke these words, for he felt them. I remained silent, and, after a while, he turned to me and taking me by the arm, said:

“Babache, you are an honest man. Come with me.”

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## CHAPTER XVI

### THE SETTING OF A STAR

We returned arm in arm to Mademoiselle Lecouvreur’s house. It had not occurred to me to present myself uninvited, but without a word I followed this man, who had something compelling about him. We went straight to Mademoiselle Lecouvreur’s door, and the maid, who was watching, let us in.

Adrienne lay in her great purple silk bed, pale, but looking more weary and sad than ill. I had often seen her look worse. She greeted us kindly, and the shadow of a smile came into her face when she saw Monsieur Voltaire bringing me in. He seated himself by her, and tried by gentle raillery to interest her, but it was in vain. For the first and last time, she let fall some words of lamentation about the fate which was coming upon her with giant strides. But she made a brave effort to rally her soul, and even forced a smile to her pale lips. The curtains were withdrawn from the window, and the soft beauty of the spring night shone in the half-darkened room. Monsieur Voltaire began to describe this soft beauty to her as only he could describe it; but she seemed careless of it and said:

“I saw it but a little while ago—and thought how unlovely it was—the moon looked brazen and haughty, like some of those fine ladies who come to see me act when they have nothing better to do. The stars seemed more unfeeling and farther off than ever, and they are always unfeeling and far off—and the first object that met my eyes was an enemy in health and beauty and splendor—while I lie here dying.”

Then I knew she had seen Count Saxe beguiled into Madame de Bouillon’s coach.

“But,” she cried, her voice ringing sweet and clear, as if in perfect health, and raising herself with surprising strength, “they will see that I am not yet gone. I will act once more. Yes, Voltaire, the good God will let me act once again. I know, I feel it. Do you hear me, good Babache?”

Monsieur Voltaire replied to her that he hoped the good God in which she trusted would let her act many times more. I suppose I appeared like a lump of clay, because I was so overcome with remorse at Count Saxe’s action in going off with Madame de Bouillon, that I could not say a word.

“It will be in Phèdre—a part worthy of the greatest artist in the world. It has sometimes been said I knew how to play that part. If ever I could play it, I shall show this when I play it—the next

and the last time. Monsieur Voltaire, I charge you to go this night to the director of the Théâtre Français and say to him that I shall be ready to play Phèdre four days from now, as announced."

"I promise with all my heart," cried Monsieur Voltaire, "and talk not of its being the last time—oh, Adrienne!" He stopped, choked by his emotion, and not a word was spoken for a time.

"Mademoiselle," said I, seeing my betters keep silence, "those who have once seen you in that part can never forget you. Often, in those dreary days in Courland, in anxious nights upon the island in Lake Uzmaiz, my master, Count Saxe, would recall the noble beauty of those lines as you spoke them—and many other of those plays in which you had bewitched the world."

Poor soul! I knew what would give her a moment's ease.

"Did he then, remember me?" she said in a soft voice, like music. Monsieur Voltaire spoke not a word; he loved her too well to grudge her these few crumbs of comfort.

Seeing she was interested, I began to tell her some of the incidents of our flight from Uzmaiz. I told her of our sojourn at the château of Capello. She remembered Francezka well; and the mention of these things turned the sad current of her thoughts.

"What a charming, gifted creature she was," said Mademoiselle Lecouvreur, "and how amusing it was, Voltaire, for you, the author, and me, the artist, to see our greatness as we thought it, so burlesqued that night in the little out-of-doors theater! However, that quick transposition showed the child had vast power and originality. And Jacques Haret—what has become of the creature?"

I replied, with truth, that I neither knew nor cared, not wishing to wring Mademoiselle Lecouvreur's tender heart with the story of Jacques Haret's latest villainy.

We remained an hour. Several times I would have left, but Monsieur Voltaire detained me by a glance. At last, when Mademoiselle Lecouvreur was inclined to sleep, we departed. Once outside the door, and under the shadow of the tall old houses, Monsieur Voltaire grasped my arm, and said in a voice full of tears:

"Captain Babache, we are watching the setting of a star—we are seeing the Pléiade as she is gradually lost in the universal abyss. Soon, Eternity, with its unbroken, derisive silence, will lie between Adrienne and all whom she loves and who love her—" He suddenly broke off, and went his way in the night.

Before I slept, I repeated every word of what had happened at our interview, to my master, and Madame de Bouillon did not get him in her coach again. After that he spent every hour that he could at Mademoiselle Lecouvreur's house. He and Monsieur Voltaire no longer avoided each other. There was the truce of God between them for the few days that Adrienne Lecouvreur remained on earth.

Few persons believed that she would be able to play again, but the mere hint of it crammed the Théâtre Français to the doors on that last, unforgettable night. Gaston Cheverny and I had secured seats in the pit of the theater. Gaston had been admitted to the honor of Mademoiselle Lecouvreur's acquaintance and admired her at a distance, like a star.

There was a breathless excitement in the crowd, something in the air of the theater seemed to communicate excitement. It was like that tremulous stillness which seems to overtake the world when the earth is about to be riven asunder, and volcanoes are making ready to explode in oceans of fire and flame and molten death.

Not one more person, I believe, could have been packed into the theater five minutes before the curtain rose, except in one box that remained empty—the box of the Duchesse de Bouillon. I looked around for Count Saxe, and caught a glimpse of him afar off in the crowd—then he disappeared. Again I saw him passing quite close to me. By some accident, he wore a full suit of black that night—black velvet coat, and black silk small-clothes—perhaps to render himself less conspicuous; but he was a man to be noted in a crowd because of his beauty, even if he had been the veriest oaf alive—or marked out for a great man, if he had been as ugly as I am. That night he was like a perturbed spirit seeking for rest and finding none; unable to drag himself away from that last touching and splendid vision of Adrienne Lecouvreur, and yet, almost unable to bear it.

Everybody in the theater knew to whom that empty box belonged—it was to the worst enemy of Adrienne Lecouvreur. The story had gone forth that Mademoiselle Lecouvreur's illness had come from poison administered by the Duchesse de Bouillon, out of jealousy of Count Saxe. It is true that Madame de Bouillon would no doubt have poisoned anybody whom she thought stood between her and Count Saxe; and it is also true that the young Abbé de Bouret confided something concerning Madame de Bouillon's schemes to Mademoiselle Lecouvreur, one night, in the gardens of the Luxembourg. The Abbé de Bouret was quickly silenced by a *lettre de cachet* and the Bastille by the powerful De Bouillon family—but beyond that, I think no one knows. The public however, was ready to believe anything against Madame de Bouillon in its passion of regret over losing Adrienne Lecouvreur; and Madame de Bouillon's brazen defiance of this sentiment in coming to the theater to witness this last farewell of Adrienne's to the public which had loved her so well, was bitterly resented.

In the midst of an oppressive silence, one minute before the curtain rose, Madame de Bouillon appeared in her box. She was quite alone. As she seated herself, she displayed upon her beautiful white arm, a miniature of Count Saxe, set in diamonds. I dare say she stole it. She sat there, smiling and unconcerned, with every eye in the theater turned on her with hatred. But

then sounded the three knocks which herald the rising of the curtain, and the play began.

When the time came for Mademoiselle Lecouvreur to appear and the first glimpse of her as Phèdre in her classic garb was seen, a frantic roar of applause went up—men shouting, women weeping their welcome. It was plain that she was very ill, but likewise every human soul in that house knew that she would go through her part. I will not speak of her acting that night: how she brought us to tears, and plunged us into despair and pity and horror at her will. But there was a climax, the essence of all feeling when she advanced to the front of the stage, and, fixing her beautiful, despairing eyes on Madame de Bouillon, repeated those immortal lines in a voice that might have been that of an accusing angel.

*Je sais mes perfides,  
Enone, et ne suis point de ces femmes hardies,  
Qui, goûtant dans le crime une tranquille paix,  
Ont su se faire un front qui ne rougit jamais!*

How shall I describe what followed? The pity, fury, and despair that filled all hearts; the cries, the maledictions directed toward Madame de Bouillon; the tears for Mademoiselle Lecouvreur; the passion of regret, the tears, the words of endearment lavished upon her. When I came to myself after a period of frenzy, Gaston Cheverny had thrown his arm about my neck and was weeping like a woman. The Duchesse de Bouillon had vanished. Héreault, a lieutenant of police, had told her he could not answer for her life if she remained in the theater. Adrienne was still on the stage, supporting her frail body by leaning against an urn, and tears were dropping upon her cheeks; she looked like some fair effigy of patient grief. She wished to live—and she was so soon to die! I know not how the play ended, or if it was ended at all when the curtain went down.

An agitated crowd blocked all the streets leading to the theater. Adrienne's coach was waiting to receive her. Presently, there was a sudden rush. Adrienne was being supported to the coach, and in the arms of Count Saxe—for she was more carried than led. A murmur of approval, of relief, of sorrowful satisfaction ran through the multitude. Adrienne, the paint washed from her face, was of a deathly pallor, but her eyes were full of light and joy. She was to die, but yet to die as she would have wished, with Count Saxe once more her own, won in triumph from her enemy, and the affectionate plaudits of the public which ever loved her, ringing in her ears.

Count Saxe caught sight of me in the crowd, and made a signal to me. I forced my way to the coach, and got on the box with the driver. Then, glancing back, I saw Monsieur Voltaire and the Earl of Peterborough spring upon the footman's running board behind. The people gave one single loud cry of approval, and then amid the tears and farewells of thousands, Adrienne Lecouvreur was borne away for the last time from the Théâtre Français, of which she had been the chiefest ornament.

When we reached her house, Monsieur Voltaire and Lord Peterborough sprang down, opened the coach door and let down the steps. Mademoiselle Lecouvreur laughed a little when she saw what manner of footmen she had; she was then in perfect peace, and could smile and even laugh. Monsieur Voltaire took her in his arms and carried her up the long stairs to her apartment, Count Saxe following. Their jealousy was dead and about to be buried in Adrienne's grave.

I went up the stairs and sat in the anteroom. Within Adrienne's chamber there were my master, Monsieur Voltaire, Lord Peterborough, Mademoiselle Lecouvreur's sister, her two faithful servants and the doctor. There was a strange quiet for so many persons. The windows were opened, letting in the mild air of the spring night. Beneath the windows, a vast, silent and sorrowing crowd stood through the night, while the moon and stars watched and waned. The eastern sky grew rosy, and the long lances of the sun's advance-guard tipped the roofs and spires with glory. While I was watching this miracle of a new day, I heard the door to Mademoiselle Lecouvreur's room open behind me. I caught one glimpse of Monsieur Voltaire as he leaned weeping over the pillow whereon Mademoiselle Lecouvreur's head lay, naturally as if she had fallen asleep. Her face was turned a little toward the window, and one hand, half open, lay outside the coverlet—as Count Saxe had dropped it last. He came out of the room. I saw that he was almost as pale as the dead Adrienne; for she was dead, the beautiful, the loving, the generous, and gifted. He walked steadily enough toward me; then suddenly tottered. I helped him out of the room, and below and into a coach. He spoke not one word as we drove toward the Luxembourg, but wept—oh, how he wept!

I left him in his room, alone with his grief and his remorse. I went to my own. At my writing table sat Gaston Cheverny, writing, his tears dropping upon the paper. I believe everybody in Paris wept when Adrienne Lecouvreur died.

"I am writing an account for Mademoiselle Capello," he said; then laid down his pen, when he saw by my face what had happened.

Four days later Adrienne Lecouvreur was buried at midnight. I was among the few at her interment. Monsieur Voltaire managed it all, with a delicacy, a tenderness inexpressible. Those who say that man could not love, knew not the nobility of his love for Adrienne Lecouvreur. When her will was opened it was found that nearly all of her property was left to the poor.

The death of Adrienne Lecouvreur made an epoch with my master. Except her, he had not been fortunate in the women he had known best; and there were no more, for him, like Mademoiselle Lecouvreur. He never again spoke to the Duchesse de Bouillon. In that, he was unfailingly true to the memory of the woman who had loved him so well.

This was in March of 1730. It seemed to me as if the days were growing heavier, and Paris drearier, every week that passed. Not that Paris is reckoned a dreary town; particularly in the spring and summer, when everything is in full leaf and flower, and the whole population is out of doors all day in the yellow sunshine and half the night under the laughing moon and merry-twinkling stars—for the people of Paris think that the moon was made for their chief torch-bearer, and that the stars were set in the sky that Paris might be supplied with a handsome set of girandoles. But I was not of that mind. For a long time after Mademoiselle Lecouvreur's death, Count Saxe never spoke her name. He longed to be away from Paris. In June, the King of Saxony, his father, was to form a great camp at Radewitz, and Count Saxe, to his satisfaction, was invited to attend. So, preparing for that event, in which he was to take a considerable part, gave him some distraction during that sad springtime of 1730. I wished him to leave Paris, too. I never thought the air of that town agreed with his constitution.

Gaston Cheverny, as became a young man whose blood runs quick and red, liked the springtime. He had not enough money to go to court often, which he would have liked, so he put up with humbler pleasures. I do not believe he could, to save his life, pass one of those impromptu balls on the corner of the street, where the people, young and old, dance to a pipe or a fiddle. He always joined in, and as he danced with grace and skill, the little milliners' girls and the merry old women always liked to have a fling with him.

We made many excursions on foot as well as on horseback, in those hours when Count Saxe had no need of me. We often loitered past the deserted garden of the Hôtel Kirkpatrick, where the lilacs and syringas drenched the air with perfume as on that spring afternoon, four years before. Gaston would say to me:

"See yonder balcony—it was from that balcony Francezka bade me good by. And look—the very guelder rose-bush by which I once spoke with her, on coming to pay my respects to Madame Riano! I can conjure up that charming Francezka as if she were before me now!"

So could I.

By the artful subterfuge of sending Madame Riano the news of Paris, for which she thirsted, Gaston had been lucky enough to keep in constant communication with the château of Capello. Madame Riano often used Francezka as her amanuensis, and I grew to know her clear, firm handwriting well. Her letters were written at Madame Riano's dictation, but it was plain that Francezka managed to express in them her own thoughts as well as Madame Riano's. She often spoke of Regnard Cheverny.

"Monsieur Regnard was with us yesterday, at our fête champêtre." And "Monsieur Cheverny is reading a Spanish story to us, which I understand quite well, although I have scarce spoken ten words of that language since I was a child." And once—oh, blessed letter!—she said, "My aunt and I desire our regards to Captain Babache. Tell him, as I know he is a poet in his heart, if not with his pen, that there is a beautiful poem being made now by a lady in Brabant. The lady is Mother Nature—period, this present springtime. It is a play in several acts. I watch it daily from the Italian garden. It is a comedy, with some tragic aspects—for Nature has her tragic moods. The comedy is in the birds and the laughing river, and the leaves and blossoms. These last are defying their cruel old father, Winter, as they come out in spite of him, at first shyly, and then boldly, to be kissed by their lover, the sun. The lake remains always tragic; it never laughs nor even smiles, but is always sadly beautiful, like Niobe, poor, childless one. This is all for Captain Babache. And so Mademoiselle Lecouvreur is no more—and how are we all impoverished by her loss!" And much more of the same sort.

In June we started for Radewitz, near the Elbe. Thirty thousand soldiers were assembled there, many royalties, including the King of Prussia and the Crown Prince Frederick, afterward known as the Great, and every pretty woman in Europe. It was a huge, royal fête champêtre, in which the river Elbe seemed to run with champagne. I had expected it to be a practice camp, and so made preparations with pleasure for Count Saxe to go.

Gaston Cheverny was overjoyed to go, for several reasons; one was, that our road would lie directly toward Brussels, and he would have a chance to stop at his own house, and so, to see the lady of his love. As soon as it was known that we were going, we received kind invitations from Madame Riano and Mademoiselle Capello to become guests at the château. It was not possible for Count Saxe to accept, however, and Gaston got only a week's leave, departing from Paris in advance of us and joining us at Brussels. My master seeing I was disappointed in not stopping at the château on our way, promised that I might stop on our return in July; and with this I was satisfied.

Gaston Cheverny left Paris the middle of May—he was in the highest spirits, as well he might be. The morning he set forth, I rode with him to the barriers. He had a good horse under him, he was to see the lady of his heart, he was then to take part in a great military pageant, beautiful to the eye of a soldier—he was, in short, a very happy young fellow, and forgot that his purse was light. He rode away along the highroad, waving me farewell, and I returned to work like a Trojan to get my master's escort in trim for the journey. I was glad for Count Saxe to be away from Paris then. Those who think that he was not grieved at Mademoiselle Lecouvreur's death, or did not silently lament her, know not the man. But a soldier must take arms against his sorrows, as against his enemies.

Another week found us on the road to Brussels. The very night of our arrival there, Gaston Cheverny turned up; and with him was his brother, Regnard.

Regnard, as usual, was handsome, smooth, well dressed and well equipped with horses and



servants to make a good appearance at Radewitz. He was far better off externally than was Gaston; but the same brotherly feelings which made him perfectly at home in Gaston's house, made Gaston free of Regnard's servants and horses. The two brothers lived upon the same terms of amity and cordial intimacy as always, in spite of the fact that as they were now men, and not youths; and as Mademoiselle Capello was her own mistress, their rivalry had become far more serious.

After supper at the inn, I left Regnard with Count Saxe, while Gaston and I walked together upon the city ramparts, under the soft dark skies of the summer night. It was plain, without the telling, that his visit to Brabant had been highly satisfactory. He gave me a kind message from Mademoiselle Capello, and also one from Madame Riano. He told me that Francezka had developed the same capacity for affairs which marked Madame Riano; and to the surprise and chagrin of the wiseacres who expected to see everything at Capello at sixes and sevens under a woman's rule, hers was the best managed estate in the province. She had stewards, but looked after them herself, not being free from a fondness for ruling. Old Peter was still her right hand man, but aged and inexpressibly sorrowful at the humble tragedy of the lost Lisa. Jacques Haret had not since been seen in those parts; and Gaston Cheverny had given his word to Mademoiselle Capello that the next time he saw Jacques Haret, the scoundrel should have a double dose of punishment on old Peter's account, as well as on Gaston's own, and Francezka seemed mightily contented with the idea. Revenge, as well as all the other elemental passions, was a part of Francezka Capello's nature.

Madame Riano, Gaston said, was the same Madame Riano, but a late fantasy of hers was giving Mademoiselle Capello some anxiety. Madame Riano had been seized with a raging desire to go to Scotland. She had a notion that the time was ripe for another uprising against the Hanoverians; and I believe that woman was capable of raising the clans and marching at their head to recover for Charles Edward Stuart the throne of his ancestors. This sudden passion of Madame Riano for Scotland was very embarrassing for Mademoiselle Capello, because it would almost force her to seek the protection of a husband, as she had no intention of forsaking her home in Brabant. I do not think this decision of Madame Riano's seemed to trouble Gaston Cheverny very deeply, although he candidly admitted what the consequences would be. It was plain, however, that his prospects in that quarter were such as to warrant his taking a certain risk; and I believed he played fast and loose with the ladies slyly encouraging Madame Riano to go to Scotland, while ostensibly urging her to remain in Brabant. I asked him if his brother had yielded the field to him.

"By no means," he replied, "but the only way to make him yield is to carry the lady off. There is no waiting game to be played in love—one must be ready to take the hazard of the die at any moment. My brother is not my only rival—there are scores of others; but I do not count up my chances of failure—I only count my chances of success. Oh, Babache, if Francezka Capello should exchange her dower for the smallpox, it would make no difference to me—" and he quoted to me that sonnet of Master William Shakespeare's, in which the poet makes it clear that true love is not Time's fool.

We started next morning, in beautiful summer weather, which lasted us until we reached Radewitz.

What shall I say concerning the splendors of that place? The temporary palaces, built of painted and gilded canvas, adorned with pictures and statues, and surrounded with gardens and shrubberies, where kings and princes were served from gold and silver plate; where after the most magnificent military pageants all day long, at evening came soft and dulcet music, concerts and serenades and even operas; where all the splendor and beauty in Europe seemed gathered together. It was like the Field of the Cloth of Gold, and it lasted for a whole month. I sometimes wondered why, among the great number of ladies present, there should not be Mademoiselle Capello and Madame Riano; and one summer afternoon, my question was answered, for rolling along the highway, toward a fine country mansion, where many guests were entertained, I saw a splendid traveling coach, well horsed and with outriders. The liveries were not the purple and canary of Madame Riano, but a superb crimson and gold. In this coach sat Madame Riano, and by her side, Francezka Capello—Francezka, in the very flush and flower of her exquisite beauty.

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## CHAPTER XVII

### AN IMPATIENT LOVER

Why do I always call Mademoiselle Capello beautiful? I can not tell. Her features were only tolerably regular, not even so regular as Madame Riano's; but Francezka had on her eloquent face the power, if not the substance, of the most dazzling loveliness. She put handsomer women behind the door, at the mere look of her. Everything became her. If she were splendidly appareled, that seemed the best and only dress for her. If she rode a-horseback, with her hat

and feather, that was the right thing for her, and when she wore a simple linen gown and a straw hat, we wondered how she could endure to wear any other costume. That, I take it, is the essence of beauty—not that I am learned in beauty, though I am an expert in ugliness.

The coach was stopped, and I hastened to pay my duty to the ladies. Madame Riano's greeting was kind, Francezka's more than kind. They were to be the guests of some great people at the fine mansion for which they were bound, during the remainder of the camp—about a fortnight longer. Madame Riano was disposed to grumble a little that so many sovereigns and princes should waste their time in pageants instead of using their arms to set Prince Charles Stuart upon the throne of his ancestors; but otherwise she was reasonable enough.

Francezka looked scarcely a day older than when I had last seen her two years and a half before. She leaned forward, out of the coach door, one little red-heeled shoe showing coquettishly. A large straw hat, fit for a woodland nymph to wear shaded her dark eyes, now soft, now sparkling. She expressed many wishes to see much of me, and reminded me, as did Madame Riano, that I was due at the château of Capello on our return to France. Presently, the coach rolled away, along the highroad, under the dappled shadows of the linden trees, and that was the only satisfactory interview I had with Francezka that bout.

Gaston Cheverny had not so much as even one satisfactory interview, for, straightway, Francezka was pounced upon by every man who felt the need of fortune for himself or his sons, and every woman who thought the estates of Capello would be desirable in her family. Besides this, there were numbers of young officers who were deeply smitten by Francezka's own dark eyes, for she was one of those women born to trouble the hearts of men. No young girl ever had more of admiration and adulation than Francezka had, on this her first entrance upon a larger stage than that of a province.

Count Saxe showed her marked, but respectful attention. The Crown Prince Frederick of Prussia admired her openly, and always danced with her at the grand balls given every other night by the King of Saxony. As for the young sprigs of royalty and nobility, Mademoiselle Capello was the toast of the hour with them, and he that could rob her of her little slipper and drink her health in it was reckoned a hero.

It may be imagined how pleasant this was to Gaston Cheverny, who could scarce come near Francezka for the press. Moreover, Count Saxe attended that camp to work, and he made everybody under him work; so that Gaston Cheverny had not many hours to play the gallant to any one. Regnard Cheverny, who was merely a guest, had all the time he wanted to pursue Mademoiselle Capello, but not even he, the persistent, the tenacious, could charge successfully through the cordon of admirers which always surrounded Francezka now. I saw her sometimes at a distance, dancing at a ball, and looking like a fairy princess out of a story book; or, riding like a lapwing with Count Saxe, and other officers; or again, in gorgeous pleasure parties on the river. But she was like a comet in its brilliant but erratic course through the heavens, and no longer a fixed star, whose orbit is known.

Gaston Cheverny's misery was extreme. He passed at once from the high heaven of delight to the lowest deeps of wretchedness, because, forsooth, Mademoiselle Capello did not show him the exclusive consideration she had bestowed on him in Brabant. He called her many of the hardest names in the lexicon; one would have thought to hear him rail at her, that she was under a strict obligation not to speak to another man than himself. Count Saxe and I rallied him often, but he grew so savage about it that presently we desisted. Regnard was far more debonair and reasonable, but I have always distrusted that man who is entirely reasonable in his loves and his hates.

At last the June days came to an end, and with it, the gorgeous pageantry of the camp of Radewitz. In a night the splendid scene vanished. The silken tents, the canvas palaces, suddenly were no more. The fleet of purple-sailed pleasure boats upon the Elbe floated away; the fair green slopes, the gardens created as if by magic were trampled on by thirty thousand men on the march. The highway was choked with coaches and baggage-wagons and horsemen and horsewomen, and the inns on the roads that led from Radewitz were like camps, so many persons being forced to lodge out of doors. Count Saxe and myself, with Gaston Cheverny and faithful Beauvais, the valet, and other servants, scarcely slept in a bed from the time we left Radewitz until we reached Brussels. One reason was, that in common with other officers, Count Saxe was more generous than prudent, and after having lodged with kings at the camp, often he had not the money for a good inn. Then we were glad to take up our quarters in a roomy, clean barn; and one or two of the June nights we slept on the ground in our cloaks, as soldiers should.

In Brussels, my master made known his necessities to his father, the King of Saxony, who sent him a splendid remittance. Count Saxe remained in Brussels while awaiting this remittance, so that he might judiciously determine, in advance, how to spend it; and after it came, he naturally continued there, so as to carry out the intentions so carefully formed.

This time he allowed me to spend in Brabant, and also gave Gaston Cheverny leave; and Gaston inviting, or rather commanding me to become his guest, we had a whole fortnight at the Manoir Cheverny.

Regnard went to his own castle of Haret. He civilly entreated me to visit him, but Gaston putting in his claim strongly to all my time, I was, very willingly, driven to decline.

We parted from Regnard at Brussels, and rode out in a morning to the Manoir Cheverny. At every step of the road, Gaston swore a new, strong and strange oath, that he was done with Mademoiselle Capello; that no word or act of hers could ever induce him to return to her, no,

not if she made her way from the château of Capello to the Manoir Cheverny on her knees. From reproaching her, he turned to bitterly reviling me, because I had not stuck my sword all the way through his body, instead of only about six inches, on our first acquaintance. To this I made irreverent answers as we rode through the pleasant country. It was barely noon of the summer day when we came within sight of the Manoir Cheverny, and at the same time saw the château of Capello sitting, white and beautiful and stately upon its marble terraces and above its fair gardens and green slopes, like a queen upon her throne. We skirted the domain and entered the pleasure grounds of the Manoir Cheverny, and soon were reposing ourselves in the ancient and comfortable old house.

Two or three old servants had been kept in the place, and it was well aired and in good order. Scarce had we sat down to an excellent dinner with good wine, when a letter was brought to Gaston Cheverny. It was from Mademoiselle Capello, and invited us, both in her own name and Madame Riano's, to become her guests at supper that evening.

Without one word of apology, Gaston Cheverny dashed away from the dinner table, wrote a letter of acceptance, and came back looking exactly as a man does when he has won the first prize in the lottery, or has just received a field marshal's baton. In an instant of time, and by a stroke of Francezka's pen, all of his grievances, his resolves, his fierce resentment, melted away like the mists of the morning. Nobody could complain that Gaston Cheverny was coldly reasonable in his love.

Six o'clock was the hour named in Francezka's letter, but Gaston's impatience was so great that we set out a little after five, and spent the time loitering in the great park. If I had thought the château of Capello lovely in the autumn days, more than two years before, when the woods were russet, the earth brown, how much lovelier did it appear in this rare summer afternoon when it was one vast garden of beauty! The green, softly rolling hills, the rich park, the purple woods, the château rising from its emerald terraces, its marble balustrades gleaming white, the fountains plashing diamonds, the lake blue and still and melancholy, the Italian garden like a poet's dream—my senses ached with so much beauty—but I forgot it all, when, in the sunset glow, I saw Francezka Capello.

The bell in the little village church was clanging musically, as Gaston Cheverny and I mounted the terrace steps. A table was set out in the rose garden by the side of the canal, for an *al fresco* supper, and there in the sweet, warm evening air, sat Francezka, dressed in white, a book, her usual companion, in her hands. Madame Riano had not yet appeared. As soon as Francezka saw us, she dropped her book, and ran toward us merrily, like a child, a thin white scarf floating cloudlike behind her.

I think she felt that Gaston perhaps had some cause for complaint of her behavior at Radewitz, for never was woman kinder to a man than she to him at that meeting. And as for myself, one would have thought Babache, the Tatar prince, and native of the Marais, was the Crown Prince of Prussia. She wished to know how my health was, and praised and admired Count Saxe to my heart's content, and desired to know if I was ready to desert his service for hers.

Thus, warming our hearts with her sweetness, Francezka took us back to the rustic seats by the canal, where Madame Riano now awaited us.

As we had the good fortune to be favorites of that lady, we were well received by her also. Gaston Cheverny was a prime favorite of hers, having won her good will by many warm protestations of his devotion to what she called the cause of England's rightful king; a devotion which I think Gaston Cheverny very much exaggerated for purposes of his own.

We spent a pleasant hour at supper. Old Peter directed the servants who waited on us. The old man blushed under his tan and wrinkles when I greeted him kindly. I saw that the story of his niece's disgrace was ever present with him, and my presence recalled the fate of poor Lisa. After supper, when the harvest moon was rising in pale beauty, and the western sky glowed with gold and amber and green, we walked to the Italian garden. The air of retirement and repose and distance of the spot grew upon me. It seemed a place for sweet meditation. Francezka, pointing to the sun dial, said to me:

"So far, it has had none but sunny hours to mark for me." She said this with a little note of triumph in her voice; but what young girl situated as Francezka Capello was, at this period of her life, could have remained wholly undazzled?

Below us lay the lake, dark and solemn under the shadow of the cedars.

"Listen," said Francezka; and listening, we heard that faint, sad murmur of the water, that came, no one knew how.

We spent an hour sitting on the stone benches, under the yew and box hedges, and watching the purple twilight enfold the landscape, as we conversed. Francezka declared we must have some music, and calling in her clear voice, a servant heard and answered her, and brought from the château a Spanish guitar. To this Gaston Cheverny sang. Presently, in response to the silent request of Francezka's eyes, and an eloquent assent from his own, he sang that song to which I always thought they attached a fond and secret meaning:

*O Richard, O mon roi!*

Francezka, with her white scarf about her dark head, listened in her favorite attitude, her cheek upon her hand; listened with an air that would have made any man's heart beat the quicker for it.

We did not leave the garden until late, and then it was time for us to go back to the Manoir Cheverny. On the way through the park and fields, under the harvest moon, Gaston Cheverny raved as only lovers rave; but I, of all men, excused him, knowing the object of his love.

The time sped away during that fortnight, albeit I was separated from Count Saxe. We saw the ladies at the château of Capello daily. The extraordinary kindness of Mademoiselle Capello toward me rather increased. It seemed as if she lay bare her mind, her heart, her soul, to me. I was not, and never could be, her lover, but I was her friend. I found out many things about her that I did not know before. One was—whether it were a defect or not I do not know—she had few intimates. She was not only so differently placed, but so different in herself from most young creatures of her age, that she had not much in common with them. She confessed to me more than once that she had been disappointed in feminine friendships.

“When I think I have found a friend and companion I invariably find in the background a brother or a cousin—some one who wants to rule here,” she said to me one day.

“And whenever you find one of the other sex who seems to know what friendship is, does he not also resolve himself into a lover after a while?” I asked.

Francezka laughed and blushed.

“All, except you,” she answered. “That is why I turn to you with so much confidence, Babache. You alone of the whole wide world, as I know it, can I call my friend, without any admixture of love or flattery. You alone ever found fault with me, or told me my way was not a reasonable way.”

“But I can not now recall ever having dared to find fault with you, Mademoiselle,” I said, cudgeling my brains.

“Oh, it matters not exactly in words; but I know you would find fault with me, if you thought I was wrong, and would tell me so, though I can not bear to be told of my faults—and so I love you”—and then she laughed, as I did, at her own peculiar logic.

Regnard Cheverny by no means allowed his brother a monopoly of Mademoiselle Capello’s company, but duly appeared, after a few days. I watched Francezka’s behavior to him and came to the conclusion that in spite of the entertainment she derived from his company, she liked him no better than she had two years and a half before. I happened to speak to her one day of the resemblance between the two brothers, which was so marked.

“How can you think that?” she replied. “I never mistake one for the other. One is charming—the other is not.”

That very evening, the two Chevernys and myself being at the château, we sat down to cards with Francezka and Madame Riano. It was stormy outside, and a sudden gust of wind coming, all the lights were in an instant blown out. While we sat in the dark, waiting for the servants to come and relight the candles, Regnard Cheverny spoke, and his voice being so much like his brother’s, Francezka answered him for Gaston, and they talked together, much to our diversion. Francezka did not find out her mistake until the candles were again alight, and then, instead of laughing, was strangely vexed and offended at the pleasantry played upon her.

Regnard Cheverny, as well as Gaston, was fond of books, and on that ground he could hold his own with Francezka. She had all of the new books sent her from Paris, Brussels and the Hague, including Monsieur Voltaire’s, much to Madame Riano’s horror. Likewise, she diligently studied the harpsichord, having masters from Brussels to instruct her. She loved to be praised for her good management of her affairs, but I was inclined to think that old Peter, whose gray, humble head was full of sound sense for other people’s affairs, deserved more credit for this than he got. One morning, meeting him as I walked through the park, I remarked upon the beauty and order of the estate and congratulated him on having so capable a mistress to serve.

“Truly,” he said, “mademoiselle has a good understanding of affairs, but, in confidence, Captain Babache, she makes her mistakes. I tell her a certain man is lazy, is not doing his work; that I have given him a fair trial, have warned him, and yet he will not work, so I have discharged him. The rascal waylays mademoiselle in the park; tells her a pitiful tale about a wife and seven children all starving. My lady offers to take him back into her service. Oh, no; my rogue does not want that; he wants money enough to get to the next town, where he has a brother who will get him work. Mademoiselle hands him out a gold piece, returns to the château, sends for me, storms at me, and at last permits me, as a favor, to explain to her that the fellow has no wife, no child, no brother that I know of, but her gold piece will enable him to get drunk and to live without work for a month. Oh, young ladies of fortune are difficult to manage—very. Mine is no worse than others, I dare say. Rather better than some, for at least she knows her own mind.”

I had said no word concerning Lisa or Jacques Haret, but before the old man left me he spoke of his misfortune to me, looking as if he were the guilty one instead of Jacques Haret.

“It was I who was blind—I who should have watched my niece. But I did not—I was much to blame.” The scanty tears of age dropped from his eyes as he spoke. I asked if anything had been heard of Lisa.

“Not a word,” he said, “but I believe, and mademoiselle believes, that as soon as Monsieur Jacques deserts her, Lisa will return.”

So, even poor Peter knew that Jacques Haret would desert Lisa.

Madame Riano was ever talking during that fortnight of her projected journey to Scotland. I saw

that the mention of it made Mademoiselle Capello very uneasy. Fearless as Francezka was, she knew better than to attempt to remain alone and unmarried in Brabant, for there was no strain of deep-seated folly in her. She might find some *dame de compagnie* to take Madame Riano's place, but that was not an agreeable thought to her, and she was very far from being ready to give up her liberty to any man—just then. She confided to me with secret laughter that her one hope of keeping her aunt in Brabant was, that the war was still on with unabated fury between Madame Riano and the Bishop of Louvain, and Madame Riano had not yet scored a conclusive victory over her enemy. At present the bishop was trying to get the consent of the government to add to the episcopal palace, and Madame Riano, who loved to enact the rôle of a she-Jupiter, had determined that the palace was already large enough for the bishop, and was preaching a crusade through the country against the proposed improvement.

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## CHAPTER XVIII

### A VINDICTIVE ROGUE

One afternoon, during our stay at the Manoir Cheverny, Gaston Cheverny entertained the ladies in very good style at an outdoor fête. Regnard Cheverny, of course, was present, and also the handsome, foolish Count Bellegarde, whom Francezka treated with airy indifference. For amusement there was peasant dancing and singing to rustic pipes, and afterward a collation under the trees, at which the servants were dressed in the national costume of Brabant; the national dishes were served, and musicians, concealed in the shrubbery, played and sang the songs and airs of Brabant. It was extremely pretty, the afternoon being bright and soft. When the collation was over, Gaston escorted Madame Riano and Francezka about the house and grounds. There was a handsome drawing-room in one wing, which was seldom used, but was open on this occasion. Gaston led the way to this room, where there was a harpsichord, which he opened that Francezka might play on it. As she fingered the keys with one hand, the other hanging down, she started with a little shriek of dismay. A dog, crouching unseen under the harpsichord, stood with his forepaws on the edge of Francezka's chair, while he licked affectionately the little white hand so temptingly within his reach.

"Good dog—wise dog," said Gaston Cheverny, patting the creature. He was a Spanish pointer, of a reddish liver color, remarkably handsome, with satiny, pendulous ears, and the most intelligent eye I have ever seen in an animal. There are other dogs reckoned more affectionate and intelligent than these Spanish pointers, but I never knew any dumb creature superior to this one, as time strangely proved; for this dog afterward played a great part in the drama of Francezka Capello's life.

The dog seemed enraptured with Francezka, and she with him. She passed his long ears through her white fingers, the dog giving a little whine of delight, and rubbing his head against her satin gown of the color of spring violets.

"What is his name?" she asked—the first question every woman asks concerning a dog or a horse.

"Bold," replied Gaston. "And his taste and discernment on this occasion has fixed his fate. I have been debating whether I should take him or his brother, Rattler, with me to Paris, and was until now inclined to Rattler—come out, my dog."

Gaston hauled Rattler forth from under the harpsichord. He was a handsome dog also, but nothing like so pleasant mannered as Bold. I had noticed the two dogs about the place since my arrival, and had all along recommended Bold as the worthier dog. Regnard Cheverny, on the contrary, believed in Rattler.

"I think Rattler the better dog," said Regnard, coming forward and patting Rattler, who took no manner of notice of Francezka, while Bold overwhelmed her with evidences of affection. "But Bold is better adapted to be a Paris dog. He has a taste for luxury, and instead of being satisfied with a good woolen blanket to sleep on, he will persist in taking his ease on the satin sofa in this saloon. He is a *petit maître* of a dog. Take him to Paris, brother, by all means—and give me Rattler."

At this Bold seemed to realize that Regnard was not his friend, and gave him a look of dislike altogether human, turning his back meanwhile with an air of unmistakable contempt. All present laughed at this dialogue between the man and the dog.

"Bold is bound for Paris, then," said Gaston, "and you will see how he will give up his *petit-maître* ways and become a seasoned soldier after one campaign."

Francezka then took her attention long enough from the dog to play some beautiful airs upon the harpsichord. That, if anything, increased Bold's infatuation for her and recommended him still more highly to his master.

The evening falling, the ladies made ready to depart, after many thanks for their entertainment.

The coach was to come for them, but the July evening being inexpressibly sweet, Francezka persuaded Madame Riano to walk the short distance to the château. The arrangement of the walking party scarcely fell out to suit any one. Gaston was obliged to escort Madame Riano, who stalked ahead like a grenadier—never woman had such a stride—with Bellegarde, the most insipid man on the globe, on the other side of her. Francezka was escorted by Regnard Cheverny, whose company she never showed any pleasure in, and myself. She was civil enough to Regnard, but was most pointedly kind to me, partly from good-will to me and partly from ill-will to Regnard. He took it politely and debonairly, as became a gentleman. But I saw in his eye that he did not thereby for one moment abandon his resolute pursuit of Francezka Capello. Bold accompanied us, and had to be dragged, yelping, from Francezka's side, when we returned home. This was four days before we left.

The last evening we spent as we had spent many others, at the château of Capello. It seemed to me a momentous parting between Francezka and Gaston Cheverny. Her attitude to him now was that of a young sovereign, who airily bids her lover wait until she is ready to marry him; but Madame Riano's departure might change all that. I had not the least doubt, if Francezka were compelled to make instant choice of a husband, that Gaston Cheverny would be the man. On the other hand, Madame Riano's remaining might change Gaston Cheverny, for he was not the stuff out of which patient lovers are made.

At midnight we said adieu. The last sight we had of Francezka was as she stood on the balcony of the red saloon, waving her white scarf in farewell to us. She wore a white gown, and a great resplendent moon overhead bathed her in its silvery radiance. She might have been an angel alighting upon the earth and ready to wing her way back to heaven with the dawn of day. When we reached the Manoir Cheverny I went direct to my bed, but the brothers remained an hour or more in conversation in Gaston's room. It was near two o'clock in the morning when they parted in the corridor upon which my chamber opened, and I heard Gaston's clear voice saying:

"Brother, you have chosen another country than I; we can no longer say *Un Foy, Un Loy, Un Roy*, but we need not be any the less brothers."

