

A Knot of Blue

BY WILLIAM R. A. WILSON.
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It was when the spirits of the company had reached this height after dinner and they had settled themselves comfortably in a huge semicircle in the great hall that du Tillet arose and, filling his glass, said:

"To one of our number, who has recently come off victorious despite the vile machinations of some hidden foe, the king of good comrades, who has won my stranger-heart completely, proving to me that even in these wilds of the new world there gleams unvarnished the same true metal of which the many noble heroes and brave men of our beloved France through all her glorious history were made." Raoul cast a grateful glance toward the speaker, and raised his hand deprecatingly as he finished. The toast was drunk with a ringing shout.

A dozen complimentary speeches followed. Among them were those of the three conspirators, who vied with one another in their efforts to impart a genuine, hearty tone to their words. "Léon, Léon, as being the one whose testimony had been the first to direct suspicion upon Raoul, publicly apologized to him, with tears in his eyes, and a volley of explosive oaths, acknowledging that he should have conferred first with him upon the matter and swearing on his soldierly honor that were he called upon to do the thing over again he would resign his commission rather than cast a shadow of mistrust upon so upright and true a friend as Raoul. The latter accepted his proffered hand, begged him to cease all regret, and toasted him in turn as a gallant officer who followed boldly where duty led, despite his personal feelings.

A song was proposed and sung. Another followed. Then came stories of love or adventure, each person in turn contributing his share to the entertainment of the group. At length Armand was reached. A song was clamored for, as all knew the excellence of his voice. He assented good-humoredly, and began:

"In olden days for lady's praise,
A knight went forth to war,

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With arms complete, his charger fleet,
And pennon fluttering far;
While on the field of blazoned shield
Hung fair and clear to view,
A simple band from woman's hand—
A tiny knot of blue:
A true knot,
A blue knot,
A lover's knot of blue."

The air was captivating. The fingers of many drummed the time of the measure upon their chairs, and all joined lustily in echoing the refrain:

"A true knot,
A blue knot,
A lover's knot of blue."

During this chorus du Tillet, who sat next to Raoul, leaned over and spoke softly in his ear with a knowing look. "I understand, mon ami, that it was a woman's wit and woman's reasoning which won the governor that persuaded him to sign your pardon. Ah, my friend, you have much to thank the beautiful widow for!"

Raoul reddened, and gazed at his host in astonishment, but the beginning of the next verse prevented him from questioning further.

"Did foeman bold, or robber's gold
Or Paynim blade appear,
For God, St. Clair, and lady fair—
Rang forth the rousing cheer,
Mid weapons' flash and deafening clash,
As upon and beast he slew,
An omel clear danced over near—
A tiny knot of blue:
A true knot,
A blue knot,
A lover's knot of blue."

The lit of the music was in the very atmosphere. Eyes sparkled and hands waved in unison, the resounding chorus was repeated:

"A true knot,
A blue knot,
A lover's knot of blue."

Raoul tried again to gain more information from du Tillet, but he only smiled slyly, and shook his head. "Ask her," was all that he would say. Now came the closing lines:

"Today your knight goes forth to fight,
Oh, love, my love, so true,
God give him grace his foes to face
With your sweet knot of blue—
A true knot,
A blue knot,
A lover's knot of blue."

They all rose to their feet to repeat it, which they did twice over with a vim, and when they had finished they sat down again, flushed and excited.

"Pardieu! Monsieur Armand," exclaimed du Tillet heartily, "a gallant song and one whose tune, methinks, has quite heartened us all." Then turning to Raoul he continued, "Mon cher de Chatignac, while our friends have been singing of knights and war I have noticed the sword you wear tonight. I do not recollect having seen you with it before. It has a look of ancient workmanship as though it could tell of murderous onslaught against the Paynim hosts. Can you not fashion for us out of the past some tale of knightly valor for our diversion?"

Raoul drew his sword and holding it high in his hand spoke musically: "It has indeed a history, strange and curious, not unlike in its interest to that of Excalibur, King Arthur's blade, famous in the songs of our French troubadours. You see its fashion is that of an early day, with its fantastic hilt, its long, thin blade, with needle-point for trusting, fit to be compared with our modern rapier, yet with double edge so sharp that no sword of battle could out more keenly."

So saying he arose and tossed his perfumed handkerchief, a filmy bit of lace, into the air; a bright flash was seen as the steel gleamed in the candle light, and two fragments of the fabric floated to the floor instead of one. The company, vastly interested, left their chairs and gathered around the speaker. "Tis a family heir-loom that has descended from father to son since the days of the first de Chatignac, who received it from the hands of St. Louis himself, who dubbed him knight in recognition of his deeds of prowess performed in the sixth Crusade. He also gave him this jewel in the hilt, which was said to have adorned the eye of some heathen idol. The blade is of the famed Damascus make. Here he placed the point upon the floor and bent it until the handle almost touched the tip.

