

# Woodless Duel's Result

ment was encamped in the obscure village of Yalins, to the frontier of Austria. The duel was over, and we officers were laughing before the work of the day. A little apart from the others, sat Platel, moodily watching the fall of a tall, strongly-built man with a fallow face and restless cold character repelled without inspiring respect. He feared not loved him; we were simply indifferent.

"Bye," said he, suddenly, toward one of his neighbors, "I tell me what the colonel is doing with you this morning?"

"What you hear his name?"

"He was formerly a lieutenant in the guards."

"Is the officer who is engaged to the daughter of the chateau yonder?"

"I was not aware that you had arrived yesterday."

"He is anxious to see your acquaintance, gentlemen, and I have accordingly invited him to come over at once. And that is the name of the lieutenant," he continued.

"That you and he are of the same regiment some five years ago?"

"I answered; 'I remember him well. He was then a handsome youth, of a rather stumpy, but a general favorite of all that.'" "Brook broke in upon me with a sympathetic smile."

"Brook," said he, "your friend will be welcome, but he must be careful of his temper, or I shall be obliged to cool it."

"The captain himself stood in the doorway, and bowed to the company. He was fair-complexioned, with a confidence open as a summer day, and the very ideal of a cavalry captain."

"Gentlemen," said he, advancing, "I am proud and happy to have joined your regiment." He bowed again, and seeing me, held out his hand.

"What you, lieutenant! You have brightened me, I hope?"

"I told you practice shooting—shooting, too?" said he, in a strange voice that we stared at in astonishment.

"It is my custom for an hour every day," the captain answered curtly after a slight pause.

No one stirred. The fate of a comrade was at stake, and even the bravest shrank from the ordeal.

"Major," said Broc, "will you do me this favor?"

"The major could not refuse; he made a sign of assent."

"Be good enough to place us," continued the captain, giving me the saber. "Then load."

"You need not trouble about that," said Platel, "I have brought the pistols; one is charged, the other has only a gun cap."

"Do you know which is which?" said I.

He frowned darkly on me.

"It does not signify in the least, sir. Captain Broc shall take which he pleases."

The major drew the captain's saber from its sheath and drove the point of it in the ground till it stood upright; then he drew his own and set it in the same way before the first. One pace alone separated the two blades. Each adversary was to stand behind a saber with extended arm, so that each had the muzzle of the other's pistol 6 inches from his heart.

While these preparations were being made Platel took off his coat. His second produced a box in which were two pistols, and Broc, selecting the first his hand touched, stepped quickly back and stood erect at his post.

Platel eyes him closely. Not a muscle moved in the captain's face; he was like a figure of granite.

Major Clement stepped forward.

"Are you ready, gentlemen?"

There was a silence of death. Only the leaves rustled on the trees. In this dread hush the major's ringing voice made us tremble.

"One."

"Two."

I will not be harsh with you. And it shall go forth to the world that you have retired in consequence of bad health. The surgeon will sign the necessary certificate. Now go!"

Platel rolled his eyes menacingly like a wild beast at bay; and his hands closed and clinched convulsively; he opened his mouth as if to speak, but speech failed him. In silence he turned and disappeared among the trees.

We drew a long breath of relief and pressed around the captain. He looked sad and dejected.

"I know not what presentiment haunts me, but I wish the villain's pistol had been loaded," he said.

We returned slowly, arm in arm. There was a strange stir at the chateau as we drew near; servants were talking on the doorsteps, and all at once the old white-haired gardener came tremblingly up to us.

Broc shuddered and grew pale to the very lips.

"Something has happened," he muttered hoarsely.

"Ah, sir! hasten if you would see my dear young lady alive. She was at the window when Lieutenant Platel passed on his way back, and knowing you two were to fight she feared for your safety. We found her stretched fainting on the floor, and she has never opened her eyes since."

Broc left me without a word: The doctor was descending the steps as he reached them.

The doctor looked inexpressively shocked.

"I am sorry, but it would be cruel kindness to hide the truth from you," he said, kindly. "Be brave, sir; you will need all your courage now. Mademoiselle had a weak heart and I always told her to avoid any strong emotion."

But the captain had ceased to listen; he rushed past him into the house.

On a couch in the saloon lay Lucie, placidly, as if she was sleeping. He threw himself on his knees beside her and touched the hand that never again would return his pressure. Clasp in her hand was a slender curl of her own hair.—New Orleans Picayune.

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A more contemptible plea to avoid paying an honest debt was never made. But after all, we are disposed to blame the father as much as the son. Had he put the boy to work in the grocery store when he left the high school, the family might have been spared the humiliation of having such an unmanly plea made by one of its members. One of the first duties a parent owes a child is to enable him to earn his living and to contribute his part to the ongoing of society. Old Mr. Tilford was so intent on making a fortune that he neglected to teach his boy how to work and now it may be too late for him to learn. He is evidently not ashamed of living an idle, useless life and has not even ambition enough to buy an "abandoned farm" where he could live comfortably on \$6,000 a year and gain a "high social position" by paying his debts and saving part of his income.—New York Sun.

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