"True," replied Regnard. "Our mother's father chose another faith, another law, another king, when he left Scotland, wherefore should I not rather be Austrian than French if I like? How many times has this province changed sovereigns? French, Spanish, Austrian, Flemish—I go with the Austrians because I think there is a better chance for fortune and promotion with them. Besides, I ever loved the English, and the English and Austrians will be allied for all of our time. I shall not yet sell Castle Haret—" here he paused a minute; I thought I knew why he would not sell all his landed possessions, which were so very convenient to the château of Capello—"but it depends on events whether I shall occupy it permanently or not."

Gaston, I fancied, was too proud a man to express any jealousy of his brother's continued nearness to Francezka, so he replied coolly:

"By all means, retain Castle Haret. You got it for much below its value, and you would do well to keep it; and besides, you will not be entirely Austrian or English either, as long as you retain Castle Haret in the Low Countries."

Then they parted for the night, and at sunrise we were in the saddle. Regnard Cheverny rode a stage with us, and the parting between the brothers was affectionate. They knew not, when they next met, whether it would be in peace, under the roof of one or the other, or in mortal strife on the field of battle. Gaston did not forget to take Bold with him, the dog trotting by the side of our horses until he was tired, and then finding a perch, usually behind Gaston's saddle. Bold was in the greatest favor with his master, after having won the good opinion of Francezka.

Our rendezvous with Count Saxe was at the second stage from Brussels. There we found him awaiting us, with Beauvais and his other servants. He was good enough to tell me that he had needed me for one purpose or another every hour that I had been away, and that I should never get out of pistol shot of him again. We continued toward Paris that same day, and reached it after three days of easy travel. And then began a repetition of that dreary life of the two years past—dreary to me, that is. But no matter how dreary, I remembered the stars in their courses, "everlasting, yet unresting," and bore the hours as well as I could.

War with Austria was imminent at every moment, although it did not actually break out until the spring of 1733. This prospect prevented Count Saxe from making any further attempt on Courland. He was sought after in Paris and at Versailles as no man ever was before or since—at court, everywhere. There was no Adrienne Lecouvreur to fix his wandering heart upon herself. As for Madame de Bouillon, he hated the sight of her. Monsieur Voltaire was daily rising in glory. The king did not like him, and for all Monsieur Voltaire's efforts to get on at court, he never could contrive it. I often wondered he should not see that men cast in his mold have nothing to hope or fear from kings; they enjoy a sovereignty of their own on which no mere hereditary monarch may infringe. Count Saxe knew this, for whatever might be his relations with Monsieur Voltaire, he did not make the ridiculous blunder of undervaluing that notary's son. There was, however, peace between them after they had stood together at Adrienne Lecouvreur's death-bed. I think her gentle and loyal spirit breathed peace even when she was no more.

Count Saxe gave much attention to his regiment of Spar, which was a model. Of his lieutenants, none was better than Gaston Cheverny. The personal affection which Count Saxe always had for Gaston Cheverny was extreme, and that was the best guaranty of Gaston's military fortunes; for Count Saxe would never let a good soldier go unrewarded.

The narrowness of Gaston Cheverny's fortune made him lead the same life in Paris he had led since he first joined with us. Whether it were choice or necessity, his only intimate friends were myself, and his dog Bold. This dog was to him what I have tried to be to Count Saxe. No man need be ashamed to have his faithfulness and devotion compared to that of a dog of the right character. Bold had some of the noblest virtues of humanity as well as of caninity. He was faithful, honest, watchful, kind, scorned to fight a weaker dog, while presenting a courageous front to one larger than himself; and although a warrior by nature, yet by the excellence of his heart, and the soundness of his judgment, he became a philosopher, not so brilliant as Monsieur Voltaire, for example, but far more consistent.

Once a year Gaston Cheverny visited Brabant, always taking Bold with him. Mademoiselle Capello remained at her château of Capello, and so did Madame Riano, although she was ever, like ourselves, expecting to be on the march. The time had expired when Francezka professed to be bound by her father's will not to marry, yet she showed no inclination to reward any of her numerous suitors. She continued to live in gaiety and splendor at the château of Capello, and I imagine rather enjoyed the torments of her lovers. Regnard Cheverny kept up his pursuit of her, so Gaston told me. Regnard had then joined the Austrian service, being a captain in the Grenadiers. He contrived, however, to get leave to visit Brabant at the same time that Gaston did, once a year. The brothers played a very watchful but perfectly fair and honorable game with each other in this love affair, which had already lasted six years. Meanwhile Francezka had not forgotten her friend, Captain Babache, but often sent me kind messages. Through Gaston Cheverny, I knew quite well all that passed at the château of Capello. I was concerned to know what had become of that prince of rascals, Jacques Haret. At last I heard of him, and to my great satisfaction. It was after Gaston's return from his annual visit to Brabant in the autumn of 1732. It was the first thing he told me, on his arrival, as we walked up and down the gardens of the Luxembourg on a drear November afternoon. He had but just reached Paris.

"God be praised, Babache, I have met Jacques Haret and given him the handsomest drubbing imaginable," he said.

"Thank God," I replied.

"It was at a little inn on the border line of France. Part of the inn is in the Netherlands and part is in France, and a chalk line drawn across the floor of the common room shows you, if you wish, when you are in France and when you are in the Netherlands. One day affairs took me to this little place. There, sitting and drinking in the common room, was Jacques Haret, looking not one whit changed in four years. He was dressed as usual, half shabbily and half splendidly. He greeted me as if he had led the most blameless life in the world since I had seen him last. You know, Babache, besides my own indignation at his shameful breach of hospitality, I had Mademoiselle Capello's injuries to avenge. So I went up to Jacques Haret and said: 'Rascal, where is Lisa Embden?'

"'God knows,' says he, 'but what is your interest in Lisa Embden, the niece of a servant, and little more than a servant herself?'

"'This much,' I replied. 'If I had known what was going on while you were staying at my house four years ago I would have broken every bone in your scoundrelly body.'

"'Oho,' said he, 'if that is the way you talk, I suppose you want satisfaction.'

"I told him I did, but not with the sword. You know, Babache, I have a faculty of fist fighting from my Scotch ancestor, and I never meant to degrade my good sword in a contest with a rogue like Jacques Haret. So, reaching over, I caught him by the collar, and gave him then and there the hardest beating I could. We fought all over the room, first in France, then in the Netherlands. Jacques Haret could make but a poor defense. The life he has led does not equip a man with brawn and muscle, so I had things my own way with him. When I was through, both of his eyes were blacked, his nose was as big as my fist, and there was blood on him. I had not a scratch. He took his injury with that outward calm which seems the peculiar virtue of a rogue, but he showed a quiet vindictiveness which amazed me. I have ever found before this that men who forget benefits easily forget injuries quickly. Jacques Haret is different, for he forgets all benefits at once, and treasures up his injuries. I think it was the fist beating that infuriated him. There are some rags and remnants of a gentleman left hanging to him, and although he would have forgiven completely any hole I might have made with my sword in his carcass, he could not stomach the beating outright. He sat on a chair, wiping the blood from his face, and said to me in a cool, determined voice:

"'Gaston Cheverny, I am in your debt for this. I will promise to pay you off, with a balance to your credit.' That was all he said—I scorned to have anything further to say, and mounting my horse, rode off, but I have made a good enemy out of a remorseless scoundrel. At all events, however, it is better than having him profess friendship for me."

"Quite so," I answered, "and what did Mademoiselle Capello say when she heard of it?"

"Of course, I did not speak of it to her, but equally of course, she heard of it, and thanked me for it. And she had also heard that Jacques Haret had promised to revenge himself. But she is no more afraid of him than I am. She still hopes and believes that Lisa will return, but no word has come of her, whether she be living or dead."

He then told me that Regnard, as usual, had timed his visit to Brabant, so the brothers could be there together, and half laughing and half chagrined, told me that Regnard, in his white Austrian uniform, was very captivating to the eye. And they both desired Francezka, who laughed at all suitors to her hand. Yet there was a cheerfulness about Gaston Cheverny, which

showed me that Francezka was not less kind than formerly. Madame Riano was talking with renewed earnestness of going to Scotland, and Gaston based great hopes on that.

But the time of action had arrived, and soon we would all be on the march. In the first days of February, 1733, Count Saxe's father, the King of Poland and of Saxony, died. He left Count Saxe a fine fortune, and he left war to Europe. The King of France was minded to have his father-in-law, Stanislaus, ex-King of Poland, back on the electoral throne of Poland. Nobody else wanted him there. I doubt if the poor old man himself would not rather have lived and died peaceably at Lunéville. But he must try for it, against the wish and will of Austria. A conflagration in Europe was impending, and meanwhile another one occurred in a small way in Brabant. The same *estafette* which brought the news of King August's death, also brought intelligence, gleaned by chance, that in the middle of the night, four days before, every granary, stable and outbuilding of the Manoir Cheverny was burned to the ground; and on St. Valentine's day of 1733 Gaston Cheverny got letters saying that the Manoir Cheverny itself was but a heap of ashes. Not a book nor a chair had been saved. The fire occurring in the night, it was beyond control before it was discovered, and by daylight the old manoir was a pile of ruins, only a part of the blackened wall remaining.

Gaston Cheverny received the news early in the morning of a very important day. It was the day on which the king announced to his officers of high rank that any interference on the part of Austria with the election of a king in Poland would mean war. And Austria, it was well known, would interfere.

When the letter telling Gaston Cheverny of his losses was placed in his hands, we were in the act of starting from the Luxembourg for Versailles, accompanying Count Saxe. Gaston glanced at the letter hurriedly, and his face grew pale, but he mounted and rode forward without a word, thrusting the letter in his pocket. It was a cold, bright February morning, and we traveled briskly. Count Saxe called me to his side, and as we followed the road, talked with me concerning the change in his affairs made by the death of the King of Saxony and the impending war. For my part, since the dose I had had in Courland of elective crowns, I had a rooted aversion to them and only pitied the man who would aspire to one of the accursed baubles.

When we were some miles on our way, Count Saxe turned his head, and seeing Gaston Cheverny with a rueful face, riding among the suite, asked me the cause; for Gaston had a natural gaiety of heart, very becoming to a soldier. I told Count Saxe of the ill news Gaston had just received. Count Saxe then called to him, and on Gaston's riding up, promised him some recompense in the way of a fortune, that he might rebuild his house, for which Gaston expressed his thanks.

"And there is great joy ahead," continued Count Saxe, loud enough to be heard by all of the suite, "for we may reckon to be at odds with the Austrians by June, at least."

With that Gaston's countenance cleared as if by magic and the youngsters in the suite began cheering with pleasure. We were crossing the bridge near Sèvres, that bridge where Monsieur Voltaire got one of his celebrated canings, and the thought of fighting so pleased Gaston Cheverny that besides cheering loudly with the rest, he stood up in his stirrups, and for very joy flung his hat into the river. The other youngsters followed this gallant example, and except Count Saxe and myself, not a man in the party had a hat when we reached Versailles. Count Saxe told the story to the king, who was vastly diverted by it, and next morning, before we left Versailles, every man who had thrown his hat away in the exuberance of his joy received from the queen the gift of a handsome laced hat. So much for Gaston Cheverny's flinging his away. He showed a steady and cheerful fortitude under his losses. Besides the actual loss to him, whose fortune was already small, he was deeply attached to his home and his belongings. He told me with a rueful smile that only the fine gateway of the Manoir Cheverny had been spared. There was no doubt in the minds of either of us that Jacques Haret was the guilty one in these crimes.

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## CHAPTER XIX

### THE HAPPIEST MAN ALIVE

Will it be believed that after the king had in February sent for Count Saxe and other officers to Versailles to announce to them the war, we were not actually on the march until August? There was a song the soldiers sang on the sly during these months, when the king, having said he would make war, seemed loath to begin:

*Timide, imbécile, farouche,  
Jamais Louis n'avait dit mot.*

At last though, under those two tough old warriors, Marshal Villars and Marshal, the Duke of Berwick, the French were on the march. Marshal Villars went to Italy and the Duke of Berwick to the Rhine. With the Duke of Berwick went Count Saxe's old friend, the Duc de Noailles and



Count Saxe himself, then camp marshal. The Duke of Berwick was very great as a man and a soldier, and everybody knows the high esteem in which he held Count Saxe—of which I will speak in its true place.

I am ashamed to say what a figure the army made on its march to Strasburg. One result of the camp at Radewitz, like that at Compiègne some years before, was to make young officers believe that the great game of war was a summer fête. Every captain must travel in his chaise, and there were almost as many cooks and valets and gill-flirts as soldiers on the road to Strasburg. To those who knew that stern old soldier, the Duke of Berwick, it was a certainty, fixed in advance, as to what would become of the chaises, the valets, the cooks and the gill-flirts. Count Saxe knew "*ce diable anglais*" as Berwick was called. About ten miles before reaching Strasburg he dismounted from his chaise—for he, seduced by the bad example of others, rode in a chaise—and marched the ten last miles with his regiment, that he might get well soiled and dusty when presenting himself before the general commanding.

Gaston Cheverny, who was Count Saxe's aide-de-camp, had ridden all the way from Paris, with the dog Bold at his heels. We reached Strasburg at an opportune time. It was in the afternoon, and all day long the chaises had been rolling through the gates; some said there were as many as eighteen hundred in the town at the time. Within them were the officers, as dainty and debonair as if just out of my lady's bandbox. The Duke of Berwick, exasperated beyond words, had stationed himself at the principal gate and caught these gentlemen when they least expected it. We were told that the countenances of these chaise soldiers were a sight to behold when they caught sight of the grim old marshal and noted the terrible look of him. He was a man of few words, but very fierce when roused. He got those young popinjays out of their chaises by a single glance, which acted like a grenade when the fuse is touched off.

The regiment of Saxe came marching in, however, every officer in his place, and Count Saxe riding at the head of it. When the Duke of Berwick's eagle eye saw this his countenance cleared as if by magic; he had looked like a thunder cloud before. Count Saxe had sent all the chaises of the regiment around to another gate. It was a pleasant summer afternoon, and the old city by the Rhine shone in the August sun, which likewise showed the dust, so carefully acquired on his accoutrements by Count Saxe. The Duke of Berwick's greeting to Count Saxe was afterward known throughout the world.

"Welcome," said he; "I had asked for a reinforcement of three thousand men, but now that you are come, I do not need them."

My master responded fittingly, and then, very artfully, made an apology for his appearance, alleging the heat, the dust and the condition of the streams—everything was overflowed that year of 1733.

"No apologies are needed, Monsieur," replied the marshal. "I am pleased to see that you have brought me soldiers instead of the popinjays and dandies which I have heretofore seen."

Now this was true of Count Saxe's regiment in spite of the inroads of luxury upon the youngsters, for my old Uhlans were among them, and the whole regiment enjoyed the names of "Clear-the-way-boys," and "Storm-alongs," which our Uhlans had earned long since. By way of a reward the regiment was quartered in the town of Strasburg, but near the river bank. Count Saxe established himself in a small, but comfortable old mansion, surrounded with gardens sloping to the river. I, of course, was quartered with him, and Gaston Cheverny, being aide-de-camp, was also lodged there.

Prince Eugene, of Savoy, was on the other side of the river, and there was courteous communication by flag of truce between the French and the Austrians.

A day or two after we arrived a letter came for Gaston Cheverny from Regnard Cheverny saying that his grenadiers were with Prince Eugene, and Regnard very much desired to see Gaston. It was easily arranged that Gaston Cheverny should meet his brother at Kehl after nightfall, and should bring him to Strasburg to spend the night. It was only stipulated that Regnard should come and go in darkness.

It was a soft September night when Gaston came into my chamber, joyfully bringing Regnard with him. My room was small, but had a large and pleasant balcony overlooking the straggling gardens and the river. Regnard greeted me pleasantly—he looked gallant in his white Austrian uniform. We went out upon the balcony, had wine brought and spent an hour or two together. Regnard had lately paid a flying visit to Castle Haret, and, of course, had been to the château of Capello.

"Mademoiselle Capello was most kind and charming," he said, "and, by the way, Captain Babache, she desired her remembrance to you."

"And nothing to me?" cried Gaston.

Regnard smiled—I never liked his smile, in which his eyes took no part.

"Do you think, boy," he replied, "that I employed the gracious minutes that Francezka—I mean Mademoiselle Capello—allowed me, in talking to her of another man?"

"Then," cried Gaston, rising half in mirth and half in anger, "I will myself see Mademoiselle Capello and hear from her own lips whether she has forgotten me."

"We do not propose to give you time to make excursions," replied Regnard, laughing good-naturedly. "Your Berwick has to dance a branle first with Prince Eugene, and he who would dance with such a partner must be very active and keep his wits and his legs ready."

Gaston sat down again, and did not lose his good temper. But Regnard told us further that Madame Riano was really going to Scotland. She had got it in her blood, and was likely to leave any day. Mademoiselle Capello had been forced to engage a *dame de compagnie* in the person of Madame Chambellan, some relation of Count Bellegarde's, and as near milk and water as he. I surmised that Francezka was not likely to choose for her *dame de compagnie* one able or desirous to cross her.

After an hour or two I was called to attend Count Saxe, and the brothers were left alone. They seemed as affectionate as ever I saw brothers. I heard their voices as they spent the hours in converse in Gaston's room. Toward morning, in the ghostly half light which precedes the dawn, they left the house together, taking a boat at the foot of the garden. I watched them as they passed down the old garden path to the river. Their arms were around each other's shoulders, schoolboy fashion, and both of them wore long dark cloaks, for the hour before the dawn was chill. Never were two figures more alike than Gaston and Regnard Cheverny, and there was not the smallest difference in their gait and bearing. I think the mother who bore them would scarcely have known them apart, as I saw them walking away in the pale hours of the morning. A boat awaited them at the foot of the garden. The river rolled dark in the gray half light, half darkness, and a ghostly mist lay upon its bosom. As the boat containing the two brothers was pulled into midstream the creeping mist enveloped it for a moment, then a wandering breeze driving the mist away, the boat became again visible. Some singular interest fixed my eyes upon those two figures in the boat, trying to distinguish one from the other. But, to my chagrin, I could not do this. Presently the mist enveloped them wholly.

Gaston returned within an hour. I told him of the effort I had made to tell him and his brother apart at a distance. He said that Regnard and himself had much sport with the boatman, and also with the sentry, by merely changing cloaks, so that their uniforms could not be seen.

The next evening, as I was reposing myself on the balcony after a hard day's work, Gaston Cheverny burst upon me. He looked like a bridegroom, he was so radiant.

"I start for the Low Countries to-morrow," he cried, giving me a whack on the back that nearly knocked me off my chair. "I have just met Count Saxe coming from the Duke of Berwick. The marshal wishes to know if the Austrians are observing the neutrality they engaged for in the Low Countries. There have been some disturbances, especially the burning of houses, like mine, for example, which excite the duke's suspicions. He wants a trusty person, well acquainted with the country, to find out the truth, and Count Saxe offered me. I ride to-morrow. I may remain as long as I think necessary, but my duty compelled me to say that I could find out all there was to know and return within a fortnight. I shall see Francezka, and, Babache, only fancy Regnard's chagrin when he finds out, after my return, that I have lain *perdu* in Brabant for two weeks!"

I had no time to fancy anything then, for Count Saxe was calling me. We worked until late that night on the instructions for Gaston Cheverny. Early in the morning he set out alone, not even having a servant with him. He promised me to give my everlasting remembrance to Mademoiselle Capello. It was, of course, impossible for him to take with him his dog, heretofore his inseparable companion. I was to have charge of Bold in his master's absence. I locked the creature up in my chamber, and attended Count Saxe during his morning duties. When I went to my chamber at noon I was vexed to find the dog had disappeared. The fastening to the door leading to the balcony was indifferent, and marks showed that the dog, by scratching and pawing, had got the door open. A reward was offered for him at once, but as he did not appear, I felt sure he had managed to join his master.

The fortnight was a busy one; the Duke of Berwick and Prince Eugene were not men to let the grass grow under their feet. It was too late to attempt operations on a large scale that season, but with an active general no day is lost. Two weeks to the day on which Gaston Cheverny had left Strasburg he rode up to Count Saxe's quarters and dismounted.

I happened to be waiting at the door for Count Saxe, and so saw Gaston Cheverny when he flung himself off his horse. Although it was in the dusk of an autumn evening, I saw, as well as felt, that Gaston Cheverny radiated happiness. There was something in the grasp of his hand, the ring of his voice, which proclaimed the man with joy in his heart. At the same moment he arrived Count Saxe also rode up. At once he took Gaston Cheverny within, when, with my pen to record, Gaston gave an account of what he had discovered. Although there was no actual proof of treachery on the part of the Austrians, the mysterious burnings continued. Some attributed these dreadful events to private malice, but it was remarkable that every chateau, house or barn burned belonged to a French sympathizer. It was thought likely to be the work of a band of fanatics, which made it still more alarming. Gaston Cheverny gave his opinion that in the case of the burning of his own house and outbuildings, it was a case of revenge on the part of Jacques Haret.

Gaston Cheverny having told all he had found out, and some impudent duchess or countess coming to claim Count Saxe—no doubt, against his will—Gaston and I were left alone. He sprang up, caught me by the arm, and cried in a ringing voice:

"Babache, I am the happiest man alive. But come out of doors. This room stifles me. I want to look at the stars—like Francezka's eyes. I wish to breathe the perfumed air of the garden, because all beauty—all perfume is like her." He dragged me out into the beautiful old garden, with its tangled shrubbery, its grass-grown walks, its myrtle trees, showing black against a pale night sky, and the great river rolling past. I thought he would at once make me some great confidence, for I had no doubt that he had won Francezka's love. But instead of that he began to recite to me that poem, adored of lovers, by Houdart de La Motte to Célimène, in which the poet

yearns to be the flower that reposes on the bosom of his beloved, the passing breeze that kisses her cheek, the nightingale whose sad notes detain her in the myrtle groves, the fair moon by which the shepherds bring home their flocks. There is in every language I have known a great poem with this thought, common to all hearts that love, running through it, but I like this one of Houdart de La Motte's the best. When he had finished repeating the lines, with great beauty of voice and meaning, I asked him:

"Did not Mademoiselle Capello send me a message?"

"A thousand. Babache, Francezka loves you with all her heart. She told me, at our last conversation, that she could never think of you without remembering that night in her girlhood when she was taken to the Temple, and from that moment she has reckoned you the most faithful of friends."

"And how do you stand with her?" I ventured to ask.

"I can not utter a word concerning that. Only to you, Babache, will I say that I am happier than I ever dared to hope."

"At least you can tell me how Francezka is situated."

"Oh, yes. Madame Riano has really started for Scotland. She left two days after I got to Brabant. I saw her five times before she went. She promises to return within a year. Francezka now has with her Madame Chambellan, but she is old and feeble, and I know not how long the arrangement will last."

Here was news indeed.

"Francezka has another friend at hand—good Bold. The rogue got away evidently, and when I was full five miles from the city gates I heard him panting behind me. His tongue was out, and he would hardly have lasted much longer at the pace he was going, had I not found him and picked him up."

I then explained how the dog had escaped.

"As I was secretly in Brabant," continued Gaston, "of course, it was impossible to keep the dog with me. It was out of the question that I should give him away to any chance person willing to take him, so I made straight for the château of Capello, where I knew he had a friend in Francezka. I left him with her, as a guardian and protector, and a reminder, too, of his master. He remained willingly in Francezka's sweet company, being ever a dog of the soundest discernment. I feel no jealousy; Francezka is welcome to my dog, as she is to me."

I could not make out what Gaston's footing was with Francezka, but that he was assured of her love I no longer doubted. Well, this was as it should be. The difference in their fortunes was but accidental; in all else they were equals. It must be an agreeable feeling to know one's self equal to any and all the world, except in this matter of fortune. I never had that feeling. I know myself to be a man, with all a man's faculties, but this world of ours seldom lets a man forget from whence he sprang.

Gaston Cheverny further confided to me that he expected to be permitted to return to Brabant for a while as soon as we went into winter quarters, but before the leaves fell from the trees this beautiful dream of hope vanished. This time it was the Duke of Berwick who used Gaston's services. During our fourteen months in Courland Gaston had picked up some knowledge of the various Polish dialects, for he was a man of quick perception and given to learning. The Duke of Berwick needed such a man in Poland and East Prussia, and within a month from the time of Gaston Cheverny's return from Brabant he was sent to Poland and East Prussia on an errand that might last a month and might last a year.

He went gallantly enough. It was not pleasant duty, and he showed to me alone the deep chagrin it caused him not to revisit Brabant, but he was not a man to refuse any duty assigned to him. He only asked to be allowed to remain long enough at Strasburg to take part with his regiment in the capture of Kehl. This was accorded him. Marshal, the Duke of Berwick, took Kehl in October, thus administering a beautiful slap to the Austrians, and as soon as that was done Gaston Cheverny set out upon his errand.

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## CHAPTER XX

### FORGING THE CHAIN

In November we went into winter quarters. I was much in hopes that Count Saxe would remain in Strasburg the whole winter, but the women in Paris would not let him. They besieged the king to send for Count Saxe; they nearly worried Dangervilliers, the minister of war, into a madhouse, demanding that he order Count Saxe to Paris. Cardinal Fleury declared that his days would be shortened by the importunate ones, who implored him for Count Saxe. Is it any wonder, I say, that Count Saxe was no anchorite with all this adulation and flattery bestowed

upon him—with women throwing themselves at his head and at his feet? He went to Paris.

We reached Paris in January and remained until May. It was an unusually tedious time for me, because I had not Gaston Cheverny with me. There was but little for me to do. My master wrote his own love letters—he had few others to write—so that I had many hours at my disposal. There was a young baggage of an actress named Verières, who tried to play the poor lost Adrienne Lecouvreur's part to Count Saxe. I know not whether she succeeded or not.

I heard several times from Gaston Cheverny. He was still in Poland, over the border first of East Prussia and then of Russia, traveling from place to place, following the instructions of the Duke of Berwick. Every month he expected to be allowed to join his regiment, but something more was always found for him to do. He was promised, however, that he should not be detained in Poland longer than the first month of the campaign.

The campaign, however, was unusually late in opening. Marshal, the Duke of Berwick, reached Strasburg in March, but found everything in confusion. Luckily, the enemy was in no better case than we. It was May before it became necessary for Count Saxe to start for the Rhine.

We traveled by way of Brussels, and I made a request of Count Saxe which had been burning in my heart all the winter. It was that I might stop, if only for a night, at the château of Capello. To this, as the most indulgent of masters, he readily agreed.

It was on a May day, in 1734, that I saw the château of Capello, after four years of absence. It was late in the afternoon, and the shadows were long in the boscaiges of the park and upon the fresh green terraces of the château. As I drew near I looked toward the Italian garden, and there I saw a figure pacing to and fro, which I at once recognized as Francezka. A dog was at her side, and in him, too, I recognized an old friend—Bold.

I threw my bridle to a servant at the foot of the terrace and went straight to the Italian garden. As I entered it, Francezka was walking meditatively up and down the box bordered walk, where stood the well remembered statue of Petrarch, the sun dial and the stone bench. Her eyes were bent upon the ground, and I saw her well before she noticed me. She wore a gown of crimson brocade with a muslin kerchief crossed over her white neck; and she had on dainty shoes with red heels—her favorite affectation. I had heard that Francezka gave great scandal to the ladies of Brabant by wearing silks and satins every day, which was contrary to their custom. Francezka, however, had a well-developed taste for luxury, which came with her warm Spanish blood.

The dog saw me first, and ran forward with a yelp of pleasure. Francezka heard him and raised her eyes to mine. If ever any one in the world showed joy at seeing Babache, it was Francezka then. She advanced a step, and when I kissed her hand, she laid her other hand on mine, while the warm tears dropped from her eyes. It is something to have the loving friendship and confidence of such a woman. She told me many times how glad she was to see me—told me so with her eyes as well as her voice—as we walked up and down together. She was lonely since Madame Riano had gone. It was her fate to be more admired by men and envied by women than loved by either, and that is one reason why I think my devotion was dear to her. She told me as much then. I asked her if she was happy with Madame Chambellan.

"Madame Chambellan is a good soul; but, dear Babache, she is like that simpleton, Bellegarde. How am I ever to stand her?"

From the moment Francezka began to speak, I became conscious of a touching and beautiful change in her; an angelic softness had come upon her—a softness most seductive which she had often assumed, but which now seemed a part of herself. Before I had been ten minutes in her company, I saw this change had gone deep. There had been in her nature ever since I knew her a note of triumph. She could not remain unconscious that she was the favorite both of nature and fortune. Her active and penetrating mind had been occupied since her early years in planning her own destiny, which was hers to decide. Other young girls had their destinies decided for them, but Francezka knew, from her childhood, that she would one day be mistress of herself and her fortune. This had given her an exultant air, pretty and charming enough, but after all, what is so becoming to a woman as humility? And this sweet new humility of Francezka's was more winning than I can say. The whole expression of her lovely face had changed. Her eyes, instead of sparkling like stars, were soft, and had the quiet beauty of a lake by moonlight. They had a supplicating look. Francezka was yearning for something, like other human beings, and so, was more nearly like the rest of the human family. We sat together on the stone bench, the lake lying cool and somber before us; night seemed to have come upon it although the sun still blazed in the west. The dog licked my hand, and showed great friendship for me, and I told Francezka how ingeniously he had escaped from me at Strasburg to join his master.

"Well," replied Francezka, demurely, "no one can blame Bold for running away to join such a master. I have read in old Homer somewhere that Achilles tells Agamemnon he is as impudent as a dog. If it is impudence like Bold's, Agamemnon might have taken it as a high compliment."

To this frank expression of admiration for both Gaston Cheverny and his dog, I said:

"I have had letters from Gaston Cheverny within the month. Perhaps you have heard later?"

For answer Francezka looked at me for a whole minute in silence, her eyes glowing with fire and dew and with a smile as soft and beautiful as a summer dawn, and meanwhile, the eloquent blood hung out its banners in her cheek. Then suddenly, her graceful figure drooped, and she hid her face upon the dog's head, which lay upon her lap. I was astounded; I had never seen

Francezka overcome with bashfulness before. I sat silent, watching her. She trembled, and in a little while the red blood crept from her cheek, into her white neck under her muslin kerchief. Some instinct told me that this soft tumult referred to Gaston Cheverny, and that his fate and Francezka's were now forever linked together. I said no word but waited until Francezka raised her blushing face and spoke.

"Babache," she said, "I made Gaston promise that he would keep from every human being the secret between us—and I confess, in the agitation of parting, I overlooked my good Babache—but I can not keep anything concealed from you, when your kind eyes are fixed upon me. When Gaston was here—secretly—in September of last year—we were married."

She said it calmly, but with an undertone of the deepest and serenest joy; and rising, and once more wearing that look of happy exultation which had been hers, she added:

"I am Gaston Cheverny's wife. Ought I not to be the happiest creature on earth?"

I rose, too, and kissed her on the brow, the cheek and the hand, with the greatest reverence. When I could speak, which was not at once, I said, with the deepest sincerity:

"Nothing could be better than for you to have Gaston Cheverny for a husband. Knowing him, my heart rejoices for you—not only for what you have gained, but for what you have escaped. Ah, Francezka—I used her name without knowing it at the time—"when I remembered the horde of fortune-hunters who surrounded you—when I thought that you might give the treasure of your love to some man who would make merchandise of it—my heart grew cold within me. But Gaston Cheverny would take you in your smock—that I know."

"I know it, too," she answered, with a gleam of her old laughing spirit. "All that I fear for the future is Gaston's supersensitiveness about my fortune—but that I hope I have wit enough to manage. I shall never make him anything but simple in his tastes. He thinks my fondness for luxury childish, and he will endure it good-humoredly, but I know him well enough to understand that he is a soldier and is as superior to luxury as Cato himself."

"Tell me all," I said.

We seated ourselves, and Francezka told me, with many eloquent pauses, with smiles, with shining eyes, with blushes, her short love story.

"It was in September of last year that one day I sat where I am sitting with the volume of Petrarch, out of which Gaston had often read to me, upon my lap. I was thinking of Gaston at that moment—yes, thinking of him and longing for him. And more, I will affirm, that I have never seriously thought of any other man but Gaston since that night at the prison of the Temple. Babache, I have loved him ever since I loved you!" She said this with such an air of innocent devotion—Francezka might change, but she could not cease to be Francezka; and she had this way of saying sweet things to all whom she loved. "And as I read, I yearned so for Gaston, that I spoke his name aloud twice, and then, as if in answer to it, I looked up, and Gaston was sitting on the bench beside me. Perhaps, like the rest of the Kirkpatrickes, I am superstitious, for I was afraid it was what my aunt calls a 'wraith,' and I trembled and caught his hands, thinking he would melt away into the air. Now you are laughing, Babache, but remember, I am not incredulous like you French—I am Scotch and Spanish—"

"But Gaston did not melt away. He grasped your hands—and—"

Francezka again hid her face upon the dog's sleek head, and with her face so averted continued —

"He took my book away from me, and although I protested, he read some things I had written in my Petrarch—some things meant for no eye but my own—Gaston read them and interpreted them. He told me he had not meant to make known his love to me until he had achieved something to put us more on an equality, so he said—foolishly, I think—for it is not what a man does so much as what he is; and he was looking forward to promotion in this campaign,—and thinking then—then he could speak—when, seeing me so moved, and reading what I had written in my Petrarch, and all—I know not how it came about—but we were married secretly before twenty-four hours."

There was a long pause here. Francezka passed the silky ears of the dog through her fingers, and looked into his tawny eyes, but her thoughts were evidently in the happy past. There was no sound in the still May evening, except the faint, mysterious moan of the lake.

"Truly," she said, after a while, "I know not how our marriage came about, except that we loved each other and sought an excuse to bind us, one to the other. The excuse was, that my aunt was going to Scotland at once, and I was to be left alone—for Madame Chambellan is scarcely a guardian for me. Gaston and I had already determined to be married, before we spoke to my aunt. She, with her usual keen sense, reminded us of the threat that had come, no one knew whence, or how, of any roof that Gaston might have, being burned to the ground—and also, of the many châteaux and houses belonging to French people which had been burned. She suggested, therefore, for the present, that the marriage be kept secret—if we were bent on being married—as Gaston would be leaving in a few days, and his return would be uncertain. To that we agreed—Gaston calling himself a blockhead for not thinking of the usefulness of secrecy for a time. We were married in the village church by Père Benart, at sunset. No one was present, except my aunt, Madame Chambellan, and old Peter. I made a fête for the village people, so they were all in the fields, dancing and feasting and no one saw us go or come from the church. It was a beautiful day, but at sunset, while we were in the church, a terrible thunderstorm came up. That frightened me a little; it did not seem a good omen."

"And this world is governed, not by the laws of God and Nature, but by omens," I replied gravely. Francezka did not laugh at this. Truly, as she said, she was not without superstition.

"Gaston comforted me, and I soon recovered my spirits. My aunt left next day for Brussels, on her way to Scotland. Gaston remained with me a week. Old Peter and my good old Elizabeth, who is Peter's sister, managed to keep Gaston's presence a secret. We had one week of perfect happiness. How many of God's creatures, think you, can say as much?"

"Few," I replied. "Certainly not Babache, captain of Uhlans."

"The recollection of that week of happiness is a treasure that can not be taken away from me. Even the gods can not recall their gifts," continued Francezka. "My marriage seems to me like a covenant made in a dream. My happiness, however, was very real. Gaston was in the country some days longer," she went on, "and we had three brief meetings. Once, with old Peter, I rode to Brussels by night, to spend one half hour with Gaston—he was only stopping long enough to get fresh horses—and he came here for an hour to bid me one last farewell. When we parted, it was with the full expectation of his return in November, when our marriage was to be proclaimed, and we were to go to Paris for the winter.

"When the campaign opened, I was to follow Gaston as early as possible, for he was determined not to leave me at Capello after it was known that I was his wife, until the war should be over. But, as you know, he was sent far away. You know, Babache, I am not the woman to swerve a man from his duty. I love Gaston's honor even more than I love him. And so, hard as the separation is, I thank God that he is the man to choose his duty first. I felt that at our parting—which, like our meeting, was in this Italian garden. I love this spot more than ever now, because from here I can see the highroad, along which Gaston will return to me. Here, Bold and I come once every day, generally at sunset, to watch for the coming of the master of both of us. It is one of my cherished fancies—superstitions, I suppose you would call it—that in this spot Gaston and I shall meet again. I shall see him and, and he will know where to look for me. Bold thinks so, too,—don't you, my dog?"

The dog actually seemed to nod his head in assent, as Francezka gravely interrogated him.

"Gaston said to me, when he gave me this dog, 'I give you one of my best friends. Remember me as he does—for dogs never forget. In the virtue of constancy, dogs are superior to men.' So, Bold and I love and remember our master every hour in the day, and joyfully await his coming."

Francezka was young, and full of hope. The thought that Gaston might never return to her did not appear to have darkened her mind once. Presently, her face, so full of peace and hope and joy—for in perfect love there is peace and hope and joy—grew clouded. She gave me a sidelong glance, and then said, sighing a little:

"But there is something else, something which occurred this very day, that has troubled me. I can tell you, but I know not how to tell Gaston. Yet, I must tell him some day." She paused again, and I waited patiently for her to continue. "Perhaps it is known to you," she said, blushing more deeply, "for Regnard Cheverny made no secret of it—"

"That he wished to marry you?" She nodded.

"I have ever been cold to him, as a lover—though, for the past months, when he has been several times at Castle Haret, I have been kind to him, remembering that he was Gaston's brother—and I think he misunderstood me. Often, when he has been to see me—and urged his suit more with his eyes, than with his words—I have felt frightened—and you know, I do not come of a race of cowards. There is something to frighten one about Regnard Cheverny, he is so cool, so quiet, so debonair when seeking his own will; not light of heart like Gaston, nor full of sudden fury, nor impatiently renouncing what does not please him—but Regnard pursues his object steadily, like Fate. Well, then, this day, not two hours ago, as I was taking my afternoon walk in this garden, and living over the hours I have spent with my husband, I looked toward the highroad, and there, I thought I saw him coming. I watched, with my heart almost leaping out of my breast—but, presently, I knew it was not Gaston—but Regnard. I saw him disappear under the hill, and ride up to the courtyard—and then he was walking toward me across the grass." She stopped suddenly and asked me:

"Have you noticed how much alike Gaston and Regnard have become?"

"Yes, Mademoiselle—or Madame Cheverny, I should say."

Francezka's face dimpled into a rosy smile.

"It is the second time to-day that I have been called Madame Cheverny. It is the charmingest name in the world, I think."

She continued, her face becoming grave:

"When Regnard was bowing before me, I saw the resemblance more than ever—and I drank in his words, because his voice is so much like Gaston's; yet, I do not see how any one could take one for the other. Bold was with me—he never leaves me—and he annoyed me by snapping and snarling at Regnard—no mistake on good Bold's part of any one for his master! Regnard seated himself with me on this bench in the very spot where Gaston had sat last autumn, and I was trying to lose myself in dreaming that it was Gaston and not Regnard who was with me—when something he said brought me to myself with a shock. For he—" She stopped, and I said:

"He told you of his love. Tell me all, Madame."

Again I saw that girlish flash of pleasure pass across her anxious and pleading eyes. Francezka

had something undyingly childlike in her composition.

"He told me of his love so quickly I could not stop him—but I was indiscreet in one thing. When he told me he regarded my fortune as less than nothing, I *did* whisper into Bold's ear, loud enough for Regnard to hear—'So say they all—except'—the exception I meant was Gaston. He is the only suitor I have yet had, who did not assure me that my fortune was nothing to him. Regnard overheard me—and I saw he was angered. He would not be stopped, although I rose and put up my hand, and turned my back. But at last, I said to him:

"'And your brother, Monsieur?' for, of course, Regnard knew that Gaston loved me. When I said this, I turned my eyes full upon him, because I wished to intimidate him. He colored a little, but said, coolly: 'Madame, I am not wanting in brotherly affection, but in these matters my brother and I are as man to man.'"

It was just what I had heard Gaston say, nearly seven years before. Francezka resumed:

"Then I said to him, without the least tremor in the world, and feeling myself thrilled with joy and pride at the telling—'Monsieur, I am, and have been for nearly a year, the wife of your brother, Gaston Cheverny.'"

Being a natural actress, Francezka went through this scene so that it was as if it were all happening again. She rose as she spoke and actually grew taller, and her voice, although low, had a ring of joy and exultation in it when she repeated the words, "I am the wife of Gaston Cheverny."

