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PHILIPPINE DE DAMPIERRE.

(From the Lamp.)

CHAPTER I.

The sun was setting over the monotonous plain, which extends from Bruges to the North Sea...

The mother often interrupted her conversation in order to visit the adjoining apartment, where waiting women and various attendants were busily engaged folding and packing a costly wardrobe in numerous travelling chests.

'Dearest mother,' said Philippine, taking her hand, 'you are giving yourself a great deal of trouble.'

'It is for the last time,' replied the countess; 'to-morrow, my poor child, you will no longer have your mother to watch over you: to-morrow you will be gone from hence.'

'Dear mother,' said Philippine, putting her arms round the countess's neck, 'they tell me I shall be Queen of England, and a great lady, but I would much rather stay with you, to console you in your sorrows, and cheer you when my father and brothers are away.'

'It is God's will, my child, and your father's, so I must submit. Queens and princesses have more trials than other mothers, in which they resemble the Blessed Mary beneath the Cross.'

'But, mother, I will come back!' cried Philippine; 'I will ask Prince Edward to let me come to you, dear mother; our vessels are so swift, I can easily take the voyage.'

'Yes, my daughter, I hope you will return, but before you go to England, you will have to make another journey, which I shudder to think of.'

'What! dear mother, do you fear my going to Paris, to my godfather, King Philip? Is he not the suzerain, the friend, the ally of my father? I expect that he and Queen Joanna will give grand entertainments and fetes in my honor.'

The countess shook her head at hearing these words, so full of the credulous confidence of youth, and replied sadly, 'King Philip does not inspire me with any confidence, for I believe his heart to be full of malice and treason. He has coveted Flanders for a long time. He thinks that our beautiful country, with its noble cities, would be a bright jewel added to the crown of France, and I believe that he looks with no favorable eye upon your marriage, as it gives to Flanders so powerful an ally as the King of England.'

'But I am not going alone; my father, two of my brothers, and a strong guard accompany me.'

'Alas! I fear for your father, your brother, and yourself.'

Philippine replied only by tears. Her mother took her hand, saying, 'Let us go to the chapel, we will pray to God and His Holy Mother: our help is in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth.'

CHAPTER II.

A week after, crowds of the idle and the curious, always plentiful in large cities, assembled in the streets of Paris, to see the splendid retinue of the Count of Flanders and the future Queen of England. At that time no nation surpassed the Flemish in wealth and elegance; every one now expected to behold wonders, nor were they disappointed. The people of Paris admired the musicians in their scarlet robes, who opened the procession; then the numerous servants and grooms who preceded the knights and barons; these last were the heirs of the proudest names of Flanders, and, by the splendour of their appointments, represented the wealthiest lords of

the richest country of Europe. They were mounted on beautiful horses, caparisoned with embroidered trappings; their bright armour was covered with gold, and their plumed helmets might have been copied from the war dress of the ancient Scandinavians. Pages wearing their colors bore their arms. In the midst of this brilliant troop was the old count, dressed in a long robe of black velvet, over which flowed his venerable white beard. His grey hair escaped from under his cap, which was encircled by his ancestral crown. The people, who knew that the old man had been one of St. Louis's companions in arms at Mansourah, cheered him loudly as he passed. At the right of Guy of Dampierre, mounted on an Arab horse of great value, rode Philippine, who, confused by seeing such a multitude, cast down her eyes, and tried to cover her face with the folds of her veil. They applauded her youth and beauty, and the heralds replied to their cries of 'Welcome and long life,' by abundant largesses.

The cavalcade arrived in good order at the palace which Philip le Bel inhabited, and between whose strong towers arose the light beautiful spire of the 'Holy Chapel,' founded by St. Louis. The count and his daughter alighted before the steps, and the King's officers conducted to the presence of the Lord Suzerain the most powerful of his vassals. Philippine trembled on crossing the vast hall, with its walls covered with fleurs de lis, filed with the pages and servants of the king, some in long robes and some in armour, who opened a way for her, till she beheld seated under a canopy, in all his royal majesty, Philip le Bel. In her distress she did not look at the king's manly face, or his noble figure; she bent submissively, and seemed about to embrace the knees of him in whom she revered, not only the dignity of the sceptre, but also one who held almost paternal rights over her. Count Guy spoke as follows:

'Behold, sire, my daughter, your cousin and godchild, whom I and my notes have promised to the English king as bride for his son. She would not cross the sea without first coming to bid you farewell.'

