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The Helmet of Navarre

BY BERTHA RUNKLE

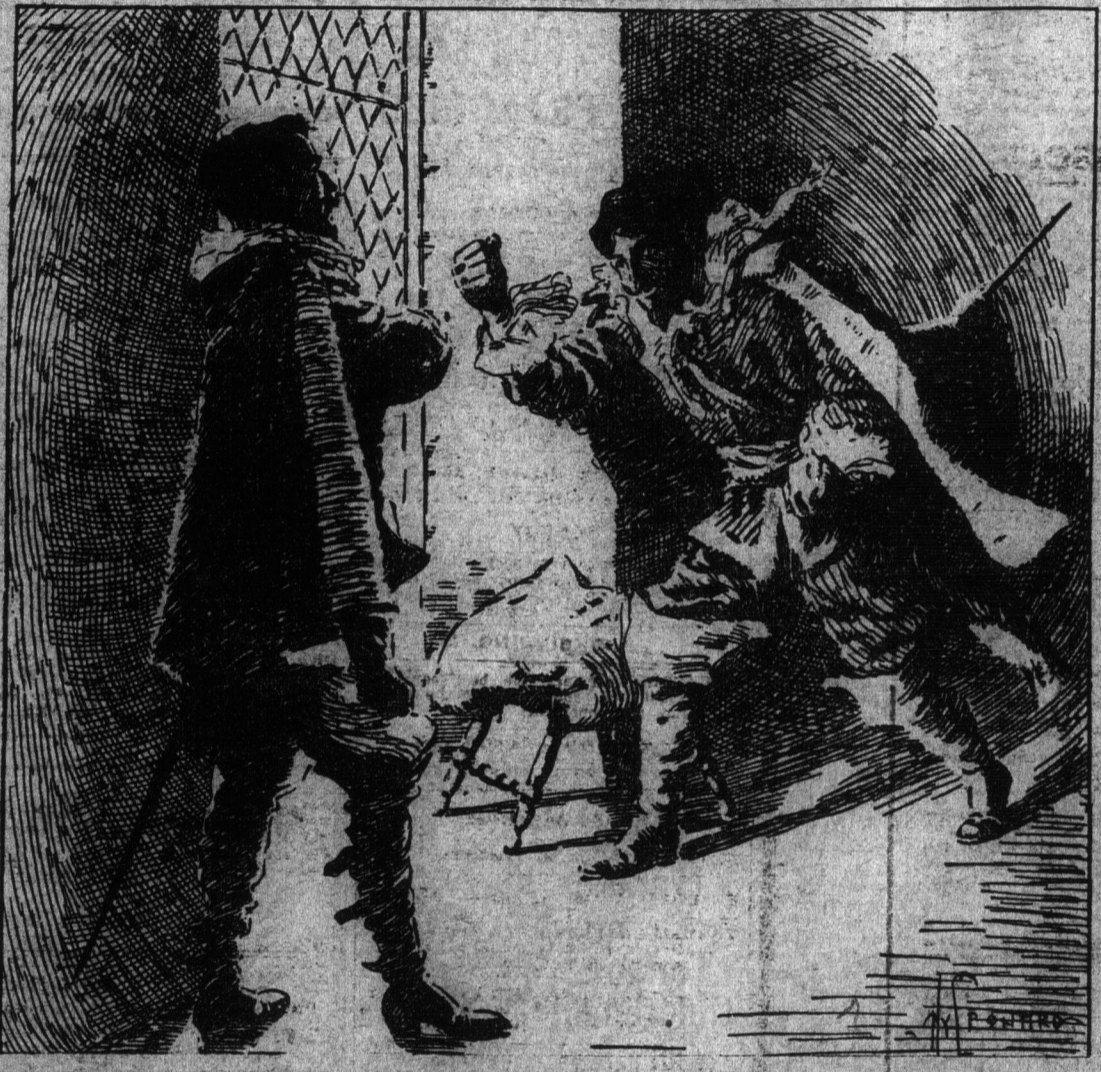
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"Not today, Vigo." "Yes, M. Etienne, today. Be advised, monsieur, Vigo said with his steady persistence. "There is nothing to gain by staying here to drink up the sea. Mayenne will no more give you your lady to you than he would give her to Felix. And you can no more carry her off than could Felix. Mayenne will have you killed and flung into the Seine, as easy as eat breakfast."