Still standing, she came nearer to me—I had risen too—and kept on:

"I have not words to describe to you Regnard's countenance at that. It was not disappointment; it seemed to be only the most overmastering rage. It is his nature to bear a secret disappointment stoically, but he knew that Gaston must hear of what had passed—and besides—he had paid me court more steadily and assiduously ever since I was fourteen than Gaston himself—for Gaston, you must know, has had periods of jealousy and pique, and for months together, has sometimes refrained from writing to me or seeing me. Not so Regnard. The words that would inflame Gaston to anger, Regnard would pass with a cool smile—I liked him none the better for it. But he was not cool then. He said in a suppressed fury:

"'Madame, you have perhaps forgotten, that in the time you have been my brother's wife, you have had many declarations of love from me, and possibly from other gentlemen. True, I made not mine in set words, as I have done this day—but it would have been as well to have confided the secret of your marriage to me before this.'

"I was more angry than he at that—but Babache, no woman can help pitying a man who loves her, ever so little, if it but be true love—and I believe Regnard loved me truly in his way. I replied to this, therefore, with anger, but not without pity. 'You made me no declaration in words, Monsieur,—and you must remember that every dictate of prudence recommended in these uncertain times, that my marriage with your brother be kept secret for the present, at least.'

"'If prudence was your chiefest consideration, Madame,' said Regnard, with a bow, 'I wonder that you married my brother at all.'

"Babache, that would have angered any woman on earth, and as you know, I am not the most long-suffering person in the world. So I said: 'Oh, no, you mistake me, Monsieur. My chief object was to bind your brother to me—for I love him so much that I could not bear the thought that he should go away without forging a chain that would bring him back to me!'"

Francezka, still unconsciously acting her part, said this with such a depth of feeling, such love, devotion, admiration for Gaston Cheverny expressed in every tone of her voice, every glance of her eye, that it must have been wormwood to a haughty, jealous and disappointed man like Regnard Cheverny. And I made not the slightest doubt that she rather enjoyed Regnard's humiliation.

"I perceive, Madame," I answered, "that ladies can be cruel as well as pitiful to a man who loves them."

"Perhaps so," replied Francezka, sitting again, and leaning her head pensively on her hand. The dog had not stirred a foot from her in this time, and was watching her with a human look of love and intelligence in his tawny eyes. "And then Regnard, mastering his rage, said to me:

"'I thought your coldness to me came from a careless and heedless indifference of an untouched heart. Now I know it to be the steady deception of a woman already a wife. I could not forget this if I would, and I would not forget it if I could. I have the honor to bid you adieu, Madame Cheverny.' And he walked off, looking so like Gaston! And then I suddenly began to feel frightened at being frightened—do you know that feeling?"

"Yes," I replied. "It is the form that fear takes with the brave."

"I had thought," said Francezka, "that I was exempt from fear, and now I find it is my lot, just as much as any one's, to feel fear as one feels heat or cold or thirst. But fear is the most terrible thing on earth. And now, Babache, I have opened all my heart to you. It has been so comforting!"

We talked some time longer. As it seemed the likeliest thing in the world that I should see Gaston Cheverny shortly, it was agreed that she should prepare a packet for me that night, which I would take with me next morning.

The purple twilight had fallen before we quitted the Italian garden, and went to the château. Old Peter was glad to see me, and at supper I met Madame Chambellan, the ancient *dame de compagnie*, warranted not to interfere in any way with those she was supposed to watch over. She promptly went to sleep as soon as supper was over, when we went to the little yellow saloon. This room, Francezka had lined with books. I found she was fast becoming learned. Her naturally active mind must exercise itself on something in solitude, and she seized upon books and music with avidity. I found out that nothing so far had been heard of poor Lisa, although Jacques Haret had been seen of late in Brussels. Francezka was firmly of the belief that the burning of Gaston Cheverny's house had been instigated by that scoundrel of a Jacques Haret, in revenge for the beating Gaston had given him.

We remained late, and after old Peter had shown me to my former chamber, I had some wakeful hours. I sat at the window, looking out upon the gardens, the lake, all bathed in the mellow moonlight of a May night. And I saw certain things by "the moonlight of memory." So Francezka's wild heart had found rest at last, and it rejoiced me. But deep in my own heart was the sense of loss—the loss of those dreams wherein Francezka was mine. One often suffers more from the loss of the ideal than the real. And feeling this, I fell asleep, sitting at the open window, and had the loveliest dream I had yet had of Francezka. When I awakened, the moon had gone down, the air had turned chill and I was oppressed with that strange feeling which comes from physical discomfort when one is asleep. A light glowed from Francezka's window, and I saw her graceful figure bending over her writing table. She wore a white negligée of some sort, and her long dark hair flowed free. She had probably risen from her bed to add something to the packet she was preparing for Gaston. Soon her light was put out, and tough soldier though I am, I was glad to get into the great, soft bed provided for me.

I was to start at sunrise, and when my horse was led out next morning, Francezka was down to bid me good by. She gave me a thick packet for Gaston, saying:

"Tell him I am well, and as happy as ever I can be, away from him. And that to see you, Babache, was as good as medicine to the sick. Do not forget that, I charge you."

When I parted from her, she wore a smile of happy expectancy—a look of jocund hope was in her dewy eyes. I never saw that expression again on the face of Francezka Capello.

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## CHAPTER XXI

### THE SERVICE OF A FRIEND

I joined Count Saxe at Brussels. I had only been away from him thirty-six hours, but when I presented myself before him he clasped me in his arms and cried:

"Babache, I am nine times as glad to see you as the Duke of Berwick was to see me, the time he told me he would rather see me than the reinforcement of three thousand men he had asked for!"

Was it strange I loved this man?

On reaching Strasburg, my first inquiry was for Gaston Cheverny; and to my great joy, I found he had returned. It had been determined by the Duke of Berwick to send Count Saxe's regiment, with certain others, to Hüningen, a good day and a half's march from Strasburg, and Gaston Cheverny, with other officers, was at Hüningen already.

When we rode into town, the night had fallen. We found without trouble the house where our officers were quartered, and riding up to the door, dismounted—and there stood Gaston Cheverny.

It had been more than six months since I had seen him, and he had not had a Mantuan winter of it; but he looked singularly well, and was overjoyed to be with the clear-the-way boys once more. He led us into the house, where supper was already on the table, and the other officers were assembled. At the first chance I had, which was when we were about to sit down to table, I handed Gaston the packet given me by Francezka. At once he said to Count Saxe:

"Sir, I beg that you will excuse me while I read my letters brought me by Captain Babache."

"Since when have you eaten, Gaston Cheverny?" asked my master.

"At noon, Monsieur."

"And you are not hungry?"

"I am as hungry as a wolf."

"Then sit you down and eat, and not until you have supped shall you read a single line of love."

Gaston, very sulky, sat down. Count Saxe and the rest of us laughed at him. Gaston still sulked, but managed to eat a good supper, and drink his share of wine. He did not smile until near the end. Count Saxe, raising his glass, drank to a pair of bright eyes in Brabant, at which the young



man chose to smile; and after drinking the toast was suffered to depart with his treasure.

Count Saxe not needing my services, I presently went to Gaston's room. He was seated at a rude table, with a single candle on it, devouring Francezka's letter. He put it in his breast when I entered.

"Now," he cried, joyfully, "tell me all about her—every word, every look of hers while you were with her. And she writes me that she has confided all to you."

"She did—and whenever I called her Madame Cheverny, a smile like the morning shone upon her face."

His face, too, was glowing, and he said:

"You see, there was nothing to be done but that we should be married. We had, so to speak, no choice."

To this I answered:

"Madame Cheverny gave another reason to me; she said it was because she loved you so much she could not let you go away unpledged to her."

Gaston laughed a joyous laugh, and then I told him faithfully all Francezka had said and done while I was at the château.

"And did she say anything of my brother? For I know that he has seen her many times since I have," Gaston asked, after we had talked together for a long time.

Count Saxe always said there was something between my eyes which told just what was passing in my mind. I was not prepared for this question of Gaston Cheverny's; it confused me, and I showed it.

"I see," he said, after a moment. "Regnard has been pursuing Francezka. But, no doubt, she has told him, as she was quite at liberty to do, of our marriage. It is only the public knowledge of it that would place her in jeopardy. Well, the secret is safe enough with Regnard. He is deeply chagrined. I feel for him, because he is my brother; but in love and war, one must learn to face defeat."

Then he asked after his dog, and all I had to tell him contented him very much.

By that time it was ten o'clock. It was Gaston Cheverny's custom, as well as mine, to walk a little out of doors every night before we slept, so we walked together on the bank of the river. The night was sultry and starless; it looked as if there would be rain on the morrow. All was still and sleeping in the little town. In our own quarters, a low stone house, there was no light. Count Saxe was weary with his long day's ride, and had gone to bed immediately after supper. The other officers had followed his example. It seemed as if the whole world slept, except Gaston Cheverny and me. We walked up and down the river bank under a lowering night sky speaking but little, and that mostly of Francezka.

Gaston had the same golden hopes that Francezka had. Beautiful visions of their future life arose before him. He was full of a noble enthusiasm for his profession and looked to achieving distinction as a counterbalance to Francezka's fortune. Like Francezka, he seemed to have fallen into that dazzling error that Fate was under bond to favor them.

When, at last, we turned our steps toward the house, Gaston stopped for a moment on the threshold, and said:

"But what if misfortune befall? Francezka will no more forget me than I shall forget her—and when I forget her, may God forget me." These were his final words.

I went to my chamber, and was soon asleep upon my camp bed. I awakened about two o'clock in the morning with a strange feeling that something disastrous had happened. The rain was falling heavily—a summer rain that fell in great drops musically upon the thirsty ground and the trees in full leaf. So strong was the feeling of apprehension upon me that I rose quietly, slipped on my clothes, and opened the door to Count Saxe's room. He was lying in his bed, sound asleep. The window was wide open—for the night had been uncomfortably warm. It occurred to me how easy it would be to kidnap Count Saxe; there were but three sentries about the place, the rest of the small body of twenty soldiers being quartered some distance away, to guard the hay stores.

I determined to speak to Count Saxe next morning, upon the rashness of remaining at Hüningen under those risky circumstances. I had often laughed behind Madame Riano's back at what she called presentiments, but this sudden waking, this seeing, all at once, a very present danger which had escaped everybody's notice, seemed to me uncomfortably like those supernatural warnings which Madame Riano was always talking about. However, I concluded to take perfectly natural means to satisfy myself there was no danger brewing, and so went to Gaston Cheverny's room. It was quite dark, and I lighted a candle with my flint and steel. He was not in his bed, and it had not been slept in. A chair, in which he had evidently been sitting, was pushed back from the table, on which were papers and a letter sealed and addressed to Francezka. The one window of the room, which looked upon the river, was wide open, and as I went to it, above the steady downpour of the rain I heard some faint noises on the river bank.

I went out, and called to the sentry, giving the countersign. There was no answer—for there was no sentry. I gave the alarm instantly, and at the same moment I heard distinctly the grating oars in their rowlocks, and the sound of a boat pulling off from the shore. Lights shone in the house. Count Saxe, half dressed, was the first person out of it. The other officers came running with

lanterns. We found the three sentries lying on the grass at some distance from each other, bound and gagged. By that time, the guards at the hay ricks, a quarter of a mile off, had seen the commotion, and were on hand. At once, the river bank was searched. Every man was accounted for, except Gaston Cheverny; but in a few minutes, a squad of soldiers returned from the river bank hauling a young Austrian officer with them. His uniform was all mud, and his face and hands were liberally besmeared. He was at once taken within the house, to be interrogated by Count Saxe, and he was, without exception, the most cheerful looking prisoner I ever saw. As a soldier flashed a lantern into his eyes, we saw that his countenance was wreathed in smiles.

"Well, gentlemen," he said to us all, standing around him, Count Saxe in the middle, "I have pleasure in introducing myself—" this, with the jauntiest air in the world—"I am sub-Lieutenant Brohl, of his Imperial Majesty's Hussar Regiment of Baronay, at your service. I see no general officer here—" Count Saxe, being only half dressed, might have been anything—"but we have made a fine haul, and got our prize away, too. The boat is on the other side of the river by this time."

"Kindly explain yourself further, Lieutenant Brohl," said Count Saxe, coolly.

"With pleasure," remarked Lieutenant Brohl. His debonairness reminded me of Gaston Cheverny's, at the same age, for the young Austrian was little past twenty. "You have got me, a sub-lieutenant—caught, because I would not delay our boat in getting off with the finest quarry yet secured in this war."

Count Saxe and the rest of us waited to hear this laughing prisoner explain matters still further.

"We, of the regiment of Baronay, determined to immortalize ourselves by carrying off Count Saxe—and we succeeded. He is, by this, landed on the other side of the river, and in the hands of Prince Eugene, and for ourselves who took him, our fortunes are made—mine, a prisoner, as well as those who escaped—for when my comrades would have delayed the boat for me, I cried to them to pull out into the river, beyond pistol shot, and never wait for me—if they had Count Saxe—and him they have."

"How did you get him?" asked Count Saxe.

"Very cleverly, Monsieur. We landed from the boat, unseen and unheard in the rain and darkness. There were but eighteen of us, all told. We managed to secure all three of the sentries—you should have had at least six—and Count Saxe should never have slept a night in this unguarded place. We then slipped into the house, of which we had a plan, with Count Saxe's room marked there—" he pointed to Gaston Cheverny's empty room. "The window of the room was wide open, and it was quite dark, but we could see that Count Saxe had fallen asleep before his writing table—"

"His writing table," murmured Count Saxe. "He is not much of a writer."

"The candles had been blown out. We surrounded him, and put a pistol to his head, and he wakened with a start. We said to him, 'We want you, Count Saxe, only. We have force enough to carry you all off—the house is surrounded, and we can bag every one of you—go with us quietly and we will let the small fry off. But we are prepared for a fight, if necessary, knowing you are but a handful.' Then Count Saxe said, quite coolly: 'I see there is no use in resisting. Let me but secure some private letters—' which he proceeded to do, as well as he could in the darkness, and with the pistol still at his ear. My captain said to him—'I wonder, Count Saxe, that so experienced a general as your Excellency should have been so imprudent as to come here with scarce a corporal's guard behind you.' 'True,' answered Count Saxe, 'but I am paying for my folly, as you see. I am ready, gentlemen.' I never saw a man take his fate more pleasantly than Count Saxe—he delayed not a moment. He is now our prisoner, while I am yours—but I fancy we have rather the best of the bargain."

We looked at each other, and Count Saxe said:

"That fellow, Gaston Cheverny, has infinite readiness. He saved the whole of us, and he shall have his promotion as soon as he is released. Meanwhile, my dear Lieutenant Brohl, make yourself entirely at home. You are a gallant young man, and I shall have pleasure in exchanging you for Captain Cheverny, waiving the difference of rank. So, both of you will get credit out of this night's performance, although you did not get Count Saxe, for I am Count Saxe!"

I never saw such a change of countenance as came over that poor little sub-lieutenant. He caught the idea in a moment, that the Austrians had been badly fooled. I felt really sorry for the poor little fellow. His eyes filled with tears, his lip trembled. He was a gallant boy and we all felt sorry for him. Count Saxe had him conducted to Gaston Cheverny's vacant room, sent him some champagne, and assured him that his conduct should be brought to the attention of Prince Eugene.

The rain had not ceased, but day was sullenly breaking. I thought, before nightfall, Gaston Cheverny would be with us again. I did not dream of what Destiny was preparing for him, of which this was but the overture. Count Saxe, with that noble candor which was a part of his character, frankly admitted his imprudence in remaining at Hünningen, and declared that Gaston Cheverny should be amply rewarded for saving him; for there is no doubt the Austrians would have carried Count Saxe off, if they had only got into the right room.

As soon as the little Austrian lieutenant was up and dressed, I went into the room he had occupied to secure Gaston Cheverny's papers until he should return. I felt sure that his pretense of securing them was only an ineffectual ruse to gain time. I found nothing on his table of the least consequence, except a letter to Francezka, sealed and addressed. Of this I took possession.

By nine o'clock in the morning, Count Saxe sent me across the river with a flag of truce, to Prince Eugene's headquarters, to arrange for the exchange of Lieutenant Brohl for Gaston Cheverny. I was instructed to waive the required number of common men to make up the difference in rank, if that point were raised.

On reaching the Austrian lines, I was politely escorted to headquarters, where Prince Eugene, that little great man, that mighty hunchback, received me courteously. I handed him Count Saxe's letter and he took off his hat while reading it. He then said to me:

"Nothing has been heard of the expedition since it left last night. We feared the whole party had been captured."

This was surprising, but Prince Eugene suggested, as the most probable event, that, in the rain and darkness, the boat had been carried down the river, and it might yet be some hours before it was heard of. It was arranged that at the first information on either side, we should communicate with each other.

I returned to our own side of the river, a little puzzled, but in no way alarmed at the disappearance of the party, for so fate blinds us when she is about to deliver her heaviest strokes. But search was made in good earnest. Within twenty-four hours every man of the party was accounted for, except Gaston Cheverny. As Prince Eugene had surmised, the boat had drifted a long distance down the river in the darkness, with the wind and tide both urging it on. At daylight an attempt was made to land on the Austrian side where there was an outpost, and before the character of the expedition was found out, several shots were fired on the boat and a bullet made a slight wound in Gaston Cheverny's head. Their greatest danger came after they were recognized, for in attempting to land, the boat had been upset, and every man in it narrowly escaped drowning. All had been saved, however, and three of the Austrians declared that they had seen Gaston Cheverny after they reached the shore. But beyond that, no one could tell anything. They had found out he was not Count Saxe, and in the confusion of the boat's upsetting, and the struggle for their own lives, they had lost sight of their prisoner. This was perfectly satisfactory to us for a time. We supposed that Gaston, seeing his chance, had quietly walked away from his captors. We expected him every day for a week, and to facilitate his return, Count Saxe released Brohl, the lieutenant, with the understanding that Gaston Cheverny was to be set at liberty as soon as found. But he was not found, nor was there any sign of him.

A man can not vanish like a ghost, said Count Saxe; so he set to work with a good heart, to have Gaston Cheverny sought for. His wound in the head might partly account for his disappearance. He had perhaps wandered beyond the Austrian lines, and being wounded, might have sought refuge in some farmhouse or peasant's hut, where he would be found. Nothing seemed more likely. Every farmhouse and peasant's hut, every village, every schloss even, was searched for the wounded French officer, the Austrians assisting; but if Gaston Cheverny had vanished from the earth, he could not have disappeared more completely. I acknowledged that for the first week—nay for two weeks—I was not seriously alarmed. A wounded man on foot can not get out of a certain zone, and that zone was searched as one searches for a gold piece dropped on the floor. But we found not Gaston Cheverny. At the end of two weeks we were fairly puzzled, but by no means in despair. Marvelous things happen in war, and a story of the strange disappearances and stranger returns of men lost in siege, battle, or reconnaissance, would read like the fables of the ancient mythology.

At the end of a fortnight, I began to see signs of anxiety for Gaston Cheverny in Count Saxe. Perhaps this was because Gaston's disappearance came from his prompt ruse to save Count Saxe, and there was little doubt that the bigger game would have been bagged but for this ruse. Count Saxe thought constantly of Gaston Cheverny. He not only instituted the most thorough search, but he offered a large reward in money, out of his own purse. Trust Count Saxe to remember the services of a friend! The one thought in my mind was Francezka.

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## CHAPTER XXII

### HER BEST BELOVED

I considered within myself whether it were not my duty to confide to Count Saxe the fact that Francezka was Gaston's wife, and I quickly concluded that it was my duty. And so one night, sitting at the writing table, I told him the story of Francezka's and Gaston's love.

Count Saxe listened to me attentively.

"So, my lady Francezka takes the bit between her teeth and marries the man of her choice. Well, any one might safely have predicted as much. It is a good thing, though, that her fancy turned to Gaston instead of Regnard Cheverny, for Gaston is much the better man. But it is impossible—I say, Babache, it is impossible—that Gaston Cheverny should not shortly reappear."

When Count Saxe used the word impossible, I knew for the first time he felt a poignant doubt

and anxiety.

"And how shall Madame Cheverny be informed?" I asked.

"As Gaston Cheverny's coolness saved me from the consequences of my own rashness—for look you, Babache, I was rash, and showed all the qualities of a bad general in remaining here practically unguarded—it is as little as I can do to have the news of his disappearance gently conveyed to his wife. So, be prepared to ride for Brabant by the day after to-morrow if nothing be heard of Gaston Cheverny by that time."

My heart leaped and then sank into an abyss. I should see Francezka, but what news should I carry to her!

"It would be well," added Count Saxe, "that Regnard Cheverny be formally notified of his brother's disappearance, that he may assist in the search."

Which was done, a special messenger taking the letter to Prince Eugene's headquarters, from whence it would be forwarded to Regnard Cheverny.

I made my preparations next day to leave the following morning, for I felt an inward painful conviction that nothing would be heard that day of Gaston Cheverny. Count Saxe gave me leave to remain as many days in Brabant as necessary, and if Francezka wished to return with me, I was to escort her. Such was the generous nature of the man. I took with me that last letter Gaston had written, but his other papers and belongings I left under my master's care, hoping—but alas! not believing—that before I returned Gaston Cheverny would have been found. I rode hard on that journey, and on the fifth evening after leaving Hünigen, about ten o'clock, I reached the château of Capello. It had been less than a month since I had left Francezka full of hope and joy, and I had come now to rob her of all except hope.

Although it was the fragrant time of the year, the evening was chill, with a fine, cold rain falling. The lights were still burning in the little yellow room where Francezka usually sat.

My knock at the great door of the château sounded to me like the crack of doom. Old Peter opened the door, and by some magic of thought, he saw at a glance that I was a messenger of evil. Without a word, he led me to the yellow saloon, and announced in a trembling voice, which was a warning in itself:

"Here, Madame, is Captain Babache."

Francezka was alone, but not without companionship. The dog Bold lay at her feet. Her harpsichord was open, a book lay by her on the table, and her fingers were busily employed on some fine needlework, for she was an expert needlewoman. I had schooled my countenance, but I verily believe, without levity, that there is something sinister in extreme ugliness, and it was that which gave old Peter the warning of evil, and also Francezka. As she heard my name, she sprang up, her vivid face breaking into a smile like sunlight, and she cried, in her sweet and penetrating voice:

"Oh, Babache, how glad I am to see you! And how is my lord? And where is the letter, for surely he has written me."

I handed her silently the letter I had found on Gaston's table. She snatched it from my hand, kissed the signature, and read it and re-read it, smiling joyfully all the while; then, for the first time, looking closely at me, her smile faded, her eyes grew anxious, and stepping forward, she laid her hand on my arm. She said not one word, but her eyes commanded me to speak. She told me afterward that the look in my face frightened her so that she could hardly stand. But I, obeying the command in her eyes, told her every word concerning Gaston that I knew. She heard me to the end, and I could see that like all really courageous persons, she grew calmer as the danger got closer. When I had finished, she said to me in a steady voice:

"And you say, Babache, there is not the smallest evidence that my husband is dead?"

"Not the least, Madame. Not a handkerchief belonging to him has been found. There is a boom at the narrowest part of the river, below Hünigen, which would stop the body of a ferret, much less a man's, and nothing has been found there."

She drew a long breath of relief, and sat down, leaning her head on her hand—a favorite attitude of hers. The dog Bold, knowing as well as I that Francezka was troubled, lay down at her feet, and licked the half-open hand that hung at her side. I then told her that Count Saxe had directed me to place myself at her service.

"How good that was of him!" she said. "And you, of all persons, would be the most helpful to me, for, of course, I intend myself to go in search of my husband. Has Regnard been notified of Gaston's disappearance?"

I replied that he had, but so far no word had come from him. Francezka reflected a little while. Then she said:

"Babache, you are the best and truest of souls, and are my chief dependence. But I think it would be an abuse of Count Saxe's indulgence to keep you here. I can not, as Mademoiselle Capello, go in search of Gaston Cheverny. I shall have to assemble my friends and neighbors and announce to them my marriage. Then I shall provide myself with a stout traveling chaise and travel to Hünigen, and search and search until I find my best beloved."

I had often remarked upon the natural good sense which was the basis of Francezka's character, and saw at once the justness of her course.

"So," she said, bravely recovering her cheerfulness, "you will remain here to rest, and you shall leave when you like and I will follow you within the week."

I explained, however, that if I were at liberty to return at once I should go back to Brussels that very night and start for the Rhine country next morning. To this she agreed, when she saw I had reason on my side, but before I went she made me sup, and had brought out for me a bottle of the true lachrymæ christi, of which her father had laid in a small store at a great price. By midnight I had said farewell to Francezka and was again in the saddle.

As I rode through the blackness and solitariness of the night I could but reflect upon the extraordinary courage and constancy of women when really put to the test. Francezka was the last woman in the world to be weak in the face of calamity. She had in her the making of ten good soldiers, including a general.

My master was at Philipsburg with his command when I again saw him. He was assisting the Duke of Berwick in the siege of that important place. I did not need to ask him if there was any news of Gaston Cheverny; I saw at the first glance there was none.

The siege went on steadily. We had in our army too many "red heels" and *tourlourous*. The red heels were those luxurious and worthless young gentlemen sent us in chaises from the court, who had not one single idea of a soldier in their empty heads, and who were fit for nothing but to lead the forlorn hope, waving their swords frantically, and bawling "Follow me!" The *tourlourous* were the raw levies, of whom we had more than was quite comfortable. To balance this, Prince Eugene had in his army eighty royal princes, which in itself was enough to account for the strange paralysis of this active old general.

But a dreadful misfortune lay in store for us. On the twelfth of June, at nine o'clock in the morning, Marshal, Duke of Berwick, while standing upon the banquette, and directing the captain of the siege, was struck by a cannon ball—whether French or Austrian, was never known—and was blown to pieces. In an instant of time he had made the whole journey from this country into the other one, and suffered not one pang. He had made twenty-nine campaigns, and had commanded in fifteen, and had never had his skin broken. Glory holds an invisible shield before her children. Cæsar was never wounded, nor Pompey, nor Charlemagne, nor Henry IV, nor any of the great generals of Louis XIV. But sometimes, the days of a warrior being accomplished, he is accorded death upon the Bed of Honor, as it was anciently called. The great Constable de Bourbon never received but one wound, and that his death wound, while leading the assault. Old Marshal Villars, lying at the age of eighty on his deathbed, said, when he heard how the Duke of Berwick had been called higher: "That man was ever lucky."

The sorrow and confusion brought about by this terrible loss is not to be described. But the soldiers, infuriated by the death of the great marshal, demanded Philipsburg as a sacrifice to his ashes, and the siege was conducted with the greatest fury.

Within three weeks from the time I had parted from Francezka in Brabant I received a message from her. She was at a little village, three miles from Philipsburg, and desired to see me.

I had no difficulty in getting away, and I reached the village where Francezka was, in the late afternoon. It was a small, peaceful place, lying in the lap of the hills, and the inn on the outskirts of it was plain, but comfortable. When I rode up, Francezka was awaiting me on the balcony of her room. Her traveling chaise was in the tavern yard, and I caught sight of Peter, with two men servants, and Elizabeth, Francezka's maid.

As always, Francezka seemed glad to see me. She knew I had no news of Gaston, and only asked me if search was still kept up for him. I told her yes, and that Count Saxe had increased the already large reward offered for news of Gaston. Also I told her that we were well convinced Gaston must be on the farther side of the Rhine; I did not say "if alive." I could not, with Francezka's lovely, miserable eyes upon me. But she was perfectly calm and collected. I never saw her more entirely mistress of herself.

I then asked her of her own affairs since we had parted. She told me that she had thought best to make the announcement of her marriage as public and as ceremonious as possible, and for that reason had invited all of the most considerable people of the neighborhood to the château of Capello on a certain day. She told me—poor, unhappy Francezka—that in anticipation of a gala when Gaston should return, she had prepared handsome new liveries for all her servants, and had refurnished the red saloon, and had hung the Diana gallery with mirrors. These things she determined to display on the day she made the announcement.

"For, in spite of my heavy misfortune in not knowing where my husband is, it must ever be a day of congratulation and of honor with me when I tell the world that I am Gaston Cheverny's wife," she said proudly.

She had written to the Bishop of Louvain with her own hand, but by some accident he had heard before receiving the letter that Francezka was privately married—only that Count Bellegarde, his relative, was the happy man, instead of Gaston Cheverny. The bishop, pleased at his nephew's good fortune, wrote Francezka a letter of congratulation, warmly approving her marriage, and most indulgent toward the secrecy of it. But on receiving Francezka's letter, saying she was Gaston Cheverny's wife, the bishop changed his tune and sent Francezka a fulmination, in which he denounced the secrecy of the marriage excessively. To this Francezka replied, saying as the bishop was so incensed with her, she would reconsider a considerable gift she had intended making toward building the new wing of the palace, to which Madame Riano was so much opposed. This brought the bishop down on his marrow bones. Francezka, in spite of her trouble, was still Francezka, and a gleam of her old humor shone in her eyes when she

told of the bishop's discomfiture, and especially that the threatened withdrawal of the gift was the suggestion of Father Benart, the bishop's brother. I always knew the little priest was not devoid of either sense or humor.

When the day came Francezka said she was so torn with emotions she could scarcely go through with it, but pride and devotion to Gaston Cheverny held her up. And a great piece of good fortune befell her at the crucial moment—Madame Riano arrived unexpectedly from Scotland. Another gleam of humor shot from Francezka's eyes when she told me that Madame Riano claimed to have had supernatural information in Scotland that a Kirkpatrick was in trouble, which brought her home; but Francezka thought that Madame Riano had by that time grown a little tired of her sojourn in the land of Goshen, as she represented Scotland to be. At all events, her coming was of extraordinary good fortune to Francezka; for having countenanced the marriage, and advised secrecy, Madame Riano could do no less than sustain Francezka.

"I made the announcement myself," said Francezka, "standing at the top of the Diana gallery, with the Bishop of Louvain on one side of me, my aunt on the other, and Father Benart, with Madame Chambellan, behind me, and before fifty persons of the highest quality I could gather together. I dressed myself splendidly for the occasion and wore all my jewels, and I don't think, Babache, that there was any note of apology in my voice for having married Gaston Cheverny. I told of his gallant ruse to save Count Saxe, of his being carried off, and being lost sight of, and of my determination to go in search of him. I felt, rather than saw, in the beginning, that many of those present were hostile to me, and did not cordially approve my course, but before I finished speaking there was a subtle change, a warming toward me. When I had concluded, the Sieur de Montigny, eighty years old, arose and expressed for the company heartfelt wishes that I might find my husband, and that we might live long in joy and peace together."

Yes, it was easily understood how courage and devotion in the person of Francezka, with her eloquent voice and eyes to plead for her, had won her the victory over these people.

"The ordeal had begun for me most painfully, but it ended most hopefully. Surely if all those people believed that Gaston would be found, it was not for me, his wife, to give way to despair. Just as at the hour of our marriage, a storm had come up, followed by a clear and beautiful evening, so, on the morning of the day of which I have been telling you, rain fell, and a cold northeast wind made the June day as dreary as November. But while I was speaking I caught the gleam of the sun upon the canal, under the windows, and suddenly the day became inexpressibly beautiful; so I think, Babache, that my day and Gaston's will yet be sunshiny."

With this Francezka's face grew almost gay, but it was a lightning flash; it was not the steady and cheerful hope I had seen in her eyes when she told me first of her marriage.

She further told me that she was accompanied on her travels by Madame Chambellan for the sake of propriety; but beyond securing Madame Chambellan's comfort, I do not fancy that Francezka concerned herself further. This good, insipid, incapable lady was not a person to uphold any one, and answered Francezka's requirement for a lay figure perfectly.

I asked after my old friend Bold. Him, she said, she had left behind, not being minded to take the chances of traveling with him.

"And if Gaston should reach Capello while I am away he will have at least one faithful heart to greet him," she said.

Madame Riano remained at the château, and Francezka spoke with gratitude of her courage and sympathy, which were never wanting in a good cause. I returned to camp by nightfall and reported to Count Saxe. Next day he went with me to pay his respects to Francezka and to concert with her any plan she might desire for the prosecution of the search. Francezka received us with her old grace and dignity, and blushed with pleasure at Count Saxe's tribute to Gaston Cheverny.

"And apart from my affection for Monsieur Cheverny," he said, "I feel myself peculiarly obliged to use every means to find him. We can not afford to lose such a man as your husband, Madame Cheverny."

Francezka thanked Count Saxe, and then sitting down at a table, we discussed pros and cons. The extent of the search which had already been made for Gaston seemed to frighten Francezka a little, but she bravely rallied. She said to Count Saxe that her whole fortune should be spent, if necessary, in this quest for her husband. Then Francezka told him of a new plan she had—to search all the Austrian prisons. It was by no means improbable that Gaston Cheverny, wandering about in his French uniform, and dazed with his wound, might have fallen in with Austrians, who would send him away with other chance prisoners. This was so plausible a theory that Count Saxe was much struck with it, and said to Francezka:

"Madame, you would be a much better general than I, if once you would put your keen wit to the business."

Francezka smiled with pleasure. No sorrow nor anxiety that ate into her soul could keep her from relishing a compliment from so great a man as Count Saxe. My master, however, gently put before her the discomforts and dangers that might lie before her. Francezka only looked at him calmly and replied:

"Discomfort and danger are nothing to a woman in comparison with her best beloved."

Count Saxe said not one word further to discourage her, but, on the contrary, set himself seriously to work to help her. He offered to get letters from many royal and noble persons and

officers of rank in both armies. Francezka, in thanking him, said, with tears in her eyes:

"I realize at this moment that I am, for the present, strangely alone in the world. I know not whom to advise with, except you, Count Saxe, and my good Babache. I know, however, one thing which is necessary to me, and that is, Babache. When you are not actually fighting, will you not lend me Babache, to help me search until I find my husband?"

"Madame," replied Count Saxe, "I do not lend him to you—I give him to you as long as you need him. He is the most valuable possession I have on earth; therefore you may measure my regard for you."

They both rose—so did I—and Francezka turned her cheek to Count Saxe, who kissed her reverently. Let those sneer at Count Saxe who will, about his Mademoiselle Verières, his Duchesse de Bouillon and the rest. I say no one respected a woman of honor more than Count Saxe. He was bewitched by Francezka's beauty, tears and devotion, and he began to tell her of so many officers, supposed to be lost in war, who had returned, sometimes after long years, to their friends, that he fixed the idea in Francezka's head, Gaston *must* return. I said to him afterward, privately, that Francezka's determined belief that Gaston would be found would be unalterable after this conversation. Count Saxe looked a little disturbed, but striking his forehead, cried out:

"Babache, I swear I knew not half I was saying; I saw only distressed beauty, faithful and devoted, and I would have perjured my soul to comfort her!"

It was concluded, at this conference, that as soon as Philipsburg fell, I was to accompany Francezka and Madame Chambellan to Prince Eugene's headquarters, and if necessary to Vienna, that the plan of looking for Gaston Cheverny in the Austrian prisons might be carried out.

We returned to our stations before Philipsburg, but I had several opportunities of seeing Francezka in the next few weeks. She posted large rewards for news of Gaston Cheverny, but not one single person appeared to claim them.

Philipsburg fell on the eighteenth of July. As soon as this was accomplished the campaign became perfunctory. In August, everything had simmered down, and actually the Crown Prince of Prussia, with some of the other too numerous princes in Prince Eugene's army, were given passports to visit the French camp. This young Crown Prince of Prussia, afterward known as Frederick the Great, was the same one who had so much admired Francezka at the camp of Radewitz, four years before. Count Saxe suggested that Francezka should see him, and ask, through him, the help of the Prussians in her search.

On the day of this visit, therefore, a beautiful August forenoon, after a whole mob of princes had been entertained by the Duc de Noailles and other officers of high rank, Count Saxe invited to his tent the Crown Prince of Prussia. This tent was of purple and white silk, and was very luxurious; but luxury did not prevent Count Saxe from being a soldier as hardy as those old Greeks, who furiously chased and fought their enemies over the windy plains of Troy.

I had seen the crown prince many times at Radewitz. He always bore on his countenance some indications of greatness: the clear, steel blue eye of him, the forehead of a man born a captain. But at Radewitz his old brute of a father had treated him worse than a dog. Like his friend, Voltaire, he had been caned more than once. Now, times were better with him; but no man ever submitted to have a cane laid on his back without bearing marks upon his character long after the marks on his skin had disappeared. When I was a private soldier I always carried around my neck a little bag which contained my few treasures, and one of these treasures was a bullet for the sergeant who should order a lash laid on me. No sergeant ever ordered this.

When the crown prince was seated in Count Saxe's tent I went and fetched Francezka, who appeared with Madame Chambellan as her *dame de compagnie*. Francezka was dressed in the Spanish fashion that day—the costume was black, and I think she felt a distaste for gay colors, and meanwhile, she would not assume mourning; so this Spanish mantilla, which she wore with a grace inherited from her Spanish mother, well became her. The crown prince received her amiably, recalled their previous acquaintance at Radewitz, and repeated Count Saxe's compliments to Gaston Cheverny. At this, Francezka's face, which was a little pale, grew red with gratified pride. She asked the crown prince's assistance in publishing her rewards and making known Gaston's disappearance—and he promised with a fine grace. He had excellent manners when he chose, particularly when he had been his own master long enough for the novelty to have abated. He told Count Saxe afterward that Francezka, without being the most beautiful woman he had ever seen, was the most interesting.

In all this time no word had come from Regnard Cheverny. Francezka commented bitterly on this, and it much amazed me, as I had never seen any lack of affection on either side between the brothers.

At last, toward the middle of August, all things being arranged, I set out with Francezka on our travels in search of her lost love.

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## CHAPTER XXIII

### A LOVING QUEST

Francezka had a natural desire to see the spot from which Gaston had disappeared, and to satisfy herself as to the search in those parts. We traveled to Hünigen, therefore, crossed the Rhine at the point below where the boat had crossed and came to the place, a low-lying Austrian outpost, at which Gaston had been last seen alive. From thence we hunted the Rhine country on both sides of the river before proceeding to Prince Eugene's headquarters, which had been moved farther back in the interior, toward the Taunus hills.

We traveled rapidly. A journey is fast or slow, according as there is money forthcoming. Old Peter, in spite of his years, acted admirably as an avant-courier. He always rode ahead two stages to secure post-horses; and if there was any dispute about it, I could always bring the postmaster to the right way of thinking. But what was quite as effective was Francezka's soft and insinuating address, which never failed to get horses or anything else she wanted. It is a part of human nature to delight in exercising a power with which one is gifted. Francezka had the power of persuasion in a high degree, and it pleased her self-love to see a postmaster or an innkeeper succumb to it, as quickly as a Maurice of Saxe.

We had fine weather from the day we left Philipsburg. The Duke of Berwick used to say that travel was the best means ever devised to wean the human mind from the continual contemplation of sorrow. So it proved in this instance. There is something in the motion of a horse under one, which is a subtle distraction. The horse itself becomes a component part of being, and exacts a share of attention. Francezka, who was fond of horse exercise, left the chaise almost entirely to Madame Chambellan and rode on horseback with me.

There could be no doubt of her high and even feverish hope. She was never more to have that serene expectation of happiness which I had seen in the soft and lambent light of her eyes on my first knowing of her marriage to Gaston Cheverny. Rather was it an excited and over-sanguine hope that built itself most lovely visions on nothing at all. She seemed to think it probable that at any moment Gaston might appear. The least movement startled her. If she were at table and the door opened suddenly she would half rise, with the flash of expectation in her face. At night every sound brought her to the window. She was still under the sweet illusion of youth, that happiness was her right. I really believe she thought that God, having given her so much—such love, beauty, youth, health, and wealth—could not in justice refuse her happiness.

As we traveled on we found the highroads full of equipages: officers' wives, French and Austrian ladies of rank and many persons of consideration from such large towns as Brussels and Cologne, to say nothing of the constant passing to and fro, such as two great armies, one on each side of the Rhine, required. Francezka was known to many of these people. The story of her romantic marriage and her loving quest for her husband had got abroad, and at every stopping place she received sympathy and wishes for success in her search. I saw that Francezka took all these polite expressions for gospel truths, and thought everybody who spoke a word of encouragement to her was profoundly versed in wisdom.

I had neither the power nor the wish to rob her of this beautiful illusion. She had by nature a great and glowing imagination, and she pictured to herself and to me the charm of her return journey with Gaston. She admitted the possibility that he might be ill and worn, but then her tenderness would nurse him back to health. It would be necessary for him to ride in a chaise, perhaps, so she would give up her horse and ride with him. How exquisite it would be, as they passed along the swift flowing Rhine, through the purple vineyards, the radiant mornings, the glorious sunsets, the dreamy purple twilights—all would be beautiful. But these glowing visions did not impair Francezka's watchfulness nor lead her to relax one single effort in her vigilant hunt.

