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"Benoit," said Madame Tallien, stepping towards him, her looks depicting her great compassion. "Go into my room, I will follow you immediately."

These gentle words had a great effect on the unfortunate man. He did not resist any longer, but permitted the servants to lead him quietly away. In a few words husband and wife had given to their guests the asked-for explanation about Benoit and the cause of his insanity. Before the guests had taken their leave, Madame Tallien had hastened to the room, into which the unfortunate man was taken, and where the servants, as they were ordered, watched over him. Benoit appeared to be very happy. He had thrown himself into an arm-chair, and dropped his cloak. When he perceived his former prisoner for whom he had felt so unhappy a love, he gravely inclined his head, and said in an important manner:

"Are you here, Senora? I have expected you."

"But my friend," said Thérèse, who, at these words, felt the full confirmation of her fears; "why did you never send us any news? Have you been at my father's?"

"I was in Spain, Senora," he replied, proudly thrusting his chin into his neck. "I have come to fetch my beloved."

Notwithstanding his assumed importance he said all this in so quiet a tone that Thérèse felt dubious if Benoit's insanity was more than passing. But the next words of the poor man convinced her that his mind was entirely deranged, and that a cure could only be effected in course of time by careful nursing.

"I have been made a grandee of Spain," Benoit continued, in his raving. "We can now make Thérèse Cabarrus our wife. I am now good enough for you, am I not?"

"Benoit, have you come here to grieve me?" she replied, trying by these means to bring him back to reality.

"How can that grieve you?" he resumed. "A grandee of Spain is wooing you, Senora. Yes, it is I. I have been created a grandee, the vesture of a knight has been given me. Look! Is it not beautiful?"

"Have you then been in Madrid, Benoit?"

"In Spain, Senora, in Spain. The King sends his greeting to you: he gave me this letter for you."

At the same time he drew from his doublet a large letter closed with a huge seal, and handed it to the astonished young lady, whose husband at this moment joined her.

"Let us read it," she said to him.

She looked, half smiling, half in surprise at the address which ran:

"To the noble daughter of Spain, Thérèse Cabarrus."

The seal, with all kinds of impressions made by rings, confirmed the suspicion that somebody had played a cruel jest with this unfortunate man: the contents of the letter proving it to a certainty.

"Be it known," was written, "that as the French knight Benoit, whose folly we have learned, desired us to appoint him a grandee of Spain, we have allowed ourselves this jest with him, given him this old knight's costume, and written to Senora Cabarrus that she may have him cured."

This letter was signed "Ariero, in the Castle, the 28th August 1794. Don Juan Albidia."

Valère and Thérèse did not attempt to undeceive the unfortunate Benoit. He was fixed on certain ideas, and he felt composed only when a hope was extended to him that his wishes would be realized. There remained no other help but to send the madman to an asylum, in which they succeeded the next day by persuading him that he was a nobleman had to inspect his navy, and before conducting his bride home.

Benoit was incurably mad. A few days towards death released him.

And she for whose sake he had lost his reason was the only one that laid flowers on his grave and dropped a tear for this faithful heart.

CHAPTER XVIII.

"THE BEAUTIFUL SPANARD."

Let us return, at the end of this story, once more to Bordeaux.

There, after Tallien had been called away, after the happy time of Thérèse Cabarrus, the rule of terror had commenced again with new rigour. Blood was flowing anew in streams from the guillotine; the prisons were re-filled by the suspected and moderates, and many who had returned in safety to the large city on the Garonne, expiated their rashness by death. In the same degree as the barometer of the Jacobin rule rose in Paris, so did it in the provinces, as also in Bordeaux.

In father Claudet's winch-house at "The Red Cap," this turn of affairs would have been borne with patience; for every one needed only to assume his former mien. Old Claudet could philosophize and sell his guillotine wine; mother Claudet could superintend and receive the cash; Lucie could tap the wine or make love to her released Henry Tourguet at the side of the cask. The guests could become noisy again, and the little clerk Timm empty his can of wine to the health of Robespierre. Disturbance only arose when Gilbert Cardourel returned to Bordeaux. The approach of the bird of prey was scented in the dove-cot.

At first Cardourel appeared in an agreeable humour. He visited "The Red Cap" without in any way referring to the former incidents. His bow to Claudet and his wife was as full of Jacobin friendship as heretofore: he seemed not to perceive Lucie's disdain of him, did not deign to notice his cousin Henry, neither did Henry notice Cardourel. In the midst of his old friends and associates he spoke of Paris, the convention, the great Jacobin club, of Robespierre, St. Just, and Conthon, the three great men of terror; he also boasted of his heroic deeds, of the arrest of Thérèse Cabarrus, not understanding why her name had not yet appeared in the daily list of the

beheaded. He considered her death to be the end of his vengeance which he had sworn, and for which he was no longer able to work.

After some time, however, Cardourel showed himself in his true nature. By the recommendations of the Jacobin party in Paris, as likewise by his zeal and disregard, he gained a powerful influence in the city of Bordeaux. With the Jacobins, who had appeared again in great numbers, his word was as important as that of Robespierre in the Club of Paris. Destruction threatened those he denounced, and the authorities and tribunals seemed to be dependent on him who was so popular with the fanatic mob. He induced Timm, who acted again as his adjutant and adviser, to publish a journal, in which Cardourel was every day praised and pointed out as the best patriot of the Bordelais. He advocated his election as citizen mayor of Bordeaux at the next ballot, and there was no doubt of the success of these intrigues, all his rivals and adversaries being afraid of Cardourel's Jacobin power.

Henry Tourguet mistrusted his cousin as soon as he had regained his influence. He had fled, his sausage shop was closed, and no one knew whither he had gone.

