

# BARLASCH OF THE GUARD

By Henry Seton Merriman

CHAPTER XI.—(Continued.)  
"Because you still make your own dresses and teach dancing," replied the pupil, with a quick sigh, at the thought of some smart bursh in the Prussian contingent.

"Ah, but Charles will return a colonel, and I shall bow to you in a silk dress from a chaise and pair—come, left foot first. You are not so tired as you think you are."

For those that are busy, time flies quickly enough. And there is nothing more absorbing than keeping the wolf from the door, else assuredly the hungry thousands would find time to rise and rend the overfed few.

August succeeded a hot July, and brought with it Sebastian's curt letter, Sebastian himself—that shadowy father—returned to his home a few hours later. He was not alone, for a heavier step followed him into the passage, and Desreé, always quick to hear and see and act, coming to the end of the stairs, perceived her father looking upward toward her, while his companion, in rough sailor's clothes, turned to lay aside the valise he carried on his shoulder.

Mathilde was close behind Desreé, and Sebastian kissed his daughters with that cold repetition of names which always suggested a strenuous past, in which the emotions had been relinquished for ever as an indulgence unit for a stern and hard-bitten age.

"I took him away, and now return him," said the sailor, coming forward. Desreé had always known that it was Louis, but Mathilde gave a little start at the sound of the neat clipping French in the mouth of an educated Frenchman, so rarely heard in Dantzic—so rarely heard in all broad France to-day.

"That is true," answered Sebastian, turning to him with a sudden change of manner. There was that in his voice and attitude which his hearers had never noted before, although Charles had evoked something approaching it. It seemed to indicate that, of all the people with whom they had seen their father hold intercourse, Louis d'Arragon was the only man who stood upon equality with him.

"That is true—and at great risk to yourself," he said, not assigning, however, so great an importance to personal dangers in a military career as he had the manners and mind of a peasant. These gentlemen dealt more in deeds than in words. They had not much to say for themselves.

As for the Russians, Russia remains at this time the one European country unhampered and unharassed by a promise to men have a quiet tongue. A hundred years ago Russians did great deeds, and rest was silence. Neither Kutusoff nor Alexander ever stated clearly whether they followed Moscow was intentional or unavoidable; and these are the only men who knew. Perhaps Napoleon knew; at all events he thought he did, or pretented to think it long afterward at St. Helena; for Napoleon the Great was a consummate liar.

"The courier leaves this evening," she said, with a quick glance at her in her voice, as if she feared that for some reason or another she ran the risk of failing to despatch her letter. She glanced at the clock and stood, pen in hand, thinking of what she would write.

"May I enclose a line?" asked Louis. "It is not wise, perhaps, for me to address to him a line—since he is on the other side of the world, it is a small matter of hereditage which he and I divide. I have placed some money in a Dantzic bank for him. He may require it when he returns."

"Then you do not correspond with Charles?" said Mathilde, clearing a space for him on the larger table, and setting before him ink and pens and paper.

"Thank you, mademoiselle," he said, glancing at her, with that light of interest in his dark eyes which she had ignited once before by a question on the only occasion that they had met. He seemed to detect that she was more interested in him than her indifferent manner would appear to indicate. "No, I am a bad correspondent. If Charles and I, in our present circumstances, were to write to each other, it would only lead to intrigue, for which I have no taste and Charles no capacity."

"You seem to hint that Charles might have such a taste then," she said, with her quiet smile, as she moved away, leaving him to write.

"Charles has probably found out by this time," he answered with the bluntness which he claimed as a prerogative of his calling and nation. "That a soldier of Napoleon's who intrigues will make a better career than that of a merely fight."

milles from Moscow. If there is a great battle to-morrow, we shall see Moscow in less than a week. For we shall win. I have now found out from one who was near him that the Emperor said 'nd remembered me the day he passed by the Fraueugasse—our wedding-day indeed. Nobody is so insignificant for him to know. He thought that my marriage to you (for he knows that you are French) would militate against our purpose. Napoleon had decided to be sent at once to Konigsberg, and to continue the work there. De Castimir told me that the Emperor is pleased with me. De Castimir is the best friend I have; I am sure of that. It is said that under the walls of Moscow the Emperor will dictate his terms to Alexander. Everyone wonders that Alexander of Russia did not make proposals of peace when Vilna and Smolensk fell. In a week we may be at Moscow. In a month I may be back at Dantzic, De Castimir said.

And the rest would have been for Desreé's eyes alone, had it ever been penned. For next in sacredness to the future, the words of a man, lover-letters; and those who read the love-letters of another come to know the man who wrote them. It was the dawn of September 7th, 1812.

"There is the sun of Austerlitz," said Napoleon to those who were near him when it arose. But it was not. It was the sun of Borodino. And before it set the great battle of Desreé's life had been fought, and eight French generals lay dead, while thirty more were wounded. Murat, Davoust, Ney, Junot, Prince Eugene, Napoleon himself were there, and the Russian army was broken. The French claimed it as a victory; but they gained nothing but a name, and lost forty thousand killed and wounded.

During the night the Russians evacuated the position which they had held, and lost, and retaken. They retreated to Moscow, but Napoleon was hardly ready to pursue.

These things, however, are history, and those who wish to know of them should turn to the history of the war. The man orderly persons who would wish to see everything in its place, and the history-books on the top-shelf, to be taken down and read on future days, which will never come to hand, the explanation is due that this battle of Borodino is here touched upon because it changed the current of some lives which we have to deal with.

