

"Ha! ha!—more than you imagine, perhaps! Mousigneur the Duc d'Epéron does not pay according to the rank of this country bumpkin, but in proportion to the anger he feels against him."

"That's another affair entirely. For what sum will you turn the business over to me?"

"For half the price allowed to me—that is to say, five hundred crowns."

"Five hundred crowns is really a very pretty profit. You, then, are to get a thousand crowns?"

"Neither more nor less. If I were not at the moment absorbed by very grave interests, I assure you, cousin, I should never have thought of giving over to you the management of this affair. Do you accept my offer?"

"I don't know yet, dear Louviers. You know that before deciding upon anything I like to reflect a little. Tell me, does the bumpkin fight?"

"Fight!—I will be frank with you, cousin—like a lion! But of what consequence is that? Your people will do the work: you will only see that it is properly done."

"My people, cousin!" repeated the captain. "Parbleu!—they are not numerous. One suit of livery suffices to dress them all—a handsome livery—a suit of armor!"

"What riddle are you propounding?"

"I am telling you the simple truth: of attendants I have but one—my sword."

"Well, that is your business, cousin. Promise me to get rid of this country squire, and I ask no more."

"And who is this country squire who fights like a lion?"

"The Chevalier Sforzi!" repeated De Mauvert, coolly, and without exhibiting the least surprise. "Some Italian vagabond, no doubt?"

"No; he is a Frenchman."

"And where does this Chevalier Sforzi live?"

"Not far from here—at the Stag's Head hotel, in the Rue des Tournelles."

"Very well, cousin," replied De Mauvert. "Before coming to any settlement, I should like to make the acquaintance of my adversary at the address you have given me."

"But Monsieur d'Epéron is very impatient."

"What the devil!—Monsieur cannot refuse to wait four and twenty hours."

"That is just the time he has allowed me."

"And it is quite sufficient. If I decide, I will insult Sforzi this evening, and kill him tomorrow at daybreak. That will be within the time specified. By the way, cousin, is he well bred, this Sforzi? May I, without compromising myself too much, cross steel with him?"

"I do not know, dear cousin."

"It is of no consequence, since I shall see him presently myself."

"And your answer—when will you give it to me?"

"At dinner, if you like."

"So be it. Where?"

"At Le More's."

"That is understood, then. At two o'clock, at Le More's."

The two cousins again saluted each other warmly, and parted, each going his own way. But hardly had the captain gone a hundred paces before he stopped, and, after making sure that his relative could no longer see him, turned and bent his steps towards the palace of the Duc d'Epéron.

(To be continued.)

\* The name of a famous eating-house keeper of the period. An ordinary dinner at Le More's cost five livres—a sum representing twenty-six francs seventy-two centimes of the present money of France.

"THAT LITTLE FRENCHMAN."

CHAPTER I.

FIRST ENCOUNTERS.

A gathering crowd in the gay city of Paris; idlers chattering and taking their places along the edge of the pavement—some knowing why they waited, others profoundly ignorant of all save that there was something to be seen. The fashionable lounge, the *bonne* with her charge, the workman in his blouse, soldiers, sergeants de ville, and the usual sprinkling of gamins, all were there ready to wait an hour for something less attractive than a royal face.

"He can't be long now, mon cher," said one of a group of well-dressed men. "You are so impatient to get back to those wheels and spindles!"

"Impatient—ma foi! not I," said the one addressed—an eager, little keen-eyed man of eight-and-twenty, rather demonstrative of action, as, turning to a lady and gentleman on his left, he drew back with the natural politeness of his nation. "If monsieur will deign," he continued, raising his hat, "madame will be able to see better from where I stand."

The gentleman gave a half-haughty bow in reply; but the lady, with a smile, availed herself of the offered position; a few words in bad French were uttered; and then the movement and excitement in the crowd betokened the approach of the expected cortège.

The roll of wheels, the jingle of cavalry accoutrements, and a scattered volley of shouts, could now be heard. The crowd pressed forward; the sergeants de ville scowled and signed them to back. The lady—evidently English—drew a frown from her companion by turning

excitedly to the little Frenchman, her handsome face full of vivacity as she asked him some question as to the meaning of the procession, a question replied to with equal embarrassment.

"It is the King, Richard, love," she exclaimed the next instant, as she turned to impart her information.

"We are amongst strangers here, Adelaide," was the whispered reply, accompanied by a gloomy look, which made the lady slightly knit her brow and give her head an impatient toss.