"The Claudets must know it," said Cardourel, on hearing this news, with a malicious grin to little Timm. "I will make the proud Lucie suffer for it. Come, Timm, we will play with her as a wolf with a lamb."

Timm being the most devoted servant of Gilbert, was ready

"My dear Claudet," began Cardourel with hypocritical solemnity, after he and Timm had taken their seats at the table, and the host had approached them. "We come to speak with you to-day upon an important matter, I might say upon business."

"Yes, upon business," repeated Timm, "not upon ordinary business."

"First," continued Cardourel in his assumed manner, "we would like to know where my cousin Tourguet is."

"Your cousin Tourguet?" asked Claudet, "how should I know?"

"How! you mean to say that you don't know?"

"By no means."

"And he was to have become your son-in-law! Perhaps Lucie, your daughter, will know?"

"What should we know?" replied Claudet, looking round for his wife who was slowly advancing from the bar. "We know as well as you do, citizen Cardourel, that he is gone. We know what every one knows, that he has left Bordeaux and has gone to some place else."

"Ah, this is very clever," said Gilbert with sarcasm; "but if the tribunal were to ask the same questions would you answer them in the same manner?"

"Yes, citizen Cardourel," replied his wife in his stead. "Truth is everywhere the same. And it is no matter to us whither citizen Tourguet has gone."

"Eh, what do you say, citizen!" exclaimed Cardourel maliciously. "Then the engagement with Lucie is broken off?"

"That is not so," said she confusedly.

"In so far as broken off means to be at an end," added Claudet hastily. "What can be broken off if there was no joining?"

"Hearts do not separate," affirmed mother Claudet so seriously that Gilbert burst out laughing.

"Well, mother Claudet," said he, "you have preserved your heart well. But now to the point. I have come to ask in all earnestness for my friend Timm, the hand of your daughter. You refused me once—a second time I would take it very seriously."

The old couple did not seem much surprised, they had anticipated the purport of this communication.

"We by all means appreciate the honour you confer upon us, citizen," replied mother Claudet in a respectful tone, casting an anxious look towards her husband. "Citizen Timm is, no doubt, a very estimable citizen."

"Very estimable," put in father Claudet, trying in vain to conceal his cunning look. "And as he has such fine prospects before him, we may say, the proposal affords us great honour."

"Yes," said Cardourel, pleased at the yielding of the old couple, "in four weeks I will be mayor of Bordeaux, and Timm will then obtain the office of the first city clerk."

"And truly, citizen," said Timm in great spirits, addressing the hostess; "I love Lucie, and have learned to respect her through her faith to Tourguet, whom I did not like to supplant. That would not have been generous. But now that he is gone—"

"Enough, you then agree that Lucie becomes Timm's wife?" asked Cardourel in a very decided tone.

The old couple looked timidly at each other.

"But we ought to take this proposal into consideration," muttered father Claudet.

"Into consideration!" burst forth Gilbert. "Did you not say just now that it will be an honour?"

"Yes, but Lucie also must be consulted," remarked the hostess. "The poor child—"

"Eh, what, poor child!" cried Cardourel. "Just say to the poor child that you wish this marriage, lest you and Lucie might be accused of having aided a suspected man in his escape, and of having concealed his whereabouts."

These threatening words were followed by an uneasy silence.

The old couple looked anxiously at each other. Cardourel curled up his mouth mischievously, and Timm sat staring vacantly.

"Oh, you will not act in this way towards Claudet at last replied. "You know well that I am a good patriot. But if our good patriots devour each other, the bad ones of course remain."

"Citizen Cardourel likes to frighten us," added the old woman. "What should induce him to treat us so badly?"

"I tell you," cried Gilbert, who wished to gain a quick and decided victory, "that I will act as I have said. Either your daughter marries citizen Timm, or before a week is over, the headsman shall make short work with you."

"Gently, gently," said mother Claudet. "There is no occasion to quarrel. We did not say No, and the best thing after all will be," she continued, turning to her husband, "that Lucie gives Tourguet the slip."

"Of course," he answered. "Marriage is marriage. If they do not love each other before, they will do so afterwards. But we must impart this philosophy to her."

"Call her hither," said Gilbert imperatively.

"I will fetch her," said the old woman, tripping quickly away.

After a while mother Claudet came back with her daughter. Lucie looked haughty and gloomy. When Timm saw her, he ran towards her and said, with an awkward loveliness:

"Young and beautiful citizen, Lucie Claudet! I have asked for your hand—the great citizen Cardourel had the kindness," he continued, correcting himself. "Your good parents will not refuse me. And you?"

He waited for her answer, but she was silent.

"Well, does the girl not consent?" cried Gilbert, sneeringly. "Does she still prefer Henry Tourguet, that greasy sausage—"



Father Claudet.

to do everything for his master, whom he so much dreaded. He, naturally a timid, harmless man, took through fear not only an active part in the mischiefs of Cardourel, but exerted his brain to render himself zealous and useful by his advices. The best position in the city-office was offered to him as a reward, as soon as Cardourel had become mayor of Bordeaux. Cardourel having taken up his old plan, desired that Lucie should marry Timm, as he knew that she despised him. What once had been only one of his malicious whims, was now his settled plan on Lucie, which he considered, the poor girl deserved on account of her having been not only a witness of his humiliation by Tallien, but also of having been the direct cause of it.

Ultimately little Timm, who formerly could not overcome his dislike to matrimony—for which very reason the malicious Cardourel had urged him—had fallen in love with Lucie to such a degree as to desire in real earnest to cut out the sausage-dealer, and make her his wife.

In the forenoon of a hot summer day Gilbert and little Timm, marching in all dignity, repaired to "The Red Cap" to make their proposals to father Claudet. To their great joy they found the old man alone with his wife, but who, by their assumed friendliness showed distinctly that they anticipated nothing pleasant from this visit.