

# STORIES OF ADVENTURE.

It was a small room, scantily furnished, with the same marks of neglect and decay which met us at every turn. The walls were hung with discoloured tapestry which had come loose at one corner, so as to expose the rough stonework behind. A second door, hung with a curtain, faced us upon the other side. Between lay a square table, strewn with dirty dishes and the sordid remains of a meal. Several bottles were scattered over it. At the head of it, and facing us, there sat a huge man, with a lion-like head and a great shock of orange-colored hair. His beard was of the same glaring hue; matted and tangled and coarse as a horse's mane. I have seen some strange faces in my time, but never one more brutal than that, with its small, vicious, blue eyes, its white, crumpled cheeks, and the thick, hanging lip which protruded over his monstrous beard. His head swayed about on his shoulders, and he looked at us with the vague, dim gaze of a drunken man. Yet he was not so drunk but that our uniforms carried their message to him.

"Well, my brave boys," he hiccupped. "What is the latest news from Paris, eh? You're going to free Poland, I hear, and have meantime all become slaves, yourselves—slaves to a little aristocrat with his grey coat and his three-cornered hat. No more citizens either, I am told, and nothing but monsieur and madame. My faith, some more heads will have to roll into the sawdust basket some of these mornings."

Duroc advanced in silence, and stood by the ruffian's side.

"Jean Carabin," said he.

The Baron started, and the film of drunkenness seemed to be clearing from his eyes.

"Jean Carabin," said Duroc, once more. He sat up and grasped the arms of his chair.

"What do you mean by repeating that name, young man?" he asked.

"Jean Carabin, you are a man whom I have long wished to meet."

"Supposing that I once had such a name how can it concern you, since you must have been a child when I bore it?"

"My name is Duroc."

"Not the son of—?"

"The son of the man you murdered."

The Baron tried to laugh, but there was terror in his eyes.

"We must let bygones be bygones, young man," he cried. "It was our life or theirs in those days: the aristocrats or the people. Your father was of the Girondins. He fell. I was of the mountain. Most of my comrades fell. It was all the fortune of war. We must forget all this and learn to know each other better, you and I." He held out a red twitching hand as he spoke.

"Enough," said young Duroc. "If I were to pass my sabre through you as you sit in that chair, I should do what is just and right. I dishonor my blade by crossing it with yours. And yet you are a Frenchman, and have even held a commission under the same flag as myself. Rise, then and defend yourself."

"Tut, tut!" cried the Baron. "It is all very well for you young bloods—"

Duroc's patience could stand no more. He swung his open hand into the centre of the great orange beard, I saw a lip fringed with blood, and two glaring blue eyes above it.

"You shall die for that blow."

"That is better," said Duroc.

"My sabre!" cried the other; "I will not keep you waiting, I promise you!" and he hurried from the room.

I have said that there was a second door covered with a curtain. Hardly had the Baron vanished when there ran from behind it a woman, young and beautiful. So swiftly and noiselessly did she move that she was between us in an instant, and it was only the shaking curtains which told us whence she had come.

"I have seen it, all," she cried. "Oh, sir, you have carried yourself splendidly. She stopped to my companion's hand, and kissed it again and again ere he could disengage it from her grasp.

"Nay, madame, why should you kiss my hand?" he cried.

"Because it is the hand which struck him on his vile, lying mouth. Because it may be the hand which will avenge my mother. I am his step-daughter. The woman whose heart he broke was my mother. I loathe him, I fear him. Ah, there is his step!" In an instant she had vanished as suddenly as she had come. A moment later, the Baron entered with a drawn sword in his hand, and the fellow who had admitted us at his heels.

"This is my secretary," said he. "He will be my friend in this affair. But we shall need more elbow-room than we can find here. Perhaps you will kindly come with me to a more spacious apartment."

It was impossible to fight in a chamber so small. I was blocked by a great table. I followed him out, therefore, into the dimly-lit hall. At the farther end a light was shining through an open door.

