

The Helmet of Navarre

BY BERTHA RUNKLE. GROSSET & DUNLAP Publishers: New York.

(Continued.)

M. Etienne looked from one to another with the childlike smile of his bare lips, demanding if any here spoke Italian.

"I," answered Pierre himself. "Now, what may your errand be?"

"Oh, it's soon told," M. Etienne cried volubly, as one delighted to find himself understood. "I am a jeweller from Florence; I am selling my wares in your great houses. I have just sold a necklace to the Duchesse de Joyeuse; I crave permission to show my trinkets to the fair ladies here. But take me to them, and they'll not make you repeat it."

"Go tell madame," Pierre bade one of his men, and turning again to us gave us kindly permission to set down our burden and wait.

For incredible good luck, the heavy hangings were drawn over the sunny windows, making a soft twilight in the room. I sidled over to the bench in the far corner and was feeling almost safe, when Pierre—beseech him!—called attention to me.

"Now, that is a heavy box for a maid to help lug. Do you make the lazees do porters' work, you Florentines?"

"But I am a stranger here," M. Etienne explained. "Did I hire a porter, how am I to tell an honest one? Believe me, I'll run off with all my treasures, and where is poor Giovanni then? Besides, it were cruel to leave my little sister in our lodging, not a soul to speak to, the long day through. There is some where we lodge, knows Italian, as you do, so like an angel, Sir Master of the Household."

Now, Pierre was no more maître d'hôtel than I was, but that did not dampen his pleasure to be called so. He sat on the bench by M. Etienne.

"How came you two to be in Paris?" he asked.

My lord proceeded to tell him I know not what glib and convincing farrago, with every excellence, I made no doubt, of accent and gesture. But I could not but tell him I had affairs of my own by this time. The lackys had come up close round me, more interested in me than in my brother, and the same Jean who had held me for my beating, who had wanted my coat stripped off me that I might be whacked to bleed, now said:

"I'll warrant you're hot and tired and thirsty, mademoiselle, for all you look as fresh as roses. Will you drink a cup of wine if I fetch it?"

I had kept my eyes on the ground from the first moment of encounter, in mortal dread to look these men in the face; but now, gaining courage, I raised my glance and smiled at him bashfully, and faltered that I did not understand.

He understood the sense, if not the words, of my answer, and repeated his offer, slowly, loudly. I strove to look as blank as the wall, and shook my head gently and helplessly, and turned an enquiring gaze at the others, as if beseeching them to interpret. One of the fellows clasped Jean on the shoulder with a roar of laughter.

"A fall, a fall!" he shouted. "Here's the all-conquering Jean Marchand tripped up for once. He thinks nothing that some petticoats can withstand him, but here's a maid that hasn't a word to throw at him!"

"Haw! it doesn't understand me!" Jean returned, undaunted, and promptly pointed a finger at my mouth and then raised his fist to his own, with such a gulp. I allowed myself to comprehend then. I smiled in an coquetish fashion as I could contrive, and glanced on the ground, and slowly looked up again and nodded.

The men burst into loud applause.

"Good old Jean! Jean wins! Well played, Jean! Vive Jean!"

Jean, flushed with triumph, ran off on his errand, while I thought of Margot, the steward's daughter, at home, and tried to recollect every air and grace I had ever seen her assume before us ladies. It was not hard fun, this. I hid my hands under my apron and spoke not at all, but sighed and smiled and blushed under their stares like any fine lady. Once in one's life, for one hour, it is rather amusing to be a girl. But that is quite long enough, say I.

Jean came again directly with a great silver tankard.

"Burgundy, pardieu!" cried one of his mates, sticking his nose into the pot as

it passed him, "and full! Cel, you must think your lass has a head." Jean answered.

I put out my hand for the tankard, running the risk of my big nose's betraying me, resolved that he should not drink with me of that draught, when of a sudden he leaped over to snatch a kiss. I dodged him, more frightened than the abeyst maid. Though in this half-light I might perfectly look a girl, I could not believe I should kiss like one. In a panic, I fled from Jean to my master's side.

M. Etienne, wheezing about, came near to laughing out in my face, when he remembered his part and played it with a zeal that was like to undo us. He sprang to his feet, drawing his dagger.

"Who insults my sister?" he shouted.

