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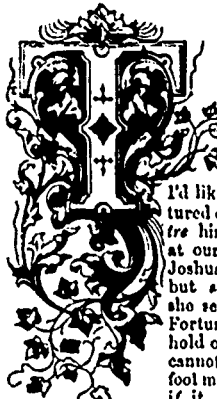
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RUTH MORRISON.

IN FOUR PARTS.

PART III.—CHAP. VII.—Continued.



HERE is no doubt, Marguerite, but you did her business cleverly."

"Not so cleverly, after all, that

I'd like to have ventured on it if *le maitre* himself had been at our elbow. But, Joshua, if you had but seen the letter she sent to Madame. Fortunately, I got hold of it in time. I cannot tell what that fool might have done, if it had come into

her hands. She enclosed a note from some uncle of hers in it, so I pitched them both into the fire, and sent her back a message of my own from Madame. A great thing to have her clear off, out of our way I can tell you; I wouldn't have that one here after to-morrow night's little work—no, not for a thousand francs. Demure as she looks, she's deep and dangerous. Bless yourself, you *pauvre homme*, that you haven't her scenting you out; she'd be worse than a detective."

The man shuddered at the last word. "Hush! for Heaven's sake, don't talk of those folks now," he said. "But, Marguerite, come to business, my good woman: tell me again exactly what you know of the captain's goings to-morrow."

"Why, I heard him tell Madame that he would be early in the day at Lisburn, at the Downshire Arms; that he was then going to the Black Swan—a public-house, on the road somewhere near Hillsborough; that he had

an appointment there with tenants, and was to receive rents; and that he would pick up the evening mail-car at Hanbridge, that carries the cross post along—I don't know where, but it would drop him, he said, as it passed, at Common Cross. And now mind:—"Let Marks," he said, "or one of the men, meet me there at half-past seven, to bring up my bag. But I don't wish it to be known, Marie, what way I am coming"—if I didn't laugh in my sleeve at this—"for the country is not over quiet, and I shall have a large sum of money that I must bring with me, as I should not be in time to lodge it in the Bank."

"You have it all put, my jewel," returned Marks, "and there never was anything so lucky: let me see," and he leaned over the fire, upon the chimney-piece, as if reflecting upon the information.

"Well," exclaimed the housekeeper, half angrily, after a few moments' silence, "sure, 'tis all plain sailing now."

"Yes, plain as day," said the other, looking up. "I must take care to be the one to meet my brave captain to-morrow night."

"Leave that to me; but see that you don't bungle the business; *le maitre* has his wits about him; remember that."

"Oh, the thing is simple enough now; trust me, I'll not put my foot in it, with such a fair opportunity. Everything turns out just as we could wish it; doesn't it! But stop a moment—goodness send he has left the *little persuader* where it always lies, in the drawer here;" and the pair walked across to the large secretary that stood at the opposite side of the room. Marks unlocked it with a key that he took from his pocket, and then there was a sound of different drawers being opened. "Ah, here it is;" and in a second or two the appalled listener on the sofa heard the peculiar cick which told it was a deadly weapon that the man was examining. "Loaded and all, by jinnin! Faith, the fellow little dreamed, when he was last loading this, that, as they say, 'he was cutting a rod for his own back.'" And a suppressed laugh broke from them both.

"But now," inquired Mrs. Montserrat, "tell me how you mean to manage. 'Tis safer to settle all here 'n the dead of night,

with no one to be the wiser, then to be seen talking together when people are about. Don't you think I was right to manage it so?"

"To be sure; you're always right, my dear! Well, when we come together from Common Cross, by the Oak Walk, as he always comes, I'll be behind as is most respectful; there'll be a little bit of a young moon up, I suspect, light enough for work, and not too light for mischief; and when we get to the loneliest bit, where the road turns, and the trees are the thickest just by the lake-side, why then"—and he cocked the pistol with a significant gesture. "Next I'll send this down to the bottom of the water, where it will tell no tale; and then I'll get at the tin, quick as a weasel would lick the blood of the rat he had throttled, and home like a shot, when do you be at hand to slip all the awag away, and then a story is easily made up of murder and robbery as we were coming home, and the fellow making off. Do you understand?"

"I do," returned Mrs. Montserrat, speaking with deliberation. "That might answer very well; but we must be prepared for all difficulties. Suppose now, that he sends you on before him."

"Well, if he does, sure and 'tis done all the same. 'Tis easy to lie by in the trees there where I say, and manage it as he comes up."

"Yes; but you might miss him; or you mightn't do for him outright; and 'tis only dead men, mind, that don't tell. And, Joshua, if you only hit him—if you didn't shoot him dead, he'd be an awful man, I tell you, to have the last bout with."

"Never you fear," replied the miscreant. "I'll put the grappling-irons in him. Let me but get good aim, and he'll not speak many words after; besides, 'tis a simple thing to silence him, once he's down. Then, my hearty, our course is clear; no one will suspect us. Just as well, though, as you say, that that unsafe-looking craft, the governess, is off the stocks. They'll be offering rewards, and all that sort of foolery. Missis, most likely, won't be for staying here. Anyways, you and I, after a decent time, when the hubbub settles down a bit, can be off quietly over the water with the needful, my dear" (and here he nudged the