"We shall find what we want in here," said the man with the dark beard. It was a large, empty room, with rows of barrels and cases round the walls. A strong lamp stood upon a shelf in the corner. The floor was level and true, so that no swordsman could ask for more. Duroc drew his sabre and sprang into it. The Baron stood back with a bow and motioned me to follow my companion. Hardly were my heels over the threshold when the heavy door crashed behind us and the key screamed in the lock. We were taken in a trap.

For a moment we could not realize it. Such incredible baseness was outside all our experiences. Then, as we understood how foolish we had been to trust for an instant a man with such a history a flush of rage over us, rage against his villainy and against our own stupidity. We rushed at the door together, beating it with our fists and kicking with our heavy boots. The sound of our blows and of our execrations must have resounded through the Castle. We called to this villain, hurling at him every name which might pierce even into his hardened soul. But the door was enormous—such a door as one finds in

medieval castles—made of huge beams clamped together with iron. It was as easy to break as a square of the Old Guard. And our cries appeared to be of as little avail as our blows, for they only brought for answer the clattering chocs from the high roof above us. When you have done some soldiering, you soon learn to put up with what cannot be altered. It was I, then, who first recovered my calmness, and prevailed upon Duroc to join with me in examining the apartment which had become our dungeon.

There was only one window, which had no glass in it and was so narrow that one could not so much as get one's head through. It was high up, and Duroc had to stand upon a barrel in order to see from it.

"What can you see?" I asked.

"Fir-woods, and an avenue of snow between them," said he. "Ah!" he gave a cry of surprise.

I sprang upon the barrel beside him. There was, as he said, a long, clear strip of snow in front. A man was riding down it, flapping his horse and galloping like a madman. As we watched, he grew smaller and smaller, until he was swallowed up by the black shadows of the forest.

"What does that mean?" asked Duroc.

"No good for us," said I. "He may have gone for some brigands to cut our throats. Let us see if we cannot find a way out of this mouse-trap before the cat can arrive. The one piece of good fortune in our favor was that beautiful lamp. It was nearly full of oil, and would last us until morning. In the dark our situation would have been far more difficult. By its light we proceeded to examine the packages and cases which lined the walls. In some places there was only a single line of them, while in one corner they were piled nearly to the ceiling. It seemed that we were in the storehouse of the Castle, for there were a great number of cheeses, vegetables and various kinds, bins full of dried fruits, and a line of wine barrels. One of these had a spigot in it, and as I had eaten a little during the day, I was glad of a cup of claret and some food. As to Duroc, he would take nothing, but paced up and down the room in a fever of anger and impatience. "I'll have him yet!" he cried every now and then. "The rascal shall not escape me!"

This was all very well, but it seemed to me, as I sat on a great round cheese eating my supper, that this youngster was thinking rather too much of his own family affairs and too little of the fine sorape into which he had got me. After all, his father had been dead fourteen years, and nothing could set that right; but here was Etienne Gerard, the most dashing lieutenant in the whole Grand Army, in imminent danger of being cut off at the very outset of his brilliant career. Who was ever to know the heights to which I might have risen if I were knocked on the head in this hole-and-corner business, which had nothing whatever to do with France or the Emperor? I could not help thinking what a fool I had been, when I had a fine war before me and everything which a man could desire, to go off upon a hair-trained expedition of this sort, as if it were not enough to have a quarter of a million Russians to fight against, without plunging into all sorts of private quarrels as well.

"That is all very well," I said at last, as I heard Duroc muttering his threats. "You may do what you like to him when you get the upper hand. At present the question rather is, what is he going to do to us?"

"Let him do his worst!" cried the boy.

"I owe a duty to my father," said I.

"That is mere foolishness," said I. "If you owe a duty to your father, I owe one to my mother, which is to get out of this business safe and sound."

My remark brought him to his senses.

"I have thought too much of myself!" he cried. "Forgive me, Monsieur Gerard. Give me your advice as to what I should do."

"Well," said I, "it is not for our health that they have shut us up here among the cheeses. They mean to make an end of us if they can. That is certain. They hope that no one knows that we have come here, and that none will trace us if we remain. Do your hussars know where you have gone to?"

"I said no-thing."