"Who is the dog does this?"

"Who is the dog does this?"

They were on him, wrenching the knife from his hand, wrenching his lame arm at the same time so painfully that he gasped. I was scared chilly. I knew if they mishandled him they would brush the wig off.

"And your manners, sirrah!" Jean cried, Monsieur's ardour vanished; a gentle, appealing smile spread over his face.

"I cry your pardon, sir," he said to Jean, then turning to Pierre. "This answer does not understand me. But tell him, I beg you, I crave his good pardon. I was but angered for a moment that any should think to touch my little sister. I meant no harm."

"Nor he," Pierre retorted. "A kiss, forsooth! What do you expect with a handsome lass like that? If you will take her about—"

"Madame says the jeweller fellow is to come up," our messenger announced, returning.

"My lord brought Pierre:

"My knife? I may have my knife? By the beard of St. Peter, I swear to you I want no harm with it. I drew it in you."

Now, this, which was the sole true statement he had made since our arrival, was the only one Pierre did not quite believe. He took the knife from Jean, but he hesitated to hand it over to the owner.

"No," he said, "you were angry enough. I'll keep this little toy of yours till you come down."

"Very well, Sir Majordomo," M. Etienne rejoined indifferently, "so be it you give it to me when I go." He grasped the handle of the box and we followed our guide up the stair, my master offering me the comforting assurance:

"It really matters not in the least, for if we be caught the dagger's not yet forged can save us."

We were ushered into a large, fair chamber hung with arras, the carpet under our feet deep and soft as snow. At one side stood the bed, raised on its dais; opposite were the windows, the dressing-table between them, covered with see's-bottles and boxes, brushes and combs, very glittering and grand. Fluttering about the room were some half-dozen fine dames and demoiselles, brave in silks and jewels. Among them I was quick to recognize Mme. de Mayenne, and I thought I knew vaguely one or two other faces as those I had seen before about her. I started presently to discover the little Mlle. de Tavanne; that night she had worn sky-color and now she wore rose, but there was no mistaking her saucy face.

We set our box on a table, as the duchess bade us, and I helped M. Etienne to lay out its contents, which done, I retired to the background, well content to leave the brunt of the business to him. It was as he prophesied; they paid me no heed whatever. He was smoothly launched on the third relating of his tale; I trow by this time he almost believed it himself. Certes, he never faltered, but rattled on as if he had two tongues, telling in confidential tone of our father and mother, our little brothers and sisters at home in Florence, our journey with the legate; his kindness and care of us (I hoped that dignity would not walk in just now to pay his respects to madame la generale); of our arrival in Paris, and our wonder and delight at the city's grandeur, the like of which was not to be found in Italy; and, last, but not least, he had much to say, with an innocent, wide-eyed gravity, in praise of the ladies of Paris, so beautiful, so witty, so generous! They were all crowding around him, calling him pretty boy, laughing at his compliments, handling and examining over his trinkets, trying one out of a buckle or a bracelet, preening

and cooing like bright-breasted pigeons about the corn-thrasher. It was as pretty a sight as ever I beheld, but it was not to smile at such that we had risked our heads. Of Mlle. de Montluce there was no sign.

No one was marking me, and I wondered if I might not slip out unseen and make my way to mademoiselle's chamber. I knew she lodged on this story, near the back of the house, in a room overlooking the little street and having a turret-window. But I was somewhat doubtful of my skill to find it through the winding corridors of a great palace. I was more than likely to meet some one who would question my purpose, and what answer could I make? I scarce dared say I was seeking mademoiselle. I am not ready at explanations, like M. le Comte.

Yet here were the golden moments flying and our cause no further advanced. Should I leave it all to M. Etienne, trusting that when he had made his sales here he would be permitted to seek out the other ladies of the house? Or should I strive to aid him? Could I win in safety to mademoiselle's chamber, what a feat!

It so irked me to be doing nothing that I was on the point of gingerly disappearing when one of the ladies, she with the yellow curls, the prettiest of them all, turned suddenly from the group calling clearly:

"Lorraine!"

