

beneath the white column of the neck argued maturity, and yet the waist was girded by a wide sash of ribbon which trailed on the floor, while the nut-brown ringlets of her hair hung unconfined down her back. Beautiful, childish, ravishingly simple and sweet, as a French woman may sometimes be between the ages of twelve and twenty—never later.

The Lieutenant did not look to see the effect of this white vision on me. He knew what it would be. He was a worshipper, and had never found a person who did not willingly share his homage when they saw his idol.

"This is my daughter Aimee. Aimee, this is my friend Monsieur—"

"I would know my father's American friend. I have often heard him speak of you," and the little rose-tinted palm was laid in my hand.

Imagine my astonishment. This jumping-jack of a lieutenant, who has just been giving me exquisite merriment by his antics and singing and boasting—this little wasp-waisted dandy of the infantry, with his waxed mustache and white gloves, reminding me of an American militia-man on dress parade—this man the father of this floating, ethereal little sylph in sky-blue satin! It was too much, and I sank back exhausted.

"Was Monsieur in the great American War of the rebellion?" said Aimee.

"I was in the public service," I answered. "I was not a soldier."

"I am sorry for you then," said this warlike angel. "You have seen, though, the great Grant, and the brave Sherman, and that great man with the black horse which comes so far to the great battle."

"Sheridan," I suggested.

"Yes, yes—the Little Phil," and her big eyes twinkled with admiration.

"Ah! it was great—superb!"

"And now you have war in France," I said. "And you will have glorious names to remember, glorious fields to consecrate, and new history to be written. I hope, Mademoiselle, it may not be as long a war as ours, nor cost so many lives, but may be just as successful. Americans remember that France gave us our first recognition in our early struggles, and sent us one of our bravest generals in Lafayette, and, better than all, there was a French army stood in line at Yorktown when Cornwallis laid down his arms. We can cry with good-will, 'Vive la France!'"

Tears stood in the beautiful eyes, and her voice trembled as she answered:

"France, I am afraid, will need much sympathy and long forbearance for her many mistakes. I love her still, though she has been a cruel mother to me."

"Behold," said the Lieutenant, stalking forward and pointing to Aimee in a dramatic manner, "who is this Aimee, my daughter—the daughter of Lieutenant Hippolyte Boh of the infantry? Yes, she is my daughter, but she is more! This Aimee is also the grandchild of the Duke de Brinvilliers. Where the sun kisses the grapes on a thousand acres is her rightful home. Not in the Quartier St Germain, in the shadows, should she be, but in the wide saloons of the tall chateau. Her divine mother, the gentle Marie, was a poor toiler in the streets of Paris. Then she smiled on the poor lieutenant of the line, Hippolyte Boh, and he—he drank water, and saved every sou, that his gentle wife might rest in ease and comfort; and her child Aimee has lain in the soft nest while the parent bird has fought for food. Is it so, Aimee?"

"My father!" was all she said, and laid her cheek against his face.

"And who crept into the courts of kings or presidents or emperors and poisoned their ears with false tales, and took away the castles and the vineyards, and blotted out the name of Brinvilliers? *The Marquis Larue!*" he shouted. "Who to-day seeks our quiet home and puts watchers on our throat, and would take the life of my angel, the last heir to the vast estates? *The Marquis Larue!*" he shrieked.

"My father," said Aimee, "perhaps Monsieur does not care to hear of these matters, which do not concern him."

"He does care. He is my American friend," said the excited Lieutenant. "Who else shall know? Every man you meet may be of the secret police. Who shall tell what will come next? Will a Bourbon go back to Versailles, or a Bonaparte make his court in the Tuileries, or will another President sit above Delegates in the Louvre? What matter! Whatever it be, and wherever France may fall, the dark-minded Marquis will still be a courtier, a spy, or a delegate, and will still seek the blood of my angel, that the great estates may remain under his heel. Ah, Aimee, you are descended from soldiers, and your poor father is a soldier. See! I must soon go against the German. If I come back, it will be with the Cross of the Legion of Honor on my breast. If I come not back, then you will be alone in the nest and the falcon soaring above."

"My father!" Aimee said, and kissed the rough cheek.

"The American is my friend. He is a lover of liberty and justice. If I come not back, Aimee, go to my friend for guidance and for help," and he took Aimee's hand and laid it in mine.

What a situation was this for an old bachelor Secretary of Legation! I had not been a woman-hater, but I had been too busy in my ambitious plans, which had borne fruit in my foreign appointment, to ever seek for woman's love. Was I smitten now? No, for I would as soon have fallen in love with the auroral tinge of morning or a distant star as with this ethereal little sylph. A fatherly instinct in me made me for a moment womanish, and it was in a thick, tremulous tone I said:

"Lieutenant, you are a man! That is the highest Yankee compliment, and if I have laughed at your bombast, and ridiculed at times your lively expectations of conquest and glory you will forgive me. I honor you, I respect you, and I hope God will bring you safe out of this war. If not, then you can die in peace, knowing that as long as life shall last and reason sit on her throne, I will try to be all you have been to Aimee. I would die for her now if danger threatened. I can say no more."

(To be continued.)



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