



## An Enemy of The King

By Hagenbuch Wyman

CHAPTER XIII.—(Continued.)

He uttered one shriek, I drew my sword out of his body, and he fell in a limp heap. With a convulsive motion he straightened out and was still. I turned his body so that his face was toward the sky, and I went back to the courtyard, leaving him alone in the moonlight.

CHAPTER XIV.

"God Grant I Do Not Find You False!"

In the courtyard was mademoiselle, very pale and agitated, standing by Blaise and grasping his arm as if for support. She still had on the gown of pale green that she had worn earlier in the evening. Her head was uncovered, her hair in some disorder, and this, with the pallor of her face and the fright in her wide-open eyes, gave her some wildness of appearance. It was De Berquin's piercing death-cry that had blanched her cheek and made her clutch Blaise's arm.

"You have killed him!" she said, in a voice little above a whisper.

"You ought not to be here, mademoiselle," I replied.

"From my chamber window I saw you talking with M. de Berquin. What he said I know not, but you drew your sword and went away with him. I waited for a long time in anxiety until I heard the sound of swords. I came down, and would have gone to help you to stop, but when I heard that awful shriek I could not go any further. Oh, monsieur, you have killed him!"

"He brought it on himself, mademoiselle," was all that I could say. And here Blaise did what I thought a strange and presumptuous thing. He approached mademoiselle, and, looking her keenly in the eyes, said, gravely: "He said that you came from the governor of the province to betray M. de la Tourneille!"

"Blaise!" I cried, in great astonishment and anger. "How dare you even utter the calumny he spoke? Go you and look to the disposal of his body." And he motioned him away with a wrathful gesture.

He looked frowningly at mademoiselle and then at me, and went off, with a shrug of his shoulders, to the place where De Berquin lay. I turned to mademoiselle; she stood like a statue, her eyes fixed on the empty air before her. Yet she seemed to know when my look fell on her, for at that instant a slight tremor passed through her.

"Tremble not for M. de Berquin, mademoiselle," said I, thinking of that divine gentleness in a woman which makes her pity even those who have persecuted her. "Indeed, he must have wished to die. He well knew that a certain way to death was to tempt my sword with a black lie of the truest kind in France."

"You killed him," she murmured, in a low, pitying voice, "because he said—I came from the governor—to betray you!"

"Why else, mademoiselle? What is the matter? Why do you look so?"

"For all life and consciousness seemed to be about to leave her countenance. 'Mon dieu!' she said, weakly, 'I cannot tell.'"

I hastened to put my arms about her, that she might not fall.

"You pity him," I said, "but there could be nothing of good in one who could so slander you. Indeed, mademoiselle, you are I have led you in. Believe me, mademoiselle, he well deserved his death."

"Thus endeavoring to calm and restore her mind, I led her slowly into the courtyard and up the steps to the door of her chamber. She followed as one without will and with little strength. Hugo and Jeannotte, who had been sitting on the landing outside her door, had risen as we came up the stairs. When I took my arms from about mademoiselle, she leaned on the maid's shoulder, and so passed into her chamber, giving me neither look nor word. Leaving her to keep his vigil outside her door, I went down to the great hall of the chateau.

Several of the men lay on the floor, most of them asleep. I asked one of them where the governor was, and three rascals who had become our prisoners, and he rose and led the way to a dark chamber at the rear of the hall. He took a torch that was stuck in the wall and followed me into this chamber. It was my desire to look upon these men whether or not Barbe-mouche, or one of them, had borne to M. de la Châtre an account of my hiding place; for there had been time for one to have done so and returned. It might be that the original plan suggested to the governor by Montignac had been altered, and that some other plan had been adopted for my capture. The very visit of De Berquin, the very story he had told me, might have been connected with this other step. One of his purposes, in trying to make me think myself betrayed, may have been to induce me to leave a place so inaccessible to attack. If a new plan had been put in operation, these men might know something of it. I would question them and then consult with Blaise, comparing the answers they should give me with those they had given Blaise.

They lay snoring, their hands fastened behind their backs, their ankles so tied that they could not stretch out their legs. The man with me said that Blaise, after belaboring them and interrogating them, had said, heartily, 'You tent, had relented, and brought some cold meat and wine for them. I suppose that the gentle spirit of his mother had obtained the ascendancy. They had devoured the food with the avidity of starving dogs, and had lain down, full of gratitude, to sleep. Blaise

had then bound them up as a precaution against a too unceremonious departure. I woke them one after another, with gentle kicks, and they stared up at me, blinking in the torch-light. Submissively and readily, though drowsily, they answered my questions. They swore that neither Barbe-mouche nor any one of them nor De Berquin himself, had borne any message to the governor; that the five had remained together from the first, living under the rock and keeping watch from the tree top, as De Berquin had narrated, until the previous afternoon, when the three had deserted, only to fall into the hands of our sentinel. In every detail their account agreed with that of their late master. When I accused them of telling a prearranged lie, and threatened them with the torture, the foppish fellow said:

"What more can a man tell than the truth? But if you're not satisfied with it, monsieur, let me know what you wish me to say. 'I'll say it with all my heart, and swear to it on whatever you name.'"