Our hearts stood still—mine died, and I can vouch for his—as the heavy window-curtain swung aside and she came forth. She came litheley. Her hair sweeping against her cheek was ebony on snow, so white she was; while under her blue eyes were dark rings, like the smears of an ink finger. M. Etienne let fall the bracelet he was holding, starting at her oblivious of aught else, his brows knitted in distress, his face ashy with love and sympathy. He made a step forward; I thought him about to catch her in his arms, when he recollected himself and dropped on his knees to grope for the faint fringed.

"You wanted me, madame!" she asked Mme. de Mayenne.

"No," said the duchess, with a tartness of voice she seemed to reserve for Mlle. de Montluce; "it was Mme. de Montpensier."

"It was I," the fair-haired beauty answered in the same breath. "I want you to stop stooping over there in the corner. Come look at these bangles and see if I cannot bring a sparkle to your eye. You wanted me, madame! The having too many lovers is nothing to cry about. It is an affliction many a lady would give her ears to undergo."

"Take heart of grace, Lorraine!" cried Mlle. de Tavanne. "If you go on looking as you look today, you'll not long be troubled by lovers."

She made no answer to either, but stood there passively till it might be her pleasure to have done with her, with a patient readiness that it wrong her heart to see.

"Here's a chain would become you vastly, Lorraine," Mme. de Montpensier went on, friendly enough, in her brisk and careless voice. "Let me try it on your neck. You can easily coax Paul on some one to buy it for you."

She fumbled over the clasp. M. Etienne, with a "Permit me, madame," took it boldly from her hand and hooked it to himself about mademoiselle's neck. He delayed longer than he need over the fastening of it, looking with burning intensity straight into her face. She lifted her eyes to his with a quick frown of displeasure, drawing herself back; then all at once the color washed across her face like the dawn flush over a gray sky. She blushed to her very hair, to her very feet. The red vanished as quickly as it came; she clapped at her bosom, on the verge of a swoon.

He threw out his arms to catch her. Instantly she stopped and, turning with a little unsteady laugh to the lady at whose elbow she found herself, asked:

"Does it become me, madame?"

The little scene had passed so quickly that it seemed none had marked it. Mademoiselle had stood a little out of the group, monsieur with his back to it, and the ladies were busy over the jewels. She whom mademoiselle had addressed, a big-nosed, loud-voiced lady, older than any

of the others, answered her bluntly:

"You look a shade too green-faced to-day, mademoiselle, for anything to come you."

"What can you expect, Mme. de Brié?" Mlle. Blanche promptly demanded. "Mlle. de Montluce is weary and worn from her vigil at your son's bedside."

"I am quite sure she had the temerity to laugh; but for the rest, a sort of little groan ran through the company. Mme. de Mayenne tude sharply. "Peace Blanche!" Mme. de Brié, red with anger, flamed out on her and Mlle. de Montluce.

"You impudent minx! 'Tis enough that one of you should bring my son to his death, without the other making a mock of it."

"He's not dying," began the irrepressible Blanche de Tavanne; her eyes twinkling with mischief; but whatever naughty answer was on her tongue, our mademoiselle's despairing voice overbore her:

"I am quite sure of the charge, madame. It was through no wish of mine that your son, with half the guard at his back, set on one wounded man."

"I'll warrant it was not," muttered Mlle. Blanche.

"Mr. has turned traitor, and deserves nothing so well as to be spitted in the dark," Mme. de Brié cried out.

Mademoiselle waited an instant, with flashing eyes meeting madame's. She had spoken holy before, but now, in the face of the other's passion, she held herself steadily.

"Your charge is as false, madame, as your wish is cruel. Do you go to vespers and come home to say such things? M. de Mar is no traitor; he was never pledged to us, and may go over to Navarre when he will."

It was quietly spoken, but the blue lightning of her eyes was too much for Mme. de Brié. She opened her mouth to retort, faltered, dropped her eyes, and finally turned away, yet seeming to feign interest in the trinkets. It was a rout.

"Then you are the traitor, Lorraine," chimed the silvery tones of Mme. de Montpensier. "It is not denied that M. de Mar has gone over to the enemy; therefore are you the traitor to have intercourse with him."

She spoke without heat, without any appearance of ill feeling. Here was merely the desire, for the fun of it, to keep the French, foisted his eyes recklessly on her, hurrying, applauding, adoring her. I went softly around the group to pull his sleeve; but he was lost if any turned to see him.