This rosy hope lasted her until we reached Prince Eugene's headquarters in the Taunus hills. There, one interview with Prince Eugene himself brought home to Francezka the gray and gloomy outlook before her. It left her with but one rational basis of hope, that of finding Gaston in some Austrian prison.

On the night of this interview with Prince Eugene, at which I was present, Francezka sent for me to come to her room at the little inn where we were staying. I saw by the gravity of her look that the old hunchback prince's clear, but not unkind, statement of the case had produced its effect upon her. And she also proved to me, in our conversation, what I had long known, that although self-willed and impetuous, Francezka was neither selfish nor inconsiderate.

"Babache," she said to me on entering, "I think you know that you are the most comforting and helpful person in the world to me now, and that if I consent to part with you it is not because you are of no more use or good to me. But I see plainly that my search in the Austrian prisons for my husband is likely to last the whole year if, oh God! I find him even then! And I see that I can contrive all that is necessary myself. Therefore, much as you are to me now, I can not think it right to deprive Count Saxe of your services, and so I give you leave to return at once. When I want you, be sure I will send for you."



In reply, I told her that I belonged to her and to Count Saxe, and either could make any disposition of me that was desired.

We then deliberated on the singular silence of Regnard Cheverny. Although he was not with Prince Eugene's own contingent, yet it was scarcely possible that he had not received one of the several letters which had been written him by Francezka as well as other persons, concerning his brother's disappearance; nor could he fail to know of the catastrophe from other sources; but not one line or word had come from him. Francezka was very deeply incensed at him. She had never really liked nor trusted Regnard, and was not disposed to excuse him in anything.

Her next move would be to Vienna, in order to complete her plan of searching the Austrian prisons. With her usual promptness, she decided to start on the morrow.

The next morning I saw her depart. She went in the chaise with Madame Chambellan, discarding her riding horse. When she bade me farewell at the chaise door she tried to express her thanks to me, but instead, she burst into a passion of tears. I closed the door hastily and turned away. I could not bear to see her weep, and I could not, myself, utter one word.

I returned to Count Saxe. On the first of January, 1735, peace was proclaimed; and as Count Saxe said, the rain having ceased, the cloaks were laid away.

For the two years that followed I was often with Francezka, and never out of her reach, and worked for her diligently; yet I speak of some things that I did not actually see, but heard.

Francezka proceeded to Vienna, where she was received with distinction by the Emperor Charles and his empress. They became much interested in her story, and gave her every facility possible. The young Princess Maria Theresa, who was destined to reign with the energy of a king and the sweetness of a queen, was then in her eighteenth year. She became deeply interested in Francezka, and showed her many kind attentions. Armed with letters from the emperor, Francezka proceeded to examine the Austrian prisons, from which the prisoners were being released on their exchange at the prospect of peace, and all of the records were laid before her. But she found not the smallest trace of her husband.

This consumed the entire autumn, winter and spring. At the beginning of summer, this source of hope being exhausted, Francezka reluctantly turned toward Brabant. But on passing through the Taunus country she made a discovery at the very center of the region that had been combed over a dozen times for Gaston Cheverny by the French, the Austrians and Francezka herself. This was the indubitable proof that Gaston Cheverny had been alive and at that place three months after his disappearance, and in the very midst of the hunt for him!

Francezka unearthed this fact by the acuteness of her understanding, which reckoned nothing too small or too great for her to attempt in this undertaking. On her way to Brabant, after nearly a year of fruitless effort, she stopped over night in a village not far from the Rhine and on the way to Frankfort. She did not fail to ask of the authorities if any person answering to Gaston Cheverny's description had been seen at any time in the place, and to cause a large reward to be posted; but no one could tell her anything.

At the inn she noticed a pointer that somewhat resembled Bold. The dog took a fancy to Francezka, which she returned, being touched by the dog's resemblance to her old friend. The innkeeper's little daughter, not ten years old, seeing this, said in Francezka's hearing, that the dog was as fond of "the great lady" as it had been of "the French prisoner with his head bound up." Francezka, calling to the child, questioned her closely, and received the startling information from the little girl that the prisoner, who was a gentleman, had fondled the dog, because he said it was like a dog at home which he loved. It was brought out at once that this prisoner was one of a number on their way to Bohemia. His description tallied perfectly with Gaston Cheverny, and the absolute certainty was reached by the innkeeper's wife producing a fine handkerchief which had been left behind, with Gaston Cheverny's initials embroidered on it by Francezka's own hand!

When Francezka heard this she was like one ready to die with joy. It proved at once that nothing concerning Gaston's disappearance could be taken as final. Francezka, by her own wit, had found out what all the machinery of two great commanders had failed to discover. Was it strange that after this she should trust to no one's efforts but her own? All this I gathered in hurried but ecstatic letters written me in the first flush of her delight. At once all her hopes bloomed afresh—nor could any one, in reason, discourage her.

But this joy was the joy of Tantalus—for in spite of months of time and great sums of money spent on the spot by Francezka, not one scintilla of light more was thrown upon this tragic mystery of her life.

At last, having spent a whole year in her pursuit, Francezka was forced to turn her steps homeward. This did not mean that she gave up either hope or work, that was impossible to her; but that she would rest and wait a while. She told over to herself, so she wrote me, all the stories she had ever heard, including those of Count Saxe, of persons who, having been sought diligently, at last returned when all hope was abandoned. Francezka apparently forgot that although strange disappearances and equally strange reappearances take place often in troublous times, but few persons in the world had been searched for as thoroughly, as patiently, and with such lavish expenditure of time and money as had Gaston Cheverny. To his honor be it said that at no time was there the smallest suspicion in any mind that he had made way with himself, or had voluntarily abandoned Francezka.

It was in September of 1735 that Francezka again saw the château of Capello. She entered her

own house with sadness and disappointment, but not in despair. Hope could not die within her. As she wrote me, "My heart can not—will not—break."

It is not to be wondered at, however, that the rest of Francezka's world reckoned Gaston Cheverny a dead man. Father Benart, the little priest, who was a courageous man, even hinted to Francezka that she should wear mourning. This went to her heart like a knife. To put on the garments of widowhood would be the last abandonment of hope, and to this she would not consent. She adopted, however, the Spanish costume, which is black, but not mourning, and no one could accuse her of unseemliness in her attire.

She found her house swept and garnished, for Francezka's administrative qualities were of that order which make affairs apparently go on of themselves. The dog Bold was overjoyed to see her and became, as formerly, her inseparable companion. The harvests had been good, her flocks and herds had prospered; all belonging to Francezka seemed to bask in the sunlight of good fortune, except Francezka herself.

As soon as her return was known she was overrun with visitors, mostly impelled by curiosity, who pestered her with questions. Francezka met these with the spirit and courage which were a part of her. Being naturally and incurably humorous, she often smiled, and even laughed, though her heart was near to breaking, at the air of surprise and even chagrin with which her calm announcement was received that she did not yet admit her husband to be dead, and should ever hope for his return. But these idle persons inflicted upon her pride a burning smart; she continually felt that she was reckoned foolish and visionary—she, the most practical, the most resourceful, the most entirely sensible of women.

She had greater courage, a more powerful imagination than most people, and so the commonplace of the earth had ever been eager to deny her common sense. She had proved herself possessed of the most sublime common sense in the management of her life and her affairs. Beautiful and alone, she had escaped slander; with a great fortune and perfect liberty, she had avoided the ever present snare of being married for her fortune, and had chosen a man who loved her for herself alone, and would have married her in her smock. She had proved herself capable in every emergency, and had commanded love and admiration, a thing not easily forgiven. Now, the small-minded, the carpers and the critics, had their opportunity, and they fell upon her in full cry like a pack of wolves.

She could sustain herself against them. They might whisper and backbite—they might point with unctuous hypocrisy at the terrible results of a marriage made solely to please herself, but none of them dared to speak before her face. It was, however, mortifying for her self-love to know that they dared speak behind her back. Francezka was, in some respects, a spoiled child of fortune. She did not for one moment relax her efforts to find Gaston Cheverny, although she no longer attempted it personally. A number of trained men were employed by her to keep the matter alive, the rewards before the public, and to follow up every possible clue.

And then she went upon her way, unchanged and unchanging in some respects. She again took up her reading and studying; the Brabant ladies were much scandalized at the amount of money which Madame Cheverny spent on books. She again had her music and singing masters to attend her. She did all these things diligently, though she had lost much of the enjoyment they once gave her. Such hope as she had left was enough to make her uncomplaining in her present life, but not enough to make her happy. And so the year of 1735 passed.

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## CHAPTER XXIV

### CONFIDENT TO-MORROWS

It does not matter how that time went with me, Babache. I was with my master, Count Saxe, whose glory increased with time. Every day and hour Francezka was in my mind, and so far as I could I kept up the search for Gaston Cheverny. I never met a man from the Rhine country, nor one who had taken part in any of the campaigns of 1733-34, of whom I did not make inquiry concerning Gaston Cheverny.

One thing was strange and tantalizing: while it was impossible to prove that he was alive, it was equally impossible to prove that he was dead. Nor was this an unknown man who had vanished, but an officer of distinction, for whom the search had begun within six hours of his disappearance, which was taken part in by Count Saxe and the armies of France and Austria, and carried on steadily by a woman of the wit, the wealth and the resource of Francezka Capello. I have known of strange vanishings in war, but never have I known one in the least like Gaston Cheverny's. Regnard Cheverny seemed to have vanished, too, but his disappearance was entirely voluntary.

The only communication which was received from him was to his agent. As soon as peace was assured this agent received orders from Regnard Cheverny to sell Castle Haret, which he presently did, for a good round sum. It was known soon after that Regnard had resigned from

the Austrian army and had accepted a high command in the East India Company's army in British India. I concluded that the chagrin Regnard had felt at losing Francezka was very deep and had much increased his distaste for his native country, but on the whole, his conduct appeared both unfeeling and ungenerous. Madame Riano oscillated between Paris and Brabant. I think the attitude of her mind had something to do with Francezka's obstinate clinging to the belief that Gaston Cheverny was alive and would be found. Madame Riano's belief was superstitious, pure and simple. She actually believed that nobody married to a Kirkpatrick could be called out of this world without ceremony. There must be all the ghostly accessories by which the exits of the Kirkpatricks were made as imposing as the Deity could contrive—so thought she; but to Francezka it always seemed the height of wisdom to believe Gaston Cheverny to be alive.

Much of the year 1736 we spent at Paris, and Count Saxe again occupied himself with his *amusettes*, and in the invention of a wheel by which boats could be propelled through the water. The women, I admit, still chased him vigorously; one brazen princess would not let him get the length of a cow's tail away from her. But was this to be wondered at? Maurice of Saxe seemed to be sent into this world to conquer all women as well as all men.



We were always lodged magnificently in Paris, at the Luxembourg, and at Versailles and Fontainebleau, and Marly-le-Roi, when we went to court. The king could not do enough for Count Saxe, and had already begun to consider giving him the Castle of Chambord, as he afterward did. Count Saxe could, if he had wished, put the king's shirt on him every morning, but Count Saxe was not a perfect courtier, after the sort described by the Regent of Orleans, who defined a perfect courtier as a man without pride or temper. Count Saxe had both, and did not like the business of valeting, even for kings.

He spent much time on his book, *Mes Rêves*, he dictating and I writing it. He also studied the seven books on war by that Florentine secretary, Niccolo Machiavelli, who knew more about war than any man who ever wore a black cloak. He was the first who invented the battalion formation. Count Saxe used to say, laughing, that according to Machiavelli, I lacked an essential of a good soldier—gaiety of heart. I always replied that the Tatars, my royal ancestors, like other princes, had not much cause for gaiety, and that my somberness was due to the exalted rank with which I had been invested. When I was a barefooted boy, trotting about the Marais, I was as happy as a bird in spring.

I think Mademoiselle Lecouvreur's death had a lasting effect on Count Saxe. I ever believed that he grieved more for her than did Voltaire, who wrote verses on her. Voltaire, at that time, was hanging to the petticoats of that lean, brown Madame du Châtelet, who spent her time working out Newton's Principia and henpecking Voltaire. No woman ever henpecked my master. But I must admit Voltaire was a sorcerer, and could spur a dead horse into life. He confused me very much about that time by asking me if the writing I was engaged upon was a life of Count Saxe, and when I said not, the rogue remarked that he supposed I was like Amyot, who said that he did not write the life of his various masters because he was too much attached to them. Now, what answer is a man to make to such things?

In spite of all the distractions of Paris, Count Saxe by no means lost interest in Francezka, and kept in constant communication with her. Madame Riano had urged Francezka to join her in Paris, but Francezka declined to leave Brabant for two reasons why she must not stir from home; that Gaston, if living, might find her there; and if he were dead, she preferred the

seclusion of her own home to the gaiety of Paris.

In the spring of 1737 Madame Riano was seized with the notion of going to England again. I judge she had had enough of Scotland, that land of milk and honey, as she represented it to be. This time she went straight to London, where she took a great house, proclaimed herself a Jacobite, put white cockades on every one of her servants, down to the very scullions in the kitchen, and defied Sir Robert Walpole's government to arrest her. To her cruel disappointment, the ministry took not the least notice of her. In vain she gave balls on Prince Charles Stuart's birthday, whom she called James III, made everybody curtsy to his portrait, which was placed in the main lobby of her house, and never failed to revile and ridicule the Elector of Hanover, as she called King George, and all his family. The straw that broke the camel's back was when her coach locked wheels with that of the Duke of Newcastle, then secretary of state under Sir Robert Walpole, and known as the greatest fool in England. It was on the way to a levee at St. James's Palace. Madame Riano upbraided the duke for his treachery to his lawful sovereign, King James the Third, called King George a Hanoverian rat, and then triumphantly demanded in the face of a great crowd which collected around the combatants:

"And now, will your Grace have me arrested?"

The poor foolish duke, who stuttered and stammered fearfully, replied to this:

"M-m-m-madame, the king's orders are n-n-not to arrest anybody except p-persons of the f-f-first consequence, M-madame!"

Fancy Madame Riano's rage! And the crowd actually cheered the duke, so we heard in Paris. This, however, drove Scotch Peg out of London. She returned to Paris, reopened the Hôtel Kirkpatrick, and announced that she only lived for the purpose of hurling the Hanoverian rats from the throne of England and Scotland. My master went to call on her and took me with him. Madame Riano received us in her usual state, which was lofty, for one of the merits which Madame Riano possessed in common with Francezka was a perfect capacity for affairs. Madame Riano might furnish food for laughter in Paris and London and Brabant, but her debts were always promptly paid; she lived splendidly, but without waste, and she always had more money in her pocket than those who laughed at her.

She was kind, if patronizing, to Count Saxe, and acted as if I were rather the more important of the two. She delivered a long account of the outrages heaped upon her by the Elector of Hanover, as she called George of England, which outrages, as nearly as I could make out, consisted wholly in not having her sent to the Tower of London and tried for high treason as she ardently desired. After the recital of Madame Riano's wrongs at the hands of the Kings of England, Spain and France—for she had something against the last two as well as the first, and complained that they had all treated her as if she were of no more account than the drummer's cat—the conversation turned on Francezka. Madame Riano heard from her regularly. She was well, endeavored to be cheerful, and held an undying hope.

Madame Riano freely declared she believed Gaston Cheverny to be still alive, but could give no better reason for it than the belief that Omnipotence would not trifle with the life of one connected with the Kirkpatrick family by marriage. She told us that she was going to Brabant for the summer and later to pay a round of visits in Luxembourg. Shortly after our visit she took her proposed departure.

That year of 1737 was an active one for Count Saxe. I could make a very pretty history of our travels and adventures in Paris, Dresden, Leipsic, Brussels and other gay towns, but I will not. For myself all places were alike to me, provided I was with Count Saxe or with Francezka. I hoped eagerly that Francezka would send for me, knowing that would mean some clue to Gaston Cheverny, but she did not. I had from her three letters, however, in which her soul shone forth. In the spring of 1738 we were at Paris again. The women were very troublesome that year after Count Saxe, and a gay set of rival duchesses came near driving him to drink. One night in May he came into my chamber at midnight, and throwing himself on a chair, said:

"Babache, I am weary of this town of Paris, and there is a duchess or two that I would as lief were somewhere else. But as they will not go, I have bethought me of our errand to Brussels. We can travel slowly through the pleasant French country in this month of May; we can stop at the château of Capello and see that matchless Francezka, and for a little while we can live like men, instead of courtiers. What do you think of this?"

I thought it well; my heart leaped at the mention of the château of Capello. It was arranged that we should not give the least hint where we were going. In fact, I was instructed to say that we were going to the Pyrenees, and the story took so well that both the duchesses sent their private spies to Spain to find out what my master was doing there. Meanwhile we were on the high road to Brabant.

No one was with Count Saxe except myself and Beauvais. We left Paris on a spring morning, very like the one so many years before when I had been led out to be shot. We traveled briskly, and at every step that we left the duchesses behind my master's spirits rose. As we had given out that this journey was to the Pyrenees, the ladies sent their couriers with their love-letters in the wrong direction, and Count Saxe did not get a single love-letter between Paris and Brussels, and his health and spirits visibly improved. Trust a woman of rank for hounding a man to death.

We sent word ahead to the château of Capello of our coming, and planned to arrive about sunset. The country of Brabant is everywhere beautiful, rich and well tilled, but the estate of Capello was the most beautiful, the richest and the best tilled of any we saw. Francezka had not increased the park land, rightly thinking she had no right to reduce the arable land of the

peasants, but she had made them keep their cottages like the cottages of a theater scene, and she had planted most charming hedges of roses and of lilacs, and other beautiful plants and trees. I think I never saw anything lovelier than the rich meadow, where cows were grazing, almost encircled by a lilac hedge, with occasional rose trees; and the cows had sense enough to prefer the rich grass to the thorny roses or tough lilac foliage. This was characteristic of Francezka. She loved beauty, as a Spaniard does, but this love was tempered by that stern Scotch sense which does not lose sight of what is useful.

Count Saxe had not seen the château since 1732, and he, too, was lost in admiration at the beauty, order and fruitfulness of it all. The windows of the château blazed in the sinking sun when we crossed the stone bridge, dismounted, and walked up the steps of the terrace. Francezka met us on the highest terrace. She wore, as when I had last seen her, a rich Spanish costume of black, but not of mourning. She was then in her twenty-seventh year, and was in the full perfection of her charms. She received us joyfully, gave Count Saxe her cheek to kiss and me her hand, and thanked us for coming to see her. Bold was still her inseparable companion, and barked a joyful welcome to me.

As I had noted in her, after she had married Gaston Cheverny, a new and sweet humility, so I now saw a new development of gentle patience and quiet courage. She had taken up at last the burden of anxiety which is a part of every creature's burden on this earth, and she bore it more sweetly than would have been thought possible by one who knew how dazzlingly happy and brilliant her path had been heretofore. Unlike most persons whose lives and fortunes are dedicated to a single pursuit, Francezka had not become ill balanced or fanciful. I thought I had never seen her more dignified or sensible than when she presided at supper that night.

She was perfectly informed on public affairs in Europe, being naturally a great reader, and the retired life she led inclining her the more to reading. She blushed with pleasure at Count Saxe's compliments upon her acquirements. But Francezka, in spite of all changes, was still Francezka. She knew perfectly well how to entertain a great man like Count Saxe. While we supped she had musicians in the gallery, who sang a song recounting Count Saxe's triumphs in war. My master listened with pleasure, the greater when Francezka admitted that she was the author of both the words and the music. In her voluntary retirement she had cultivated gifts that would have lain fallow had she kept her place in the world.

Old Peter waited on us, as usual, at supper. There was something in his response to my inquiry after his health which was more cheerful than I had seen in him for years. I was not surprised, therefore, when Francezka whispered to me, during Peter's absence from the room, that poor little Lisa had returned.

Madame Chambellan was still of Francezka's household, but being, as I think, incurably lazy, she kept her room and asked to be excused to us, which we cheerfully granted.

When supper was over it was still warm enough to go out of doors, so Francezka led the way to that well-remembered spot, the Italian garden, and there, under the solemn yew trees, and looking down upon the somber lake, dark, although the twilight was still mellow, we sat and talked with the joy and peace of friends after a long separation. Bold, of course, was of the party, and continued to honor me with his friendship.

The first thing Count Saxe asked Francezka was, if she had any news of Gaston. Francezka shook her head.

"But I have not given up hope; if I did I should throw myself into the lake. And, after all, what does any search amount to, after my discovery that my lord was alive and present in a place which had been searched a dozen times in three months? Could any wife give up hope after that? No! All I can do is to wait and watch and hope and pray and work, for work I do, that when my husband returns he may find a wife to his taste. I read somewhere lately that Hesiod, an old Greek, said that the gods have placed labor as a sentinel over virtue. As long as I work and stay quietly at home no one can slander me, no one can accuse me, and I can live my own life of work, study and prayer."

Count Saxe looked at her in silent admiration. There was something heroic in the steady fight this woman was making for her love. She told us that she still spent a great part of her income in promoting the search for Gaston Cheverny. She acknowledged that much of this money went to deceitful and designing persons, who professed to have information to sell which was no information at all, but as Francezka said coolly, she would rather spend her fortune in that way than in any other. Then she told us about Lisa's return.

"Jacques Haret, it seems, had deserted her after six months," said Francezka, "and poor, doglike Lisa followed him for almost a year from place to place, not to force herself on him, but only to get a glimpse of his face. Think of such love being wasted on Jacques Haret! Think of such devotion to him as old Peter's! Well, Lisa, at last, came face to face with Jacques Haret. He spoke to her, gave her a silver snuff-box in default of money, and when she threw it away before his face, the only act of spirit I ever knew in her, Jacques Haret laughed at her. That stung even her patient soul.

"She fled from him, and in her despair thought to drown herself. She was stricken with remorse at her thought, however, and little by little the desire to kill herself departed. Then the longing to see poor old Peter and her home overcame everything, and she turned her face toward Brabant. It took her long, of course, to reach here; she was quite on the other side of Paris; she had to live and to work, but with steady purpose she came toward Brabant. One evening, in the late winter, when Peter went home, he found Lisa sitting in rags by the fire. She fell on her

knees before him and was forgiven in a breath.

"Next morning Peter came to me, and, with tears, implored me not to send Lisa too far away. He was overwhelmed when I told him she might stay in the cottage. Poor Lisa! If all sinners were as penitent! Father Benart is kind to her, and the poor soul works and prays. Some of the people in the parish are indignant with Father Benart, and with me, too, for countenancing Lisa, but they have not so far ventured to speak to me on the subject. If they did—" Francezka turned her head with an air that showed that neither sorrow nor disappointment had impaired the lofty martial spirit she had inherited from the Kirkpatrick.

She also told us that Madame Riano was absent upon her tour of visits, but would return within a fortnight. That night, before we slept, Count Saxe told me he did not propose to remain long enough to encounter Peggy Kirkpatrick.

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## CHAPTER XXV

### A DISCOMFITED BISHOP

Next morning, as usual, I was up early, and walked down to the village. There I found Father Benart, the good little man, just coming out of the church. He told me he had got word that his brother, the bishop, was coming to visit him and Madame Cheverny that day, and he knew a sharp disappointment was in store for the bishop when he should find Madame Riano absent. Then Father Benart asked me some very intelligent questions about Count Saxe's exploits in the Rhine campaigns. As we talked we walked along a narrow road by a field, in which some women were at work, digging and planting. Among the workers I recognized at once the unfortunate Lisa. She was poorly but cleanly clad, and although it was plain she labored hard, she was inexpert, and did not accomplish a great deal.

All of the women, except Lisa, were coarse peasant women, with stout arms and legs, broad backs, and but little inferior in physical strength to men. Lisa, on the contrary, was more delicate, more thin and pale than she had ever been before. She worked steadily, neither turning to the right nor to the left, not even when one of the women pointed to her and uttered a jeer, which was greeted with coarse laughter. Her pale face colored faintly, but she made no response, going on with her work. Father Benart opened his mouth to call out a reproof to the women, who joined in taunting the unfortunate girl, but changed his mind.

"No," he said aloud, "it is just that she should bear her punishment, and this public shame may save some other girl from the same downward path, but God is more merciful than man."

While we were standing in the road beside the field we saw a great, lumbering coach approaching, which the little priest at once recognized as that of his brother, the bishop. His Grace had not been expected until the afternoon, but here he was at eight o'clock in the morning. I suspected the bishop had not enjoyed a very good lodging the night before. When the coach drew near we saw the bishop sitting in it alone. As soon as it was close enough it was stopped, and the bishop called to his brother, invited him to step within, and recognizing me as the Tatar prince with whom he was acquainted, extended the same civility to me. We both accepted and mounted into the coach, which proceeded toward the château of Capello, where his Grace said he was going on a particular errand. I fancied the bishop preferred the cookery of the château to that of Father Benart's housekeeper.

His Grace had sharp eyes, and had observed the scene going on in the fields, about which he inquired. Father Benart told him it was Lisa, with whose story the bishop was perfectly acquainted.

"That is one of the things that I wish especially to speak to you about," said the bishop to Father Benart, in the tone of a schoolmaster and without regarding my presence in the least. "My brother, it is with grief that I learn of what has been going on in your parish of late, of the sin and evil behavior."

"Alas, my brother," responded Father Benart gravely, "there is always sin and evil behavior of some sort in this parish, and I greatly fear, until mankind is totally changed from what it has ever been, that a certain portion of sin and evil behavior must abide with us."

The bishop scowled.

"I fear you do not precisely understand me, brother. I refer particularly to the case of Peter Embden's niece, who, I hear, has returned here, and has not only had all her sins forgiven, but forgotten, as it were. And I recognize the girl yonder flaunting her shame in the face of honest women."

Father Benart silently pointed out of the coach window to Lisa in the distance, her thin form outlined against the bright sky of a May morning. She was a picture of patience and penitence. The bishop, however, although he was not a cruel man, loved to scold, and proceeded to harangue Father Benart, who listened patiently and replied:

"The unfortunate girl is a shining example of God's grace. She tells me—and I have ever found her truthful, having known her from her infancy—that finding herself deserted by that villain of villains, Jacques Haret, she had but one thought—to drown herself—and, as she walked along the brink of a river with this thought in her heart, God's light came to her; she saw it would be but to heap sin on sin, and a voice within her bade her return to her uncle, who had suffered so much for her sin. And so, struggling against the Spirit of Evil, which made her dread this place worse than any in the world, she came back; came back half starved, half clothed, and arriving at nightfall, went to Peter Embden's door, and offered to go or to stay, as he should wish. And he, a gentle and forgiving man, bade her, as did our Lord and Saviour, to sin no more, and took her again under his roof. Then, coming early next morning to ask of me what he should do, being greatly troubled in his mind, I said to him to treat this poor sinner as he himself would wish to be treated at the Last Day. So he has given her bread and shelter since."

"Very reprehensible," cried the bishop. "Such lapses should be punished, punished with severity, and Madame Cheverny, wilful and impractical woman that she is, disdainful of advice from all, abetted you in this, for the girl could not have remained in Peter's house without Madame Cheverny's consent."

"True," said Father Benart. "Of course Peter was obliged to ask Madame Cheverny's consent. I did not even think it necessary to remind him of that. And as to Madame Cheverny's asking advice, I know of no one who has managed affairs so successfully as Madame Cheverny. We might all of us ask advice of her in many things."

The air of humility with which the little priest said this convinced me that he was a wit disguised in his rusty cassock. The bishop did not relish the implication in his brother's speech, and resumed with some choler.

"I presume that headstrong woman, Peggy Kirkpatrick, who wishes to be thought Jove in petticoats, went about the parish counseling all the young women to follow Lisa Embden's example."

"I can not inform you on that point, brother," replied Father Benart, "I have not cognizance of all Madame Riano says and does."

"She is a great trial of my patience," said the bishop. "She is the thorn in my flesh like unto the one that St. Paul prayed seven times that he might be delivered from. I should come oftener to the château of Capello, but for the unpleasant chance of meeting Peggy Kirkpatrick."

"You will not meet her this time, brother. She is in Luxembourg."

At once the bishop's countenance fell, but he recovered himself sufficiently to express satisfaction that Madame Riano was in Luxembourg. He then went on to say, taking me as well as his brother into his confidence, that one object of his visit was to induce Francezka to give up all hope of her husband's return, and, putting on mourning, to comport herself as a widow should. I could not help compassionating the bishop when he said this, knowing what he was likely to receive. He consulted with Father Benart whether he should admonish Francezka in public or in private. Father Benart reflected a moment before he answered. We were then driving along the splendid avenue of lindens toward the château, which sat in fairy beauty on its terraces, the morning sun gilding its white façade, the canal sparkling in the light, the grass freshly green—all, all, lovely to excess. After a pause, Father Benart spoke:

"It is a painful and delicate subject, brother, and but little can be safely said upon it. I think it best, perhaps, if you are determined to speak, to do so in the presence of a third person."

The little priest told me afterward, that he was afraid, if the bishop undertook to harangue Francezka in private, he would get such a reception that his ears would burn for a week; and he looked to the third person to restrain Francezka's tongue, which was somewhat free on all occasions.

By that time we had dismounted from the coach. Francezka was not awaiting the bishop at the top of the terrace, which seemed to annoy him. He forgot that he had arrived some hours in advance of the time.

Count Saxe, however, was strolling about enjoying the fragrance of the morning. The bishop had not seen him since our return from Courland, and, by some accident, had never been enlightened as to his real name and rank. It was not without secret amusement that I introduced him to the bishop, who instantly recognized his old acquaintance. His Grace was a moving sight at the moment. His face fell, his eye wandered aimlessly around as he muttered to himself:

"Count Saxe—Count Saxe—and is it possible I did not know that he was Count Saxe?"

"I think not, Monseigneur," replied Count Saxe, "else your Grace would not have criticized my expedition into Courland so freely before my face."

The bishop's chagrin was a little mitigated by Francezka's appearance at that moment. She greeted him courteously, apologized for her delay in appearing, and had old Peter to show the bishop to his apartment, where he might repose himself until dinner time. Count Saxe made some excuse to be absent from dinner, and when the hour came, only Francezka, the bishop, Father Benart, Madame Chambellan and myself sat down together.

As soon as it was over, and we had retired to the red saloon, the bishop intimated he had something of a particular nature to say to Francezka.

"Then, will your Grace say it here?" said Francezka, who knew the bishop's propensity for

haranguing, and reckoned, as Father Benart had done in her own case, upon Father Benart to restrain the bishop. She continued: "All of the friends present are close to me, and conversant with my affairs—hence, no harm can come of your Grace's speaking openly."

I saw the calmness of her manner, and her air of gentle expectancy somewhat disconcerted the bishop, who perhaps found women disconcerting creatures.

"Madame, my friend," began the bishop, following the advice of Horatius Flaccus, and plunging into the middle of things, "I have come upon a painful errand. Reproof is always painful to me."

"Yes, your Grace."

As Francezka said this, there was a gleam in her eyes like laughter. And Père Benart took out his handkerchief and coughed violently.

"Reproof, I say, is painful to me," repeated the bishop blandly, "but I should be a renegade to my duty, if I spared you, my child, in order to spare myself. First, I must complain of the actual encouragement you give to vice by permitting that niece of Peter Embden's to remain in his house, which is your property."

"I do it, your Grace," replied Francezka, sweetly, and with a glance at Father Benart, "by the express advice of my director."

And then, with folded hands, she sat demurely looking down, and leaving Father Benart to shoulder the burden alone. The good bishop saw that he had two recalcitrants to deal with instead of one; so, like other weak, well-meaning men, he resorted to bluster when reason did not suggest itself to him.

"It is my opinion," he said, raising his voice, "that Lisa Embden should be sent out of this parish—sent to some city, where her past is not known, and where she can give no scandal."

Francezka turned sweetly to her accomplice, and said:

"You hear that, Father Benart? The bishop looks to you to enforce this."

Father Benart said not a word, but raising his eyes to the ceiling, seemed to be absorbed either in prayer or in uncomplimentary speculation about his brother. The bishop, who was not quite a fool, saw that he had not gained his point. He then charged again, but this time against another position.

"We will speak later of this affair of Lisa. To come now to something more nearly concerning yourself. While your loyal devotion to your husband, and your constant expectation of his return, do your heart infinite honor, Madame, it is not equally flattering to your head. As Swift, an English writer says, reason goes to cuffs with imagination, and fancy gets astride of judgment. For, distressing as it is to me to say it, I must tell you that Monsieur Gaston Cheverny will never return."

Francezka grew a little pale at these words, but rallied after a moment, speaking courteously.

"Such is your Grace's opinion. But you can not expect Gaston Cheverny's wife to be the first to give up hoping for him."

"By no means. But—Madame Cheverny—you are a widow—and you should conduct yourself as such. You should put on mourning, and place the affairs of your husband before the courts, that they may be settled. In short—pardon the form in which I put it—but you are a widow and should conduct yourself as such."

"In that case, I should be at liberty to marry again," coolly remarked Francezka. "Would your Grace recommend me to that?"

The bishop fairly jumped from his chair.

"Great God! No, Madame! It would give frightful scandal!"

"But, Monseigneur, you say that I am a widow—that I should wear mourning. At least be consistent."

The bishop, swelling with wrath, rose and walked twice, thrice up and down the room. I fancied he was saying in his mind—Was there ever so vexatious a creature as this Francezka? She never had any proper respect for authority! And there sat that easy young brother of his, smiling at his discomfiture—the discomfiture of a bishop!

Francezka remained silent for a little while, and when she spoke it was with seriousness.

"Your Grace asks me to give up the hope on which I live. I can not do it. My husband may be dead, but I have not been able to secure the smallest proof of it. It has been four years since he disappeared. But we know of strange disappearances lasting much longer. And can you ask me—his wife, who adores him—to believe him dead unless I have proof of it? No! a thousand times no!"

She rose and her face and eyes were flooded with color and light, as she stood facing the bishop.

"Do not again speak to me of putting on mourning. When I do that, then indeed is life over for me—all hope, all joy, forever dead. And do you suppose I care that idle people wonder at me? I am too busy to care for anything but my husband's return; I have my estates to manage—a heavy task for a woman. And I am determined that if my husband returns, he shall find not only a great estate to his hand, but an accomplished wife to his mind. Look at this proof of my study



and endeavor!"

She threw open the door which communicated with the little yellow room, where she spent most of her time. The walls were lined with books, and there were several musical instruments in the room.

"There do I read and study daily. Gaston Cheverny was ever fond of books—fonder than I, carried away as I was with the pleasures of life. He must often have felt the want of knowledge on my part. He shall not feel it so, when he returns. And does your Grace see yonder harpsichord? When my husband last saw me, I played but fairly well on it. Now, I spend a part of every day before it, and I am a skilled performer. And I dress every day in silk—for Gaston's sake. For he may come to me at any moment, and I do not wish him to find me a frowsy creature, but a wife worthy of him. To be that, I must be ever well dressed, well read, well behaved—such, I hope I am."

The flood of her vehemence arrested the bishop's impatient walk. Father Benart sighed a little, as any one might, at this poor, human heart of Francezka's, laid bare, and beating desperately against the fate that seemed closing around her. Neither one of them spoke immediately, nor did I. No one of us present knew how to answer Francezka. After a considerable pause, the bishop said, not unkindly:

"I perceive my counsel has been in vain. I must depart."

Francezka, then, mindful of her duties as chatelaine, pressed him to remain, or at least to take some refreshment before leaving. To the last he agreed.

Peter, in response to a ring of the bell, brought a tray, with wine and glasses. At the first sip of wine, the bishop's countenance cleared. He was a judge of wines and that in his glass was worthy even of the Bishop of Louvain.

"This is admirable—the best of the Mosel vineyards," he said.

"Yes," sweetly replied Francezka. "I stocked the cellar last year with good wine at a reasonable price—" which she named.

The bishop blinked his eyes at her. How came it, that she, a woman, should have so good a head? And being practical in the purchase of wine and the management of affairs should be so impractical concerning her missing husband? However, the bishop would depart, so he said adieu to us all, and accompanied by Father Benart, went away, to spend the night at the priest's house.

I made no remark about the bishop's visit, but I saw that it was not without its effect on Francezka, in spite of her spirited protest to his Grace. She was more silent all of that day than I had yet seen her, and there was a heart-breaking look in her eyes that went to my heart, and also to the heart of the dog, Bold; for, seeing her pensive, he rose from his place at her feet, and laid his head, with a little whine of sympathy, upon her lap. For once, Francezka forgot to notice him. Her eyes were fixed on something afar which yet she saw not, and I heard her murmur:

"Oh, my tired heart!"

Father Benart told me afterward, the conclusion of the bishop's concern about Lisa. The little priest did not tell it me exactly as I repeat it; but what I had seen of his Grace supplied all details. His defeat at Francezka's hands determined him on punishing somebody, and Father Benart and Lisa being convenient, they became the natural objects of the bishop's righteous indignation. In the evening, after his arrival at his brother's house, the bishop told Father Benart that he felt it his duty to speak to Lisa Embden—he was fearful that the girl's soul would be lost for want of counsel and reproof. Father Benart, without protesting, said that he would send for Lisa in the morning. Next morning, when the bishop was having his breakfast in the garden, Lisa appeared. This brazen creature, as the bishop chose to esteem her, looked anything but brazen. With every indication of privations undergone, and with her poor clothes, Lisa was a very good exemplification that the wages of sin is death.

The bishop calling up his sternest accents said:

"I know what your sin has been—are you truly penitent for it?"

Lisa made a faint sound, indicating her penitence.

"And are you willing to do penance for it?"

Lisa inclined her head, and trembled.

"Your sin has been very great. Your behavior no doubt was light, such as to encourage Jacques Haret or any other evil man."

Lisa raised her eyes to the bishop's face, and said gently:

"Sir, I can not say that. However wicked I was, at least I was not wicked in that way."

"But you must have been," replied the bishop, with the calm confidence of ignorance. "And the misery you endured while persisting in your sinful courses, was God's punishment."

"But, sir," said Lisa, still calmly, "I was not miserable then. I was the happiest of God's creatures."

"Impossible!" cried the bishop, starting from his chair, as he had done the day before, in the interview with that other obstinate woman, Francezka Cheverny.

Lisa did not contradict the bishop, but the bishop saw that his denial of the fact had not really affected that fact.

"Do you mean to tell me," thundered the bishop, "that you were happy in the society of your partner in guilt?"

"Yes, sir."

The bishop dropped back in his chair. What problems were these parish affairs anyway! Here was a girl, persisting in saying she had been happy in guilt, when the bishop knew—or thought he knew—that all sinners were miserable!

"But at least you are not happy now?"

"No, sir."

"And why?"

"Because," replied poor Lisa, with the utmost simplicity, "I can never see Monsieur Jacques Haret again."

"You may go."

Lisa turned and walked rapidly away.

Soon after that I passed through the village, and noticed the bishop's coach in front of the priest's modest house. The two brothers were coming out of the door. Father Benart was saying:

"There are many inexplicable things in a country parish, my brother. It is not in my power to make Lisa Embden, or any other creature, feel happiness in the pursuit of good. If I can keep them a little out of the path of evil, it is all I can hope for."

"I am of the belief," cried the bishop, "that one self-willed and unruly woman like Peggy Kirkpatrick can put insubordination into the head of a young woman, like Francezka Cheverny—Francezka, in her turn, can implant it in her dependents. There seems to be a general lack of discipline among the women in your parish, brother."

"True," replied Father Benart, "and I take it that Madame Riano is to blame for Lisa Embden's lapse from virtue."

The bishop glared at his brother—Father Benart standing, smiling and blinking in the sun. The bishop then noticed me, but I was no restraint upon him, for he plunged into a long and severe discourse upon the evils Father Benart was bringing upon his parish by allowing the women in it to do pretty much as they pleased. Father Benart meekly excused himself by saying that he could not help it. The bishop, however, showed that he had not a bad heart, by leaving a dozen gold louis, which he directed should be spent on the poor of the parish—at the same time sternly commanding that not one penny should be spent on the chief of sinners, Lisa Embden. Father Benart accepted this dole with a twinkle in his eye and solemnly promised that Lisa should not have a penny of it.

