

# THE FAVORITE

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"YOU LIE, MARQUIS!" CRIED RAOUL.

## FEUDAL TIMES;

OR,

## TWO SOLDIERS OF FORTUNE.

### A Romance of Daring and Adventure.

(Translated especially for the FAVORITE from the French of Paul Duplessis.)

#### CHAPTER III.

##### THE INTERDICTED HOUSE.

It was six o'clock in the evening when the two cavaliers rode out of Saint Pardoux. For a long time they rode in silence, broken at length by Captain Roland.

"Chevalier," he said, "will it be agreeable to you to talk for a few minutes on the subject of politics? It is indispensable, if our friendly engagement is to hold, that I would ascertain your opinions. Are you for the king, or for Messieurs de Guise? For my own part I make no attempt to conceal it from you—and heaven send that your way of looking at the matter may be the same as my own—I am for both."

"Captain," replied Raoul, "I arrived in France

but a few days back, and have, therefore, a very imperfect knowledge of the affairs of the kingdom; but, nevertheless, I do not hesitate to declare to you that if I were called upon to take one side or the other, I should humbly offer my sword to the king."

"Mistake, dear comrade—mistake! The king's resources are used up; he has no means of recompensing his faithful servants."

"In offering him my sword, I should consult no personal interest, but should act simply in obedience to the voice of my conscience and honor. The king, whatever may be his defects as a man, remains none the less the elect and representative of heaven upon earth, and as such everyone owes him obedience and respect."

Captain Roland smiled.

"Ah, dear chevalier," he cried, "you look on politics from the worst point of view—the sentimental side. You have yet a great deal to learn."

At this moment the conversation of the two friends was suddenly interrupted by the blast of a trumpet.

By a simultaneous action, both laid their hands upon their weapons of defence.

"The devil strangle me if we are not already sighted by those infernal apostles. If I could only cut the throat of that burly musician, who is calling down upon us those gentlemen's pistols and daggers, it would be some satisfaction, but I can see nobody. Can you see anybody?"

"No, I can see no one," replied Raoul, after he had raised himself in his stirrups, and looked on every side of him. "Let us push on."

The road they were traversing was a kind of path worn upon a stony soil; here and there on either hand, grew a few pear and wild cherry trees, then in blossom; but altogether the configuration of the ground was but little adapted to the purposes of an ambushade.

After riding on for some distance further, at as rapid a rate as the heavy harness of the captain's horse permitted, they came in sight of the fortified house of which they were in search.

This house, built upon an eminence, and surrounded by a wide and deep moat, had most of the characteristics of a castle. Its extremely thick outer walls were evidently almost cannon-proof.

"Pardieu!" cried Raoul, with a joyous smile and air, "the Demoiselle d'Eranges is well protected."

Arrived before the principal gate or gate of honor, the captain seized his companion's rein, and pulled his steed up short. He had caught sight of the muzzle of an arquebus projected from above the supports of the drawbridge.

A moment later, and a rough voice was heard demanding: "Who goes there?"

"Two travellers who request hospitality for the night," replied the captain.

"Are you Catholics or Huguenots?"

For an instant Captain Roland was embarrassed by this question.

"We are fatigued," he responded, after a short hesitation.

"Your names and qualities?" demanded the voice.

"The Chevalier Raoul Stort, and Captain

Roland de Maurevert. What need of all this parleying. Do you fear that I and my friend are meditating the capture of your fortified house?"

"I must consult my mistress, the Dame d'Eranges," replied the hidden speaker.

Captain Roland, with a dozen ingeniously and vigorously accentuated oaths, expressed the impatience with which these delays filled him. Before he had half completed his volley of abuse a body of horsemen appeared in the distance.

"Here come these devil's whelps!" he cried.

"Will they never let down this infernal drawbridge? Don't for a moment suppose that I speak from the point of view of honor—nothing of the sort. It is not only that the condition of these scoundrels is inferior to mine, but because they are certain not to have a crown in their pockets, that I desire to have nothing to do with them! I care nothing for a fight that offers no spoils to the victor. Ah! the wars of religion for that!—gold on both sides—spoils of allies as well as of adversaries; that's worth fighting for. There they come over that hill! the scoundrels advance in order, as if they knew something about the rules of warfare. I'm sorry to see you so lightly armed, chevalier. Manage your two pistols well, and don't be carried away by excitement. Before a quarter of an hour these ruffians will be upon us.—Hallo, here! open your infernal gates."

"Gentleman," cried the speaker bidden by the drawbridge, "my mistress greatly regrets to be obliged to refuse you hospitality; but the