From the faces of the others I knew that they were willing to tell anything, true or false, to avoid torture, and so I could not but believe their story. Therefore, said I to myself, Montignac's plan was not adhered to. De Berquin sent one on to the governor with information concerning my hiding place. La Châtre had come to Clochonne without having awaited such information. De Berquin had been too slow. Perhaps, indeed, the plan had been altered so as to omit the sending of this preliminary word to the governor. A fixed time might have been set for the coming of the governor. Clochonne, however, had probably retained his men that he might have one to use as messenger to the governor, in notifying La Châtre where to place his ambushade, and that he might have others to lay mademoiselle. His lie was doubtless a bold device to put mademoiselle into his power, and to get entrance to my company. It was a last resource, it was just as likely to bring death as to bring success, but it was the gambler's chances. They had gone against him, and he had uncomplainingly accepted his defeat.

So the governor's presence at Clochonne was not to be taken as reason for great alarm, inasmuch as there seemed now no probability that he knew my hiding place. We were still safe at Maury. We should have only to maintain greater vigilance. Falling to hear from his agents, who he had dead in the garden at Maury, and could never work us harm, the governor would eventually take new measures for my capture, or, if I kept quiet and my men left no traces, he would presently suppose that I had gone into his province. As for mademoiselle, neither La Châtre nor Montignac knew where she was. We might, therefore, have more of those delightful peaceful days at Maury. Moreover, what better time to surprise the commandant of the Chateau de Fleurier than while La Châtre was at Clochonne? My heart beat gaily at the thought of the bright was the prospect. I passed out by a back way to the garden, where Blaise had been looking to the body of De Berquin.

My life antagonist lay in peace and order. Blaise, having replied, his doubt on him and put his sword by his side.

"A handsome gentleman," said Blaise, quietly, looking down at the body.

"But a fool as well as a liar," said I. "How could he think that such a story was to be swallowed? To have thrown him into confusion, I should have told him that I had overheard the plan for my capture, that I knew of an attempt to be made to get me from my men, that mademoiselle has never made any such attempt either by trust or summons, or on any pretext whatever."

"Neither has De Berquin," answered Blaise, sullenly, "and yet you think he was the spy whom the governor sent." He had no opportunity," I replied, rather sharply, annoyed at Blaise's manner. "He did not dare come here until he had formed a desperate plan on which to hazard everything."

"As for mademoiselle's having had no opportunity, I am not sure. How do you know? How do you know that she did not go, with a kind of doggedness, 'the spy was not to plan the ambush until the governor should arrive at Clochonne.'"

"Do you dare hint that you credit this villain's lie for a moment?" In my exasperation I half drew my sword.

"Credit nothing and discredit nothing," he said in a low but steady tone, "but I place no one above doubt, except God and you. I have had my thoughts, monsieur, and have them still. It is enough, as yet, to keep all eyes open and turned in many directions."

"You cur! You dare to suspect—!" Without finishing the sentence, I struck him across the face with the tip of my sword, and he fell back. He drew a deep breath, but made no movement.

"I shall not trouble myself to suspect," he went on with no change of tone, "until I hear that M. de la Châtre is at Clochonne."

"We know that already," I broke in, hotly. "Marianne brought the news this afternoon."

"Until we know that mademoiselle knows it," he went on.

"We know that, too," I said. "She heard Marianne tell."

"And her other servant happens to be missing, and some occasion arises through her for your going somewhere without your men. For example, if she should go for a walk in the forest, should return with word that mademoiselle lay mortally hurt somewhere—"

"I would go to her at once," I cried, with a start.

"So mademoiselle would suppose. You would not wait for my men to

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arm and accompany you. You would have found some peasant boy and dispatched him to the Governor?"

"My comrade says that the boy was sent by a woman," said Frojac.

"A woman?" I cried. "If it be true, then, malediction on her! Some covetous, spying wife of a farmer has found us out, perchance!"

Perchance, Monsieur! But, all the same, I am M. de Berquin, who was on guard yonder by the path, took the liberty just now of stopping the boy of mademoiselle, your guest, as he was riding off. In advance of him rode a woman. I had just come up the path and had not yet spoken a word with Maugret. Suddenly the woman dashed by and was gone in an instant. Neither of us had time to make up our minds whether to stop her or not, for she came from this place, not toward it. By the time when we had decided that the rider was the boy Hugo, she was out of hearing. But then came a second horse, and that we stopped. The rider was the boy Hugo, eyes! "And the woman hidden at Maury? She shall be followed and caught and treated like any cur of a papageot spy, man or woman!" I was wild with rage to think that she had been gathering just outside the walls. She often plucked herbs after dark, as there are some whose potency is believed to be the greater for their being uprooted at night. "Ah, no, no!" 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