

"*Tiens, tiens !*" she said, "my cousin Georges, *he* found some ! Seventy-three old louis—under a stump in a field of hemp ! M'sieur is searching for money—gold money, very old, under the ground in a crook !"

"No, not exactly that," he said slowly. "Sapphires, Madame. A pair of large and lovely sapphires. Hidden in a Château Royal."

Tiens, tiens ! Yes, sapphires—at the Château Royal—at Versailles ! Versailles was near Paris, yes. She herself had seen sapphires, though not at Versailles. Her cousin-by-marriage, Claudine, wife of Georges, *she* had sapphires. Two sapphires. Claudine bought them at Paris. You could buy anything at Paris ; or at Versailles. Claudine wore hers to mass on Sundays.

"Does M'sieur think the Bon Dieu likes to see people with jewellery at church on Sundays ?" the little woman went on, with a touch of jealousy of Claudine. She herself would not do it, not if she had a hundred jewels, no ! Her cousin Georges was so foolish about Claudine, who was ugly, after all. Claudine's would not be the sapphires of M'sieur, of course. Sapphires were blue.

"No, Madame—violet coloured," he said solemnly enough, though he smiled as he flicked the ash from his cigar. "At least, those I search for are violet-coloured. Very gentle, beautiful sapphires, Madame. That, all the same, can flash !"

"Bien sûr," she said again. Claudine's could flash. If M'sieur's sapphires were violet-coloured, they would be American sapphires, she suggested. Or German, perhaps ?

"Neither, Madame. English sapphires, maybe, but . . . no, probably French, in an English setting. . . . They went abroad, dear Madame ; they departed to—ah—abroad," he added in a mimicking voice. . . . "But French, I should think ; though I have seen them too seldom to be sure."

"*Tiens, tiens !* And M'sieur Faldalaldo walks to see them again !" she said large-eyed.

"M'sieur Faldalaldo would run, swim, or fly to see them again !" he said deeply. "But they have vanished, Madame ; they have taken themselves away !"