But a few days more remained of our stay. It passed quietly, in sweet and gentle converse, and with books and music. The change continued in Francezka after the bishop's visit. He was a man of little weight, and she had frankly treated him as such, but his belief that Gaston Cheverny was no more, which she had treated with scorn, had yet left its impress on her; perhaps because people of more sense than the bishop had been more guarded and tender with her. But when we bade her good by, she said to us:

"Remember, Count Saxe and Babache, if you are my friends, you will never forget to make inquiry of each and every person you meet, from whom it would be possible to hear of my husband. For myself, once, every day, shall I go to the spot in the Italian garden which overlooks the highroad, to watch for my heart's desire—and if he never returns—"

She paused and her eyes filled, and she quoted from some book she had lately been reading:

"Man is based on hope; he has, properly, no other possession but hope; this habitation of his is named the place of hope."

Her eyes, as she said this, grew dark with melancholy, but there was still an undying courage shining in them. Poor, poor Francezka!

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## CHAPTER XXVI

### COME AND REJOICE

We went on to Brussels; but though my body was in Brussels, my soul was still at the château of Capello. I had not the slightest doubt in my own mind that Gaston Cheverny was dead, and the spectacle of this poor Francezka, with her passionate faithfulness, unable to part with that lingering ghost of hope, was enough to touch any heart. It deeply touched Count Saxe's. He was

the last man on earth to forget that through devotion to him Gaston Cheverny had been lost, and I believe he would have given his right arm could Gaston Cheverny have been found.

By the time we got to Brussels, the women in Paris had found out where Count Saxe was, and a bushel of love letters awaited him—which spoiled that place for us. We went as far as Dresden, and going to Strasburg, returned to Paris by that road, without passing near Brabant. In fact, two whole years passed without my seeing Francezka; and when I saw her—but no more—

Many things happened to Count Saxe in those years, the most important being the gift of the Castle of Chambord with an income to support it, and the promise of being made Marshal of France if he were successful in the war which was bound to break out soon, and actually did break out in 1741. This gift of Chambord was made in January of 1740. The king always had a fear that he might lose Count Saxe's services, for the Courland business haunted my master—that dream of a throne and a crown never quite left him. For that reason Louis XV determined to attach Count Saxe permanently to France; and this royal gift of Chambord, with its vast estates, its forests, fields and parks, made Count Saxe at once the ruler of a principality.

There had been some hints of this, and Count Saxe had told me privately that he would not accept any gift from the king, unless coupled with the promise of the marshalship in the event of a successful campaign. I can say of my own knowledge that Count Saxe would rather be Marshal of France than to own Chambord, with Versailles and the Louvre thrown in as makeweights.

On that January day, when Count Saxe was sent for to Fontainebleau to receive this kingly present, I was with him. He was summoned to the king's closet by Marshal, the Duc de Noailles—the one who always called my master "My Saxe." As soon as Count Saxe disappeared, I was left in the anteroom with the mob of ladies and gentlemen; they flocked about me. They knew that a great honor for Count Saxe was impending, and by some strange logic, they persuaded themselves that they were entitled to share in it, and they looked upon me as a shoeing horn. I was "good Babache" to people I had never seen before. My health, all at once, seemed to become of consequence to everybody at Fontainebleau; and the proverb that a beggar, on falling into a fortune, has neither relations nor friends, was speedily disproved. I found I had hosts of friends, and no doubt could have found some relations if I had tried. Courtiers are very childlike creatures after all. The continual frank pursuit of their own interests brings them back to the starting point of a savage, who does not see or know anything beyond to-day and its wants.

Among the waiting crowd was Monsieur Voltaire. I had seen him several times in the preceding two years. He always greeted me civilly—a tribute I think to the poor lost Adrienne, whom none who knew her could forget. On this day, however, Voltaire eyed me somewhat superciliously, and I protest I relished it by contrast with the smirks and bows and smiles and honeyed words lavished upon me by others in hopes of an invitation to Chambord.

My master remained with the king a full half hour. When he came out, he was accompanied, as when he went in, by the old marshal, Duc de Noailles. As soon as I saw Count Saxe's face, I knew that something more and better had befallen him than a life interest in a great estate. His eyes, the brightest and clearest in the world, sought me out, and by a look, he brought me to his side, the people making way readily enough—real princes cheerfully taking the wall for this Tatar prince born in the Marais! When I got quite close to my master, he whispered in my ear:

"Marshal of France, if successful!"

I felt myself grow hot with joy. Marshal of France! How much greater was that than a huge pile of stone like Chambord!

The Duc de Noailles was then giving out the news, and, turning to my master, the white-haired marshal embraced him as a brother in arms. But I had been the first one told by my master.

The ladies and gentlemen all showed great joy and complaisance. They knew that Count Saxe was not the man to do things by halves, and that at Chambord the gay days of Francis the First and the *escadrons volants* would be gloriously renewed. I watched Monsieur Voltaire, as with his wonderful and unforgettable eyes he gazed upon Count Saxe and probably reflected on the difference of the reward given a successful general and a great wit—for I am not denying that Monsieur Voltaire possessed a very considerable share of wit. He was among the last to congratulate my master, but he did it finally, winding up a fine compliment with this:

"And now, Monsieur, I presume you will be elected to the seat in the Academy. You shall have my vote. You can always spell victory—and what matters the rest?"

This was the meanest allusion possible to my master's never having time or inclination to devote to such common things as spelling. But Count Saxe came back at him thus:

"Oh, no, Monsieur Voltaire. I am not a candidate for a seat in the Academy. I am pledged to support a friend of mine for the vacancy."

All the people pricked up their ears and Monsieur Voltaire was the most eager of them all.

"My candidate," said Count Saxe very impressively, "is Captain Babache"—here he whacked me on the shoulder—"a prince of the royal blood of Tatar, who can spell like any clerk, and write a better hand than any academician, living or dead, ever did."

Monsieur Voltaire was a picture. The people present shouted with laughter—Monsieur Voltaire never was very popular at court—and my master grinned, and I felt myself grow weak in the knees with all those laughing eyes fixed on me. It was said afterward, that some of the

Academicians were sore over this joke of Count Saxe's. I had my turn at Monsieur Voltaire shortly after, for having occasion to write him a note in my master's name, I directed it in full to "Monsieur François Marie Voltaire, Member of the French Academy"—which he was not until some time afterward—"at the house of Madame du Châtelet, on the Isle of St. Louis, Paris." "Voltaire, Paris," would have taken any letter straight to him, but I chose to assume that very explicit directions were necessary to reach him, as if he were quite unknown, and difficult to find. It made him very angry, so I heard, and that was what I meant it for.

The whole of that winter and spring, I spent running to and fro between Paris and Chambord, for it is no easy thing to get in order such an establishment as Count Saxe set up, in that vast palace. There were four hundred rooms, and thirteen grand staircases, to say nothing of the smaller ones, and there was stabling for twelve hundred horses. The king had given Count Saxe permission to increase his body-guard of Uhlans, in view of the war known to be coming, and all these men and horses had to be assigned to their proper quarters, and provided for otherwise. The hunting establishment alone required the services of more than a hundred men; for there were wolves and wild boars to be hunted besides smaller game, in the forests of Chambord, and the plains of Salon. It is in this region that Thibaut of Champagne, so the peasants believe, follows his ghostly hunt. Often, at midnight, the winding of his horn echoes through the darkness of the forest, and the cry of his dogs from the nether world rings to the night sky—so say the peasants. I never saw or heard this supernatural hunt.

With the internal management of the castle I had nothing to do. Beauvais was promoted to be *maître d'hôtel*, and a hard enough time he had, losing, in one year, a very good head of hair over it. The only authority I was made to assume was over the pages of honor. There were ten of these brats, all dressed in yellow silk breeches and waistcoats, and black velvet coats, and they gave me more trouble, grief and perplexity than my whole battalion of Uhlans. Will it be believed that these little rascals in yellow silk, of whom the eldest was barely fourteen, kept me perpetually in anxiety about fighting duels among themselves?

They would beg, borrow or steal rapiers, and sneaking away by night or in the early morning, would fight on the edge of the moat on a little embankment, from which they were extremely likely to tumble into the water, if they missed each other's swordpoints. I could not cure them of it, but whenever I caught them I cuffed them soundly. They made great outcry over this, being of the best blood of France. But when they ran with their tales to my master—particularly one little Boufflers, who was about to run me through—my master always told them that I was of the royal blood of Tatar; so it was rather an honor, than a disgrace, for me to lay hands on them.

Let it not be supposed that all these labors and perplexities put Francezka out of my mind for one hour. Nor had Count Saxe forgotten her. He caused me to write to her more than once, and delicately intimated a desire that she would honor Chambord at some time with her presence. I little thought when I wrote that letter that Francezka would be likely to see Chambord. But events were moving silently but swiftly, and when I least expected it—when Francezka's sad fate seemed fixed; when her life had apparently adjusted itself finally, a great, a stupendous change was at hand. It came suddenly but quietly, and the news of it met us at the last place and from the last person one might possibly expect. It was May, when being overtaken by sunset on the way to Paris, and the horses being tired, Count Saxe and myself stopped at a little roadside inn, just one stage from Paris. Count Saxe had not even a servant with him, thinking to spend only a few hours in Paris and then to return at once to Chambord.

The inn was a plain, but comfortable place, with good wine, and excellent plain fare. After supper, Count Saxe, being weary, went to bed, the innkeeper valeting him, while I remained out of doors. The evening was softly beautiful. The sun was slowly disappearing; it was not far from eight o'clock, and the sky was all red and gold and amber. The rich and quiet landscape was not unlike that of Capello, though far from being so rich and so lovely. It was the sweet hour at which I always thought of Francezka, the hour she always kept her vigil in the Italian garden—a vigil that had seemed to me to be taking the form of remembrance of the dead, rather than expectation of the living. And knowing exactly what she was doing at that hour often produced in me a sense of nearness to Francezka.

On this evening she seemed to hover near me, and it was not the Francezka I had last seen, the bravely patient, the undyingly courageous; but the Francezka of her first wild, sweet youth, high-hearted, all fire and dew, laughter and tears, haughty and merry—the Francezka who claimed happiness as her right. And with this presence near me, and her voice ringing in my ears, I was suddenly brought back to this earth by seeing before me the unwelcome face of Jacques Haret.

I had not seen the scoundrel for four years, and never wished to see him again. He was sitting at a table in the garden of the inn—for I had unconsciously wandered from the orchard into the garden. He looked more prosperous than I had ever seen him, being well dressed all over, and for the first time evidently in clothes made for him. I was for passing on with a brief word, when he stopped me.

"Have you heard the great news?" he asked. "No, of course you have not. Gaston Cheverny has been found. I compute that he reached the château of Capello this afternoon—probably at this very hour."

The earth began to rock under my feet, the heavens broke into long waves of light, as if the oceans and a million voices were shouting in my ear at once. In the midst of all this, Jacques Haret's cool, musical voice continued:

"Yes. He should reach there about this time. And a tragedy may have preceded him—Madame Cheverny may have driven a nail into the eye of Count Bellegarde, as Jael did to Sisera, or cut off his head and put it in a bag, as Judith did that of Holofernes. For Bellegarde—the greatest fool alive—told me that on this date he meant to go to Capello and make a formal offer of his hand to the supposed widow, and by the blessing of God he hoped to own Capello. I have just come from Brabant, you see. I advised Bellegarde to make his will and to repent of his sins before going on such an errand, for Madame Cheverny has the spirit of all the Kirkpatricks in her beautiful body, and is dangerous when roused."

While Jacques Haret was speaking, I recovered my composure, although my soul was in storm and tumult, but I could not ask one of the thousand questions burning upon my lips. Then I saw a figure approaching, hatless and unpowdered, and wrapped in a bed coverlet. It was Count Saxe. He had not gone to sleep, and hearing through his open window Jacques Haret's tale, had sprung from his bed and rushed into the garden. Next to Francezka, Count Saxe, of all the world, wished Gaston Cheverny to be found for reasons easily understood. He called out as he stalked forward in his bed coverlet:

"Do you know anything else about it?"

"Nothing," replied Jacques, thrusting his hands in his pockets; "but it has ruined Bellegarde's chances of living at Capello, the palace of delights."

"And some one else has come back to Capello," I added. "Lisa, Peter Embden's niece."

Not by the flicker of an eyelash did Jacques Haret show any shame at the mention of the unfortunate girl's name, or of poor old Peter's. Count Saxe, however, standing a little way off, and gesticulating in his coverlet, cried loudly:

"Jacques Haret, you are the blackest villain, cheat, scoundrel, rogue and rascalion yet unhung. The jail yawns for you, the gallows yearns for you. May they both get you!"

"Thanks, Monsieur," replied Jacques Haret; "I am as God made me—and He makes men different. As Monsieur Voltaire said of your Excellency, 'God has not seen fit to give wings to the donkey.' God has not seen fit to make me like the founder of La Trappe. That is all."

Count Saxe turned to me:

"Get post-horses, Babache. We must go to Paris this night; no doubt there are letters for us. This news, if it be true, is worth a hundred thousand crowns to me."

The innkeeper got horses for us, and we started for Paris in a ramshackle chaise. Jacques Haret watched our departure with the greatest interest and entirely at his ease.

When I was stepping into the chaise, I called out to him, as he stood on the grass, in the shadowy light:

"I have not time now to give you a good beating, Jacques Haret. But when next we meet, I promise it to you, and will let nothing interfere with my engagement."

"Thanks," replied Jacques, "I have been promised not less than a million of beatings and have not yet got the first one. Adieu."

As we jolted along through the May night, all sorts of agitating thoughts poured into my mind about Francezka. She was at that moment, probably, in a heaven of her own making; for, be it observed, I doubted not in the least that Jacques Haret knew what he was talking about. I was somewhat surprised that he knew in advance of Gaston's arrival, but that was easily accounted for. Gaston would not travel incognito, and the news must have flown in advance of him.

Count Saxe, lying back in his corner of the chaise, talked of Gaston, of his manliness, his courage, his charm; and of Francezka, whom he could not praise enough. I saw that a cloud had passed from his life with Gaston's return. He told me that Francezka's face haunted him, and the absence of any reproach on her part for the imprudence which led to Gaston's capture went like a poniard to his heart. We reached the Luxembourg before midnight, and were abroad by daylight. I, myself, went to the café of the Green Basket, where news was to be gathered, and found that wild rumors were afloat concerning Gaston Cheverny's return. Within the next two days we got positive confirmation of it, and, also, a letter from Francezka. It was written in a trembling hand, unlike her usual firm, clear writing. It ran thus:

*Count Saxe and dear, faithful Babache:*

*My best beloved has returned to me. Come and rejoice with me.*

*Francezka Cheverny.*

That was all; none of her other names and titles, scarce one superfluous word—but a letter written in the very ecstasy and palpitation of joy.

It took Count Saxe not an hour to fix a day for our departure for Capello, and I wrote a letter telling Francezka when we should arrive; and trying to tell her how deep was my joy in her joy.

Within a week we rode for Brabant—only myself and Beauvais with Count Saxe—and traveled leisurely in the pleasant spring weather.

What Jacques Haret had told concerning the poor Count Bellegarde was true. He, the most absurd creature alive, who had believed for years that this glorious creature was his for the asking, had come to the château of Capello that May afternoon, and had made Francezka a formal offer of marriage. It had been easy enough to dispose of the poor gentleman. Francezka's

temper was naturally warm. In this case, her heart eating itself with despair, her nerves racked with hope deferred, she had turned like a lioness upon the unfortunate Bellegarde. He had fled from her indignant presence, and from the wrath which shone in her eyes and blazed in her cheeks; and Francezka, trembling and tempest-tossed, had, in her turn, fled to the Italian garden, where she could be alone. For she needed to be alone to face the specter which now took shape before her. It was no less than her dead hopes, clad in their grave clothes, which told her that Gaston Cheverny was no more. And while she walked slowly up and down the path, with this horror walking beside her, she looked up, and, behold! There stood Gaston Cheverny in the flesh.

Of what she said or did, Francezka had no memory. When she first became conscious of thought, she was lying in Gaston's arms, in an agony of sobbing and crying, and he was soothing her, and lavishing upon her every tenderness that love could devise. And after a time, when the first great shock of joy was over, Francezka rallied and became herself again—brave, resolute and loving. And then they looked into each other's eyes with rapture, and Gaston cried:

"We can never again be apart beyond the touch of each other's hand."

And after an hour spent in paradise, Francezka and Gaston walked hand in hand to the château, the servants and dependents were summoned, and Francezka, kneeling among them, with her hand on Gaston's shoulder, humbly gave thanks to God for having restored her best beloved to her. The news spread like wildfire, and roused the entire country. The next day, when Francezka and Gaston publicly gave thanks in the church, half the province was present.

Gaston was, of course, besieged with inquiries concerning the vicissitudes which had befallen him. They turned out to be quite as strange as might have been expected. The wound on his head had been severe, and had caused him great suffering, and, what was worse, had brought upon him long periods of forgetfulness. He had no recollection of anything that had happened to him after being struck by the Austrian bullet, and could not recall even the incident of the little village in the Taunus, where he had been seen three months after his capture. His first connected impressions were, on finding himself in Holland, and next, he knew not how, on a Dutch ship bound for Batavia. After nearly a year he had reached Batavia, and then began the struggle to return to Europe. He had written repeatedly to Francezka, and to his friends; that is, scrawled as well as he could, with his left hand, for his right hand, although it had no outward mark of weakness, was quite unfit for writing. He could not explain the cause of this; it was one of those blanks in his memory, in which some of the most painful as well as some of the dearest of his recollections were erased.

Being bred to the trade of a soldier, he knew no other means of livelihood and he found it hard, in his wanderings, to keep body and soul together. He was alone in a far country, unacquainted with the languages, and further borne down by those physical and mental ailments which only mended in the course of long years. Only two things remained ever clear and unclouded with him: one was, the remembrance of Francezka; the other was, a fixed determination to return to Europe. By degrees, his mind recovered its poise and his body its health; but seven years were consumed from the time he was snatched away from his country, from his love, his health, his understanding, until he was again restored to them.

Some of this we heard before we left Paris. Of course, the women would not let Count Saxe depart in peace. The Countess Vielinski followed us with post-horses as far as Mézieres, and Count Saxe only saved himself by decamping in the night, galloping out of one gate of the town, as Madame Vielinski's berlin rolled into the other. And yet this man is called a gay Lothario!

Everywhere on the road people were talking of Gaston Cheverny's wonderful return. The number of persons who knew that he must eventually come back was very large—I believe I did not see one single person who was not convinced all along that Gaston would be found. And the country rang with praises of Madame Cheverny's constancy and devotion. Especially did this come from the people who had declared Francezka to be wildly visionary and had severely condemned her course from the beginning.

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## CHAPTER XXVII

### A ROYAL RECOMPENSE

It was night when we reached the château of Capello. Afar off, we could see the windows blazing with lights and hear the heavenly thrilling of music. The villagers were dancing by moonlight on the village green, to the music of pipes; we heard that every night since Gaston Cheverny's return, there had been dancing and music everywhere on the estates of Capello, as well as at the château.

When we dismounted before the great entrance, we could see that the château was full of company, and a ball was going on in the Diana gallery. Old Peter received us, and fairly burst into tears of joy when we greeted him. An army of servants were in splendid new liveries; there

seemed to be no limit to waxlights, and everything was in gala.

We were shown to our rooms to change our traveling clothes, and soon descended to the red saloon, where Francezka and Gaston received their guests. I was so eager to see how Francezka bore her happiness, that I saw only her, standing at the top of the splendidly lighted room with Gaston by her side. She wore a trailing gown of white shimmering satin, and pearls and diamonds were on her matchless white throat and in her rich hair. She had lost long since the air of graceful pride and innocent triumph which marked her first bright youth, and now, with all her joy, there was a soft deprecation, that in one by nature so proud as Francezka was the sweetest thing in the world. I saw all this while my master was making his compliments to Francezka, and embracing Gaston. Francezka, by that time, was looking into my face, with tears on her cheeks, and grasping my hand with both of hers, she only said:

“My dear, dear Babache—my faithful friend—”

Then she turned to Gaston, who embraced me warmly.

“Francezka has told me all, Babache,” he cried. “How can I thank you enough!”

In that brief moment I noticed that Gaston had changed much, as one might expect in those seven years of exile and misery, but not for the worse. On the contrary, I thought him a comelier man than he had ever been before. And strange, for a man who had spent seven years of hardship and labor among a half-civilized people, he bore no trace whatever of awkwardness or boorishness amid his splendid surroundings. He might just have stepped from the *œil-de-bœuf* at the king’s levee at Versailles, he was so graceful and so much at ease, but he had ever been remarkable for that.

The great apartment was full of people. I recognized Madame Riano, who called me to her and spoke to me most graciously. Also, Father Benart, who had on a new cassock for the occasion. He, too, spoke to me most kindly, but he was rather subdued and silent. I judged that like the pagan Greeks of old, this Christian man felt a fear for those who stood upon the shining peaks of perfect joy.

Bellegarde was not there. Francezka, somewhat unreasonably, I think, haughtily refused to see or to speak with him, and sent him a message to the effect that his life would be spared, for which he should be thankful. She was very bitter against him, but the rest of the world, including Gaston Cheverny, took a more lenient view of poor Bellegarde’s offense, and he was laughed at rather than condemned. Nor was the Bishop of Louvain present. I fancy he was afraid to face Madame Riano, after having persistently declared his conviction that Gaston Cheverny would never be again heard of, and having pooh-poohed Madame Riano’s signs, dreams and presentiments that Gaston would return.

I have said before, that although declared a prince, a Tatar prince, I have a most unprince-like habit of retiring to the wall when in fine company, and this I did in the red saloon. I could not take my eyes from Francezka. It seemed to me as if no change could come over her that did not increase her hold upon hearts. Certainly I had never at any time seen her look so beautiful or so winning as in this, her day of triumph. She disarmed envy by a silent appeal for forgiveness that she was so much happier than most of the children of men.

No woman ever lived who knew better how to be splendid than Francezka Cheverny, and she and all about her were very splendid on this night. Supper was served in state, the handsomest youths of the best families in Brabant serving at table, according to the old Brabant custom. There was no want of attention to any one present—not even to me, Babache. When the company was being marshaled for supper, Gaston sought me out and secured me a partner in the person of a very old and very ugly lady of rank who, I take it, had been misled by my title, and evidently thought me a person of consideration and treated me accordingly. Francezka, of course, was escorted by Count Saxe.

The supper was very grand; the old Marquis Capello’s wine flowed like water; there was a servant in livery behind every other chair; the table was loaded with delicacies; and musicians played soft music from the gallery, the guests joining in the singing. Many old songs were sung, like the ancient *Carillon du Verre*, and some new ones—especially one, a song of hope, beginning, *Espère! Espère, il reviendra!* which particularly applied to Francezka and Gaston. I saw the eyes of Francezka and Gaston meet when this strain was sweetly played; they sat, after the French custom, opposite each other in the middle of the long table. Francezka’s eyes were those of an angel, and Gaston’s were so full of pride, of love, of triumph, that they shone like stars.

During the singing I noticed, for the first time, the slight defect of memory from which I had heard Gaston still suffered. He had formerly an agreeable voice, of no great compass or quality, but he sang with taste enough to make up for both. Many heavy hours during our days in Courland had we been soothed with Gaston’s singing to his viol; many moonlit nights on the island in Lake Uzmaiz had his voice told its story in songs. In those journeyings through France and Germany and in those long and quiet evenings in Paris Gaston’s singing had been one of our great resources, but he seemed to have lost all power over both words and music, and sat quite silent while all the rest trolled forth. I do not know whether any one else observed this except myself. When the singing was at its height my master called out to me, as I sat, near the foot of the long table:

“Babache, my prince, what is the name of the song Monsieur Cheverny used to sing to us on the terrace of the island in the lake?”

"It was Blondel's song, Monsieur," I answered.

Francezka, with a glowing face and dewy eyes, looked at Gaston, but he looked puzzled and a little embarrassed.

"I can not recall it," he said; "it has gone from me with the memory of other things I would remember."

Francezka, to assist his struggling memory, softly repeated the first two lines:

*O Richard! O mon roi,  
L'univers t'abandonne!*

It would seem as if he could not but remember how they had often sung and played it together in their golden youth, and the secret, tender meaning they had affixed to it, known only to themselves. And Francezka, in her unhappy time, had often played that air upon the harpsichord as recalling her lost love. But Gaston only shook his head.

"It is gone from me with other things—the sweetest recollections—the sacreddest memories—never to return."

"When you begin to play the guitar once more, as you used," said Francezka gently, and smiling, to encourage him, "all these songs will come back to you again."

Gaston raised his right hand, brown and sinewy.

"This hand looks to be the same it was when I gave it you," he said, smiling back sadly at Francezka, "but, like my memory, it is not what it once was. I can neither play the guitar nor write, nor do anything with it as I once did."

It was sad to see so young a man in the full vigor of manhood with these cruel marks of mental and physical suffering left upon him, but on the whole, few men living could at that moment reckon themselves happier than Gaston Cheverny. If he had suffered he had certainly come into a royal recompense.

We sat late, and afterward there was dancing in the Diana gallery. Francezka walked the minuet with Count Saxe, and afterward danced in a very merry branle. She had danced since Gaston's return, for the first time in eight years, she told me, having no heart to dance in that first year, when she was secretly Gaston Cheverny's wife, because he was away at the wars, and having never seen dancing in those seven years of sorrow when she waited and longed for him. But she had not lost either her grace or her gaiety, and danced as she had done in her first girlhood. Madame Riano did some strange Scotch dances with great agility in spite of her sixty years, and rated everybody soundly who could not do the Scotch dances and did not know the Scotch airs.

It was midnight before the company dispersed. I did not go to my chamber, but driven by some impulse stronger than myself, slipped out of the château and took my way toward a spot sure to be silent and deserted at this hour—the Italian garden.

A great bright moon rode in the heavens, making the landscape all black and silver. The yews and box trees were as dark as the darkest night, and the lake lay in its ever-present gloom shadowed by its sad cypresses and cedars, with but a shimmering of light in its center. In the deep silence its faintly mournful sound was softly heard. Francezka was happy, that was plain. All else mattered little—even a strange and hateful feeling within my own breast—I no longer loved Gaston Cheverny.

At the moment my eyes fell upon him there came upon me a sudden fading of the strong affection I had felt for him every moment of the fourteen years which had passed since that night in the garden of the Temple, when I had come near to killing him. Never had I felt so singular and mysterious an aversion toward a man I had ever loved as toward Gaston Cheverny on my first seeing him that night, and when he clasped me in his arms, with all of the old affection, this aversion became an actual repulsion. I had disguised it perfectly. I had returned his embrace warmly. All of his kind words, his friendly glances, I had met in kind; but a coldness not to be expressed in speech had come over me toward Gaston Cheverny in this, our hour of reunion. Nothing availed to warm it, not the recollection of long and close companionship, of keen adventure, of tedious months and years, lightened by each other's companionship, of community of tastes, of a high mutual esteem—nothing, nothing availed. The Gaston Cheverny of other days I still loved tenderly. This Gaston Cheverny I regarded with entire indifference. I did not fail to remind myself that seven years' separation, as complete as if we had inhabited different worlds, might make this change, but I could not deny that the change seemed wholly on my side; for, unless he were as good an actor as I, he felt for me all the warmth of affectionate friendship which had once been ours in common. Tormented with this singular revulsion of feeling, I remained long in the garden, until my eye happening to fall on the sun dial, I was reminded there was such a thing as time, and I heard a distant bell chiming two o'clock in the morning, when I returned to the château and went to bed.

Next morning the château was awake early, and then began, in the sweet May weather, a round of festivities which lasted every day of our stay at Capello. Fêtes in the fields, in the May days; masquerades by night, with water parties on the canal, where hidden music played; and always winding up with a ball in the Diana gallery,—these were our regular occupations. In all of these pastimes Francezka shone as queen. In beauty, gaiety, grace and wit, she was unmatched. Her enjoyment and zest of pleasure were contagious. It was natural that it should be so. Francezka's life had been so clouded and so stormy, for seven years she had borne so heavy a burden of anguish, that when at last this burden was removed and the sun shone again it was to be



expected that she should have a thirst for pleasure.

And to Gaston, cut off for so many years from any communion with those of his own race, tongue and caste, it was necessary, in order to bring himself once more in touch with his own world, that he should see something of it.

Despite that coldness of the heart I felt toward him, I could not deny that Gaston Cheverny had preserved—nay, greatly developed—his gifts and graces. I had heard that the Chevernys as a family were famed for eloquence, and certainly both Gaston and Regnard Cheverny had always known how to speak well. Gaston now displayed in perfection this excellent gift. His strange adventures in the isles of the East; his description of his seven years' battle against alien climes, peoples and conditions; his wanderings by land and sea, the steadiness with which he kept his face turned to the west, the struggles by which he finally reached Europe again—were worth hearing and lost nothing in the telling.

Many nights, after a hard day's pleasuring, a great supper party and a ball afterward, did Gaston Cheverny keep us up until almost daylight telling us these things. Nor was he over ready to do it, but being courteously pressed by Count Saxe, or other gentlemen, he would tell us what we wished to hear. Sometimes Francezka listened to these recitals, listened with a glorified face. Her happiness was so great, so keen, that it made me fear for her. Like the little priest, Father Benart, I thought the gods would demand their tribute, and only hoped it had been paid by her seven years of anguish.

Madame Riano was staying at the château, and had not changed a whit. She had ever liked Gaston Cheverny, and they seemed to be the best of friends still. But she intended shortly to return to Paris, and so invited herself to travel with Count Saxe when he should be ready to leave. Old Peter was the same faithful, devoted, sad-eyed creature as ever, but I think not unhappy after all. Lisa's return had given the old man's heart its natural resting place. I asked him about her, and he told me, with tears upon his withered leathery face, of her devotion to him, her uncomplaining fortitude, her humility—he did not say penitence, for Francezka told me that neither old Peter nor she herself had ever been able to get one word of regret for the past out of Lisa. I told Francezka about my chance meeting with Jacques Haret. She asked me if I had given him a good beating; Francezka was, in some respects, a vengeful woman. I told her it had not occurred to me to do this, but I would remember it if I ever met him under favorable circumstances again. He had honestly earned a beating—the only thing he ever honestly earned in his life.

Besides Peter, my other old friend at the château, Bold, seemed also changed, but for the worse. Age had fastened upon him, and he was now decrepit. That was perhaps the reason why he was not so much with his mistress as formerly, but, in truth, the whirl of the days and nights was such that a sober and discreet dog could not keep up the pace.

Now that Gaston Cheverny had been miraculously restored to his wife, people began to ask about Regnard. Count Saxe inquired of Gaston if anything was known of Regnard, but Gaston shook his head. He had not yet had time to have inquiries made about his brother, but would do so. Judging, however, from such information as he had found awaiting him, it seemed likely that Regnard was dead. This Count Saxe combated, saying it seemed to him most unlikely that an officer of rank in the East India Company's army should die without his family or friends receiving any notification.

And if it were indeed true that Regnard was dead, his estate was worth inquiring after. The sum he had received for Castle Haret was in itself a considerable one. To this Gaston replied obstinately that he was convinced Regnard's long silence meant that he was dead, and as soon as it was possible, inquiries should be set on foot in England to find out all the facts connected with Regnard's fate. In spite of this, however, I saw that Gaston was really indifferent to his brother's fate, and remembering their unclouded intimacy and affection, in spite of their rivalry for Francezka, I found this surprising. It was the first genuine cause I had for loving Gaston Cheverny less, because his warmth and kindness to me suffered no variation.

I had not, of course, much chance for private talk with Francezka during that week of dancing and feasting, but I felt she was too loyal a soul to forget me in her hour of triumph, and would not let me depart without some evidence of her unchanged regard. On the morning of our departure I rose early, according to custom, and went forth. It was but little past sunrise, and a delicate fine rain, as thin as a muslin veil, was falling. The earth and the blooming plants were drinking it up eagerly; it was so gentle that it would not roughly strike the most delicate flower. I walked about the gardens and terraces, and then went toward the Italian garden, which always seemed to be consecrated to Francezka. I was scarcely surprised, early as it was, to see her walking up and down the box walk, with Bold by her side. She had the hood of her crimson mantle drawn over her head, and was walking slowly up and down, a branch of roses in her hand. Her face was not joyful, but rather meditative, and it made my heart leap to see how it lighted up when she saw me within a yard of her.

"I did not mean to let you slip away, Babache, without one private word with you," she cried, as I joined her. "I thought if I came out here I should probably find you. See how strong is habit. Here I am, walking and watching with my dog and my friend, just as I have done for seven years past, and he for whom I watched and waited—my best beloved—is safe at home; and yet I come always once a day to this spot, and give thanks. And I thank God for you and Bold. You know, it is high praise to be classed with Bold."

"I know it, Madame," said I, "and Bold is a happy dog now that his master is come home."

Francezka's brow clouded a little, and she looked about her to be sure that no gardeners or possible eavesdroppers were near.

"No," she said gravely, even with a little quiver of her lip. "Bold is not a happy dog. He did not know his master, and does not know him now, and to think of how Bold and I loved and watched and waited for seven years—how many conversations we had about Gaston—and how Bold always assured me that his master would return. I think he was not less comforting than you, and much more encouraging. And now he cares nothing—he even snarls at Gaston—"

She looked reproachfully at the old dog, trotting by her side. He was aged, but he had not lost his sight, or his teeth, or his native good sense, for at the charge brought against him he looked his mistress steadily in the eye, and then coolly turned off, as much as to say:

"If you choose to complain of me to Captain Babache, at least I scorn to defend myself."

"It must have been very hard on Gaston," I said, "for he ever loved the dog so much."

"No," replied Francezka, as if she were communicating some great sorrow to me. "Gaston cares no more for Bold than Bold cares for Gaston. What do you think—now, will you promise me to keep this a secret?"

"Yes."

She came closer to me, and fixing her eyes on me with tragic intensity, said in the voice of the broken-hearted:

"Gaston had forgotten his dog!"

It was like Francezka to make a huge mountain of a thing like this. Therefore, I replied gravely:

"That is very sad and very bad, but at least, Gaston remembered you. And after all, Madame, you *did* attach a ridiculous consequence to the dog."

"Did I?" cried Francezka, with the first flash of her old resentful imperious spirit that I had yet seen breaking out. "A ridiculous consequence to the creature my husband left me to be my friend and companion during his absence? And told me whenever I looked into Bold's faithful eyes I was to see his—Gaston's—faith reflected there, for dogs never forget! And was not Bold the only living thing, except yourself, who gave me any comfort in these last seven years? Really, Babache, I can not love you any longer, if you say such things."

It was a trifle, but I saw that the indifference between Bold and his master troubled her.

"Do you know, Madame," said I, "that when one reaches the very heights of happiness—near the blue heavens—the least little speck of unhappiness is visible?"

"True," replied Francezka, her somber eyes brightening. "To think, after what I have suffered for seven years that I let this trifle—yes, Babache, your word was the right one—give me one clouded moment. But—" her eyes were darkened again; "no one walks those heights of happiness long. It is only for a short time that one can live in that too pure air. The old Greeks knew this."

"Madame," said I, "give me leave to say that you have lived too much with your own thoughts and emotions for your own good. No human being, least of all a sensitive woman, could have endured what you have for so long without retaining some marks of it. So, although I am only Babache, a savage Tatar prince, the son of a poor notary in the Marais, yet, take my advice: be happy when you have achieved your heart's desire and trouble not yourself with old dogs or old Greeks, either."

Francezka's face suddenly dimpled into smiles. The sun came out radiantly at that moment, and the grass and trees, diamond hung, glittered in the golden sheen of the morning. The earth seemed new-born; life and joy seemed new created. Francezka looked toward the château and waved her hands to Gaston, on his way to the stables. He turned and came toward her. I could not but remark how comely a man he was. He had never been a beautiful creature, like poor silly Bellegarde, but a good figure of a man, with regular and well-marked features, full of grace and intelligence. In a minute or two he had joined us. I had not before noticed the behavior of Gaston and the dog to each other, but now I observed that when Gaston approached, Bold exhibited an active dislike toward his former master.

His bristles rose, he showed his teeth, and in spite of Francezka's command, and even entreaty, he trotted off and would not return. I have always been sensitive to the dislike of dogs, believing them to be better judges of character than men are. But Gaston Cheverny did not seem to mind Bold's disaffection; he was satisfied with Francezka's constancy.

We remained a pleasant hour in the Italian garden. Gaston was, as he had been from the first, kind and courteous to me; pressed me to return in the autumn for the wolf hunting, which is one of the great sports of the region, and thanked me again for what I had been enabled to do for Francezka in his absence. When we returned to the château the sun was high, but Count Saxe had not yet left his room. He had then acquired the habit of lying late abed, except when he was in the field. Then he never slept at all, so his enemies said.

Madame Riano had threatened to accompany us back to Paris, but we were not sure whether she would go or not. Paris dragged her one way, the hope of meeting the Bishop of Louvain and triumphing over him, dragged her the other. But we saw her great traveling chaise hauled out of the coach house and her people busy, so we were not surprised when she met us and announced that she, with her maids and her *maître d'hôtel*, was ready to start with us. I allowed Beauvais to communicate this intelligence to Count Saxe, not liking to be the bearer of bad

news, and I heard my master swearing furiously in his bedroom. But when he appeared in traveling dress, at ten o'clock, he was smiling and polite as usual, and expressed great joy at being allowed to journey in Madame Riano's suite. Count Saxe was a prudent as well as a courageous man, and he never belittled his antagonists, least of all Madame Riano. He often said he reckoned Madame Riano to be the first warrior of the age with Prince Eugene and Marshal the Duke of Berwick a considerable distance behind.

At ten o'clock the start was made, Madame Riano in her traveling chaise leading. She bade an affectionate farewell to Francezka and a kindly one to Gaston, placed her hôtel in Paris at their disposal whenever they wished to come to Paris, said adieu to old Peter, sent poor Lisa a gold piece and a terrible denunciation, mounted into her chaise and started.

I had said farewell to Francezka several times in the last few years from the terrace, when she stood alone and lonely, but with undaunted courage and undying hope. Now that hope and courage were rewarded; she stood with Gaston by her side, the two happiest creatures on earth. That last vision of Francezka in her beauty and happiness haunted me like a ravishing strain of music in a lovely dream.

When we had traveled a couple of stages Madame Riano invited Count Saxe to ride in her chaise, an honor which he dared not decline. Next day it was my turn. I loathe riding in a stuffy chaise, full of packages and waiting maids, but, like my master, needs must when Madame Riano drives. The first question she asked of me amazed me.

"What think you," said she, "of my nephew Gaston Cheverny?"

"What I always thought," I replied. "An admirable man."

"Nevertheless," replied Madame Riano, "you loved him once. You love him no longer."

That was the worst of this terrible old lady. She always found out the awkward truths and proclaimed them at inconvenient seasons. I made no reply to this, and she continued:

"Men grow hard with time. It is vain to expect of a man separated from you for seven years, and but three and thirty years of age, the same sensibility he had when he was six and twenty and had spent many preceding years in your company."

This was true, and I had often said so to myself, so I told Madame Riano.

"As for yourself, Babache," continued this indomitable woman, "you are like old Peter, only fit to love and forgive and lay your heart down to be trampled on."

"Madame, I have laid my heart at the feet of two persons only," replied I, with spirit; "one is my master, Count Saxe. Surely he never trampled on it. The other is Madame Cheverny, whom I have revered ever since I first knew her, and with whom, by the strange turns of fate, I have been much cast for some years."

"Count Saxe and my niece do not tread on you because they both have noble natures. If they were otherwise now—"

"I should not have had for them the reverent love I cherish, had they been otherwise," I answered, and just then, Madame Riano taking snuff, she gave a stupendous sneeze that nearly shook the chaise to pieces and actually jarred the door open; so I slipped out, mounted my horse and was glad to lay my legs across his back once more.

I had never mentioned to Count Saxe any change I saw in Gaston Cheverny, for indeed, I saw none—I only felt it. On that Paris journey, however, we talked together much concerning Francezka and her strange fate; and I found that Count Saxe, like myself, saw a subtle and unpleasing change in Gaston. But Francezka was happy—that was enough. Nothing could matter very much so long as Francezka smiled.

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## CHAPTER XXVIII

### A CAMPAIGN OF PLEASURE

We returned from the château of Capello in the spring of 1740, and from then until the autumn there was hard work to be done at the Castle of Chambord. My master proposed to entertain a great and noble company of guests, including the king himself, during the time of the boar hunting, a very royal sport which prevails in Touraine. The king was to come the first week in December and to remain three days. Among those invited to be of this royal party were Gaston and Francezka Cheverny. They were to stay a fortnight at Chambord and to spend the rest of the winter in Paris.