"Hum! It is clear that we cannot be starved here. They must come to us if they are to kill us. Behind a barricade of barrels we could hold our own against the five rascals whom we have seen. That is, probably, why they have sent that messenger for assistance."

"We must get out before he returns."

"Precisely, if we are to get out at all."

"Could we not burn down this door?" he cried.

"Nothing could be easier," said I. "There are several casks of oil in the corner. My only objection is that we should ourselves be nicely toasted, like two little oyster pates."

"Can you not suggest something?" he cried, in despair. "Ah, what is that?"

There had been a low sound at our little window, and a shadow came between the stars and ourselves. A small, white hand was stretched into the lamplight. Something glittered between the fingers.

"Quick! quick!" cried a woman's voice.

We were on the barrel in an instant.

"They have sent for the Cossacks. Your lives are at stake. Ah, I am lost! I am lost!"

There was the sound of rushing steps, a hoarse oath, a blow, and the stars were once more twinkling through the window. We stood helpless upon our barrel with our blood cold with horror. Half a minute afterwards we heard a smothered scream, ending in a choke. A great door slammed somewhere in the silent night.

"Those ruffians have seized her. They will kill her," I cried.

Duroc sprang down with the inarticulate shouts of one whose reason had left him. He struck the door so frantically with his naked hands that he left a blotch of blood with every blow.

"Here is the key!" I shouted, picking one from the floor. "She must have thrown it in at the instant that she was torn away."

My companion snatched it from me with a shriek of joy. A moment later he dashed it down upon the boards. It was so small that it was lost in the enormous lock. Duroc sank upon one of the boxes with his head between his hands. He sobbed in his despair. I could have sobbed, too,

when I thought of the woman and how helpless we were to save her. But I am not easily baffled. After all, this key must have been sent to us for a purpose. The lady could not bring us that of the door, because this murderous step-father of hers would most certainly have it in his pocket. Yet this other must have a meaning, or why should she risk her life to place it in our hands? It would say little for our wits if we could not find out what that meaning might be.

I set to work moving all the cases out from the wall, and Duroc, gaining new hope from my courage, helped me with all his strength. It was no light task, for many of them were large and heavy. On we went, working like maniacs, slinging barrels, cheeses, and boxes pell-mell into the middle of the room. At last there only remained one huge barrel of vodka, which stood in the corner. With our united strength we rolled it out, and there was a little low wooden door in the wainscot behind it. The key fitted, and with a cry of delight we saw it swing open before us. With the lamp in my hand, I squeezed my way in, followed by my companion.

We were in the powder magazine of the castle—a rough, walled cellar, with barrels all round it, and one with the top staved in in the centre. The powder from it lay in a black heap upon the floor. Beyond there was another door, but it was locked.

"We are no better off than before," cried Duroc. "We have no key."

"We have a dozen," I cried.

"Where?"

I pointed to the line of powder barrels.

"You would blow this door open?"

"Precisely."

"But you would explode the magazine."

"It was true, but I was not at the end of my resources."

"We will blow open the store-room door," I cried.

I ran back and seized at in box which had been filled with candles. It was about the size of my shako—large enough to hold several pounds of powder. Duroc filled it while I cut off the end of a candle. When we had finished, it would have puzzled a colonel of engineers to make a better petard. I put three cheeses on the top of each other and placed it above them, so as to lean against the lock. Then we lit our candle-end and ran for shelter, shutting the door of the magazine behind us.

It is no joke, my friends, to lie among all those tons of powder, with the knowledge that if the flame of the explosion should penetrate through one thin door our blackened limbs would be shot higher than the Castle keep. Who could have believed that a half-inch of candle could take so long to burn? My ears were straining all the time for the thudding of the hoofs of the Cossacks who were coming to destroy us. I had almost made up my mind that the candle must have gone out when there was a smack like a bursting boom, our door flew to bits, and pieces of cheese, with a shower of turnips, apples, and splinters of cases, were shot in among us. As we rushed out we had to stagger through an impenetrable smoke, with all sorts of debris beneath our feet, but there was a glimmering square where the dark door had been. The petard had done its work.