A stern look came over Philip's face. No feelings of pity filled his heart as he looked at the old man whom his sainted ancestor had called friend and comrade, or at his child, for whom himself had answered at the baptismal font, both of whom were come to him with such confidence. After a moment's silence, he said sternly:

'By Heaven! Sir Count I think that your daughter cannot have made an alliance so prejudicial to us and our kingdom, without your orders. But it shall not be thus, for you have treated with our enemies without our knowledge, not recognizing your sovereign lord. You and your daughter must in consequence remain with me.'

'My Lord King, this is treachery!' cried the old count. 'My lands I may not dispose of without your leave; but as to my daughter, know that my paternal rights do not acknowledge your sovereignty! I owe you service in war, and I gave it to your grandfather.'

'You are bound to consult me in your alliances,' sternly interrupted King Philip; 'and you must learn it now, if you have not known it hitherto. Guards are waiting to conduct you to the tower of the Louvre; as to your escort, they are free, and may return to Flanders. I have spoken, Sir Count!'

Philippine darted towards her father. He pressed her to his bosom with one arm, and pointing to the statue of St. Louis IX., exclaimed: 'Ah, sire! the days of St. Louis are passed!'

This sorrowful appeal was unheeded. The royal guards, who had been prepared before, surrounded the count and his daughter, whilst the Flemish knights were disarmed, and removed to a lower hall of the palace. Half an hour afterwards, the gates of the great tower of the Louvre closed upon the Count of Flanders and the betrothed bride of Edward.

The governor of the Louvre received and conducted them to an apartment which had before seen princes within its walls.

'Ferdinand of Portugal was confined here for thirteen years,' said Count Guy, casting a melancholy glance round the vast and gloomy chamber.

'Pardon me, my lord,' replied the governor, with a low bow, 'it was in the dungeon under the clock tower, which is considered the safest of all. You may see the tower from the window.'

'But, my daughter?' said the count at last to the governor who was standing near, 'where is she to lodge?'

'There, Sir Count, at the right of your chamber there are two apartments for the noble young lady, and one for her waiting-maid. The orders of the king, my lord, were precise on this subject.'

'He has been expecting us,' murmured the old

count; and like a silly bird that throws itself into the snare, I have allowed myself to be caught. If it had been only myself . . . But my poor little girl.'

He sighed, and Philippine, who divined his thoughts, embraced him, weeping, saying through her tears, 'Courage, dear father. My brothers, and our good people of Flanders, will not leave us here; I should have neither sorrow nor anxiety, if it were not for the thought of my mother. Our captivity will be short, but she will think it very long.'

The governor left them: they were happy, at least to be alone and to be able to speak freely, and weep without observation. Towards evening one of the count's valets joined them, they sent also to Philippine one of her maids of honor, named Alice Sersanders.

CHAPTER III.

A species of stupor succeeded the first shock of grief and indignation. Their captivity between the gloomy walls of the Louvre, appeared to the poor prisoners like a horrible dream, so quickly had it taken from the count the exercise of her mother, the sweets of liberty, and the hopes, so near their fulfilment, of a happy marriage. But day succeeded day, and what had appeared a dream, became a terrible reality.

The old count bore his misfortune with Christian firmness; having already attained old age, he had no wish to dispute with his enemies for a few more hours of authority, or a few more days of happiness; but the sight of his daughter shook his courage. She, happy in her ignorance, and strong in hope, always met her father with a smiling face. A few stormy days were not sufficient to blast so fair a flower. She thought herself so sure of speedy help, prompt deliverance, and complete triumph. Seated near her father, she told him all her motives for hope.— Was not Flanders a country which kings might rely upon? Her brothers, the fiery Robert de Bethune, and the brave William, were they not renowned for their trial love, and their deeds of valour? Would they, knights as they were, leave their father and sister in prison? Oh no! Then she told over with pride the various resources of her father's kingdom. She spoke of the guilds of Ghent, so well armed and warlike; of the people of Bruges, so eager and so rich; of the fleets which sailed from their ports; of the archers of Courtray; of the laborers armed with axes and pikes, in whom the courage and ferocity of their pagan ancestors were revived.