There was, however, a visitor who arrived before we were prepared for any one. This was Madame Riano. One night, quite early in the autumn, when there was an army of six hundred workmen at Chambord, and Count Saxe himself was but indifferently lodged, a traveling chaise drove up, and out got Madame Riano, come to pay Count Saxe a visit before she departed for

England on one of her expeditions to recover the crown for Prince Charles Edward Stuart.

My master swore up and down and crosswise when he recognized Madame Riano's equipage crossing the Bridge of the Lions, but went down to the courtyard to receive her. He expressed great joy at seeing her, and also regrets that he could not lodge her, having but two bedrooms in order, his own and a small one next him, where I, as always, was lodged. Madame Riano coolly informed him that she should stay the week, and would occupy his bedroom; he could take mine, and I could sleep in her traveling chaise.

"But, Madame," said my master, "think of my reputation; a woman, still young, still handsome like yourself—"

"Great God!" cried Madame Riano, "*you* have no reputation to lose, and as for myself, mine is far too robust to be hurt by a little thing like this. Not that I ever wanted for lovers when I was young, from the time I was thirteen years old, when that foolish Bishop of Louvain wanted to marry me; I had a plenty as long as I wanted them."

"It is singular," said Count Saxe, "that a bishop should want to marry a thirteen-year-old girl."

"He was not in orders then, but was a soft-headed great oaf of a young man of nineteen, and that you should have understood. Maurice of Saxe, I think you have never been so sensible a man since you made that ridiculous fiasco in Courland. It seems to have addled your brain somewhat!"

And Count Saxe had to entertain that woman a whole week! She took possession of his only bedchamber, and he, putting it on the score of propriety, slept on the hay in the stable lofts!

It may be imagined how we worked to be ready to receive the king and his suite and all the guests asked for that memorable visit. Count Saxe utilized all of that stupendous genius he had heretofore shown in his campaigns in preparing a campaign of pleasure for those royal festivities at Chambord. Besides the king, there were two princes of the blood, the Duc d'Orleans and the Duc de Bourbon, seven dukes and peers of France, two marshals of France, and a horde of other great people.

Three days in the week there were to be stag hunts and boar hunts in the forest. Two nights in the week there were to be balls, three nights there were to be cards, and the two other nights plays in the theater of the castle, otherwise the great yellow saloon. The playwright was to be no less a person than Monsieur Voltaire, who did not require much coaxing to follow the king. The ostensible bait held out to him was that Francezka, with whose beauty, faith and tenderness all Paris was ringing, would be at Chambord and would take part in Monsieur Voltaire's plays. He remembered her early triumphs in the garden of the Hôtel Kirkpatrick, and was not averse to a beautiful and brilliant woman assisting in the making of his fame.

My master was to be in one of these plays, and went to Paris several times to attend the rehearsals, which were under the direction of Monsieur Voltaire. Francezka and Gaston had then arrived in Paris. Count Saxe came back with famous accounts of these rehearsals. Monsieur Voltaire was very difficult, and everything about the performance had to be changed a dozen times, except one—Madame Gaston Cheverny was to play opposite the great Voltaire. He had never seen her act since that afternoon in the garden so long ago, but he declared the memory of it remained with him. Other great ladies were chosen, tried and flung aside. Gentlemen of the best blood of France were put through their paces before the son of Arouet, the notary.

Count Saxe noted this impudence of Monsieur Voltaire's, and had said in his hearing that if he, Count Saxe, were hauled and pulled about unseemly, he would, by the blessing of God, run Monsieur Voltaire through the body. This insured Count Saxe the most respectful treatment imaginable from Monsieur Voltaire. My master had told me, on his return from these Paris rehearsals, that Monsieur Voltaire maintained the most conciliatory attitude throughout toward Francezka, who, he declared, was the only actress among all the ladies to be at Chambord. Francezka's spirit was well known; she was not the niece of Peggy Kirkpatrick for nothing, and once or twice, so Count Saxe said, a word on her part and a flash of her eyes showed Monsieur Voltaire that she would throw up her part at the least hint of impertinence from him, so he behaved himself perfectly to her, as to Count Saxe.

Madame du Châtelet regarded Monsieur Voltaire as much her own as her warming pan, or Newton's Principia, so she, of course, had to be asked to the festivities at Chambord. Then, Madame Villars must be of the party. She was the daughter-in-law of Marshal Villars, and daughter of my master's old friend, Marshal, the Duc de Noailles, of whom the latter would be among the guests. It was that very autumn that Madame Villars had kissed Voltaire publicly, in her box at the theater, at the first performance of *Mérope*, and to the delight of the audience. Perhaps Monsieur Voltaire's head was not a little turned by this; perhaps Madame du Châtelet could have told a tale of the airs he gave himself with all the women after that, but no matter.

Of course, there were numbers of other young and beautiful women besides Francezka Cheverny and Madame Villars. Were any of Count Saxe's loves among them? Perhaps. I, at least, knew not, except that all women who looked on him fell in love with him, but he can not be found fault with for that; the fault must be found with the God who made him so all-conquering, beautiful and bewitching. This is not a chronicle of Count Saxe's love affairs. He chose his own loves, wrote his own love letters, and I knew no more about them than I did of the royal princes of Tatar, from which I was supposed to be descended. As far as I know he was a veritable St. Anthony. I have heard Chambord called the castle built for intrigues, and for the "flying squadrons," as the gay ladies of the court were named. But whether this be true or not

must be asked of some one better informed about Chambord than Captain Babache.

By the first day of December all was ready, and on the evening of that day the king was to arrive, and also Francezka and Gaston Cheverny. These, with other guests, were to precede the king's arrival by two hours. It was a cold, bright December evening, the wintry sun just setting, when the procession of coaches began to roll across the Bridge of the Lions and into the great courtyard. My Uhlans formed a guard of honor at the bridge and in the courtyard itself. A subaltern commanded, but I was present as the ranking officer of Count Saxe's household.

At least forty ladies and gentlemen had arrived before the coach drove up from which Francezka and Gaston Cheverny alighted. Count Saxe awaited them at the foot of the grand staircase, but I was on the ground to welcome Francezka. It was near dusk of a winter's evening, but the torches' glare, and the row of crystal lanterns hung above the entrance gate showed me her face plainly, even inside the coach. She was a little pale, probably from traveling, but smiled her own sweet smile at me as soon as she recognized me opening the coach door for her. Gaston, descending, embraced me cordially. He looked to be in the highest health and spirits. Francezka, her slender figure wrapped in a great furred mantle, and her fair face looking out from a black hat with feathers, stepped down with her usual airy grace.

"The finest thing in this great castle is the face of a friend like you, my Babache," she said.

There was no time to say more, for she saw Count Saxe and advanced quickly toward him. If she had been Queen Marie Leeczynska he could not have greeted her with greater devotion.

I showed them at once to their rooms, which were agreeable but rather high up, overlooking that wonderful spiral staircase which is the glory of Chambord. I explained that I had placed them so high that they might not be disturbed by the noise and commotion which was pretty sure to be going on night and day in the lower part of the castle.

"Trouble not yourself about that, Babache," cried Francezka, merrily; "Gaston and I are not in search of quiet, but gaiety. Life was so dark for us for seven years that we want it to be as merry as we can make it now," to which Gaston laughingly agreed.

I had caused a harpsichord to be placed in Francezka's room. To this she ran, opening it and dashing into a rattling air upon it. Her eyes were sparkling, the color had come back into her cheeks—her whole air was one of feverish gaiety. She was then eight and twenty years of age, but I think I never saw a more girlish looking creature. The years that most young women spend in going to balls and routs and suppers, and spoiling their complexions with rouge, Francezka had spent in the solitude and pure air of the country. She had all the verve, the freshness, of one to whom the world is still new, and youth looked out of her shining eyes. It was as if the other Francezka were laid away with her black Spanish costumes, and this Francezka were the Francezka who had stormed all hearts on the lake of Uzmaiz and at the fêtes of Radewitz.

I could only remain with them a few minutes, as the coming of King Louis was imminent. Francezka, too, had to rehearse for the play to be given that night, so both of us were hurried, but Francezka took time to say to me:

"We must have one of our old friendly interviews soon, Babache. That must you arrange for, if you have to neglect not only the king, but Count Saxe himself."

Two hours later the king, followed by a large suite, arrived. I was in command of the body-guard, and as such was presented to the king in the grand saloon, where all the great people were ranged to receive him. Louis XV was as handsome as ever and, I thought, less wearied, for he loved to be with Count Saxe.

I reckoned Francezka to be easily the star of the ladies present, and there were some of the most beautiful women in France in that saloon of Chambord, their jewels blazing under the waxlights. Nor was Gaston Cheverny inconspicuous among the gentlemen. He had the grand air as much as Francezka, and his adventures made him an object of respectful curiosity. The king conversed with him some time during the evening, and afterward sent for Francezka. She acquitted herself so well that she made all the women hate her. Monsieur Voltaire, who was not much noticed by the king, said if virtue could be made the fashion Madame Cheverny would have accomplished it.

On that evening began a veritable tempest of pleasure at Chambord, for I can call it by no other name. I can not say I enjoyed it. First, we had extra pages of honor, thirty of them, and I had as soon have had thirty extra devils on my hands. They gave me twice the trouble that my whole battalion of Uhlans did. Then I had to arrange the entire business of the hunting—everything, in short, outside of the castle, and Beauvais had charge of everything inside of it. I seldom got to my camp bed, next Count Saxe's room, before two o'clock in the morning, and I was at the stables every morning by daylight.

The first day's diversion was a grand *battue*. The *battue* was a magnificent spectacle in the forest, and was not over until late in the afternoon. Then, on the return to the castle, was organized one of those wild romps which were the amusement of the court. The gentlemen, in hunting dress, and winding their silver horns, chased the ladies through the vast spaces, the winding corridors, the crooked stairs of the castle, and when caught, the ladies forfeited a kiss, or a dozen kisses. The little devils of pages were the hounds. These, being acquainted with the multitude of turns and windings in the castle, ably assisted the cavaliers, and generally got a box on the ear for catching a lady, to which the pages responded by kisses on their own account. It was a very amusing sport, and would have been harmless if the ladies and gentlemen concerned in it had been angels. Francezka, to my surprise, took part in it, as in everything else,

but being full of art and finesse, was never caught except by one person, the aged Marshal Duc de Noailles, who was brave and gallant at the age of eighty. Gaston Cheverny excelled at this wild and gallant sport, and the ladies vowed there was no escaping him.

On the first evening of the king's arrival Francezka had a splendid triumph. Monsieur Voltaire gave *Nanine* in the theater of the castle, and Francezka was Nanine, somewhat to Madame du Châtelet's disgust, I fancy. And for the after piece was *The Tattler*, with the greatest cast the world ever saw: Francezka as Hortensia, Monsieur Voltaire as Pasquin, and Count Saxe himself as Clitander.

There were oceans of trouble about this play, and poor Beauvais was near wild, for Monsieur Voltaire was a troublesome manager, a troublesome actor, a troublesome guest, a troublesome person altogether. The play was given in that great yellow saloon, opening off from the grand staircase, where Molière first gave *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*, and where Lulli jumped from the stage into the orchestra to amuse Louis le Grand when he was bored with *Pourceaugnac*. Monsieur Voltaire was, I am sure, much harder to please than Louis le Grand, and Madame du Châtelet was harder to please than Monsieur Voltaire. The performance began at seven o'clock. The king paid the strictest attention to it, and even Madame du Châtelet, who was furiously jealous of every woman on whom Monsieur Voltaire cast his eye, was obliged to behave reasonably. Monsieur Voltaire was stage manager only in this play. The entire cast was good, but not one of the ladies and gentlemen could stand any comparison with Francezka. She was born to be in the very front rank of actresses; she could have stepped from the theater of the castle of Chambord on to the stage of the House of Molière and have won renown. She swayed the audience, an audience composed wholly of fine people, whose hearts are hard to reach, and whose souls are infinitesimal; she swayed them, I say, as if they had all been shopkeepers, and lackeys, and ladies' maids. As for the pages of honor, the little rogues did nothing but scream with laughter at the comedy parts and blubber vociferously at the moving parts.

The applause at the end of each act was deafening, the king leading off. When the play was over there was frantic hand-clapping, and shouts of "Brava!" succeeded by a general quiet, for the piece was yet to come in which Francezka, Count Maurice of Saxe, and François Marie Voltaire were to be the sole actors and Monsieur Voltaire sole author.

The whole world knows *The Tattler*, but only those who saw it done at the castle of Chambord on that December night can have any idea of the wit of the lines, the glow of the sentiment, the pure beauty of the acting. Monsieur Voltaire was great as an actor in his own immortal creations. Nobody except that impudent dog of a Jacques Haret ever dreamed of classing Monsieur Voltaire with any but the great of the earth, and Jacques Haret did it out of sheer impudence. I had no love for Monsieur Voltaire, but I can not deny his greatness.

The acting of Count Saxe was like everything else he did, superb. As for Francezka, I ever thought, as was said of the English poet Shakespeare, that she showed her art in her tragedy, but her nature in her comedy. The soft exquisite humor of her Hortensia can not be adequately described. She kept her audience, including the king, in a roar of laughter, and when, fastening her glowing eyes on Count Saxe, as Clitander, she said, in the most innocent sweet voice imaginable, that she had chosen him because he was "sober, sensible, constant and discreet," even I had to join the shrieks of amusement; and I never thought to laugh at Count Saxe.

I could see that the applause had got into Francezka's blood. She dearly loved a triumph, and she had one now. She was ever the most graceful creature alive and knew how to make what beauty she had shine, for I have ever said her taste, her grace, her charm and her wit were three-fourths of her beauty. At that moment, therefore, all these things, beauties in themselves, were most in evidence. Her eyes were luminous and had a kind of veiled brilliance. She was smiling—her mouth was not perfectly straight, and when she smiled there was a charming little curve and dimple in the left corner of it, which gave a piquancy to her eloquent face.

She had a tiny foot, and always wore the most beautiful shoes imaginable—and in some way, although she seemed careful not to show her feet, they were always seen. I glanced toward Gaston Cheverny. I was far back, leaning against the wall, that being my usual station, and he was one of a number of gentlemen for whom seats were provided, but who preferred to stand back of the ladies. I saw in his face his pride and love of Francezka. He seemed to me then more like the Gaston of former days than I had yet seen him. My heart warmed a little to him.

When the plays were over Monsieur Voltaire made a short speech. At that stage of his career he was very anxious to curry favor with the great, especially as he knew the king did not like him, but no matter how hard he struggled to be universally flattering, some tinge of his native sardonic humor would crop out in spite of him. For example, he complimented Francezka so highly that there was nothing left to be said of the other ladies, and of course the perfunctory praise he gave them did not make them love him any the better. Then he made a slight though obvious allusion to Francezka's long waiting for her husband's return, comparing it to Penelope, which would have been mightily effective if he had not said something further about her bringing conjugal faith into fashion, which was an allusion some of the ladies could not stand at all, and caused Count Saxe to laugh in spite of himself. But on the whole, the affair passed off with the greatest brilliance.

The next thing was the great supper in the hall. Although this was Beauvais's affair, I was not without responsibility. I had devised a new and splendid form of candlestick for these royal suppers. These candlesticks consisted of a hundred Uhlans, the handsomest men in the battalion, in uniforms of silk and velvet, holding their lances upright, and from the lance-head blazed a flame of perfumed wax. Then there were those damnable little pages. It was their duty

to hand the wine at supper and to attend the more distinguished guests; but they were certain to play some pranks if I were not on hand to stop them. So I always remained through the supper.

The king's table was set as always, on a dais raised a couple of inches from the floor, under a royal canopy of crimson velvet with golden *fleur-de-lis*. To this table he invited Francezka, besides Madame Villars, Count Saxe, the Duc de Richelieu and one or two others, but he did not ask Monsieur Voltaire. I heard a subdued murmur of speculation as to whether he would be asked or not, and I never yet saw Monsieur Voltaire discomfited that it did not give the assemblage a wicked delight. Madame du Châtelet was already beginning to fume and scowl. It was said that sometimes she and Monsieur Voltaire quarreled to the point of throwing dishes at each other across the table, but they were always ready enough to quarrel with the world on each other's account.

Francezka, escorted by the Duc de Richelieu, walked the length of the great hall, herself a picture of grace and dignity. On her way she passed Monsieur Voltaire. He stood on one leg, like a stork, his eyes blazing with rage, chagrin, hope and expectancy. He had not yet been invited to the king's table, although Francezka had, and this man, who was capable of writing *Nanine*, and *The Tattler*, was in acute misery because he had not been asked to take a seat at a certain table! I saw compassion for him in Francezka's face, and thought she might contrive to help Monsieur Voltaire. She curtsied low to the king, ascended the dais at his invitation, and then I heard her say, as if to herself:

"I must leave room for Monsieur Voltaire," and at the same time flashed from under her long lashes a look so full of meaning, so droll, and saying at the same time, "I pray your Majesty will excuse my awkward country ways."

The king burst out laughing and told Count Saxe to fetch Monsieur Voltaire, which he did. I never saw a creature so pleased as Monsieur Voltaire was at this. I am sure Molière did not show the same childish delight when Louis le Grand divided with him the celebrated wing of chicken.

Supper over, the king led the way to the ballroom, where, from a great orchestra of twenty-four violins, an ocean of music rose and fell like the waves of the sea. Count Saxe walked the *minuet de la cour* with Francezka. It seemed as if this night was to be her apotheosis, for everything seemed designed to show her off and to give her the first place. Monsieur Voltaire did not dance, but overwhelmingly grateful for the ruse by which Francezka had got him to the king's table, could not be too assiduous to her or praise her wit too highly. From that hour she was queen at Chambord. It was after midnight that the ball began. I remained only an hour or two, and then went to my rest, but not in my chamber next Count Saxe's for once. I had not had much sleep for several nights, so I betook myself to the stables, where, upon a pile of oats designed for the morning's feed, I wrapped myself in my cloak and fell into a deep slumber.

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## CHAPTER XXIX

### AS HAVING NO PAST

I awakened, as always, at five o'clock, and on inquiring of the grooms and stablemen, found that the music at the castle had just ceased. The ball was barely over in time for the stag hunt, which was to take place at sunrise. It was as yet pitchy dark, but the scene of commotion almost equaled the ball, for there were one thousand horses to be fed. However, I rather liked that sort of commotion; the cheerful stamping and champing, as the horses, a hundred at the time, were led out of their stalls into the sharp December air, with the stars still shining in the blue-black vault of heaven; the tussle at the great watering troughs, into which fifty men and boys pumped continually; the fresh smell of the hay, at which the horses sniffed joyfully; the steady combing and dressing of the creatures—all going on with a kind of orderly confusion.

The hunters were attended to first—something over a hundred of them—and when the chief huntsman winded his silver horn, at the first paling of the stars and flushing of the sky, and the fierce, sharp yelping of the dogs in leash was heard, troops of ladies and gentlemen in hunting dress came down the great staircase into the courtyard. Among them was Francezka. I myself swung her into her saddle. She looked as radiant as if she had not been traveling, rehearsing, acting and dancing for many hours before. As she gathered up the reins, she cried:

"Ah, Babache, this is to live! I have just changed my ball costume for my hunting dress. It is almost as good as those days before and after Uzmaiz!"

Action and adventure were in her blood, and she was a strong woman, capable of much exertion, but I had never seen in her before this thirst for pleasure.

And to the music of silver hunting horns and the bell-like baying of the dogs, I saw the hunt, with the king, Count Saxe and Francezka, sweep across the Bridge of the Lions and along the broad, bare, leafless avenue, into the forest, in the cold, bright December sunrise.

I had not time to join the hunt, and, busy with many duties, scarcely noted how the day slipped away. Toward three o'clock I saw a solitary figure—a woman—ride across the bridge. No one else had returned, nor was the hunting party expected until sunset. I recognized Francezka's form and surmised that, fatigued with all she had undergone, she had slipped away from the hunting party and had returned to the castle to rest.

About five o'clock, when the short winter afternoon was closing and the sun was red, I received a message from Francezka. She desired to see me in her apartment. I climbed the stairs to her rooms at once. Her door was opened for me by old Elizabeth, Peter Embden's sister, who, I remembered, had been Francezka's waiting maid long ago on that journey from Königsberg. Elizabeth was harder featured than ever, and rheumatic, so she told me; but Francezka had a way of keeping those about her, who had once loved her, even if they became a little infirm.

Elizabeth went to tell her mistress. I looked about the room, which had a sweet aroma of Francezka about it, something which made the place appear as if meant for her and her only. The harpsichord was by the fireplace—Francezka was always devoted to the harpsichord and played more skilfully upon it every year. There was her book of music, copied with her own hands, her embroidery frame, and the book she had been reading lay on the table, by which sat a chair with her scarf thrown over it, and a delicate perfumed handkerchief was where she had dropped it.

A fire burned upon the great hearth, and already, the room was shadowy with the coming dusk. There were two windows, one looking out upon the marvelous spiral staircase, the other facing the sunset. In a moment or two, Francezka came out of the inner room. She wore a white robe and her hair was neither dressed nor powdered, but braided down her back, as the Brabant peasant women wear theirs. Perhaps it was weariness on her part, but never was there a creature more changed than she, from the radiant being of the night before. She looked sad and dispirited, and the welcome in her eyes when she greeted me reminded me painfully of how she had met me in the sorrowful years of the past. But I chose not to see too much of this.

"It is the greatest good in the world to me, Madame," I said, "seeing you so happy and so admired. Any woman on earth might have envied you last night."

Francezka smiled a little—she was then seated and looking into the fire.

"Yes, I ever loved to act, and I felt no more tremor last night, although I was to play opposite the great Monsieur Voltaire himself, than in those days, so long ago, when I played opposite the baker's boy in the garden of the Hôtel Kirkpatrick. It would have been better for me, perhaps, if I had been born to earn my living as Mademoiselle Lecouvreur did, on the stage, than to have been the heiress of the Capellos."

I was thunderstruck when she said this. I had never known her to express a wish for any other station in life than the one to which she had been born; and, indeed, she had no reason to do so. And while I was wondering at this speech, she astounded me still more, by saying calmly:

"It is, however, God's mercy that I can act; for I am acting a part every hour and moment of my life—the part of a happy woman—when I am of all of God's creatures, the most miserable."

She spoke quite softly and composedly, but I guessed readily that she had sent for me that she might have a friend to whom to pour out her overcharged heart.

"Gaston Cheverny," was all I could say, meaning that he must be the source of her misery.

"There is no fault at all to be found with my husband. He is kindness and devotion itself. He likes the world—so do I. He is gallant, is complimentary to the ladies; I would not have him otherwise. I have only to express a wish, and, if possible, it is fulfilled. Yet, I am the wretchedest of women. For, Babache, I believe—now, do not laugh at me, Babache, and say it is my Scotch blood that makes me superstitious—but—but—" she paused a moment, and then said in a whisper, "I believe Regnard Cheverny's soul has got into Gaston Cheverny's body."

Francezka was always more superstitious than she was willing to allow, but this wildness of delusion staggered me, especially in a woman of her otherwise strong sense.

I hesitated a little before answering her. I saw in her bright and restless eyes, and in the varying color upon her cheek, that she was speaking under the influence of powerful emotion.

"Madame," said I, "I must speak plainly. It amazes me that a woman of your excellent understanding should stoop to the folly of what you have just said."

Francezka showed no anger. She only replied:

"It is not so idle as it sounds. I mean, that although Gaston himself has returned to me, he seems to have Regnard's nature. Remember, I knew them both well. Do you recollect how the old dog, Bold, saw the change in Gaston? Well, one day about a month after you left Capello, the dog, which had shown a steady dislike to Gaston, flew at him—flew at his master whom he had loved so well. Some hours after, I went to my husband—he was standing on the terrace—and said:

"'You must have worried the dog, I never knew him to attack any one before.' 'He will not attack any one again,' replied Gaston. 'I thought it best that he should be put out of the way, and to spare you the knowledge I had the dog drowned an hour ago.' I can not express to you, Babache, my feelings at this. I do not know what I did, or what I said, but that, without hat or mantle, I rushed to the lake, below the Italian garden—I seemed to know by instinct that it was there they would drown him. Some stablemen were then dragging the poor drowned creature—



my dog—my Bold—out of the water. They were frightened at what they had done, when they saw me. I retained my senses enough to say nothing before those men,—I, Francezka Capello, unable to reprove mere stablemen for the destruction of a creature dear to me for years!

"I fled to the Italian garden; I was in an agony of terror, as well as grief. I repeated to myself, over and over again, 'It was but a worn-out old dog—Gaston did it in mercy to me—' I tried, amid all my distress, to reason with myself—to present Gaston's cause. 'It is a trifle,' I said, but some inward voice told me it was no trifle, but a matter of the greatest moment to me. Suppose he should turn against me in the same way? I know not how long I sat there; it seemed to me not a quarter of an hour, but it was a long, long time.

"Presently, I saw Gaston approach. He seated himself by me; he took my hand; he begged my pardon a thousand times over; he swore to me it was solely for love of me he had it done—that the dog might have turned against me as against him, and that apprehension had made him have the poor creature drowned; and knowing I would object, he had it done secretly—and much more of the same kind. He was so affectionate to me that my heart was melted. He told me he would have the dog buried anywhere I wished and see it decently done himself. I said I would have my poor friend buried under the statue of Petrarch—and it was done that very afternoon. We left the garden, hand in hand, like lovers. I never felt more in love with my husband than at that moment—and yet—and yet—there was a concealed fear of something—I know not what—in the very depths of my soul. To think that he should cherish such a design and that I should not know it; that he should be so utterly indifferent as he had been, ever since his return, to a creature once so dear to him as his dog! This is one of the mysterious and unexplored places in Gaston's nature since his return, that gives me the strangest, the most terrifying sense of unfamiliarity with him—and he, the tenderest, the most devoted husband—a man I should admire even if I did not love him."

This story, told with Francezka's dramatic fire, impressed me more than I would have admitted to her; and however wildly fanciful her idea was that Regnard's soul had got into Gaston's body, yet, had not I, myself, felt that strangeness she described toward the man I had lived with as a brother for more than seven years? But I was not guilty of the folly of encouraging her in the unfortunate notions of which she was already possessed.

"It is a pity, Madame," I said, coolly, "that you seem to attach more consequence to a dead dog than to a living husband, whom you admit you would admire even if you did not love. There is a troublesome old dog who shows malice. You are inordinately fond of this old dog. Your husband, tenderly anxious for you, has the brute drowned without your knowledge. For that you call yourself the most miserable creature on earth."

Francezka's face turned scarlet with wrath. She half arose from her chair, looking at me in surprise and anger. I bore her scrutiny calmly, my heart reproaching me somewhat for speaking as I had done of my old friend Bold.

Francezka seated herself in her old pensive attitude, her cheek upon her hand, and there was a long silence, broken only by the dropping of the embers, and occasionally a faint cry from afar. The hunting party had returned, and the chase was proceeding merrily in the great corridors below.

"Babache," she said presently. "One of the chief joys of love is the living over of past delights. But Gaston and I live together as having no past. One of the cruelest things about the wound in his head is that he had long periods of forgetfulness, and certain parts of his life are absolutely blotted from his mind. And one of those great gaps is everything that pertained to our courtship and marriage. He remembers the summer in which we were married, but could not recall the date until I told him. He also remembers that we were secretly married and why. By some strange misfortune—perhaps because his mind was always groping after me in those sad days of wandering, both in mind and body—all else—those days when we were boy and girl traveling through Courland; those evenings on the island in the lake—all, all that pertains to our love is lost to him. He does not even remember why *O Richard, O mon roi* was so dear to us. It was not strange that he should lose his voice for singing, but it is so sad that he can not remember any of those songs which interpreted our hearts to each other.

"I tried at first to bring it all back to his mind, telling him the whole sweet story so deeply written on my heart, but it only distressed him with the sense of his lapse of memory. He told me it was his chief agony when he was recovering, in those intolerable days in the isles of the East, when he knew not how or why he came there, trying to recall this lost happiness; he never forgot me, but he could not remember, for a long time, whether we were married or not."

"Those cases are common enough," I said. "I once knew a soldier—a common man—who was shot as he was in the act of demanding the countersign. He lingered months between life and death, but lived, with just such an impaired memory as you describe. At last a surgeon, experimenting on him, raised a piece of broken bone from his skull—straightway he recovered memory and understanding, remembered the countersign—remembered everything, except what had occurred from the time he was shot until he was finally cured. Of that time, he was confused and inaccurate, just as Gaston Cheverny is. And, Madame, those risks are taken by all soldiers alike, and if you can not accept this you should have married one of the gentlemen of the long robe, who stay at home and never risk their carcasses in battle."

I thought Francezka would truly have scratched my eyes out at that, so did her own dark and eloquent eyes blaze. But she said nothing, for, at bottom, there was in her, as in Madame Riano, as I have often said, a strong good sense that always had the last word. Nothing—nothing could

make her disbelieve in the true and hearty devotion I bore her—so much was plain. Presently she spoke again.

“It is hard—is it not—that I should see so much of Regnard, whom I ever hated, in Gaston whom I ever loved? I see, as I tell you, Regnard’s soul shining out of Gaston’s eyes; I see Regnard’s nature speaking in Gaston’s words and acts. Brothers often grow the more alike as time goes on, but why could not Regnard have grown like Gaston, instead of Gaston like Regnard?”

“Has anything been heard of Monsieur Regnard lately?” I asked.

Francezka shook her head.

“I have asked Gaston repeatedly why he did not contrive to communicate with his brother; an officer in the army of the East India Company can not be lost, as my Aunt Peggy says, like a needle in a haystack. But Gaston shows a strange indifference that is unlike his nature. He was ever the most affectionate of brothers, nor was Regnard wanting in love for him—yet, Gaston does not like me to mention Regnard to him—except—”

I saw she wished to tell me all—all these painful things that preyed upon her heart in secret, and that might be dispersed by letting daylight in upon them.

“Except what, Madame?”

“You remember, Babache, that Regnard paid me great court the year of my marriage, when he knew nothing of it. I think the most painful interview of my whole life was when I was forced to tell Regnard that I was his brother’s wife; and most painful it must forever be to Regnard. Well, I thought it my duty to tell Gaston about it—and—and—”

She hesitated and then went on, her face coloring warmly.

“He laughed at it—he made me tell it him twice running. It was mortifying to me and cruel to his absent brother; but he roared with laughter, and referred to it more than once, until I asked him not to speak of it again.”

“And he has not again spoken of it?”

“Oh, no. He always respects my wishes, when he knows them. But he does not seem to have any instinctive knowledge of them. He often troubles me by not knowing what I wish.”

“In short, Madame, Gaston Cheverny has not second sight, as the Kirkpatrick’s have.”

Francezka smiled a little at this, but I saw that her uneasiness was deeply rooted, and I had not succeeded in tearing it away.

Just then there was a shout of laughter, the winding of a hunting horn, echoing afar, a sound of scurrying feet up the great stairway. Involuntarily we both turned toward the window looking out upon it, which the reddening sun made bright. Madame Fontange, one of the beauties of the court, rushed up the stairway laughing and disheveled, her hoop awry, and her satin robe half torn off her back by a rascal of a little page, who had seized her and who was calling loudly for Monsieur Cheverny. Gaston Cheverny, wearing his hunting dress, his horn in his hand, was close behind, covering the great steps two at a time. As he dashed past the window and his laughing face flashed by in the blaze of the setting sun, I saw, as I am a living man, Regnard Cheverny’s soul shining out of Gaston Cheverny’s eyes. Francezka so expressed it, and I can not express it any better or any differently. I drew back from the window into the room, and avoided Francezka’s searching glance.

“You have seen it, I see,” she said calmly. “Do you wonder that I am a wretched woman?”

I gathered my wits about me, dismissed the strange impression I had got, and said, rising:

“Madame, you have, after long waiting, had the husband of your first youth restored to you. He is not precisely what he was when you lost him. All men change, and most women. You, perhaps, are the same, but Gaston Cheverny is not. He is, however, devoted to you, high-minded, honorable, of the same strong intelligence, but with seven years of hardship and adventure behind him. All that you have told me is fanciful. Dismiss it, I beg of you, from your mind. Let not a dead dog and a look of your husband’s eye, and an inconsiderate fit of laughter wreck your happiness.”

“Do you believe all you say, Babache?” she asked, coming up to me with a world of entreaty in her eyes.

I am not a gallant, but I am enough of a gentleman to tell a lie, if necessary, to a lady, and to swear to it until I am black in the face; so I said:

“I swear it to you, Madame, on my sacred honor.” And all the time I saw and knew that Francezka had reason to be wretched with Gaston Cheverny as he now was.

I left the room, and did not again see Francezka until that evening when there was a masked ball for the king.

## THE BOAR HUNT

It was bruited about the castle that Madame Cheverny was ill and could not appear, which did not in the least surprise me, after our interview that afternoon. In the midst of the ball, however, Francezka appeared, perfectly radiant, and repeated her triumphs of the night before. I hoped from this that our conversation had dissipated all those strange ideas concerning Gaston which had lodged in her mind.

If Francezka was admired by the men, Gaston certainly succeeded in captivating the ladies. Many of them declared that any woman could have been faithful to a man as charming, as witty, as gallant, as Gaston Cheverny. The king retired from the ball at midnight; he had grown lazy by that time, but the gentlemen and the "flying squadrons" kept going for two hours more, although they had to rise at daylight, to go upon a great boar hunt, and this was the second day and night they had been pleasure-driven. Francezka was among the last to leave the ball room, and if a sparkling face and smiles and laughter are any indication of a heart at ease, Francezka was a happy woman. But she was, also, a consummate actress.

Next morning, daybreak saw us assembled in the courtyard. The hunting of the wild boar is serious business. There is a song about the

*—firm seat and eagle eye  
He must acquire who would aspire  
To see the wild boar die.*

For my part, I dread to see many men and any woman take part in this dangerous sport. I especially wished that Gaston Cheverny, with his infirm right arm, and Francezka, with her adventurous spirit, should not be of the hunting party; but I had no doubt they would be, and my apprehension was verified; for both of them were in the great courtyard when the company was mustered.

The king, being lazy and brave—for most lazy men are brave—frankly declared he meant only to be a spectator of it. So did the old Marshal de Noailles. There are some men who have attained the highest form of courage in being able to refuse danger. There are others who fear to refuse it; others again, who despise it; and a small remnant by whom the zest of danger can no more be resisted than the drunkard can resist wine. These last are always found in a boar hunt.

The preparation for this sport shows that it is seriously regarded. All who take part in it must eat lightly on that morning. The host, before starting, gives such instructions as he thinks necessary, especially to listen for a shout of "Take care!" Also, he warns all present against the boar when he seems to be dying or even dead, for the brute is capable of doing great damage in the very article of death. The final words spoken on these occasions are always solemn—

"And may God have us in His keeping."

Although ladies were allowed upon this hunt, and were even armed with hunting knives, it was not expected, nor indeed permitted, that they should take an active part in it, being mostly spectators, and especially keeping at a safe distance when the final tussle with the boar is on. A full-grown boar, luckily, is bulky and noisy and not swift of foot, as reckoned with other animals, so it is quite possible to see the sport without being in actual danger. I was in hopes that this was Gaston Cheverny's plan, but found I was mistaken. He had acquired considerable dexterity with his left arm, and carried his boar spear in his left hand with both ease and strength. But the command of a left arm gained by a man after he is thirty years of age is not to be depended upon in an encounter with the most savage animal of which we have any record.

We set out as soon as the king appeared, and proceeded to a place in the forest, about two leagues away, in which the beaters had found for us a *marcassin*, or wild pig, which would afford very good sport, and not so dangerous as a full-grown boar. But the lovers of danger in our party—and there were many—I knew, would never be satisfied with hunting the pig, and there would probably be some dangerous business before we returned to the castle. We had dogs of the ancient boar-hound breed, black marked with tan, as large as mastiffs, and with prodigious ears. Our *piqueurs* were especially trained to hunt the boar, and it was inspiring to see how both men and dogs took to their work. We reached the forest before the sun was high. The woods had already been beaten by boys with *kiaki*—a kind of wooden clapper, of which the name describes the noise. The *marcassin* had been found, and the dogs put in at once. The whole thing could have been over in fifteen minutes, but the *piqueurs*, with great skill, managed to make a whole morning's amusement out of it, and it was noon before the joyous *hallili* of the huntsman's horn proclaimed that the wild pig was dead.

All the ceremonies of presenting the boar's head were gone through with before the king, in an open glade in the forest. Although it was December, the day was mild and the sun warmed the brown earth and the crystal-clear air. A great fire was built, and from it a royal dinner was served by a regiment of cooks. The rude tables were covered with embroidered cloths, and gold and silver plate abounded. It was a feast worthy of Francis the First. Monsieur Voltaire was at the dinner, along with others of the guests who did not take part in the hunt; and the notary's son kept the whole company in a roar with his witticisms. Francezka was in high spirits, and had the honor of much notice by the king, by Count Saxe, and Monsieur Voltaire, to say nothing of the Dukes of Bourbon and Richelieu.

It was two o'clock before the dinner was over, and then the major part of the company made

ready to return to the castle. The word was quietly passed around, however, that for those who wished real work, there was an old "solitary" which had been placed, and those who liked might go after him. The ladies were not informed of this, and when Count Saxe, and half a dozen others remained, it was supposed that they would have nothing more dangerous or exciting than another chase after a *marcassin*. When the cavalcade, including the king, were riding off, Francezka turned in her saddle, and, looking toward Gaston, who remained behind, cried:

"Remember, you have but one good arm and part of another one—so, having so lately got you back, let me not lose you now."

"I promise to take all care," Gaston answered. The look they exchanged, full of genuine affection, made yesterday's interview seem dreamlike to me.

There were not more than a dozen of us in this party, including Count Saxe and Gaston Cheverny. It was not for me to warn Gaston against what we were about to engage in. Count Saxe gave him a gently civil intimation of the danger ahead, but Gaston took no note of it, and was as eager as any one to find the "solitary." We put off into another part of the forest. I rode by Gaston Cheverny's side, and privately resolved to remain there. We talked together and I found him more like the old Gaston than I had yet seen him.

This foolhardy expedition was exactly like Gaston; but when I saw the quickness of his eye, and the alertness of his movements, I concluded he could take care of himself better than any of us supposed. It was about three o'clock when we got to the circle in which the beaters had surrounded the old boar. He had been hunted twice that season and had escaped both times. Huntsmen are very superstitious, and they had got the notion that if this boar were not killed in the third chase, there was something unearthly about him. This was fostered by some laughing remark of Count Saxe about the hunt of Thibaut of Champagne, and the "solitary" being the ghost of a boar. His ghostship, however, was soon disproved, by finding his huge tracks in the soft brown earth.

Soon the dogs gave tongue, and the chase was on. We could get occasional glimpses of the boar's vast bulk, as he made prodigious speed for so heavy an animal through the thickets. There was a small ravine through which a brook flowed, and for this the boar made. We could hear him crashing through the underwood, and he got across the brook. The dogs and huntsmen followed quickly after him. The dogs found the scent again immediately after crossing the water, but on reaching a large, open plateau above the ravine, they suddenly and inexplicably lost it. There were no tracks to be seen, and the boar must have turned off either to the right or the left, in a fringe of thick underwood that bordered the ravine. The dogs ran aimlessly about, keeping up a dismal yelping of despair. The huntsmen encouraged them by horn and voice, but were evidently chagrined by this singular disappearance. My master twitted them with stories of the ghostly hunt of Thibaut, but it was plain the huntsmen thought it no joking matter. They succeeded in putting the hounds into the thicket on the right, but, although there was an infinity of barking and yelping and whining, it was plain that the scent had not yet been found.



Meanwhile, as we were standing about this open space, in the clear December afternoon, listening to the dogs and men, Gaston Cheverny dismounted, and ran a short distance toward the thicket on the left. Count Saxe called out to him to keep a firm hold on his spear, which he held in his left hand. He turned to answer, when we saw, breaking from the cover directly

behind Gaston, the boar, his horrible mouth wide open, his tusks grinding and churning blood and foam, his eyeballs like coals of fire, and his bristles rising like a mane.

We all involuntarily shouted "Take care! Take care!" but no one of us was closer than thirty yards to Gaston or the boar either. As the creature raised himself to bury his tusks in his enemy, I saw Gaston, with the quickness of thought, drop the spear from his left hand, and drawing his hunting knife with his right hand, plunge it once, twice, thrice in the boar's throat. These powerful thrusts were the beast's deathblow, but he was still capable of killing Gaston Cheverny, had there been the least remission in those tremendous strokes with the hunting knife. By that time we were on the ground close to him, and I was about to use my spear when Count Saxe motioned me away. The boar, although still fighting savagely, was clearly overmastered; a dozen dogs were tearing at him from behind.