In fact, it had done more for us than we had even ventured to hope. It had shattered gaoles as well as gaol. The first thing that I saw as I came out into the hall was a man with a butcher's axe in his hand, lying flat upon his back, with a gaping wound across his forehead. The second was a huge dog, with two of its legs broken, twisting in agony upon the floor. As it raised itself up I saw the two broken ends flapping like flags. At the same instant I heard a cry, and there was Duroc, thrown against the wall, with the other hound's teeth in his throat. He pushed it off with his left hand, while again and again he passed his sabre through its body, but it was not until I blew out its brains with my pistol that the iron jaws relaxed, and the fierce, bloodshot eyes were glazed in death.

There was no time for us to pause. A queer scream from in front—a scream of mortal terror—told us that even now we might be too late. There were two other men in the hall, but they covered away from our drawn swords and furious faces. The blood was streaming from Duroc's neck and dyeing the grey fur of his pelisse. Such was the lad's fire, however, that he shot in front of me, and it was only over his shoulder that I caught a glimpse of the scene as we rushed into the chamber in which we had first seen the master of the Castle of Gloom.

The Baron was standing in the middle of the room, with his tangled mane bristling like an angry lion. He was, as I have said, a huge man, with enormous shoulders; and as he stood there, with his face flushed with rage and his sword advanced, I could not but think that, in spite of all his villainies, he had a proper figure for a grenadier. The lady lay cowering in a chair behind him. A weal across one of her white arms and a dog-whip upon the floor were enough to show that our escape had hardly been in time to save her from his brutality. He gave a howl like a wolf as we broke in, and was upon us in an instant, hacking and driving, with a curse at every blow.

I have already said that the room gave no space for swordsmanship. My young companion was in front of me in the narrow passage between the table and the wall, so that I could only look on without being able to aid him. The lad knew something of his weapon, and was as fierce and active as a wild cat, but in so narrow a space the weight and strength of the giant gave him the advantage. Besides, he was an admirable swordsman. His parade and riposte were as quick as lightning. Twice he touched Duroc upon the shoulder, and then, as the lad slipped up on a lounge, he whirled up his sword to finish him before he could recover his feet. I was quicker than he, however, and took the cut upon the pommel of my sabre.

"Excuse me," said I, "but you have still to deal with Etienne Gerard."

He drew back and leaned against the tapestry-covered wall, breathing in little, hoarse gasps, for his foul living was against him.

"Take your breath," said I. "I will await your convenience."

"You have no cause of quarrel against me," he panted.

"I owe you some little attention," said I, "for having shut me up in your store-room. Besides, if all other were wanting, I see cause enough upon that lady's arm."

"Have your way, then!" he snarled, and leaped at me like a madman. For a

minute I saw only the blazing blue eyes, and the red glazed point which stabbed and stabbed, rasping off to right or to left, and yet ever back at my throat and my breast. I had never thought that such good sword-play was to be found at Paris in the days of the Revolution. I do not suppose that in all my little affairs I have met six men who had a better knowledge of their weapon. But he knew that I was his master. He read death in my eyes, and I could see that he read it. The flush died from his face. His breath came in shorter and in thicker gasps. Yet he fought on, even after the final thrust had come, and died still hacking and cursing, with foul cries upon his lips, and his blood clotting upon his orange beard. I who speak to you have seen so many battles, that my old memory can scarce contain their names, and yet of all the terrible sights which these eyes have rested upon, there is none which I care to think of less than that of orange beard with the crimson stain in the centre, from which I had drawn my sword point.

It was only afterwards that I had time to think of all this. His monstrous body had hardly crashed down upon the floor before the woman in the corner sprang to her feet, clapping her hands together and screaming out in her delight. For my part I was disgusted to see a woman take such delight in a deed of blood, and I gave no thought as to the terrible wrong which must have befallen her before she could so far forget the gentleness of her sex. It was on my tongue to tell her sharply to be silent, when a strange, choking smell took the breath from my nostrils, and a sudden, yellow glare brought out the figures upon the faded hangings.