"Madame," mademoiselle addressed her cousin of Montpensier, speaking particularly clearly and distinctly. "I mean ever to be loyal to my house. I come here a penniless orphan to the care of my kinsman Mayenne; and he has always been to me generous and loving."

"If not madame," murmured Mlle. Blanche to herself.

(To be continued.)

TO REVOLUTIONIZE THE ELECTRIC WORLD

ASHVILLE, N. C., June 13.—The Asheville Citizen publishes an interview from Thomas A. Edison, who says that he has made cobalt discoveries in North Carolina that will revolutionize the electric world. Mr. Edison claims he will reduce thereby the weight of storage batteries in automobiles 50 per cent. and the cost of traffic in cities 55 per cent. He has been in this state some time prospecting for cobalt. He says:

"I knew that a North Carolina trip would be successful, and, although I am satisfied now, I was well confident that I would not be disappointed. There is a streak of it running from a point just east of Nashville, Tenn., into this state, and I must add that some of the richest beds I have found have been in North Carolina. There is a large quantity of it, and my discovery means a revolution in the electrical world. I can reduce the cost of city traffic 50 per cent. and cut the weight of storage batteries just in half. It can be seen very readily that more automobiles and electrical vehicles will be built, because the cost will be placed within the reach of many people who cannot now afford to own them."

"I have found cobalt in Lincoln, Gaston, Shelby, and Jackson Counties. In Jackson county there is a large quantity of it, while the beds are valuable in the other counties. I made assays of the mineral in many places, and I find the quality to be just what I was looking for."

"The electric vehicles have been under a great handicap because of the very heavy storage batteries we are forced to put in them, and also on account of their high value. Under the present plans electric autos cannot be made without a large outlay of money, and that has kept the people—the majority of the people I mean—from using them. An automobile is considered a luxury even by our richest citizens. When I can equip an automobile propelled by the cobalt system, the weight will be one-half, thereby giving a new machine an enviable advantage over the ones now in use, and when the price is reduced so as to place them within the reach of everybody it means that the horse is a thing of the past. The crowded streets of the cities will be cleared, and that will mean a great thing in some of our largest towns. I have left a force of men in this state, where I found the mineral, and they will investigate thoroughly as to the quality to be found."

NEITHER SATISFIED.

"I hear that the Van Swellers have remarried, each other—this neither was settled with the divorce?"

"Yes, the divorce judge gave him the custody of the dog, and gave the care of the children to her."—American Spectator.

COME TO THE MIND.

"When you were in the Arctic regions you must have found the right three months long, very lifelike."

"Yes—well, but you see we got interested in a game of chess, and it was three months long, very lifelike."—Boston Transcript.

A BIRD CASE.

"McLush has been arrested for drunkenness and wanted you to bail him out."

"Bail him out? I don't know the fellow. I don't know the fellow."—Louisville Courier-Journal.

CONFIRMED.

"Money is in every demand," says an evening contemporary in opening its financial review. We are able to confirm the news on the highest authority—London Globe.

ADAMANT EVIDENCE.

"Mother Eve never would have made much of a sensation in the Garden of Eden since—Life."

AND THEN?

"What would you do if I'd stolen a kiss?"

"I'd scream for my brother."

"Where's your brother?"

"Why—visiting in New York."—Cleveland Leader.

IN A DILEMMA.

"Girl turned to her companion: 'The rule just kissed me—and I don't know as to whether I should deduct, or give him a tip.'"

LOGGEMEN ARE ANGRY

P. W. A. Lodges Demand the Resignation of Their Grand Secretary Because He Mixed Into Politics.

SYDNEY, June 17.—(Special)—Several of the P. W. A. Lodges in Cape Breton passed resolutions last night condemning in unqualified terms the action of John Moffatt, the grand secretary, in publicly favoring one of the political parties in the present campaign in preference to the other, thus violating one of the great principles of the association that it should be distinctly non-political. The resolutions demand Mr. Moffatt's resignation.

Mr. Moffatt took the platform at Dominion No. 1 recently and spoke strongly in favor of the liberal candidates. This has displeased members of the association so much that they are now asking for his immediate retirement from office. The introduction of politics would be fatal to the association and this is what the lodges wish to guard against most particularly. The action of the lodges has created a mild sensation in political circles.

A Congressional Muck Rake



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