It would have been an outrage to interfere then, so we stood ready for emergencies, while Gaston, with the assistance of the dogs, despatched the huge beast. The huntsmen were all on hand then, and when, at last, the great carcass fell over, they surrounded Gaston with shouts of delight. He was covered with blood, but had not a scratch on him. He could not explain how the boar got so close to him, except that he was listening to the dogs in the distance, and the first thing he knew he was looking down the boar's throat. The next thing he remembered, was the plunging of his knife into the beast's throat, time after time. Like all truly brave men Gaston did not try to make out the accidents of good fortune as deliberately planned by him. But seldom have I, in war or sport, seen greater courage, address and strength than Gaston Cheverny showed on this occasion.

Count Saxe congratulated him warmly, reminding him of that other occasion when by his quickness he had passed himself off for Count Saxe, and so had earned for himself seven years of captivity, but had saved Count Saxe. Gaston received this and all our congratulations with becoming modesty. He turned away from our praises to give liberal drink-money to the huntsmen, who were delighted beyond reason at the killing of the old "solitary," and that, too, without a man or a dog being injured. It was then determined to return to Chambord, whose distant towers glowed in the sun.

Gaston, as may be imagined, was in a very wretched condition. He washed off some of the blood in the little brook, threw away his handsome hunting coat, borrowed a jacket from one of the huntsmen, and we set off at a smart pace toward the castle.

From the moment I had noticed that Gaston Cheverny wielded his knife in his right hand, my mind had been in a whirl. That right hand and arm, so swift, so sure, so steady, so strong, was the one he had said was so weak, that he could not even guide a pen with it, nor play the guitar. Francezka's parting warning had been to remember the infirmity of that arm—and then—

We rode along briskly the two leagues to the castle. Gaston Cheverny was naturally elate, and even in the bravest of men, there is an exhilaration, a sort of intoxication at finding one's self alive when the chance of death was very imminent. I fell behind all the party, and was rallied by Count Saxe on my taciturnity, and accused of jealousy of Gaston Cheverny's prowess, but I let him have his joke.

When we reached the castle, we went to our rooms. Mine was the little one I speak of, next to Count Saxe's bedchamber. When I was washing off by candle-light the stains of the chase—for it was then after dark—my master entered. He looked at me significantly, going through with Gaston's motion of plunging the knife into the wild boar; he knew the story of that weakly arm. I looked back at him and shook my head; I could no more understand it than he.

We hastened down to the state supper in the great dining hall. The king was indisposed or lazy, so his Majesty did not appear, and I think the party was the gayer thereby. There was but one long table in the dining hall, and at it were seated above a hundred persons. I was near the foot, and Gaston Cheverny, in honor of his exploit, sat next Count Saxe. Francezka sat about midway the table, with a gallant on each side of her.

The aspect of happiness she had shown since the night before remained with her. She wore both powder and patches, and according to the fashion, there was a tinge of rouge upon her cheek. She was magnificently dressed in a pale green gown, the color of water-cress, embroidered in silver, and wore a splendid head-dress. I thought I had never seen her more truly the great lady. She knew, of course, what Gaston's adventure had been, but I suppose he had not given her all the particulars.

The supper was singularly merry, perhaps owing to the absence of the king. The singing at the table was entirely of hunting songs; the little rascals of pages took good care to keep Gaston's glass filled—he was a great hero with them then. When it came time for the toasts, Count Saxe arose and after drinking to the king and the ladies, gave Gaston Cheverny's health, together with an account, as only Maurice of Saxe could give it, of the exploit of the afternoon.

I knew not at the time if Count Saxe intended it, but he seemed to lay the greatest stress upon Gaston's feat being performed with the right arm—as if any man could have done it with his left one. My master told me afterward, that it was quite involuntary with him mentioning Gaston Cheverny's right arm, that he meant rather to avoid it, but, to his chagrin, the words kept coming up in his speech, he, all the while, feeling that it sounded foolish to mention that it was done with the right arm.

I glanced toward Francezka while Count Saxe was speaking. There are some inconveniences attached to sharpness of intellect—nothing escapes it. As Count Saxe proceeded with his recital, I saw that Francezka had seen at a glance the mystery in it. I had no apprehension of any show

of agitation on her part, she was a woman of too flawless courage and too good an actress, but she would not suffer the less. I saw a shadow come over her eyes as I had seen a black cloud darken the face of the lake at Capello. I saw her hands tremble slightly. She looked steadily at Count Saxe, and avoided the gaze of Gaston Cheverny which became fixed on her. He had taken more wine than usual. His steady glances, although smiling enough, were calculated to draw her gaze toward him.

At last, as if forced against her will, she raised her eyes to his, and in them was doubt and despair. All this went on secretly as it were, amid the talking, the laughing, the singing of a hundred persons at the supper, with a band of more than forty musicians twanging in the music gallery above us. Soon after this, the company arose and went into the grand ball room. The *branle* was at once formed, and Francezka, as on the night before, led it with Count Saxe. She showed not the slightest tremor or agitation, but I knew of the wild beating of her heart under the lace and jewels.

Gaston Cheverny was the hero of the hour. He danced, too, and the women, who all adore brute courage, wooed him with their smiles and arch glances. I saw him dancing with Madame Fontange, whom both Francezka and I had seen him chasing up the great staircase two days before. Francezka was dancing in the same *minuet de la cour*. There is a part when, to languorous music, the gentlemen, with their plumed hats, sweeping the ground, bow low to the ladies. As Gaston Cheverny did this, I saw suddenly flash into his eyes that look of Regnard Cheverny's. Francezka saw it, too. It was the very end of the minuet.

In the confusion that followed the breaking up of the dance Francezka disappeared. In a little while there was a hue and cry raised for Madame Cheverny. Messengers were sent after her. She was in her rooms, and sent word back that she was fatigued with the chase that day, and as she was to rehearse next day as well as act, she begged to be excused. When I heard this message repeated, I left the ball room, and going up the great spiral staircase, open to the moonlight which flooded the earth, stopped opposite Francezka's window. The sky was studded with glowing stars, and a great silver lamp of a moon made the night radiant. Below, lights were shining from every window, and the swell of the music kept rhythm with the beat of the dancers' feet. But there, at that lonely height, all was still as death. Francezka's window opened. It was not four feet from me.

"I knew your step," she said.

I remained silent and awkward. My heart, aching for her pain, had brought my body thither, but after I had reached her, I knew not what to say. She still wore her splendid gown and all her jewels.

"I know all about that *coup de grâce* with his right arm," she said in a voice quiet, though trembling a little. "Do you wonder that I am always in terror of something, I know not what? One thing is certain. I do not know Gaston any longer. He is as strange, even stranger to me than he is to you. Also, he is as kind, as devoted to me as ever he was. I hate and dread mysteries—and I am enveloped in one."

She continued looking at me for a moment; I still knew not what to say. Then, she softly closed the window. I remained out there on the stairs until the December cold forced me to seek the fire in the great hall below. There sat Gaston Cheverny, among a number of gentlemen. He was the gayest, and might be adjudged the comeliest, gracefullest, most accomplished man there, excepting always Maurice, Count of Saxe.

The next day, the king left Chambord, but the other guests stayed on for a full fortnight.

It often occurred to me, that Chambord in its palmiest days, of Francis the First with his Ronsard, of Louis le Grand with his Molière, never sheltered more wit, beauty and courage, than it did at this time. The wit and courage of Count Saxe are too well-known to need comment, and the same may be said of the Duc de Noailles, Marshal Boufflers, Monsieur d'Argental, and others then at Chambord. As for beauty, combined with wit, Francezka Capello led all the ladies, but there were other gifted ones. Even Madame du Châtelet, in spite of her everlasting algebra and Newton's Principia, was not an ill-looking woman. Madame Villars and Madame Fontange were charming. The presence of these ladies and others, all remarkable for spirit, was ever after alleged as the reason for the disappearance of the celebrated pane of glass, in one of the windows of the yellow saloon which was used as the theater.

On this window pane Francis the First had scratched this ungallant distich:

*Toute femme varie,  
Mal habile qui s'y fie.*

One night, Monsieur Voltaire read this aloud, and kept the whole saloon in a roar over his idea of what Francis the First would have said were he to come to life then. His tirade was interrupted by Francezka and Madame Villars seizing him, blindfolding and tying him with their scarfs and putting him for punishment into a sort of improvised stocks. In vain Monsieur Voltaire called upon the gentlemen to assist him; he was left helpless in the hands of the ladies, who maltreated him severely. Monsieur Voltaire's evident enjoyment of his punishment at the hands of these captivating creatures brought about one of those domestic tempests which frequently disturbed the atmosphere of Cirey and of the "Petit Palais" on the isle of St. Louis.

It was said that in the heat of the discussion next morning about it, Madame du Châtelet threw Newton's Principia at Monsieur Voltaire's head, and he made a narrow miss by dodging. Certain it is, they had high words, and Madame du Châtelet in a huff left the castle some days before

Monsieur Voltaire; and it was noted that he seemed much gayer and more gallant after the lady's departure than before.

Meanwhile, the pane of glass mysteriously disappeared. I have no doubt it was accidentally broken by one of those little rogues of pages of honor, who was afraid to acknowledge his fault; but Monsieur Voltaire chose to put it on the ladies in general and on Francezka in particular, and there was great sport and much wit over the matter. Francezka was the gayest, the airiest, the most daring of the ladies; she never more said a single word to me concerning that misery which she had represented to me as eating her heart out; and though as kind, as tender to me as ever, she rather avoided private conversations with me—for which I was glad.

Gaston seemed to me to become more like the Gaston of old than he had been, but my heart did not warm to him, nor could I forget that incident of his killing the wild boar. He made no allusion to this whatever, and continued to use his left arm only. I would have given much to know what he supposed we thought of it.

Of course, the play was high, on the nights when there were cards, and Count Saxe enriched several of his guests by his losses. He lost magnificently, and won with the greatest modesty.

During this fortnight the consumption of victuals, wine and horse feed was something stupendous, but my master never grumbled about the charges. Luckily, he had Beauvais to look after the wine and victual, and myself to look after the horse feed.

At last came the day of departure. The servants and baggage wagons were sent on some hours in advance and at nine o'clock in the morning the company all set out together for Blois, where they were to disperse. Gaston Cheverny rode with the gentlemen, and Francezka traveled alone in her coach. She bade me an affectionate good by and begged me to come with Count Saxe to the château of Capello, in the spring. Apparently she was happy and composed, but I knew she was neither. There was a searching and anxious expression in her eyes which, in spite of her smiles and gaiety, showed me a heart disturbed. That night every soul in the castle was in bed a little after nine o'clock, and I think we all slept a week.

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## CHAPTER XXXI

### THE BITTERNESS OF DOUBT

My master went to Paris for Christmas, to our old lodging at the Luxembourg. The king was very anxious for Count Saxe to be permanently lodged at Versailles, but my master, by a variety of clever subterfuges, declined to exchange his splendid and spacious apartments at the Luxembourg, for the dog-hole which was all they had to offer him at Versailles. Two thousand persons were lodged in the palace. It may be imagined what sort of lodging much of it was; mere closets for ladies of quality, a landing at a stair's head curtained off for gentlemen. My master was offered a couple of rooms under the roof for himself, myself and Beauvais. Count Saxe responded that he was not a snail, and required a lodging somewhat larger than himself. He was told that a bishop was satisfied with one room and an alcove for his valet. My master replied that a bishop was a holier man than he. The fact is, my master did not like the everlasting restraints of Versailles. Some malicious people said he preferred Paris on account of Mademoiselle Verières, the actress. God knows. There are always people who can ascribe the worst motives to the simplest actions.

Francezka and Gaston Cheverny spent the winter at the Hôtel Kirkpatrick. Madame Riano had gone to England then, but only made a brief stay. From thence she went to Rome, and Monsieur Voltaire declared it was for the purpose of getting the pope to put himself at the head of the Kirkpatricks to march to London and wrest the throne of England from the Hanoverians for Prince Charles Edward Stuart. At all events, news reached Paris that Madame Riano had fallen out violently with the Holy Father, as she had done with the Kings of France, of Spain and of England, and was breathing out fire and slaughter against the Holy See.

It was to be expected that Francezka and Gaston should live with splendor and gaiety at the Hôtel Kirkpatrick, and they did; this, too, upon a scale that probably made Francezka's father, the prudent old Scotchman, writhe in his grave. Balls, masques, concerts and ballets followed each other with dazzling swiftness. A temporary theater was built in the garden on the site of the one where Francezka had made her first dramatic adventure with the baker's boy, under the management of Jacques Haret. Here were given the best comedies of the day, with Francezka as the star. Monsieur Voltaire was often in the cast, and some of his own masterpieces were given at this theater for the first time.

Nor was he the only wit who frequented the Hôtel Kirkpatrick. Not only wits, but scholars like Maupertius, the two Bernouillis, many poets and literary men, Cardinal de Polignac and Marquis de Beauvau, soldiers like Marshal Count de Belle-Isle, his brother the Chevalier, the Prince de Soubise, the Prince de Clermont, and others, made Francezka's saloon shine. She was the extreme of the mode and her saloon became the rage. Monsieur Voltaire went about

threatening the ladies, that if they did not look out, Madame Cheverny would bring virtue into fashion. But there was no panic among them, although it can not be denied that Francezka was admired for her virtue as for her wit, and, with such a fortune as hers, neither would be likely to remain under an eclipse.

She was in the greatest demand at Versailles, too, and danced in all of the finest ballets given for the king. She had her English curricule, and with her English *joki* standing up behind her, was often seen driving in the Bois de Boulogne. She dressed superbly, and was altogether glorious. The same felicity seemed to attend Gaston. The Duc de Richelieu took a violent fancy to him, which, of course, recommended him to the king. He was of all the royal hunting parties. The king loved to hear him tell of his adventures in the East, which were extremely interesting, and Gaston was ever eloquent of tongue. He was gallant to the ladies, and much run after by them, but I do not think he ever gave Francezka cause for a moment's jealousy. In short, if two human beings might be supposed to walk the sunny heights of joy, it was Francezka and Gaston Cheverny.

Paris was seething during the winter of 1740-41, which preceded the outbreak of the first Silesian war on the part of the great Frederick of Prussia against the greater Maria Theresa of Austria-Hungary. France and Paris were dragged hither and thither, Cardinal Fleury, a peaceful old man, urging that France remain neutral; Marshal Belle-Isle, a genius in war, insisting that France must side with Prussia. Naturally, the military element wanted war, and when it seemed likely that Cardinal Fleury would keep France at peace, Marshal Belle-Isle went about storming that this old parson would ruin everything. It was understood that no active military operations would take place until the late summer, so the gay dogs of officers and the merry ladies who danced in the court ballets, and flitted about like butterflies in the sun, had to make the most of Paris then. The pace at which they went was killing—and Francezka and Gaston Cheverny were not the last in this race.

One day, shortly before the carnival, there was a great fête at the Louvre, and the courtyard was filling up with magnificent coaches. The finest of all was a gilt coach superbly horsed with six horses, with four outriders in the crimson and gold of Francezka's liveries. She sat alone in the coach, waiting her turn to drive up to the great entrance. She was, as always, dressed with splendor, and as she sat back in the coach, fanning herself with a beautiful fan that slightly moved the white plumes of her head-dress, I made my way through the crush and spoke to her. She had one of her lackeys let down the coach steps, and I stood on them while speaking to her. I congratulated her on her splendid equipage.

"It is very superb, I know," she replied, but a shade came over her face. "Is it not trying, Babache, to have one's lightest word taken seriously? Here is the story of this coach. I had a handsome one—fine enough for any one—but happening to say one day, in pure carelessness, that I should like to have a gilt coach, Gaston orders this one for me, secretly, and it arrives this morning, to my astonishment. Moreover, in order to do it, Gaston, himself, went without some horses he needs. He is by no means so well mounted as he should be."

"At least, Madame," I replied, "few wives have your cause of complaint."

I noticed then some dissatisfaction in Francezka's face; the pursuit of pleasure, night and day, is bound to leave its marks on the strongest frame, and the best balanced nerves. I suspected Francezka was in the mood to find fault.

"Yes," she replied to my last words, "few wives can complain of too great complaisance on the part of their husbands. But it is, surely, not a comfortable way to live, for a woman, to watch and weigh her words with her husband, lest he act upon the most lightly expressed wish. Depend upon it, Babache, a great passion is a great burden."

Francezka said this to me—Francezka, less than a year after Gaston's return. Oh, how strange a thing is a great passion after all!

In a minute or two more, I heard Gaston's voice over my shoulder. He was standing on the coach step below me, and looked smiling and triumphant.

"I see you approve of this equipage," said he to me. "It is not unworthy even of Francezka."

I agreed with him; admired the horses—six superb roans—and then the time came to move on, and I sprang to the ground, while Gaston stepped into the coach.

As I walked away, I reflected that the money to pay for the gilt coach and six came out of Francezka's estate. But Gaston, I knew, had the management of it; and it is not the husband of every heiress who is satisfied to keep indifferent horses for himself, and provide his wife with six for her coach, and four for her outriders, to say nothing of the finest coach in Paris.

But was Francezka happy? Her air that day did not indicate it, but rather weariness, and disgust of the pleasures she followed so assiduously. It is never a sign of happiness to follow pleasure madly.

In walking and riding about the streets of Paris I kept a lookout for Jacques Haret. I had not forgotten my promise to give him a good beating the next time I saw him, and felt conscientious scruples that I had not done it when I had met him the spring before. But the news he gave me on that occasion was so startling it put my duty out of my head. I had not the slightest doubt that some time or other he would drift back to Paris. Fellows of Jacques Haret's kidney can no more keep away from Paris than cats can keep away from cream.

So I watched for him, and one evening, soon after the carnival, as I was walking along the Rue



St. Jacques, I came face to face with Jacques Haret. It was dusk, but the lamps which hung across the street had not yet been lighted. Jacques Haret was stepping debonairly along, whistling cheerfully *Sur le pont d'Avignon*. I noticed, even in the dim February evening, that he was shabbily dressed, but bore the marks of good eating and drinking on his face. When we came face to face he involuntarily halted. I stepped up to him and said:

"Where will you take it?"

The fellow knew I meant the beating I had promised. I continued:

"Here in the public street, where we shall be recognized, arrested, and Count Saxe will see that I come to no harm, while you will cool your heels in the Châtelet prison where you belong; or in the Luxembourg gardens which are deserted now, and where I can beat you more at my leisure, but not the less hard?"

"In the Luxembourg gardens," said the scoundrel, coolly, after a pause.

I have ever admired Jacques Haret's courage and I admired it now. He knew I meant to thrash him, that I had the strength to do it, and that if he killed me Count Saxe would tear him limb from limb. He had lost that nice honor of a gentleman, which would make a man accept death rather than a blow, but reasoning philosophically, as a rogue often does, concluded to take his punishment as best he might. Kings often reason thus, but few private men do.

We marched along the dark street, Jacques Haret in front, I behind. He resumed his whistling of *Sur le pont d'Avignon*.

There were no lanterns inside the Luxembourg gardens. When we reached the spot light streamed from many of the windows of the palace, but it did not penetrate the far recesses of the gardens, behind the tall hedges and the summer houses. I motioned Jacques Haret to the farthest corner, behind a grove of dwarf cedars. Once there I began stripping off my coat, and told him to strip off his coat also.

"Now, Babache," said this fellow, remonstrating, "don't be unreasonable; it is unworthy of you. Here I have come with you quietly, and I could have made a devil of a row, except I grew tired of dodging you through the streets of Paris; but really I don't think it good for my health to take your blows with nothing but my shirt between your fist and my skin."

It was difficult to be serious with Jacques Haret, although his crimes were serious enough, of which his behavior to poor old Peter and the unfortunate Lisa were crimes in every sense. Nevertheless, I made him take off his coat, which he did, grumbling excessively. And in the shadow of the cedars I gave him as sound a beating as any man ever got on this planet. All the while I was thinking of the satisfaction it would give Francezka to know of it.

He had made no active resistance, although he skilfully avoided some of my hardest blows. He uttered no oath, nor prayer, nor remonstrance; he had long known that some time or other I should give him a beating, that I was physically twice the man he was, and in the way he took his punishment he exemplified that singular form of courage in which a rogue often surpasses an honest man.

When I was through with him he presented a very battered appearance.

"I am now in the class with Monsieur Voltaire," he said, as he wiped the blood from his nose. "He has had two beatings so far and so have I. But faith! the world is so unjust! It will not sympathize with me as it did with Voltaire. However, he was beaten by the Duc de Rohan's lackeys, while I was pummeled by a prince, a Tatar prince born in the Marais."

"I ought to have run you through," I said, "except that I am squeamish about taking human life. Now, go your ways, Jacques Haret, but if you do not want this dose repeated keep out of my way."

He bowed to the ground.

"My dear sir," he said, "I never sought your society in my life, nor even that of your master. The inducement which you offer me to keep out of your way is sufficient. I hope I shall never see you or your cross eye again."

As I turned and went into my lodgings I felt how futile a thing I had done; the dog should have been killed, but as I said, I am squeamish about taking human life. However, I knew that such punishment as I had given him would mightily please Francezka, and I determined to take the first occasion of telling her.

It came the next night, when there was to be a great mi-carême rout and ball at the Hôtel Kirkpatrick. I did not usually go to these balls unless commanded by my master, and he was a merciful man; but on this night I went with him of my own free will. It was a very splendid company, and few there were not above my quality. Madame Riano, who had just returned from Rome, sparkled with diamonds like a walking Golconda; but Francezka wore only a few gems, but those exquisite. She looked very weary; the months of gaiety and dissipation she had led were telling on her. Gaston was a noble host, attentive to all, and not forgetting the kind and quality of respect due to each.

When the rout was at its height, and the floor of the dancing saloon crowded, I had occasion to pass through the great suite of rooms, which were nearly deserted for the ball room. There was a little curtained alcove, in which either the lights had been forgotten or had been put out, and from that place, dark and still, although the wild racket of the ball was going on in the same building, I heard Francezka's voice calling me. I went in and found her sitting on a sofa.

"I am so very tired," she said. "I came here for a moment's rest, not thinking I should be fortunate enough to have a word with my Babache."

I sat down by her and told her the story of my beating Jacques Haret. I could not see her face in the darkness, but she clapped her hands joyously.

"I am afraid I want vengeance to be mine instead of the Lord's," she cried with her old spirit. "I am like my Aunt Peggy in that. Thank you for every blow you gave Jacques Haret. I shall tell Peter, but not poor Lisa. That girl has the nature of a spaniel. I believe she reproaches herself for having thrown in his face the silver snuff-box Jacques Haret gave her."

I knew that Francezka and Gaston had been invited to visit Chambord in the spring, and I expressed a wish that they might come.

"No," replied Francezka, relapsing into the weary tone she had first used. "We have declined the invitation. I am so tired of balls and hunting parties and ballets, and everything in the world, that I feel sometimes as if I wished to be a hermit."

I listened in sorrow, but hardly in surprise. It is as true as the forty-seventh proposition of Euclid that to give a human being all he or she wants of anything is to cure all liking for it. Francezka's natural taste, however, was so strongly in favor of gaiety and splendor, and she had tasted so little of it, that I thought satiety would spare her longer than most. There was a pause, after which I said:

"You will be missed at Chambord, but Capello is so sweet in the spring and summer."

"Yes," answered Francezka, "but even there I shall not be able to escape people. Do you remember how they flocked there when Gaston came home? And I verily believe half Paris means to follow us to Capello. Gaston has invited many persons to visit us."

"Against your wish Madame?" I asked in surprise.

"Oh, no, he never does anything against my wish, but he never knows what my wish is—since his return. Before he went away he always knew my wishes in advance. Sometimes he combatted them. We had our little wrangles from the time we first met and loved, and often showed temper, one to the other, until his return. Now we never have any wrangles. As soon as I express my will Gaston immediately makes it his will. That, you will grant, is an unnatural way for two merely human creatures to live."

"At least not many are afflicted with that form of unhappiness, Madame."

"It is a form of unhappiness, though. I dare not express the smallest disapproval of a thing or a person that Gaston does not seem to take it as law. The most casual wish is fulfilled, but, as I say, he has not the clairvoyance of love with all this devotion. He might have seen that I longed for rest and quiet at Capello, but he did not. Now, if I express the slightest distaste for company there he will withdraw every invitation. To have one's lightest word taken seriously, and one's smallest inclination influence the conduct of another person, is highly uncomfortable."

I knew not what to say. Francezka's grievance appeared to me to be a strange one though not wholly unreasoning. But I saw what gave me the sharpest pain. It flashed upon me that she no longer loved Gaston Cheverny. As if she had the clairvoyance that she complained of Gaston's lacking, she continued:

"Yes; outwardly, all is the same; inwardly, all is changed. I have a growing sense of strangeness with my husband. At first I felt the same intimate friendship I had felt during our short married life, but by insensible degrees I have come to feel that I do not know Gaston, nor does Gaston know me. It is an appalling feeling."

"I should think so," I replied, and fell silent.

It was all strange and painful to me. I knew Francezka's faults well, but I had never seen in her any deficiency in good sense. Even her obstinate hanging on to the belief that Gaston was alive when the world believed him dead had been justified, and her course had been most practical during it all. But this new disgust at life, this fault-finding with her husband, seemed to me lacking in reason. Yet there was undoubtedly something changed in Gaston's personality. As this thought passed through my mind she answered it, again as if by intuition:

"You remember, Babache, you always told me you loved Gaston from the moment you beheld him. But you don't love him now. You have not loved him since his return."

Oh, what a misfortune it is to be too quick of wit!

Francezka then rose and said to me:

"I return now to my guests. Think not that I have uttered to any other human being what I have said to you. But I have looked my last on happiness. I do not love you any the less, Babache. As you were my chief consolation in that dreadful time of waiting, so now that Destiny has played me this shabby trick in giving me back the shadow of happiness and withholding the substance, I still look to you for comfort. Remember, whoever wearies me at Capello, you never will. Not since that first hour we met in this old garden, when you saw me in the beginning of my career of headstrong folly, have I ever beheld your honest face without pleasure."

I returned to the ballroom, and the first thing I saw was Francezka dancing the wildest *branle* I ever saw with the most graceful abandon imaginable. I concluded that all women were singular beings, in which my master agreed, when I made the observation to him; and some persons said that Count Saxe had great experience with the sex.

## CHAPTER XXXII

### IN SNUFF-COLORED CLOTHES

I was much on the road between Paris and Chambord for the next month. It was true that Francezka and Gaston had declined with thanks to visit Chambord that year on account of returning to Capello, but they very cordially invited Count Saxe to be their guest some time during the summer, and Count Saxe, of course, included Captain Babache. About that time we knew for a certainty that Marshal Belle-Isle would take an army of observation across the Rhine in August, and my master would be given command of the vanguard. So it was arranged that on our way to Fort Louis, where the crossing was to be made, we should make a détour and visit Francezka and Gaston at Capello.

It was in April that one afternoon, being at leisure, and my master being of the king's party at Choisy, I was minded to go to the Hôtel Kirkpatrick. Madame Riano was there then, and I wished to pay her my respects.

I was shown into the garden where, in the very same sweet, retired spot where I had first seen Francezka, Madame Riano and Francezka were sitting. I was invited by a lackey to join them. As I passed through the rooms I saw old Peter, who came forward and spoke to me, as he always did, and I was glad to see the honest old soul. I asked him if he was pleased at the prospect of seeing Capello soon.

"More than I can say, Monsieur; my Lisa is there, and she is longing to see her poor old uncle again. Yes, Monsieur, glad shall I be to see Capello again. I was born and reared close by—" He stopped; I knew that he meant Castle Haret.

In the garden sat Madame Riano and Francezka. Madame Riano had on her head a great hat with a thousand black plumes on it, and she clutched her huge fan menacingly at my approach, although I must say she had ever treated me with condescension. I think she reserved her fire for great guns, like Count Saxe and the pope.

Francezka looked cheerful and even gay. She was by no means steady in that sad condition of mind in which I had found her the night of the rout. But it seemed to me an evil sign to find her always brightening at the prospect of a change, showing thereby that nothing suited her. I remember she wore a pale flowered silk, with sleeves that fell back from her elbow, and she, too, had a hat on, but it might have been worn by one of Watteau's shepherdesses. Both the ladies gave me kindly greeting. Madame Riano began to ask me something about Chambord.

"I suppose Count Saxe will have forty or fifty of his ladies there this bout," remarked this terrible old Scotch woman.

I replied respectfully that I did not understand her allusion.

"Fudge!" she cried; "you are an infant, forsooth! You know less about Maurice of Saxe than any man in Paris, I warrant."

Francezka's laughing arch glance showed me that I could expect no help in that quarter, so I prepared to defend myself.

"Madame, you are quite right," I replied. "I do know less than any man on this planet about Count Saxe and the ladies."

"You would not be the better for such information," tartly responded Madame Riano. "He will run after anything in petticoats, a milliner's apprentice or the queen's sister, it is all one to that Maurice of Saxe."

"Madame," said I, rising, "I perceive there is a dampness in this garden. I do not look like a delicate flower, but I am and I feel myself obliged to leave."

"Sit down," answered Madame Riano; "you are an honest fellow, and I'll not mention Saxe again except to say that he is the wildest, craftiest, boldest roué—"

I was going, but Francezka, looking warningly at Madame Riano, said to me, with something softly trenchant in her voice:

"Remain, Babache."

At that moment I looked up and saw Gaston Cheverny walking across the grass in company with Jacques Haret.

If the devil himself had appeared he would not have created greater consternation than Jacques Haret at that moment. Madame Riano sat bolt upright, brought her fan to the charge, so to speak, and glared at Jacques Haret. She knew the story of Lisa. Francezka's face grew scarlet with wrath; she had never thought it worth while to forbid Jacques Haret her presence, never dreaming he would dare to face her. Had he been alone, or with any one but Gaston, I feel sure she would have ordered him from her presence, but to do that when he came by Gaston's invitation and in his company was more than even Francezka was prepared for. Gaston, I

thought, looked a little embarrassed, though not fully conscious of the gross affront he was putting on Francezka in bringing Jacques Haret there. It occurred to me there was some compulsion about it. As for Jacques Haret, there was a laughing devil in his eye, which showed that he thoroughly enjoyed the situation. He was dressed from top to toe in Gaston's clothes—a suit of snuff-colored clothes and a purple waistcoat, which I had often seen Gaston wear.

"I found this gentleman sunning himself in the court of the Palais Royal," said Gaston pleasantly, "and not having met him since my return, I brought him home that we may talk at our leisure and recall the old days when he was a lad at Castle Haret and a playmate of mine and my brother's. We have already had a long conversation and some good wine in my study."

It was the first time since Gaston's return that I had heard him mention Regnard's name. Francezka gave Jacques Haret a cold bow. I do not think Madame Riano would have hesitated to order him out of the garden, but she never could resist the charm of battle. Jacques Haret was worthy of her steel in a wordy war, and the temptation was too great for this militant lady. There was here a commingling of tragedy and comedy such as I had seldom seen. I took it that poor old Peter had not seen Jacques Haret during the time he had spent in Gaston's rooms. Madame Riano opened the action by saying sternly:

"What are you doing here, Jacques Haret?"

"Come to pay my respects to your ladyship," was Jacques Haret's undaunted reply. "Think you, Madame, that I could remain long in Paris and fail to pay you my devoirs?"

Madame Riano, giving no attention to this speech, scrutinized Jacques Haret, and then said abruptly:

"How comes it that you are so well dressed? I know those clothes are not your own, for I know all about your way of life, Jacques Haret."

Gaston Cheverny looked a little uncomfortable at this. For all of Madame Riano's sharpness, she had not recognized the clothes as belonging to Gaston. Jacques Haret, however, replied with a grin:

"I borrowed them, Madame, when I was last in Brabant from your old friend, the Bishop of Louvain. The old gentleman kept this costume for occasions when he goes to Brussels *incog.* and plays Harun-al-Rashid."

Madame Riano chose to be highly offended at this levity.

"How dare you, Jacques Haret, say such things about a man of God!"

"A man of God do you call him, Madame? Who was it, I should be glad to know, that sent word to the bishop unless he stopped preaching directly at a certain lady she would tweak his ears for him the next time she met him?"

This staggered Madame Riano, for she had once actually sent such a message to the bishop, who had the prudence to desist from his fulminations against her. But like a crafty general, Madame Riano was able to collect her scattered forces, after an onslaught, and still make trouble for her adversary.

"I do not know to what you allude, and I should still like to know where you got those clothes."

"Madame," began Gaston, in great confusion, but Jacques Haret was not a whit confused and took the words out of Gaston's mouth:

"From the wardrobe of Gaston Cheverny just half an hour ago."

Madame Riano looked a trifle abashed, but rallied when Jacques Haret said impudently, taking out meanwhile a snuff-box of Gaston's,

"And I put on all my finer feelings with these clothes. I have become a gentleman once more; but if you object to them—the clothes, I mean—I will take them off, every rag of them, here on the spot. The prospect doesn't alarm you, does it? You, Madame, a representative of the Kirkpatricks, ought not to be frightened by a little thing like that."

Francezka had sat still, trying to master her indignation at Jacques Haret's presumption. But that was no restraint on him. He began, in a pleasant tone of old acquaintanceship, to Gaston:

"I suppose, Gaston, you and Madame Cheverny travel often to Versailles?"

"Not very often," replied Gaston, recovering something of ease now that the conversation had turned away from the unlucky clothes. "Madame Cheverny has danced in several ballets before the king, and has been to the masquerades, but neither of us is made to be a hanger-on of courts."

"Good for you," replied Jacques Haret. "I knew something of the folly of that in my childhood. My father was a born hanger-on of courts, as you express it. Some wag declared that my father's epitaph ought to be: 'Here lies one who was born a man and died a courtier.' Your old Peter can tell you some stories of how my father chased after kings."

This mention of Peter disgusted us all, and was an indignity that Francezka could not stand. She rose, and casting back at Jacques Haret one of those looks which, on the stage, had thrilled all who saw her, she walked like an insulted queen across the green sward toward the house. Madame Riano followed, for once disdainfully silent. Jacques Haret looked about him with the most innocent air in the world.

"Now, what have I done to offend the ladies?" he asked.

"I don't think you are exactly a favorite with *these* ladies," replied Gaston, smiling.

I listened in wonderment. Was it possible that Francezka had not told Gaston the story of Lisa? For he acted as if he knew nothing of it. However, I had my views about Jacques Haret's presence there, so I rose, too, and bade Gaston a ceremonious adieu, and said nothing at all to Jacques Haret. It did not discompose him in the least, and again taking out his snuff-box, Gaston Cheverny's snuff-box, he began to hum *Sur le pont d'Avignon*. That air seemed to be a favorite of his. I had gone about half way across the garden, and it being large, I was out of sight and sound of Gaston and Jacques Haret, when I heard Gaston at my heels, calling "Hold!" I stopped and he joined me, with an expression both of amusement and annoyance on his face.

"I am in a damnably awkward place, Babache," he said. "Of course, we all know about Jacques Haret, but the fellow has been permitted in all the houses where the Harets have been received for generations. You remember well, after that expedition to Courland, he stayed some time at the Manoir Cheverny and went to the château of Capello whenever he liked. So, meeting him to-day, as I say, in the gardens of the Palais Royal, and bringing him home with me—in fact, asking him to come and sup with us, for his entertainment always pays for his supper, you perceived the reception he got from my lady Francezka and Madame Riano. Now, what am I to do?"

"You forget," I replied, "that in those days when Jacques Haret stayed with you at the Manoir Cheverny, and with your brother Regnard at Castle Haret, it was before that scoundrelly business with poor Lisa, old Peter's niece."

"That is true," he answered reflectively. "It was a very atrocious thing, as you say, but it is a common enough story. The girl was a village girl; little more than a peasant."

I own I was full of disgust when Gaston Cheverny spoke thus. How different was this from the high-souled, chivalric Gaston Cheverny whom I had known, and who treated all women with the consideration of a Bayard! I said, however, coldly enough:

"Perhaps you have forgotten that old Peter shared his wages with that villain of a Jacques Haret—his wages, think of that! And in his own poor house sheltered the fellow. I must say that seldom if ever in my life have I known such treachery as Jacques Haret's."

I walked on, but Gaston kept step with me along the graveled paths, through the bright flower beds and under the green arbors of the garden. His face had changed completely. All amusement had vanished, and in its place was an expression of perplexity, and even fear. At last he stopped me under an arbor already covered with the young green leaves of a climbing rose.

"Babache," he said, "I am pledged to have Jacques Haret sup with me; that is the truth. You have great influence over Francezka. Will you not endeavor to reconcile Francezka to me for receiving him?"

"No," I replied; "I have not lived so long without learning to keep from meddling with affairs between husband and wife. But who cares for offending Jacques Haret? I gave him a sound beating myself not a fortnight ago in the gardens of the Luxembourg."

We were standing still in the arbor, and the mellow afternoon light showed me every line in Gaston Cheverny's comely face. Nothing that he had yet said or done had made me feel so like a stranger to him—to Gaston Cheverny, with whom I had lived in the closest intimacy for seven years—as his attitude on the subject of this rascally Jacques Haret. I could but study his countenance, which was always vivid and full of expression. The thought flashed into my mind that Jacques Haret possessed some hold over Gaston Cheverny; perhaps some secret of those lost years. Jacques Haret at Paris had known in advance of the very day and hour of Gaston's return to Brabant. This thought troubled me.

Gaston remained, looking down reflectively, and considering Jacques Haret with far more seriousness than I had ever seen any one consider him before.

"One thing is certain," I said; "Jacques Haret would forego supping with the king's majesty himself for a supper as good and a couple of crowns. I will say this of that rogue and thief of other men's honor—I never saw that human being who was so little awed by names and titles as Jacques Haret." Which was true, showing what virtues may yet subsist in a rascal.

Gaston Cheverny's face changed as if by magic.

"Why did I not think of that before!" he cried. "My dear Babache, it is not for nothing that Count Maurice of Saxe has you at his elbow day and night. That ugly head of yours contains useful ideas. A thousand thanks to you; I will this minute put your advice to proof."

He turned and walked back to where Jacques Haret was. I went away, leaving my respects for the ladies. I thought Francezka would rather not see me after the painful episode in the garden. And I made not the slightest doubt that the money for the supper and a couple of crowns thrown in would buy Jacques Haret off, as I had said, from supping with all the kings in Christendom.

## A DEVIL'S IMP

I could but suspect that a coldness had arisen between Francezka and Gaston over Jacques Haret. When I saw Francezka driving in the Bois de Boulogne, or sitting, surrounded by admirers, in her box at the opera or the theater, Gaston was no more with her, but whether it was mere accident or not, I did not know. One thing I did know, however—that Jacques Haret had a blossoming of prosperity. This I heard at the Green Basket, the celebrated café near the Pont Neuf, which was frequented by all the brightest spirits in Paris, and where I had the audacity to appear sometimes, not in the character of actor, but of audience. Here it was told among the news of the day that Jacques Haret actually had a lodging of his own, after having slept for many years anywhere he could get a bed free, or if not a bed, a chair. I heard, moreover, that he dressed well and kept a servant. At the same time it came to my knowledge that Gaston Cheverny was selling two of his five horses, and did not play any more. This put the suspicion in my mind that Gaston Cheverny was supplying Jacques Haret with money. Whether this were true or not, I soon had a confirmation of my surmise, that Jacques Haret possessed some species of power over Gaston Cheverny.

Monsieur Voltaire was in Paris then for a few weeks and in a lodging of his own, instead of being at Madame du Châtelet's house in the Isle of St. Louis. Madame du Châtelet was at Cirey. It was understood that one of the periodic storms had taken place at Cirey, which meant that Monsieur Voltaire would sojourn a while *en garçon* at Paris, until the divine Emilie grew penitent or bored, and should send an express for her divine François. The immediate cause of the present quarrel was that Madame Riano had in Monsieur Voltaire's presence called Madame du Châtelet a hussy, and Monsieur Voltaire had not resented it. His excuse was that Madame Riano, having vanquished the Kings of France, Spain and England, and the Holy Father at Rome, he, Voltaire, had very little chance with her, and so declined to take up the gage of battle. Madame du Châtelet had flown at him like an angry hen. There had been words between them, and even a few dishes and a plate or two. Hence, madame was at Cirey, monsieur at Paris.

It was much the fashion when Monsieur Voltaire was at Paris in his own lodgings for venturesome ladies of quality, who were acknowledged, or aspired, to be wits, to descend upon him by twos or threes, with masks and dominos, and thereby divert both themselves and him extremely. He was the only man in Paris to whom the ladies accorded this honor openly. They did it not to my master, because everybody knew that Count Saxe was too, too charming. But Monsieur Voltaire was already losing his teeth, and looked sixty, though not yet fifty, and had begun to give himself grandfatherly airs, whether in obedience to Madame du Châtelet, or because he was no longer young enough to play the gallant, I know not.