"Tradition has it that he who parts with it save to his rightful heir, shall die an ignominious death. Used lawfully the owner is sure to be victorious. These mysterious Arabic characters traced upon the blade carry a warning that in times past have proven strangely true. The first line, translated, declares:

"Fight not for maid unless your heart be pure."

"One of its former owners, in the days of Charles the Wise, suffered extreme penalty for disregarding it, for being enamored of the daughter of a neighboring knight with whom he lived in constant enmity, he seized her secretly and made off with her by night. Overtaken next day by her angry father, he stood up to meet him, trusting in this blade, that had never failed him, and thinking that his

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enemy's advanced age and indifferent skill at fence would give him an easy victory. He fell after the fourth thrust. The second line affirms:

"Fight not for country, save for love, not gold."

"A brave de Chatignac with a roving disposition sold the strength of his right arm to Robert of Scotland, and perished in the first battle occurring in their inroad against the English. The last line runs:

"Fight not 'gainst man unless your cause be just."

"The most famous of our blood, a favorite of Charles the Ninth, covetous of an adjoining estate belonging to a Huguenot general, took forcible possession of the same during his absence, and upon his return attacked him fearlessly, knowing full well that in the troublous condition of the times he would not be punished for the murder. The Huguenot, though taken by surprise, put up so gallant a defense that in a few moments his grasping ancestor lay stretched, his life blood soaking into the ground he had tried so basely to seize. Hence you can well understand, mes amis, how it is that I value this relic of past usefulness, known throughout preceding generations as 'Heart's Desire,' above all my possessions. In the light of my late experiences at the hands of the known enemies, you can also appreciate why I have girded myself with this invaluable weapon." Here the speaker's eyes flashed as he concluded: "My cause is just. Woe to him against whom this point is directed."

The earnestness of his voice smote ominously upon the ears of Gaudin, who shot an uneasy glance at du Tillet. The host, seeing it, smiled carelessly and turning to Raoul, said heartily: "Ventre bleu! an interesting tale, my good friend. Will you join in your wish for a speedy meeting with your foe?" The assembly then broke up and they were all soon galloping along toward the city, their merry voices making the roadside ring with echoing strains of

"A blue knot,
A true knot,
A lover's knot of blue!"

CHAPTER XVIII.

The next evening the stealthy figure of du Tillet glided up the dim back passage and stairs of Madame Duvivier's house. He came partly in response to a request from the dark beauty, and partly because he needed to outline her future actions in the furthering of his latest plan. When he entered she received him coldly and motioned him to a chair, gazed at him with a contemptuous smile. "I hope you are satisfied with your own bungling that has caused the failure of our enterprise," she began scornfully.

Du Tillet looked at her in surprise. "My bungling!" he exclaimed.

"Yes, yours," was the spirited reply. "I certainly did my work well. I landed your precious victim in a cell, and you, because you were in the net thought all was done and walked off without taking any precautions to prevent him from slipping through the meshes, or the net from being disentangled by some outside hand."

"You mean—"

"Yes, I mean that the governor should have been watched up to the last moment so that no one could approach him; that those persons most likely to interfere should have been guarded well and hindered in any move they might try to make. You are a pretty plotter, indeed; a child could check a conspiracy of yours."

Du Tillet, nettled at this retort, flushed and inquired sharply:

"You know, then, who was the means of influencing the governor?"

"Certainly! Why not? Why do I have a dozen ears and eyes at work gathering and reporting information daily if not to know what passes? Despite our careful plans, my efforts and assured success, all was thwarted by that innocent-faced, golden-haired purring pussy at the Chateau."

"Aimee de Marsay," cried du Tillet.

"Yes, she was seen to leave the city on horseback. She evidently learned where the governor was, reached him, and persuaded him, for he sent the pardon by another messenger to Quebec Junction in time, and the two came back together, for they were seen on the street riding the same horse. I have had my eye on the girl for some time, suspecting that she loved our intended victim. This act of hers confirms me in my belief."

"Du Tillet sat gnawing at his fingers. "Curse her!" he muttered. "I have this spoiled all. I will settle with her later on," he concluded vindictively.

"But all this has nothing to do with our little affair, Monsieur. You seem to have forgotten our bargain; I was to aid you, and you were to help me. I have done my part, but I have not seen you doing anything to further my ends in return. You can now continue without my assistance until you accomplish something for me besides promises."

Du Tillet masked his real feeling with a kindly smile. "Dear Madame Duvivier, how unjust you are in your speech. Unknown to you I have been exerting my best endeavor to bring about the fulfillment of your desires. Matters have now reached such a point that I have but to dispatch a message to Gasparid, Roguin and he will appear at Quebec as fast as he can travel. In fact, I have done everything except place him in your hands; and that I shall do until by your aid I have succeeded in my own affair."

"Shall not?" cried Madame Duvivier angrily, as she tapped her shiplapped foot violently upon the floor. "You use those words to me, when all I have to do is to refuse you further aid, and by enlightening de Chatignac, put him on his guard against you!"

