

CHAPTER II

IN WHICH HE CLAIMS HIS OWN

MEANWHILE, without a word, Gaston had mounted, ridden to the castle, and passed through the open gates into the court-yard. Inside he paused. In the main building many lights were burning. There came a rattle of wheels behind him, and he shifted to let a carriage pass. Through the window of the brougham he could see the shimmer of satin, lace, and soft white fur, and he had an instant's glance of a pretty face.

The carriage drew up to the steps, and presently three ladies and a brusque gentleman passed into the hall-way, admitted by powdered footmen. The incident had a manner, an air, which struck Gaston, he knew not why. Perhaps it was the easy finesse of ceremonial. He looked at Brillon. He had seen him sit arms folded like that, looking from the top of a bluff down on an Indian village or a herd of buffaloes. There was wonder, but no shyness or agitation, on his face; rather the naïve, naked look of a child. Belward laughed.

"Come, Brillon; we are at home."

He rode up to the steps, Jacques following. A footman appeared and stared. Gaston looked down on him neutrally, and dismounted. Jacques did the same. The footman still stared. Another appeared behind. Gaston eyed the puzzled servant calmly.

"Why don't you call a groom?" he presently said. There was a cold gleam in his eye.