One day, about three weeks after the scene in the garden of the Hôtel Kirkpatrick, I got a note from Francezka saying that she and Madame Villars, the one who had kissed Monsieur Voltaire publicly the year before, wished me to escort them to his lodgings that evening for a visit, and asking me to be at the Hôtel Kirkpatrick at nine o'clock.

It was a bright moonlit May evening when I arrived. Two sedan chairs were in waiting for the ladies and a red domino and mask for me, in which I looked exactly like the devil. Madame Villars came tripping down into the courtyard, wearing a white domino and mask, followed by Francezka in a black and silver domino and mask.

I could not see Francezka's face, and so did not know whether she looked well or ill, happy or unhappy. And she was naturally so accomplished an actress that she might defy any one to find out her real feelings, if she wished to disguise them. On this evening she chose to appear very gay and merry, laughed with Madame Villars, joked with me, and sprang into the sedan chair with the airiest grace imaginable.

We set off, the ladies in their chairs, I walking by their side, and the object of many jeers and gibes from the irreverent, whom we passed, as I made my way encumbered with the skirt of the infernal red domino, which I held knee-high.

We reached Monsieur Voltaire's lodging, a fine one in the Rue St. Jacques, with a garden at the back. The porter, who was used to such descents, grinned enormously, and let us pass into Monsieur Voltaire's apartment. The saloon was on the ground floor at the back and opened into the garden, now all sweetness and freshness. The saloon was a fine, airy room, lighted with wax candles, and in the middle, around a table on which were wine and books and verses scribbled on scraps of paper, sat Monsieur Voltaire, Gaston Cheverny and Jacques Haret!

The sight nearly knocked me down. Monsieur Voltaire had always despised Jacques Haret, and I had never known him to amuse himself with Jacques Haret's wit, or to countenance the fellow at all. But here the two sat, as jovial as you please, and Gaston Cheverny between them! I glanced toward Francezka. She was standing with her hand on the back of a gilded chair, and she had pulled the sleeve of her domino down so that her hand, a delicate and beautiful one, once seen, not to be forgotten, was hid. But there was not a tremor about her. I judged that she had summoned all her courage and all her matchless powers of acting to carry her through this scene where she had so unexpectedly found herself. I knew it was impossible that she should not be in a tempest of rage with Gaston for his continued association with Jacques Haret, which was so great an affront to her, and Francezka was not the woman to take an affront coolly. She gave no sign, however. Of us, it was easily seen that two of the masks were ladies, and my large shoes, showing under my domino, revealed that I was a man.

Monsieur Voltaire rose, his glorious eyes flashing with mirth and pleasure, for he loved the great, he loved the flattery of women, and he knew that only ladies of the highest quality would dare to visit him in that manner. Gaston Cheverny and Jacques Haret rose, too, and all bowed profoundly to the newcomers.

Madame Villars had not lived in Paris without having seen unexpected and awkward meetings between husband and wife, but Francezka and Gaston passed for such patterns of devotion that she thought it an occasion for harmless merriment. She exchanged a glance and a whisper with Francezka, which meant that both of them should maintain their incognito by keeping silent. To all of Monsieur Voltaire's fine speeches of welcome, therefore, they returned only demure curtsies and seated themselves quietly on the sofa.

Gaston Cheverny was not a whit behind Monsieur Voltaire in his compliments. Jacques Haret looked keenly at us, and it flashed through me that he alone suspected who the ladies were. But he said no word.

"Well, Mesdames," cried Monsieur Voltaire, "since you will not favor us with the sound of your voices, we will proceed with our affair, which is not a private one, but concerns that most public of all things—a lawsuit. Behold a poet trying to get a foothold of land for himself on this earth! You remember the German poet, who describes the first of his race, complaining to Jupiter that in the general scramble among the sons of men the poets had got nothing at all. To this Jupiter replied: 'While thou wert rhyming and star-gazing the strong and the cunning seized upon the inheritance of the world. Not one single acre remains wherewith to endow thee. But, in recompense, come and visit me in my own heaven whenever thou wilt; it is always open to thee.'"

The ladies applauded this sentiment by clapping their hands and blowing airy kisses to Monsieur Voltaire, but still remained perfectly silent.

"Come, gentlemen," continued Monsieur Voltaire mischievously, "the ladies do not know that we are present. Let us proceed. Here is the map of Brabant; show me, if you please, where the Honsbrouck line runs through this forest."

I then knew that the lawsuit he alluded to was the celebrated one of Honsbrouck, in which Madame du Châtelet had great concern, and which Monsieur Voltaire ultimately won for her. And this, too, accounted for Gaston Cheverny's and Jacques Haret's presence, as both of them were born and reared within sight of Honsbrouck.

Gaston Cheverny and Jacques Haret both bent over the map. Jacques Haret, taking a pen, began to draw a line upon the map.

"This," he said, "is the line of the brook; you see it skirts the estate of Castle Haret, once mine, then the property of Monsieur Gaston Cheverny's brother, Monsieur Regnard Cheverny, who sold it for a large sum of money. By the way, Gaston, has it ever occurred to you that your brother may be dead, and that his properties may be yours?"

"No," replied Gaston, "because my brother's agent in London still administers the property."

"But the agent may be a rogue, and may administer it for himself," said Monsieur Voltaire.

"Perhaps," replied Gaston, nonchalantly, "but as my brother and I took different sides in 1733, we became estranged, and whether one dies or lives matters nothing to the other. But the brook, Jacques, runs this way."

He took the pen from Jacques Haret's hand, and as clearly and steadily as ever I wrote for Count Saxe, Gaston Cheverny drew a line across the map with his right hand.

"I should not be surprised, Gaston, if you entirely recovered the use of your right hand and arm," said Jacques Haret, fixing a penetrating look upon Gaston Cheverny.

Gaston threw down the pen with a look of absolute terror upon his face. His action had evidently been involuntary. I was stunned by it, and I saw a tremor pass through Francezka's frame. Gaston, however, soon recovered himself.

"Yes," he said, "perhaps the use of it may come back, but I shall never be able to write with this hand. It is, however, no great matter, because I have learned to write tolerably well with my left hand."

"That's not my opinion; worse, or more awkward writing I never saw," was Jacques Haret's answer, "and I believe you can write perfectly well with your right hand when you choose."

From the first hour I had met Gaston Cheverny in the old prison of the Temple I had ever found him hot-headed to a fault. He was one of those men to whom an impertinence is the greatest of injuries. This remark of Jacques Haret, made in a taunting manner, was enough in the old days to have got a blow for him from the fist of Gaston Cheverny. No such thing now, however. Gaston only turned and flashed out for a moment upon Jacques Haret, who looked at him with a singular smile, and then Gaston by an evident effort, controlled himself and made no reply. All this was quite without meaning except to those who knew Gaston Cheverny as Francezka and I did, and as Jacques Haret did. Neither Monsieur Voltaire nor Madame Villars saw anything in it, except the most ordinary conversation. Monsieur Voltaire was smiling and glancing toward the masks.

"Ah, ladies," he cried, "if you would but disclose your charming selves we should have something more agreeable to talk about than the winding of a muddy brook, or the right of the Honsbrouck to kill game in the forest near-by."

Madame Villars waved her hand for Monsieur Voltaire to proceed, which he did.

"Gentlemen," he said, "since these ladies are not yet pleased to tell us who they are, let us, at least, try to entertain them by any means in our power. Shall I read to you my last letter from the King of Prussia, and my reply?"

Gaston and Jacques Haret at once agreed enthusiastically, and we, the masked, rose and bowed our approval. Monsieur Voltaire went to his *escritoire*, unlocked it, and took out two letters, which he read to us in that noble great voice of his. The one from the King of Prussia was a very good letter for a king to write. That man knew enough of mankind always to advance fine sentiments, and was a man, although a robber. Such was my master's opinion of Frederick, known as the Great.

In reply to this letter was that celebrated one of Monsieur Voltaire's, in which he says: "I respect metaphysical ideas; rays of lightning they are in the midst of deep night. More, I think, is not to be hoped from metaphysics. It does not seem likely that the first principles of things will ever be known. The mice that nestle in some little holes in an immense building know not whether it is eternal, nor who the architect, nor why he built it. Such mice are we, and the Divine Architect who built the universe has never, that I know of, told His secret to one of us."

Voltaire paused at this and rested his head upon his hand.

"How sad it all is!" he cried, his great gloomy eloquent eyes fixed upon the stars visible through the open doors.

There was a silence. Every person there, not excluding Monsieur Voltaire and Jacques Haret, hoped differently from this melancholy creed, but no one spoke until Jacques Haret said, with the gravity under which he disguised most of his flippancies:

"Monsieur, you can not say that the Architect of the Universe has told His secret to no one. You forget the Kirkpatricks, and especially Scotch Peg. She knows all the designs of the Supreme Being. He never dares to call a Kirkpatrick out of this world without sending a gentleman usher in the shape of a black knight or a white lady, or something of the kind, to find out whether it is agreeable to that particular Kirkpatrick to leave this world just then, I presume. There never was one of that family who did not consider himself entitled to much consideration from the Supreme Being. They are not all, however, so candid about it as Peggy is."

Considering this direct reflection upon Francezka, I looked to see Gaston Cheverny forget the presence of his host, forget the presence of the ladies, and knock Jacques Haret's impudent head off. Not at all. His face flushed suddenly, and he turned again in his chair, but said no word, although Jacques Haret's laughing face was thrust toward him.

Monsieur Voltaire evidently forgot, in the interest of his letters, the close connection between the Kirkpatricks and one of his guests, so he went on reading.

For my part, the impression I had got the afternoon in the gardens of the Hôtel Kirkpatrick, that Gaston Cheverny in some way was afraid of Jacques Haret, became a conviction. Francezka sat motionless. What thoughts must have passed through that quick, clear brain of hers!

Monsieur Voltaire finished his reading, and the ladies, to show their appreciation, rose and bowed again to him. I think he was amused by their silence, and it became a kind of duel between him and them to find out who they were, and it was not without interest to Gaston Cheverny. Jacques Haret, I was convinced, already knew them. By way of making them betray themselves, Monsieur Voltaire asked, with a mischievous gleam in his lustrous eyes:

"What ladies of the great world, think you, gentlemen, are remarkable for *esprit*?"

At that Madame Villars ran forward and tapped him smartly with her fan by way of rebuke.

Gaston Cheverny mentioned several, as did Monsieur Voltaire. Both of them included both Madame Villars and her mother-in-law, Madame la Maréchale Villars, and Monsieur Voltaire made the handsomest possible allusion to Madame Gaston Cheverny's wit and charm, which Gaston suitably acknowledged. Jacques Haret declared that it had been so long since he had talked with a woman of quality he had almost forgotten there were such creatures in the world.

"But," he added, laughing, "I shall renew my acquaintance with fine ladies and gentlemen when I go to Capello this summer to visit Monsieur and Madame Cheverny."

I could scarcely believe my ears, and I feared to look toward Francezka.

"You are not the only one who will enjoy that privilege," cried Monsieur Voltaire, "for Madame Cheverny has invited me, and Monsieur Cheverny has approved of me."

Francezka rose and made a signal to Madame Villars that it was time to depart. All rose. Francezka, advancing to the table, took up the pen and in her clear, bold handwriting, wrote on a slip of paper:

*Jacques Haret: Do not you dare to come to Capello.*

*Francezka Cheverny de Capello del Medina y Kirkpatrick.*

She slipped her hands into the sleeves of her domino and stood erect before Jacques Haret, her eyes blazing at him through the eyeholes in her mask. I was reminded of that Captain Agoust who, by the intensity of his gaze, goaded the Prince de Conti into a duel. Francezka's look at Jacques Haret was equivalent to running a sword through him. Nothing, however, could change Jacques Haret's native and incurable levity. He rose, and grinning, made Francezka a low bow.



"I am sorry, Madame, I can not oblige you," he said, "but my arrangements are all made, even to my wardrobe, and it is now too late to change, disagreeable as it is to me to disoblige a lady."

The blood of the Kirkpatricks was rising in Francezka's veins; the air suddenly seemed full of electricity. I saw her involuntarily place her hand upon the inkstand, a heavy, bronze one, lying on the table, and I thought the chance was that she would throw it in Jacques Haret's face. To save her from so wild an act was my only thought. I reached over, and getting a good grip on Jacques Haret, which I could do easily, as he was entirely off his guard, I flung him headlong through the open door into the garden below. Then, not wishing Francezka's identity to be revealed, I motioned to her and Madame Villars, and we hurried out of the room.

I forgot until the ladies were in their sedans that the scrap of writing in Francezka's hand lay on the table and would be seen by Gaston Cheverny and probably by Monsieur Voltaire. My trouble was all in vain, but I was glad I had thrown Jacques Haret through the door.

The chairmen went off at a rapid pace, I following. We turned a corner, which gave me a clear look through the garden of the room we had just left. Gaston was standing stock still, holding the scrap of paper in his hand. He knew then who the masked visitors were. I walked by the side of Francezka's chair, through the dark streets until we came to the Hôtel Kirkpatrick. Madame Villars lived close by, and we parted with her first. She said good night, but made no comment on the events of the evening. She was no fool, and saw that something had happened, although she knew not what.

We passed through the small gate of the courtyard and around to the private entrance, where Francezka dismissed the chairmen and I took off my mask and domino. We were standing in a quiet little court at one side of the great entrance. It was very still and dark, and the stars, palpitating, and bright, and distant, seemed to be laughing at the miseries of the poor mice, as Voltaire called them, hidden away in the small holes of the immense building called the Universe. Francezka, panting for breath, took off her mask. Her pale face and her eyes, somber, but full of smoldering fire, were half shrouded in the hood of her domino. In her black garb, and with a look of despair upon her face, she was as far removed from that dazzling Francezka of the former time as could well be imagined. I was not disposed to make light of what she had seen and heard that night. Nothing is more uncomfortable than to live with a mystery, and when that mystery is in the person one should love best in the world, when it poisons all the springs of joy and makes the things known best in life strange to one, it is a very dreadful thing. Francezka spoke after a while.

"Do you wonder, Babache, that I am a miserable woman?"

And I said with perfect honesty in my heart:

"No, Madame. I do not wonder in the least."

She paused, and I supposed she was about to say something to me about Gaston, when she uttered these words which remain forever in my heart, which not one waking hour has failed to recall since she uttered them:

"Babache, remember, when I am gone, that nobody in the world was ever so good a friend to me as you. I speak not of lovers—Gaston was once my lover."

She paused as if overcome, and then hurriedly vanished within the open door.

Her words thrilled me with joy and pain. What did she mean by saying, "When I am gone?" Who was more likely to live than Francezka? Why should she be contemplating the end of all things? I was roused from my anxious reverie by the sound of locking the great iron gates, the bolts and bars making a huge noise in the stillness of the night. This grating sound, however, did not drown those words of Francezka's. Something led my footsteps again to the street, where I could get from the back a clear view of Monsieur Voltaire's room. When I reached the place all was dark, and the doors and windows were closed for the night, but on the corner stood a plain coach, which I recognized in the half darkness of the summer night as belonging to Gaston Cheverny.

If I had been surprised at his patience with Jacques Haret's impertinence an hour ago, I now saw that it was not so long suffering as I had thought, for Gaston, sitting in the coach and holding the door open, was swearing at Jacques Haret with a concentration of rage I had never seen excelled in any human being before. Every word that he said was true, but there was a defiance in it which further sustained my notion that Jacques Haret held some power over Gaston Cheverny.

Jacques was taking it with the same coolness he had taken the beating I had given him in the Luxembourg gardens. Gaston was shouting out insults to him, and when Gaston stopped at the point where any other man would have drawn his sword, Jacques coolly remarked:

"You have called me a liar, a blackmailer, a leper, a dog and a devil's imp. I take it that you are of a different opinion from me on certain points. Your withdrawing your invitation to me to the château of Capello is most unhandsome. However, it is not your château, anyhow."

Gaston leaped out of the coach after him, but Jacques Haret disappeared somewhere in the darkness, for he had no scruples about avoiding a fight, yet I believe him to have been singularly insensible to fear.

Within three days I heard that Monsieur and Madame Cheverny had left Paris for their estates in Brabant. As they went together, it was plain there had been no outward break between them.

## CHAPTER XXXIV

### A GARRET IN PRAGUE

The great parties at Chambord followed and lasted all through June. They were like the one in December, but they were not illuminated by the wit, the beauty, the ineffable charm of Francezka. It may be imagined how little I enjoyed them. My heart was like lead in my bosom. Every waking hour, and often in my dreams, I saw Francezka's face as I had last seen it, pale and despairing.

There was something else besides pleasuring at Chambord; the fêtes were meant to disguise more serious events. On an August morning at daylight Count Saxe changed his ball costume for his riding dress and set forth to take command of the van of Marshal Belle-Isle's army, which was to cross the Rhine at Fort Louis, thirty miles below Strasburg. Gaston Cheverny was not to be with us. He was to go with the army of Marshal Maillebois, which was to cross the Rhine near Düsseldorf.

Count Saxe had been in a quandary about inviting Gaston Cheverny to resume his old place as aide-de-camp. There could be no doubt that Gaston merited much from Count Saxe, as it was owing to Count Saxe's own imprudence in remaining unguarded at Hüningen that Gaston Cheverny had been lost to life and love for seven years. Yet my master felt toward him the same coldness of heart that I did. It is true that Gaston's alleged inability to use his right arm properly would be a drawback, but one likely to be passed over by any commander who really wished his services, and especially by Count Saxe, taking the past into consideration. In truth there was every reason why Count Saxe should again offer a place in his military family to Gaston Cheverny. But he felt a singular indisposition to do it.

Gaston, ever quick of wit, relieved Count Saxe of his awkward predicament. He wrote, saying that Marshal Maillebois had made him an admirable offer, and while he recognized Count Saxe's right to his services, he scarcely thought anything so promising could be given him in the army of Marshal Belle-Isle. My master jumped at this easy way out of his difficulty and wrote, desiring Gaston Cheverny to suit himself. At the same time he inclosed a letter highly recommending Gaston to Marshal Maillebois. Every word in that letter, which I wrote myself, was true, because it referred to the Gaston Cheverny we had known before 1740.

Gaston replied most handsomely, and so the matter was settled to everybody's satisfaction. But it gave me a feeling of stupefaction that the person we were trying to part from decently, and to avoid with the greatest seeming tenderness, was the Gaston Cheverny whom I had loved the instant my eyes had rested on him, whom my master had bade me capture for Courland, who had served us as loyally as man could serve in all those adventurous days, who had been Count Saxe's right-hand man, and whose readiness and devotion to Count Saxe had cost such a price as Gaston had paid. It was staggering.

On that rosy August dawn Count Saxe, with a small escort, started for the Rhine by way of Châlons. This did not take us near Brabant, and there seemed no chance of my seeing Francezka. This gave me great uneasiness of mind. I was haunted by a whole troop of malignant fears, of dreadful apprehensions about that being, so ineffably dear to me. And these hideous shapes marched with me, and kept watch over me, and visited me nightly in my dreams. And to no one, not even to Count Saxe, could I speak of them! I could only go on steadfastly doing my duty.

We reached Fort Louis, and Count Saxe being put in command of the vanguard, consisting of about fifteen thousand men, of Marshal Belle-Isle's army, we began the crossing of the river. We knew we were playing a game of war with loaded dice, but soldiers must not inquire too curiously into their orders. Marshal Belle-Isle had gone to Germany the year before with a basket of eggs, which he reckoned as full-grown chickens, but the eggs mostly addled and would not hatch, so the game with the loaded dice was substituted.

We were on the march early in September, through the blue Bavarian mountains, where the air, though sharp, was like good wine, and then into the wild Bohemian country, full of rocks and bogs and black chasms, and shaggy mountains, ever colder and bleaker, ever farther and farther away from our base. Marshal Saxe was troubled with the company of the King of Saxony, whom Marshal Belle-Isle made King of Moravia; as Count Saxe said: "He is King of Moravia very much as I am Duke of Courland."

At last, in the midst of the storms, the snows, the fierce winds of November in that wild Bohemian country, we found ourselves set down before Prague. And Prague we must take or starve—starve all of us—men and horses together.

There was a multitude of counselors, each counseling some different form of folly, and only my master, with one or two to support him steadfastly proclaiming that we must take Prague or be lost. There were innumerable objections made; it was a stupendous undertaking, for we had nothing fit for besieging, only our good swords and Maurice of Saxe to lead us. But at last,

seeing ruin advancing upon us in the shape of an Austrian army, while starvation stood sentry over us, the King of Saxony and the rest of them were visited with a great light and concluded to let my master have his way; and the night of the twenty-seventh of November, 1741, was fixed upon to assault the town. It was a cold, clear night, with a moon that made all things white and light.

At midnight, when the town was sleeping, and only the sentries waked and walked, a tremendous cannonade broke out all around the walls, heaviest toward the south. This was but a sham attack, but the best part of the garrison hastened there to repel it. And then Count Saxe, advancing from the gardens and cottages on the Wischerad side, came to the walls. The men rushed forward with the scaling ladders, but they were full ten feet too short. Despair and blankness fell upon us, until Count Saxe, seeing a great, weird Thing standing gaunt and black in the white moonlight—this Thing, the gallows tree—cried out cheerfully:

“See, my lads, yonder are likely to be some short ladders; these we will splice with rope, and so make the scalade!”

And it was done, Count Saxe himself being the first man on the rampart. He had for his body-guard, my Uhlans—men fit to be the body-guard of Mars himself. But the gods of war are invisibly protected. All the books upon war say that generals should take care of their skins. I have often noticed, however, that generals who try to take care of their skins usually get shot every time they go within the enemy’s range.

Count Saxe, however, without getting a single scratch, found himself at the head of his men in the great open market-place, where the French made their rendezvous, and there we soon found ten thousand of our fifteen thousand brave fellows. Prague was ours, and almost without the loss of a man, so masterly had been Count Saxe’s dispositions.

There is something appalling in the sight of a town taken in the night. Although Prague was supposed to be taken by assault, it was really carried by strategy, and there were none of the horrors of a capture by storming. But the horrible fears of the inhabitants, the terrors of the women and children, the dreadful midnight awakening—all, all, have in them something calculated to affright the soul.

These things passed through my mind, when, with my men posted according to Count Saxe’s orders, I listened to the cries, the screams of frightened creatures, and imagined the shuddering terrors behind the walls of those tall old houses, their peaks shining in the white moonlight. And then, by an accident in handling a torch, one of those tall old houses by the market-place caught fire. Instantly, it was like Bedlam; at every one of the many windows appeared people shrieking, praying, crying. And glancing into one of those windows, where an old woman was screaming frantically, I saw a strange, a mysterious sight: upon a wretched bed lay a sick man—lay Gaston Cheverny!

I had not been brought up in the streets of Paris and forced to soldier it since my fourteenth year without becoming tolerably free from superstition. This sudden glimpse of Gaston Cheverny lying ill in a miserable garret in Prague, when I supposed him on the personal staff of Marshal Maillebois, did not prevent me from taking all possible measures to save that quarter of the town from burning, and striving to allay the panic. Both I found almost impossible. The old house blazed like tinder, the flames reddening the moonlit sky. I gave orders to blow up the houses on each side, in order to save the town. The horrible explosions, the smoke and smell of powder, the shrieking, terrified people, the soldiers battling with mob and fire—the mob believing the soldiers to have started the fire—were hideous. I have been in many a worse place than the market-place of Prague on that bleak November night, but never one which had a greater outward aspect of horror.

Toward daylight, ashes and ruins replaced the fire, trembling terror and pale exhaustion, the frantic alarm of the people, and the quarter was saved. Through it all, I had Gaston Cheverny in my mind. I could not understand how he, an officer in Marshal Maillebois’s army, could be in Prague at all, but I had seen him in the glare of the blazing building as plainly as if the sun had been at the noon mark.

In the gray of the dawn, I began to investigate concerning Gaston, but he could not be found. I thought it not strange that in so much danger, terror and confusion he had disappeared for a time, but I confidently reckoned on his being found within a few days. Next day, I put the official inquiry on foot, but there was no record of any such person having been in Prague. It was difficult to account, under any circumstances, for Gaston’s being there. Yet, had not these eyes seen him? It was one more mystery and misery about this man, once the frankest, freest, most open-hearted of men. It did not lessen those vague and terrible fears which had haunted me about Francezka.

The next few days were busy enough, and I scarce rested by night or day. A week passed, and, hearing nothing of Gaston Cheverny, I tried to persuade myself that my eyes had been deceived. Truly, although I have been a thousand times in places of much greater danger, I do not think I have ever known greater excitement, or conditions when a man could be more readily deceived than that midnight in the market-place of Prague. I said this to myself many times. It is strange how a man will argue with himself to believe a thing which he can not believe, and will silence, without convincing, himself.

I was revolving these things in my mind one night, about a week afterward, on my way alone through the narrow, dark unlighted streets, lying black in the shadows of the overhanging houses. And then there passed across my path, a figure in a ragged black cloak—a figure with

the face of Gaston Cheverny. I followed him, but I seemed to be following a ghost; for in the tangle of streets and lanes, he was lost to me. I spent two full hours hunting this shade; but had it been actually a ghost it could not have disappeared more completely.

I went to Count Saxe's quarters. It was then near midnight, and Count Saxe had gone to bed; but on the table, wide open, with some other letters for me to read, was a letter from Gaston Cheverny to Count Saxe, dated the very day before the capture of Prague.

So I was deceived. He was not and never had been in Prague. I had been deceived by some chance resemblance. It was upon events like these that Madame Riano based her absurd belief in second sight.

But let it not appear that I am a man easily deluded when I declare that from the hour I saw the man I took for Gaston Cheverny in the burning house at Prague, I knew that Francezka was in sore distress, and even in need of her poor Babache. Something within me was ever calling—calling, in Francezka's name—"Come to me!"

There are degrees in these superstitions of the heart. Sometimes they usurp the scepter of the brain. Then, indeed, are they dangerous and foolish. Again, it is known to be only the cry of the heart; and the poor, tormented heart waits patiently upon its master, the brain. So it was with me. Deep as was my yearning to see Francezka, I said no word of it to the most indulgent of masters, until the time was ripe that I might go. Francezka herself was governed by the law of common sense; she would not wish me to come to her when it was against my duty. So I fulfilled all my duty, in spite of the burden of the spirit—the strange, almost irresistible call for me to leave all and go straight to Francezka, until I could, in honor, ask for leave.

We were settled then in winter quarters. We had heard twice in this time from Gaston Cheverny. Being near home, in the borders of Hanover, for the winter, he had got leave—so he wrote—and would spend six weeks at the chateau of Capello, with Francezka. He wished that Count Saxe and I might take advantage of the lull in hostilities and come to Capello.

It was when I was in the act of reading this letter that my reserve broke down, and I told Count Saxe all—all—and that I desired to go to Francezka. And then, for the first time since I was a little, smooth-cheeked boy, playing in the weedy gardens of the Marais with Adrienne Lecouvreur, I wept like a woman. Count Saxe sat and looked at me with more than a brother's tenderness. He knew I was not a coward, for I had led his Uhlans, and what he said to me was this:

"Lose not a moment in going, Babache. It is because you love her so much that you know she is in distress. I think you would know as much, if it were I instead of Francezka."

Which was true. I can not believe that Count Saxe should need me, and I not know it, were I at the other end of the world.

And Count Saxe helping and hastening me in every way, as became such a soul as his, I set forth at once on my journey. It was the latter part of December when I left Prague behind me.

The journey was a terrible one; the season harsh beyond comparison. The ground was deeply covered with snow, which the wild winds piled in great drifts, in which both men and beasts were sometimes lost. Rain and sleet alternated with snow. The sun scarcely shone at all. The sufferings of dumb creatures were dreadful; horses plunged amid the snow, and died in it; the gaunt cattle froze in the fields; even the birds dropped dead from the icy roofs and trees. I think I never saw so much misery in any journey I ever made, as in that journey to Capello. Even when I reached the flat country of the lower Rhine, there was but little amelioration. I traveled as rapidly as I could, both night and day, but my progress was slow. My eager heart outstripped my laggard body, and it seemed to me that every hour the urgency of Francezka's call for me grew greater. I could actually hear that sweet, penetrating voice, now full of agony, crying to me, "Babache! Babache! Come quickly—quickly, or you will be too late!"

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## CHAPTER XXXV

### WOULD YOU LEAVE ME NOW

I fought my way to Brussels against the elements, and reached there at sunset of the last day of the year. I had not slept for thirty-six hours, and then it was in the rude cart of a peasant, jolting over the rough highroad. But sleep had departed from me. Up to that time I had managed to get a few hours of rest out of every twenty-four, for I was a soldier and knew how to take hard travel. But if I had been offered the great down bed of Louis le Grand, I could not have slept on that December night, thank God! Had I remained the night in Brussels—had I preferred soft slumber to the dumb cry of Francezka's soul to mine—what grief! What remorse! Therefore, I took horse again at sun-setting, and did not draw rein until I reached Capello, at nine of the clock.

It was the first time I had seen the place in the icy clutch of winter. I had ever thought it the

cheerfullest spot on earth. Nature was all gaiety at Capello. Now she was in a tragic mood, but not the less beautiful. The sky was of a deep, dark blue, jeweled with stars in every part. A radiant, majestic moon rode high, flooding the snowy earth with a pale, unearthly splendor. The château, white and stately, shone dazzling in this moonlit glow. The bare branches of the forest covered with frost, were like silver lace. All was cold, still, lonely and sad.

I noticed as I approached the château through the great bare avenue of frosted lindens, that the windows were not, as usual, lighted up. Two only were illuminated—the windows of the little yellow saloon, where Francezka spent her evenings when without company.

As ever I drew nearer to Francezka, that need for haste seemed to be more urgent. I dismounted in the courtyard, and ran, rather than walked up the terrace. Through the window, with its undrawn curtains, I saw Francezka and Gaston seated together in the yellow saloon.

I had not meant to watch them. I meant to stop and recover myself a little before presenting myself before them, but I could not keep my eyes away from the scene in the yellow saloon. I believe most persons have felt the fascination of looking at an interior illuminated with fire and candle, as one stands without, and so, unconsciously, I stood and watched Francezka and Gaston Cheverny.

The room presented that charming, luxurious and comfortable air which always distinguished it. A fire was burning on the hearth, and a table with candles and books on it, was drawn up. Gaston sat on one side of it, and Francezka on the other. She wore a robe of some white shimmering stuff, and her rich dark hair was unpowdered. I noticed the little tendrils of hair upon her milk-white neck. In her lap lay an open book, which she was not reading. She was pallid, and had no more that joyous loveliness of flesh and blood which had once been hers; but never saw I more plainly her mysterious and poetic beauty, which shone forth star-like. And one thing else I saw, and would have seen had it been my first view of her—she had a canker at her heart.

Gaston sat on the other side of the table, looking as usual, handsome and content. He, too, had a book in his hand, which he was not reading. He was furtively watching Francezka. Francezka watched the fire.

After a time—I know not how long—Francezka laid her book down softly, went to her open harpsichord, and sitting before it, played with her usual skill. I recognized the air; it was that old, old one of Blondel's, *O Richard, O mon roi!*

Gaston shifted a little in his chair. He had ever showed an indifference to the song, which once had been so dear to them, and had been so full of meaning for them. There was a look of uneasiness in his face, and he began for the first time to read attentively, his brows drawn together, while Francezka's fingers delicately played this quaint air.

Francezka played some other airs, lightly, gracefully, softly, pausing between them, meditating, with one hand on the keys of the harpsichord, and the other hanging down. The hand that hung down moved a little, as if in the act of patting a dog's head. I was reminded of poor Bold—it was as if Francezka were thinking of this lost friend. She gave me the impression of a person who feels herself alone and debates with herself.

When she ceased to play this fitful soft music, she rose and went to the window which looked toward the lake. She shaded her face with her hands, so she could see the still, pale glory of the night, and the lake, lying in melancholy beauty under the soft shining stars. There was a deep and perfect silence within and without, and it seemed to cast a spell upon Francezka and upon me, so near together, and she all unknowing.

And then, feeling rather than seeing some one near me, I turned and saw a figure in a black cloak pass me; the same figure that had passed before me in the shadowy streets of Prague—the man I thought to be Gaston Cheverny. He walked straight to the great door of the château, and without knocking, opened it as if he were the master of all there. And then, as I stood unable to move, with all my faculties concentrated in my eyes, I saw the door of the yellow saloon open. I saw the real Gaston Cheverny enter. I saw Francezka turn toward the opening door. I saw the man I had supposed for nearly two years to be Gaston Cheverny rise from his chair—and he was, in truth, Regnard Cheverny. It was impossible to mistake one for the other, standing together, face to face. It became a miracle how Regnard had ever managed to deceive his whole world into thinking him Gaston Cheverny. All the differences between them came out and seemed to clamor for recognition. The expression of the eye was different; the whole of the actual man in each was dissimilar; and how this could have been covered up by the mere likeness in shape, in voice, in feature—no one could tell.

Gaston was Gaston. He was pale and thin, and looked ten years older than he should, but there was no mistaking him. I know not how I found myself standing on the threshold of the room. Gaston had advanced to the middle, and held out his arms to Francezka.

"I know all," he cried, "poor, faithful soul! For you there is an unchanging love. There is nothing to forgive—nothing—nothing!"

Francezka stood as if turned to stone for a moment—one of those moments in which Time seems no more. Then she moved a little back, averting her face from Gaston, with a look, never to be forgotten—love, shame, despair—crying aloud from her eyes. But as Gaston spoke, she turned again, full toward him, and raised both of her white arms.

"Dearest," she cried, in her old, sweet, penetrating voice. "I do not ask why you did not come before. You could not—you could not come until now!"

At that, Regnard stepped forward, and raised his hand to separate the two.

"Wait," he said to Gaston. "She was your wife for one week. She has been my wife nearly two years. She shall remain so. I, too, loved her well, from my boyhood—and was it to be expected that I should let that childish fancy for you stand between her and me, when I thought you dead?"

I think neither Gaston nor Francezka heard him; but suddenly as a bird flies from its perch, so Francezka flew to Gaston and rested her head upon his breast. Not even Regnard dared to lay a sacrilegious hand upon her there.

"I have been the most miserable woman on God's earth," she said to Gaston, raising her head, and looking him full in the face—"and I can not survive this hour. Do not ask me to live—I can not live. I was thinking, just now, as I sat and played the air we loved so well, that I must, this very night, seek rest in death—for I suspected the truth only a little while ago. But, love, this hour atones for much. You know now how I loved you—how I remembered you. If I was dull of apprehension—if, after seven years, I accepted too quickly the deception practised on me—well, it was because I loved you so well. But I must depart; there is no place on earth for me."

For answer Gaston kissed her tenderly.

"Would you leave me now?" he asked. "Have not I, too, loved you and sought you? And shall not our happiness swallow up our misfortune, and the crimes committed against us, after those crimes are avenged?"

Then, as calmly as a summer day, he placed Francezka in a chair, and, turning to his brother, said:

"To-night, you or I must die."

"Agreed," replied Regnard.

He opened a cabinet in the room, took out several swords, and, handing them to Gaston, said:

"Choose which one you will die by."

Gaston selected one.

"With this will I kill you," he said.

Neither of them had seen me, although I was in evidence plain enough. I started forward, however, and grasping Gaston's arm, forced him to look at me.

"Babache," he said, recognizing me instantly. "The world is not big enough for my brother and for me. It is better to end it now and here. Either let him kill me, or let me kill him; so I pray you, hands off; and if I am the one to die, take care of Francezka."

I thought, too, that the world could not and ought not to hold them both living, and the sooner it was settled which should die that night, the better.

Francezka, meanwhile, sat quite still in the chair where she had been placed. Gaston, turning to her, said, with an air of gentle command:

"Leave. This is no place for you."

"Stay!" cried Regnard violently. "You are to obey my commands, not his."

Francezka, without looking toward Regnard, without a shudder or a tremor, rose. I had thought she could neither rise nor move nor speak, but there was not the least sign of weakness about her. She actually stopped and curtsied toward Gaston as she went out. He bowed ceremoniously in response.

I took her hand and led her out into the vast hall, dimly lighted. She did not speak my name, but she held on to my hand. In the tempest of her soul she instinctively clung to one whom she knew to be true. She walked with me steadily across the great hall, and into the Diana gallery, now dark and cold as a vault. She looked like a specter as her white figure glided past the mirrors on the walls.

She continued to grasp my hands as a drowning man grasps his savior. We were too far off from the place of combat to hear anything except the dull shuffling of feet upon the floor. I had not the slightest doubt that in five minutes, at most, Regnard would kill Gaston.

In less than five minutes the door of the yellow saloon opened, and a flood of light poured into the great hall, vacant, dark and silent. Regnard appeared on the threshold.

"Come, Madame," he cried in a loud and triumphant voice. "Come and behold the man you claimed as husband just now!"

Through the open door we could see Gaston, lying huddled in a pool of blood upon the floor of the little room. Blood, too, was on Regnard's face, but he wiped it off with his handkerchief, and laughed to himself.

I turned to where Francezka had sat, but she was gone. At the end of the hall, I heard the great door clang. At once the thought of the lake suggested itself to me and I ran out of doors. The way Francezka usually took to the lake was by way of the Italian garden. I knew this, but a strange confusion fell upon me when I found myself out of doors, under the blue-black starlit sky. I could not recall the way to the Italian garden—nor yet the lake. At last, it came to me. I saw, afar, through the bare trees, the white statues gleaming, the black cedars, the yew trees—black, too, in the white moonlight.

I ran toward this garden, with its pathway to the lake, and thought every moment I should see before me Francezka's flying figure. She was ever fleet of foot, and when I remembered this, the heart within me died.

When I reached the statue of Petrarch under which the poor dog lay buried, I stopped and searched the scene with a glance sharpened by agony. The lake lay before me; I heard its voice in the night—that strange voice to which I had often listened with Francezka. And then from the lonely cedars on the bank, I saw Francezka emerge, and, at the same moment, there was a sound of swift pursuing feet—Regnard, too, had known where to seek her.

Francezka paused one moment on the brink of the lake, and turned her head toward those steadily nearing footsteps. Then she raised her face, raised both arms above her head and clasped them, as if in one last appeal to that Eternal Power, on the bosom of whose mercy she was about to cast herself, not wholly despairing. There was a sound of parting waters—of the black and icy waters—oh, Francezka! Francezka! How sweet must Death have been to thee!

THE END

**Transcriber's Note:**

Author's archaic and variable spelling and hyphenation is preserved.

Author's punctuation style is preserved.

Any missing page numbers in this HTML version refer to blank or un-numbered pages in the original.

Illustrations have been kept close to their original positions.

Typographical errors were corrected, and these are highlighted in the text and listed below.

Irregularly hyphenated words are listed below.

**Transcriber's Changes:**

**Page 55:** Was 'Cheverney' (Regnard **Cheverny**, like his brother, was no man of milk and water, and once seen, was likely to be remembered.)

**Page 59:** Was 'her' (Monsieur Voltaire pricked up **his** ears; it was well-known that he loved the society of the great.)

**Page 148:** Was 'led' (We sat late, and, before we parted, Jacques Haret had arranged to travel with us, riding one of the **lead** horses.)

**Page 150:** Was 'toward toward' (you show great good-will **toward** Monsieur Gaston Cheverny—and they are as like as two)

**Page 175:** Was 'good by' (At last the time came for us to say **goodbye** to the château of Capello, and to start for Paris)

**Page 263:** Was 'must I' (I can tell you, but I know not how to tell Gaston. Yet, **I must** tell him some day.)

**Page 317:** Standardised hyphenation: Was 'snuffbox' (He spoke to her, gave her a silver **snuff-box** in default of money)

**Page 403:** Was 'tactiturnity' (I fell behind all the party, and was rallied by Count Saxe on my **taciturnity**)

**Page 442:** Was 'Jacquet' (he turned again in his chair, but said no word, although **Jacques** Haret's laughing face was thrust toward him.)

**Irregular hyphenation:**

bare-legged and barelegged

small-pox and smallpox

death-bed and deathbed

head-long and headlong

sun-dial and sun dial

good-will and good will

hand-clapping and hand clapping

right-hand man and right hand man

love-letter(s) and love letter(s)

half-light and half light

baggage-wagons and baggage wagons

well-known and well known

ever-present and ever present

half-ruined and half ruined

well-remembered and well remembered



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