

me to suppose that the poor fellow had experienced some disquieting moment in love, for which he had sought consolation in the abuse of spirituous liquors.

When he recovered from his fits he would invariably ask the same question:

"What did I say, doctor? Did I say anything?"

I naturally replied that he had said nothing of importance, and bade him quiet himself. But he was not satisfied, and after trying to search my inner thoughts with his fierce eyes he would give up the attempt and resign himself to his couch, with the equally invariable observation:

"A glass of absinthe would do me a great deal of good."

One morning, as I was entering into Castagnac's room, I saw Duterte, who was nearly convalescent, hastening after me along the passage.

"Doctor," he said, taking me by the hand, "I have come to ask you a favour. Will you give me permission to go out for a day?"

"Anything, my dear friend but that. The fever is still raging in the town, and I cannot expose you to a relapse."

"Well, give me then two hours—the time to go and come back."

"It is impossible, my good friend. In another week, if you go on well we will see what can be done."

He withdrew, evidently deeply chagrined. I was sorry, but could not help it but on turning round was surprised at seeing Castagnac following the retiring sutor with a strange look.

"What was Raymond asking for?" he inquired.

"Oh, nothing! he wanted to go out, but I could not sanction it."

"You refused him permission, then?" persisted the sick man.

"It was my duty to do so."

Castagnac said no more, but resumed his recumbent position, with a grim smile. I was almost about to say a diabolical expression of contemptance, which I could not account for, but which filled me with strange apprehensions.

That same evening my duties called me to the amphitheatre, when an antopey claimed my attention. The so-called amphitheatre was in reality a vaulted dungeon fifteen feet long by twenty wide, with two windows opening upon the precipice and looking in the direction of the high road to Philippeville. The body lay upon a table slightly inclined my lamp was placed upon a stone that advanced out of the wall, and I remained engaged in my examination till near eleven o'clock. On leaving off at length, I was horrified at seeing the window blocked up by innumerable owls, small and grey-coloured, with their feathers all erect, their green eyes sparkling through the semi-obscurity. They were waiting till I had done.

I rushed horrified to the window and drove the rapacious birds away, like so many great dead leaves carried off by the night wind. But, at the very moment, I heard a noise—a strange sound, almost imperceptible in the depth of the abyss. I stopped, and putting my head out of the window, held my breath so as to catch the sounds more distinctly. Castagnac's room was immediately over the amphitheatre; and below, between the precipice and the wall of the hospital, was a space, not above a foot in width, covered with broken pottery and bottles, the refuse of the infirmary. In the stillness that reigned around, I could distinctly hear a man groping his way along this dangerous shelf.

"Heavens grant!" I said to myself, "that the sentinel does not see him. A single false step, and he is a lost man!"

I had barely had time to make this reflection to myself, when I heard the hoarse voice of Castagnac calling out from above:

"Raymond, where are you going?"

It was a condemnation to death. At the very instant I heard some of the broken pottery slipping down the incline, followed by the fall of a heavy body. I heard the sighs of a man struggling as if to hold for his life—a groan that went to the very marrow of my bones, and I beheld my forehead with a cold, clammy perspiration, and then all was over! Not exactly all, for I heard a diabolical burst of laughter above, and then a window closed with such impetuosity, that it was followed by the sound of broken glass. And then the deep silence of night spread its shroud over this frightful drama.

After I had somewhat recovered from the state of indescribable horror in which I had been thrown I mechanically took the light, and, winding my way to my own room, I went to bed. To sleep, however, was out of the question: all night long I was haunted by those lamentable sighs and by that demonic laugh. The next morning a feeling of horror came over me, which prevented me verifying my impressions till I had visited all my patients. It was not till that was accomplished that I directed my steps to Duterte's room. I knocked; there was no answer. I entered; there was no one there. I inquired of the hospital attendants: no one had seen him go out. Summoning all my courage, I went next to Castagnac's room. A glance at the window satisfied me that two panes were broken.

"It blew hard, lieutenant, last night," I remarked.

Castagnac's lifted up his head, till he lurched in his bony bands, as if in the net of reading. "Parlen!" he said; "two windows broken, only that?"

"Your room, lieutenant, appears to be more exposed than others, or perchance, you left your window open?"

An almost imperceptible muscular contraction furrowed the cheeks of the old miscreant, and he at the same time fixed so inquiring a look at me, that I felt glad of a pretence to withdraw. Just as I was going out I turned back suddenly, as if I forgotten to ask a question;

"By-the-by, lieutenant, has Duterte been to see you?"

A shudder passed through his grey hairs.

"Duterte?"

"Yes, he is gone out, and no one knows where. I thought, perhaps, 'No one has been to see me,'" he interrupted, abruptly; "no one whatsoever."

I went out convinced of his guilt, but I had no proofs. I determined to wait and watch, and in the mean time contented myself with reporting the disappearance of Lieutenant Raymond Duterte to the commandant de place.

Next day some Arabs, coming with vegetables to the market of Constantine, made known that they had seen from the road to Philippeville, a uniform dangling in the air on the face of the rock of the Kasbah, and that birds of prey were flying around it in hundreds. These were

theremains of Raymond, and it was with the greatest possible trouble that they were recovered by letting-down men by means of ropes.

The catastrophe furnished a subject of conversation for the officers of the garrison for two or three days and was then forgotten. Men exposed to perish every day do not dwell upon unpleasant topics, Jacques dies, Pierre takes his place. The regiment alone is immortal.

My position with regard to Castagnac grew, in the mean time, more painful every day. My actions were constrained in his presence—the very sight of him was repulsive. He soon detected it, and suspicion was awakened on his side.

"He doubts that I suspect him," I said to myself: "if he was sure of it, I should be a lost man—that villain stops at nothing!"

(To be Continued.)

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