"Duroc, Duroc!" I shouted, tugging at his shoulder. "The Castle is on fire!"

The boy lay senseless upon the ground, exhausted by his wounds. I rushed out into the hall to see whence the danger came. It was our explosion which had set alight the dry framework of the door. Inside the store-room some of the boxes were already blazing. I glanced in, and as I did so my blood was turned to water by the sight of the powder barrels beyond, and of the loose heap upon the floor. It might be seconds, it could not be more than minutes, before the flames would be at the edge of it. These eyes will be closed in death, my friends, before they cease to see those crawling lines of fire and the black heap beyond.

How little I can remember what followed. Vaguely I can recall how I rushed into the chamber of death, how I seized Duroc by one limp hand and dragged him down the hall, the woman keeping pace with me and pulling at the other arm. Out of the gateway we rushed, and on down the snow-covered path until we were on the fringe of the fir forest. It was at that moment that I heard a crash behind me, and glancing round, saw a great spout of fire shoot up into the wintry sky. An instant later there seemed to come a second crash far louder than the first. I saw the fir trees and the stars whirling round me, and I fell unconscious across the body of my comrade.

It was some weeks before I came to myself in the post-house of Arensdorf, and longer still before I could be told all that had befallen me. It was Duroc, already able to go soldiering, who came to my bedside and gave me an account of it. He it was who told me how a piece of timber had struck me on the head and had laid me almost dead upon the ground. From him, too, I learned how the Polish girl had run to her father, how she roused our hussars, and how she had only just brought them back in time to save us from the spears of the Cossacks who had been summoned from their bivouac by that same black-bearded secretary whom we have seen galloping so swiftly over the snow. As to the brave lady who had twice saved our lives, I could not learn very much about her at that moment from Duroc, but when I chanced to meet him in Paris two years later, after the campaign of Wagram, I was not very much surprised to find that I needed no introduction to his bride, and that by the queer turns of fortune he had himself, had he chosen to use it, that very name and title of the Baron Straubenthal, which showed him to be the owner of the blackened ruins of the Castle of Gloom.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

## WATCH ADJUSTERS.

Men Who Study Timepieces as Physicians Study Their Old Patients.

Perhaps the most highly skilled and best paid men in the watchmaking business are the watch adjusters. One adjuster in a great factory used to receive \$10,000 a year.

The adjuster's work is one of the important elements of cost in the making of a fine watch, and a \$10,000 adjuster should be competent to perfect any watch, whatever its delicacy and cost. It is the business of the adjuster to take a new watch and carefully go over all its parts, fitting them together so that the watch may be regulated to keep time accurately to the fraction of a minute a month. Regulating is a very different process from adjusting and much simpler. A watch that cannot be regulated so as to keep accurate time may need the hand of the adjuster, and if it is valuable, the owner will be advised to have it adjusted. There are watch adjusters in large cities, working on their own account and earning very comfortable incomes.

To the adjuster every watch that comes under his hands gets to have a character of its own. He knows every wheel and screw and spindle that help to constitute the watch. He knows its constitution as a physician knows that of an old patient. He can say what the watch needs after an accident, and can advise as to whether it is worth adjusting.

No new watch can be depended upon until it has passed through the hands of the adjuster for however admirable the individual parts of the works, their perfect balance is to be obtained only by such study and experiment as it is the business of the adjuster to make. The adjuster is a highly skilled mechanic, with wide knowledge of his trade, and the utmost deftness in its prosecution.

## In Safe Hands.

What has become of all your fine diamonds? They're still in the family, I hope! Oh, yes, my uncle has them.

## MADAGASCAR PRINCESSES.

DUSKY FEMALES WHO MANAGE TO HAVE A LOVELY TIME.

Two Drink and One of Them Chews—Noble Dames of the Royal Court Who Couldn't Resist the Engaging French Officers—The Morality of the Natives is Very Bad.

Madagascar's royal princesses have been prominent, though—from this distance—shadowy figures in all the stirring and dramatic scenes of the war that France is now waging to re-establish her protectorate over that savage isle.