For battles and revolutions and historical events of any sort are the jagged instruments with which Fate rough-hews our lives, leaving us to pour out the coffee, and to wear the messenger, no doubt, to say that Charles was dead.

One letter still remained unread. It was the letter which had been written on the white letter.

"Madame," it read, "The enclosed papers were found on the field by one of mine. They are the papers of a man who, in the hurry of the advance, should have been left behind. He was your husband, Charles. D'Arragon is your name. You that he was alive and well at the end of the day." The writer assured Desreé of his respectful consideration, and wrote "surgeon" after his name.

Desreé had read the explanation too late.

CHAPTER XIII.  
In the Day of Rejoicing.  
Truth though it is harsh, it is the door of the room stood open, and the sound of a step in the passage made Desreé glance up, as she hastily put together the papers found on the battlefield of Borodino.

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Desreé glanced at his less, hard face. She rose, went out of the room, and returned in a few minutes carrying a new leaf, which she set on the table before him with a short laugh, and something glistened in her eyes that was not mirth.

"But neither Desreé nor Mathilde joined in the conversation. They were glad for their father to have a companion so sympathetic as to produce a marked difference in his manner. For Sebastian was more at ease with Louis d'Arragon than he was with Charles, though the latter had the tie of a common fatherland, and spoke the same French that Sebastian spoke. D'Arragon's French had the roundness always imparted to that language by an English voice. It was perfect enough, for of an educated perfection.

The talk was of such matters as command and war and treaties of peace. For all the world thought that Alexander of Russia would be brought to his knees by the battle of Borodino. A hundred years ago, moreover, women did not know their place as they do to-day. They ignored the primary ethics of the equality of the sexes, and did not know that a woman's opinion is always of immense value, whether she knew anything of the matter or not.

CHAPTER XIV.  
Moscow.  
Nothing is so disappointing as failure—except success.

While the Dantaisers with grave faces discussed the news of Borodino beneath the trees in the Fraueugasse, Charles Darragon, white with dust, rose in his stirrups to catch the first sight of the domes and cupolas of Moscow.

D'Arragon folded the letter slowly. It was the fatal letter written in the upper room in the shoemaker's house in Konigsberg in the Neuer Markt, where the lindens grow close to the window. In it Charles spoke lightly of the sacrifice he had made in leaving Desreé on his wedding-day, to do the Emperor's bidding. It was indeed the greatest sacrifice that man can make; for he had thrown away his honor.

"It may not be as easy as you think," returned D'Arragon, looking toward the door.

He had no time to say more; for Mathilde and her father were talking together on the stairs as they came down. D'Arragon thrust the letters into his pocket, the only indication he had time to give Desreé of the policy they must pursue. He stood facing the door, alert and quiet, with only a moment in which to shape the course of more than one life.

"There is good news, monsieur," he said to Sebastian. "Though I did not know of it, there has been another Sebastian of whom Charles had written."

"For myself," said d'Arragon, changing the subject quickly, "I can now make sure of receiving letters addressed to me in the care of the Russian consul at Riga, or the consul at Stockholm, should you wish to communicate with me, or should madame find leisure to give me news of her husband, or of Charles that I spoke of. He is safe—madame has heard."

He spoke rather slowly, and turned toward Desreé, with a measured gesture, not unlike Sebastian's habitual manner, and a quick glance to satisfy himself that she had understood and was ready.

"Yes," said Desreé, "he was safe and well after the battle, but he gives no details; for the letter was actually written the day before."

"For I feel assured," he went on, "that we shall continue to hear good news of your cousin; not only that he is safe and well, but that he makes progress in his profession. He will go far, I am sure."

D'Arragon bowed his acknowledgments of this kind thought, and rose rather hastily.

"My best chance of quitting the city to-day," he said, "is to pass through the gates with the market people returning to the villages. To do this I must not delay."

"The streets are so full," replied Sebastian, glancing out of the window, "that you will pass through them unnoticed. I see, beneath the trees, a neighbor, Koch, the locksmith, who is perhaps waiting to give me the news. While you are saying farewell, I will go out and speak to him. What he has to tell may interest you and your comrades as well as help you to escape from the city this morning."

He took his hat as he spoke and went to the door, Mathilde, thirsting for the news that seemed to hum in the streets like the sound of bees, rose and followed him. Desreé and d'Arragon were left alone. She had gone to the window, and turning there she looked back at him over her shoulder, where he stood by the door watching her.

"So you see," she said, "there is no other Sebastian."

D'Arragon made no reply. She came nearer to him, her blue eyes sparkling with contempt for the man she had married. Suddenly she pointed to the chair which d'Arragon had just vacated.

"That is where he sat. He had eaten my father's salt a hundred times," she said, with a short laugh. For whittensever civilization may be, we must still go back to obtain primitive laws of justice between man and man.

"You judge too hastily," said d'Arragon; but she interrupted him with a gesture of warning.

full of spies, strangers spoke together in the streets, and the sound of their voices, raised above the clang of carriages, came in at the open window.

"At first a victory is always a great one," said d'Arragon, looking toward the window.

"It is so easy to ring a bell," added Sebastian, with his rare smile. He was quite himself this morning, and only once did the dull look arrest him, which his daughters knew to be the only one of your name in Dantzic," said d'Arragon, in the course of question and answer as the delivery of letters in time or war.

"So far as I know, there is no other Sebastian," replied he; and Desreé, who had guessed the motive of the question, which must have been in d'Arragon's mind from the beginning, was startled by the fullness of the answer. It seemed to make reply to more than d'Arragon had asked. It shattered the last faint hope that there might have been another Sebastian of whom Charles had written.

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