"I don't see that we need always carry our insular coldness about with us," she muttered, half-contemptuously.

"Messieurs, there is a lady—an English lady—here. I beg you will not press so."

The words were those of the eager little Frenchman, and drawn from him by the movements of a knot of men behind, who crowded upon them somewhat rudely, and though wearing the *ouvroiers'* garb, their aspects did not seem to accord with their dress. So rough, indeed, were their movements, that but for the little Frenchman's outstretched arms the lady would have been forced off the trottoir.

"Thanks—much obliged," exclaimed the lady, and her aide was rewarded with a frank, pleasant smile.

"I am so obliged," said the gentleman, turning half round. "And now," addressing his companion, "come, let us get away from here."

"Only a moment longer," was the reply.

There was not time to say more, for now came the clattering of horses' hoofs; the rolling of carriage wheels; a sudden motion at the lady's side; a deafening explosion as of thunder; and then shrieks, the splintering of glass, cries for help, loud orders, and the panic-stricken crowd rushing here and there, maddened with fear, many to be trampled to death by the plunging horses of the cavalry escort, or crushed beneath the wheels;—then the hurried rush of feet, and those of the fleeing crowd who turned, gazed back upon the bodies of some thirty men, women and children, some motionless, some writhing in the dust.

For the deadly missile—the cowardly arm of a desperate band of plotters against the State—had done its work swiftly and surely, though utterly failing in its task as far as the regal carriage had been concerned. Twelve poor creatures had been hurried into eternity, while many more had been frightfully injured; the road was torn up; shop windows on either side were beaten in.

But the soldiery had not been idle; and seeing the direction from which the bomb had been thrown, one of the cluster of workmen—a youth—had been seized, and a sergeant de ville now had his hand on the shoulder of the little Frenchman, who was supporting the fainting form of the English lady.

"No, no—absurd!" he exclaimed. "It was not I. Leave me to assist this lady."

The officer drew back, having evidently laid hands upon the nearest to him, and joined his companions, who were ready to arrest everybody in the returning crowd.

"Ciel! madame is not hurt?" exclaimed the little Frenchman as the lady unclosed her eyes.

"No, no—only startled. But where is my husband?"

An opening in the crowd answered her question; and, breaking from her supporter, she darted from the place to which she had been borne by the flying people, back to the torn-up pavement, and, with a wild shriek, threw herself upon a prostrate figure.

"Here—quick! Help, here!—two or three!" exclaimed the little Frenchman. "My house is close at hand—bear the English gentleman there. Officer, my name is Rivière, numero 20, Rue d'Auvergne. Let us pass."

The officers gave way, and the insensible Englishman was borne to the appartement of the Frenchman—a well-appointed second floor of a large house—where they were encountered at the door by a young and well-featured lady, who gazed with frightened air from face to face.

"It is nothing, Marie—do not be alarmed. An English gentleman—an accident. There—there—the couch—good. You—you—fetch instantly a surgeon."

The surgical assistance was soon rendered, and the extent of the injuries shown to be a violent contusion of the head, sufficient to have produced insensibility, but that was all.

"Might he be removed to his hotel?" the lady asked anxiously.

"Oh, yes," said the surgeon, "after a few hours."

If madame would favor him with a card, he would visit the patient again in the evening.

The lady hastily drew a card from a mother-of-pearl case, wrote upon it an address in pencil, and handed it to the surgeon.

Bon. "Sir Richard and Lady Lawler, Hôtel Beaufort." Good. He would pass there in the evening, and meanwhile *miladi* need be under no anxiety—Sir Richard would soon be well.

"But these Anglais, they have thick skulls!" said the surgeon, with a shrug, as he was shown out by Rivière. "That splinter of bombshell, mon ami, would have crushed through our heads like as if they had been eggshell. *Pouf! voyez-vous?*"

Rivière nodded, and then returned to his wife.

"Will they stay here, Louis?" she whispered, as she fondly laid a little white hand on his shoulder, gazing with a troubled look in his face.

"Stay? *Ma foi!* no. I could not do less. It was frightful. And the poor people are strange."

The ringing of a bell was followed by the entrance of a servant.

"The English gentleman and lady wish to see monsieur."

"Bon," said Rivière, turning towards the door. "But stay, little one—Marie, you need not come."

"Yes, yes—do not stop me," she whispered earnestly, as she clung to his hand. "I am weak and foolish, and you will laugh, Louis—but I have only you; and—and—this tall English lady, with her bright, handsome face—she—she looked at you, Louis."