A Frenchman who served his Government at Antananarivo, the capital, for several years has returned, and gives some interesting side lights upon the manners and customs of that far-off spot.

The Queen's sister, the Princess Rasendranora, is the second lady of the land. She is fat and a little past forty years of age. For years she has kept the gossip of the capital busy discussing her scandalous adventures. She has been married three times and is at present single, her third husband having mysteriously disappeared, as did his two predecessors. It is said she never was very beautiful even from a native's point of view, but now she is extraordinarily homely and repulsive. She gets shockingly drunk at intervals, and the recent excitement of addressing the populace and urging them to enlist to repel the invasion of the hated white men threw her into the wildest frenzy.

In point of rank the Queen's sister, Ramasindrasana, comes next. She bitterly

HATES THE FRENCH,

and since they have been in control of the island her house has been the place where numberless plots and conspiracies have been formed. The meaning of the words virtue and morality is unknown among the women of Madagascar, and the Princess Ramasindrasana is no exception. She is married, but the number of her favorites has been great, and they have succeeded one another with dizzying rapidity. As Catherine of Russia used to do, she sends them in exile to remote quarters of the island, and they are put to death if they return before they are forgotten. The Princess Ramasindrasana is also far from being beautiful or young. Her favorite drink is rum and she chews tobacco.

In her palace (a frame house) on the square of Andahlo, at the capital, there are two chairs that are reserved for European visitors. The Princess herself sits on the floor, upon a mat.

The two Princesses and the daughter of Rasendranora, the young Princess Razafindramitra—she is but fourteen and has, as yet, no history—are the only ones who at present have the rank of "Royal Highness," but they would lose this if the next Queen should be chosen from another branch of the family of Andrianampoinimerina, which has occupied the Madagascar throne for more than a century.

The other Princesses, though near relatives of the Queen or the sovereigns who have preceded her, make up the crowd of ladies of honor, or Sakazandriana, friends of the Queen. Some of them are married and lead tolerably regular lives, but the most of them are single, that is, unmarried, though many of them act as housekeepers for European residents.

Ordinarily these noble dames wear the national costume, which is a loose, white robe, but on great occasions they put on European dress. Their civilized gowns always fit them very badly and are most striking in color, their general effect being made more striking by the

BARE AND DUSKY FEET

of the wearers peeping from under the lace-fringed skirts.

From the very first the Frenchmen have been popular with the feminine nobility and gentry of the Madagascar capital and court. When M. Le Myre de Villers and his party halted at Antananarivo in 1886, the brave "marsouins" of his escort threw the feminine entourage of Ranevala III. into such a commotion that the Prime Minister, her husband, had to interfere. An edict from his Excellency forbade noble women and ladies of the court from "frequenting the vaishas," as the white men are called, and this measure, which for a time was strictly enforced, gave rise to an incident which is worth recording as illustrating the method of thought of the Queen and her Prime Minister.

There was one native woman—a Duchesse—who lived with one of the French residents. So content was she with her lot that she swore she would kill herself rather than obey the new law and leave her European master. Through the intervention of her friend, who had great influence with the Prime Minister, an exception was made in her favor. A new decree was issued, authorizing this dusky Venus to remain with her vaisha and serve him as interpreter, and a copy of this amendment was filed, gravely and in due form, with the Minister of Foreign Affairs at Paris.

The common people marry and give in marriage, but faithfulness is rare and, though many of them profess Christianity, the Seventh Commandment is never observed by either of the parties to the marital contract. Both before and after marriage the morality of the natives is unspeakably bad.

## Poison on Bank Notes.

A bank cashier of Vienna recently died from the effects of touching his lips with his fingers when counting money. At an examination of the vaults it fell to his lot to count a large number of small bills, and, although repeatedly warned, he continued mechanically to touch his lips with his fingers as he counted. That evening he felt a smarting pain in his lip, but did not attend to it until a swelling had set in the next day. He then consulted a surgeon, who insisted upon an immediate operation on the tumor that had in the meantime assumed alarming proportions. But in spite of the operation, the patient died three days after of blood poisoning.