"And I?" replied du Tillet, with a bland smile, "have only to step to the Chateau and speak a word in the governor's ear entailing such consequences to your charming person as will absolutely preclude any further action on your part toward the gratification of your hatred."

Madame Duvivier's eyes flashed, but she realized the words of his words, so, biting her lip a moment, she replied in a voice she strove to render calm:

To be Continued.

When you can no longer argue, quote poetry.

It makes us feel bad when we find that our wrights are all wrongs.

OPTIONISTS SCORE THREE-FIFTHS VOTE

Will Endeavor to Have That Clause Removed From the Statutes.

Toronto, Jan. 8.—The results of the local option contests are the cause of mingled feelings in the breasts of the temperance leaders, gratification for the victories won and indignation over the defeats caused through the three-fifths vote requirement passed by the Ontario Legislature. Mr. P. S. Spence, secretary of the Temperance Alliance, and Mr. G. F. Marter, ex-M. P. P., discussed the situation this morning, and both expressed themselves strongly in regard to the three-fifths clause. An effort will be made to have the clause wiped off the statute books. This clause provides that a bylaw must be carried by a three-fifths vote. Mr. Spence says that in cases where a bylaw has been in force prior to the passing of the act, only a simple majority is necessary to retain it.

"We are exceedingly gratified," said Mr. Marter this morning, "at the earnestness and energy displayed in many places, which has accomplished even more than we anticipated, in view of the handicap they had. We are especially sorry for those who fought so hard and won substantial victories, but yet find themselves compelled to submit to the continuation of the liquor forced upon them by a minority vote. Such a condition is neither just nor right, and is exceedingly discouraging to the men and women who spent time, energy and money with the sole object of benefiting their communities and depriving the fruits of their victory by a law that makes the vote of a friend of the liquor traffic of more value and effect than that of a man who is opposed to the barroom system."

"The splendid success of the working of the law in the Province, which has followed a vote which was less than three-fifths, and the same is the case of municipalities all over the Province that carried local option three or more years ago by simple majorities. The honest and independent administration of the law in these municipalities has made the law just as successful as in the places where the new requirement was met. Enforcement depends upon the integrity of the law-enforcing officers, and not on the magnitude of the majority in its favor."

"We have much to thank the Government for, for some of the very good amendments made in the local option act, especially that which makes it obligatory to submit a bylaw on reducing a 25 cent petition, and also of making the council give a third reading when so passed by the council vote," said Mr. Marter, "but we deeply regret that these advantages are more than counter-balanced by the unfair requirements of the three-fifths majority. It is especially unfortunate that opinions on such a subject should be expressed by men who view the matter from a purely academic standpoint, and who never will understand it until they get down into the fight like other people and do some of the work which they are so ready to talk, and but for their advances we would be in a better position, as their statements were used as campaign arguments by our opponents."

JAPS DON'T LIKE MEXICO

Two Thousand Who Went There on Contract Will Come to U. S.

Washington, Jan. 9.—Reliable information has been received here of a prospective influx of over 2,000 Japanese into the United States from Mexico. The exact number is given as 2,182, some of whom have arrived and others expected to arrive at Mazatlan, Mex. They were given free transportation from Japan and were to be employed in the development of important interests in Mexico.

Those who have arrived have become dissatisfied with their conditions and surroundings and already some have crossed the Mexican border. One hundred and eighty-two are en route to El Paso and the remainder are expected to make their way to the boundary, claiming the United States as their destination.

The others en route from Japan are expected to follow, and they are sound mentally and physically and the other requirements of the immigration laws are met, there is nothing to prevent them from entering the United States. Japanese emigration to the Hawaiian Islands during the past eighteen months aggregated 16,749, a large portion of whom subsequently came to the mainland of the United States.

Oklahoma City, Okla., Jan. 9.—A message from Fort Reno tonight says that during the examination of Corp. Knowles (colored), charged with shooting Capt. Maclean, on the night of Dec. 21, it was developed that there was a plot to murder every white officer at the post.

Just before leaving for this country Henry B. Irving, now playing in the east, was entertained by a club in Liverpool. Referring to his coming visit to this country, he said, with quiet allusion to President Roosevelt's spelling reform: "It is naturally a critical moment in an actor's career when he makes his first appearance before an audience of the great nation which speaks—and as yet, I believe, spells—his own language."

When a man is of our own opinion it is pretty good evidence to us that he is above the average.

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Today, we ask you to focus your attention on silks. Read of the opportunities that are yours if you buy now and here. If you desire material for a new waist or dress by all means select it right away while this 1-5 Off Sale is in progress.

1-5 off on every kind of fancy Dress Silks. Just think of the variety that is yours to choose from. Be among the first and secure the widest choice. Come tomorrow.

1-5 off dainty Silk Waistings, in fashionable black and white checks, tartans, ribbon stripes and charming novelty patterns.

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