where, over our bleeding corpses. "On top of all his disobedience and disrespect he was most amiable to M. Etienne, treating him with a calm assumption of friendliness that would have maddened a saint. Yet it was not hypocrisy; he liked his young lord, as we all did. He would not let him imperil Monsieur, but aside from that he wished him every good fortune in the world."

a poor inn-keeper! I swear I know nothing of his whereabouts. "As my footsteps sounded on the threshold, one and all spun round to look at me in fresh dread. "Mon dieu, it is his lackey!" a chambermaid cried. In the next second a little wily dame, her eyes blazing with fury, darted out of the group and seized me by the arm with a grip of her nails that made me think a panther had got me. "So here you are," she screamed. I declare I thought she was going to bite me. "Oh-ho, you and your fine master, that come here and devour our substance and never pay one sou, but bring ruin to the house! Now, go you straight in there and let them squeeze your throat awhile, and see how you like it yourself!"

at me, remembering where I had been at three o'clock this morning. "It is a lie! He left my service a month back and I have never seen him since." "Tell that to the judges," the captain said, as he had said to me. "I am not trying you. The handcuffs, men." "One of them produced a pair. Lucas struggled frantically in his captor's grasp. He dragged them from one end of the room to the other, calling down all the curses of Heaven upon them; but they snapped the handcuffs on for all that. "If this is Mayenne's work," he panted. "The officer caught nothing but the name Mayenne. "The boy said you were a friend to his Grace, monsieur, but orders are orders. I have the warrant for your arrest from M. de Belli. "At whose instigation?" "How should I know? I am a soldier of the guard. I have naught to do with it but to arrest you." "I am not obliged to you. But I will, though. It may quiet your bluster." He took out the warrant and held it at a safe distance before Lucas' eyes. A great light broke in on that persnious face. "Mille tonnerres! I am not the Comte de Mar!" "Oh, you say that now, do you? Pity you had not said this when Lucas started. "But I am not the Comte de Mar! I am Paul de Lorraine, nephew to my lord Mayenne. "Why don't you say straight out that you're the Duc de Guise," Lucas returned with dignity. He must have been cursing himself that he had not given his name sooner. But I am his superior. "You take me for a fool!" "Aye, you shall hang for his folly!" "You must think me a fool," the captain repeated. "The Duc de Guise's eldest brother is but seventeen. "I did not say I was legitimate. "Oh, you did not say that? You did not know, then, that I could reel off the names of every Lorraine of them all. No, M. de Mar, I am not so simple as you think. You will come along with me to the Bastille. "Blockhead! I'll have you broken on the wheel for this!" Lucas started. "I am no more Count of Mar than I am King of Spain. Speak up, you old turnspit," he shouted to Maitre Menard. "Am I he?" "Poor Maitre Menard had dropped down on his iron box, too limp and sick to know what was going on. He only stared helplessly. "Speak, rascal," Lucas cried. Am I Comte de Mar?" "No," the maitre answered in low, faltering tones. He was at the last point of pain and fear. "No, monsieur, officer, it is as he says. He is not the Comte de Mar." "Who is he then?" "I know not," the maitre stammered. "He came here last night. But it is as he says—he is not the Comte de Mar." "Take care, mine host," the officer returned. "You're lying." I could not wonder at him; if I had not been in a position to know other wise, I had thought myself the maitre was lying. "If you had spoken at first I might have believed you," the captain said, bestowing a look on him. "Get out of here, old ass, before I cram your lie down your throat. And clear your young people away from this door. I'll not walk through this business, or it will be the worse for him. And every woman Jill too!" "M. le Capitaine," Maitre Menard quavered, rising unsteadily to his feet. "You make a mistake. On my sacred word, you mistake; this is not—" "Get out!" cried the captain, helping him along with his boot. Maitre Menard fell rather than walked out of the door. "A gray hue came over Lucas' face. His first fright had given way to fury at perceiving himself the victim of a mistake. He now turned to Lucas with his eyes again. Was it, after all, a mistake? This obstinate diabolist in his assertion, this ordering away of all who could swear to his identity—was it not rather a plot for his ruin? He swallowed hard once or twice, fear gripping his throat harder than even the dragon's fingers had gripped mine. Certainly he was not the Comte de Mar, but then he was the man who had killed Pontou. "If this is a plot against me, say so," he cried. "If you have orders to arrest me, go on. But I must be by the name of Paul de Lorraine, not of Etienne de Mar." (To be continued.)



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