"Ha! ha! ha!" laughed Rivière, catching her in his arms. "*Qu'il est beau*, this husband of yours. He is a killer of dames with one glance! Silly bird! what are you thinking about? I had not seen them for many minutes. And there is only one Marie in this world."

The next instant husband and wife were clasped in an effusive embrace, and then they parted—the former holding up a threatening finger at the loving face turned towards him.

Rivière entered the next room to find Sir Richard Lawler sitting up, with Lady Lawler, pale but smiling, standing with one hand resting upon his shoulder.

"Monsieur Rivière," exclaimed the injured man frankly, as he held out his hand, "I am greatly indebted to you, both for my own and my wife's sake. We are very strange and ignorant, and I hardly know how we should have fared but for your kindness."

"But it is nothing," said Rivière, lightly; "and I—we are only too glad. Monsieur would have done as much for me—and for Marie. Let me introduce her."

Rivière hurried to the door, and returned in a few minutes with his wife, when the introductions were gone through; but not without an exhibition of restraint on either side when the ladies touched hands.

"But monsieur will not think of leaving yet for some hours?"

Madame Rivière gazed full in Lady Lawler's face, but the effort was vain, and a pang shot through her little heart as she saw the Englishwoman's bright, bold eyes fixed upon her husband.

"We are greatly obliged," said Lady Lawler, eagerly; "but my husband feels anxious to be back at the hotel, and already we have given you too much trouble."

"But it is no trouble," said Rivière, gravely. "I hold it to have been a duty."

"It is very kind," exclaimed Lady Lawler, hurriedly; "but if you would have a *voiture* ordered for us, we should be very grateful. And, Richard," she said, turning to her husband, "you had something to say to Monsieur Rivière?"

"Yes, yes—of course," said Sir Richard. "We are very grateful; and my wife—we hope that you will come and dine with us to-morrow. I shall be all right then. Say you will come."

"I shall be charmed," said Rivière.

"And Madame Rivière, of course," said Lady Lawler, crossing to the pale little wife, and with womanly grace taking her hand. "We wish for an opportunity of thanking your gallant husband for his kindness. You will come?"

Poor Marie Rivière trembled, and a chill seemed to run through her as she gazed in a half-frightened way at the tall, self-possessed beauty at her side. She was afraid of her, she owned to herself; and a vague sense of uneasiness oppressed her as she endeavored to reply cheerfully to the words of gratitude.

But the uneasiness remained; and when, an hour or two afterwards, Lady Lawler bade her farewell, kissing her upon the cheek, and Rivière had gone down with his guests to the *fiacre*, Marie sank into a chair, anxious and troubled, and sought for relief in tears.

CHAPTER II.

A THUNDERCLAP.

Paris was in a state of the wildest excitement, and in club and in street men met to discuss the dire effects of the conspiracy, and the almost miraculous escape of the King. Questions innumerable asked regarding what was to come next, the lovers of law and order trembling as past revolutionary efforts were recalled; but the clouds on the political horizon seemed to trouble Louis Rivière but little, as he sat the next day in the little room he called his *atelier*, busy fitting together some piece of mechanism whose wheels, pinions, and springs he had been for weeks past constructing, ever and anon throwing down file or pointed drill to take up a violin, screw up a string, and then dash off, in an eccentric fashion, some wild refrain or difficult variation. Then, once more the mechanism would be seized, and with a watchmaker's glass in his eye, he toiled on, till he became aware that his wife was standing, pale and anxious, by his chair.

"Well, p'tite," he exclaimed, turning half round, so as to touch her hand with his lips, "how goes it with you?"

Marie's lip quivered as he uttered those words, but she remained silent; till, turning round in surprise, Rivière saw that the tears were stealing down her cheeks, and the next moment she was on her knees, weeping bitterly.

"Is this fair, Marie?" he exclaimed, sternly. "I thought, after what was said this morning, you would have behaved more sensibly. It is silly—childish in the extreme. I say a few words to an English lady, in common politeness, and then fate ordains that I shall bring her to our home to render a little assistance, when, in a foolish fit, you take a violent dislike to her. I will not call it jealousy; it would be insulting both her and your husband."

"No, no, Louis—do not be angry. It is not

that; but I cannot help it. It is as you say. Fate ordained that she should come here; and I fear her, and tremble for what fate may have in the future. But you will not go there to-night?"

"But I certainly shall," he exclaimed, impatiently. "It would be insulting their hospitality were I to stay away; and I should feel that I was wanting in firmness and self-respect were I to listen to your foolish scruples."

"But, Louis!" she exclaimed, excitedly.

"There, there, little one," he said, tenderly—"*taisez-vous*, and let us have no more of it. Now, if you are jealous of my machine, or of my old Straduarus here, I should not be surprised," he cried, lightly. "But jealousy!—pooh, nonsense! I look like a gay lad, do I not?"

He made a grimace as he drew the agitated woman close to him, and then glanced with a deprecatory look down upon himself before meeting her eyes, which seemed to tell most plainly that in their sight he had not his equal in the whole world.

"Do not laugh about it, Louis," she said, excitedly, "I feel nervous and troubled. Tell me that you will not go."

"No," he said, firmly, "I shall do not such thing. I shall go. Look here, Marie. We have been married six months; and never, in thought or deed, have I given you cause for discomfort. What you feel in this case is absurd."

"But, Louis," she said, imploringly, "I have another reason. I cannot go; and Monsieur Lemaire is sure—"

"Let us change the subject, my child," he said, taking up a wheel, and once more fitting his glass into his eye. "Ah, Lemaire—you there?" he said, cheerfully, as a tall, gentlemanly young fellow entered, the one who had spoken to him banteringly on the previous day. "Well, and how go the political matters—how the situation?"

"Really," said the new-comer, "I know very little. But how is Madame Rivière?" he said, approaching her with great deference, to receive only a cold and distant inclination of the head in reply—an inclination that he received with a half-smile as he turned back to Rivière's bench.

"When is the Eureka to be finished?"

He took up a wheel to balance on one white finger.

"Finished!" echoed Rivière, "never, I expect. Do you know, Lemaire, that situated as I am, with no occupation, the worst thing that could happen to me would be to get that piece of work finished. What should I do then?"

"Music—madame *votre femme*," said Lemaire, with a hardly perceptible sneer. "Rivière is no courtier," he continued, turning towards Madame Rivière.

But she only uttered some inaudible reply, and left the room, followed by Lemaire's eyes, in a strange, furtive fashion—a glance that she encountered for a moment before closing the door.

"Any more arrests made?" queried Rivière, fling away at a wheel.

"Yes, several, I suppose; and they do say that there will be a grand sweep made to-night, as several have been denounced."

"Poor wretches!" said Rivière, in sympathizing tones. "But ring that bell, and we'll have a cigar and a bottle of Beaume, for I shall be out this evening."

"Out!" said Lemaire, eagerly.

"Yes—to dinner with my new friend, the English milord, and his charming lady."

"Let me see—where did you say they were staying?"

"I don't remember that I said they were staying anywhere; but, all the same, they are at the Hôtel Beaufort."

"Madame goes, of course?"

"Well, yes, if I can persuade her into it," said Rivière. "Perhaps not."

"I don't think I would press her," said Lemaire. "She seems nervous and unwell: I have noticed it these two or three days past. And yesterday's affair did her no good. Have you not seen it?"

"I am ashamed to say that I have not," said Rivière. "But then, we are not all students of medicine, Lemaire. By the way, you ought to have attended the Englishman. Where were you?"

"Oh, I went on to the palace to see how matters went. You had Conté, I suppose? Well, he's clever."

The wine and cigars were brought in, and Lemaire—a young medical practitioner—sat for some time with his friend; and as at last there seemed no probability of Madame Rivière returning, and in answer to a message sent she excused herself on the plea of a headache, Lemaire rose and left the place, promising to call the following day.

For quite a couple of hours Rivière remained busily engaged at his work bench, till a glance at his watch awakening him to the fact that he had but little time to spare, he hurried out, hoping to find Madame Rivière dressing for the dinner to which they were invited. But again she pleaded a headache; and at last, with some little annoyance, Rivière dressed and started alone for Sir Richard Lawler's hotel, to find the young baronet very little the worse for his accident, while to the excitable young Frenchman Lady Lawler seemed the most charming woman he had yet seen, the result being that the homage he rendered was sufficient to draw an impatient, angry look on several occasions from her husband.

But these looks were lost upon Rivière, who chatted merrily on, played with their child—a bright, sunny-faced boy of a year old—condoled with Sir Richard because he was forbidden wine, with Lady Lawler that there were no

pieces, no reviews, no opera, nothing to make