'I would not the French king himself fear such soldiers! The count smiled at the picture; nevertheless, he knew better than his child what difficulties these powerful, but jealous cities might oppose to the liberation of their sovereign.— When he fell into such mournful thoughts, Philippine, in order to distract and rouse him, ransacked her memory; she sang with a sweet, melodious voice, the melodies of her country; she recited all the poetry she had learned in French, English, and Flemish; and when her father seemed disposed to talk, she begged him to tell her all about the wars in which he had been engaged. This always cheered him, the remembrance of King Louis was as a balm to his soul, but he would often say, 'I defended him at Mansourah, I did my best with my brave Flemings; many Frenchmen owe their lives to me, and yet I am imprisoned in the Louvre!'

'Father, there is a chapel here dedicated to St. Louis; shall we not ask his aid?'

'I invoke it, daily, my daughter, as a friend whom I possess in Heaven; but we must redouble our prayers, for I foresee great misfortunes for this kingdom of France.'

No news reached the prisoners; it appeared that the complaint addressed by the Count of Flanders to the French peers had been disregarded. Many months had passed, and even Philippine began to doubt. One evening, when the castle gates were being closed, the governor entered, followed by servants bearing torches.— A young man accompanied him, who, throwing himself at the count's feet, said to him, with a voice trembling with emotion,—

'My lord, my venerable father, you are free.'

'Robert, my son, is it you?' exclaimed the old man. 'You have not, then, forgotten your old father.'

'Not for one instant,' replied Robert de Bethune; 'nor have your good towns forgotten you, my lord. We have never ceased to demand your liberation from King Philip; the Court of Peers, solemnly assembled, has judged your cause, and has declared you innocent of all offence towards your suzerain; and yet Philip would not open the gates of your prison. I came to Paris myself, with my brothers William and Philip, and, thanks to the sovereign pontiff, whose aid we had solicited, we were granted an audience with the King of France. He imposed upon us hard conditions, but we accepted them, in order to restore you to your people and to our mother.'

Saying these words, Robert cast down his eyes.

'And my daughter, my poor little daughter; you say nothing of her,' said Count Guy, in a voice of anguish.

'My father, Philippine must remain at the Louvre as your hostage.'

'Dear father, I shall be glad to do so,' cried she. 'Go back to my mother; I shall join you soon.'

'My sister,' said Robert, 'on my knightly word I will deliver you.'

Guy hesitated; a cruel thorn was attached to his unhoped-for deliverance. His two children on their knees besought him, to profit by the permission of the king. He was obliged to consent, and, with the heart torn with grief, he gave his parting blessing to Philippine, who kissed his hands and suppressed her tears.

'My child,' said he, at last, 'it should have been your old father's lot to die here, and yours to be free.'

Robert hurried, nay almost dragged him away, after giving a hasty farewell embrace to his captive sister. She heard the heavy gates open and close again; in the silence of night she could distinguish the tramping of the horses of the escort who accompanied her father. The sound, at length, died away in the distance. She looked around, and finding that she was indeed alone in that gloomy place, a deep impression overcame her, and she wept bitterly. Presently she felt a hand press her own, and a sweet voice whispered to her,— 'We also shall return to Flanders.'

She turned and saw her faithful handmaid, Alice, who wept with her.

CHAPTER IV.

From this time Philippine felt indeed a prisoner. Until now her thoughts had carried her beyond the walls of her prison upon ways by which help might come; she had hoped, she had lived in the future; and, above all, she had had her father to strengthen and cheer; now she was alone. As she looked at the iron gratings, hope was extinguished in her soul, and the weight of captivity pressed heavily upon her. She pondered now, as for the first time, over the immense strength of the fortress; its enormous walls flanked by twenty massive towers, its iron gates, its winding corridors echoing the steps of the prisoners, its vast, gloomy halls, and its dungeons, the very name of which filled her with horror.

'I shall live and die,' she said to herself; 'I shall never again behold the green fields of my dear country; I shall never reach the shores of England, where Edward awaits me. King Philip will never let me see my mother or my betrothed. I shall be a prisoner for ever.'

When these thoughts took possession of her, she fell into that deep despair which is one of the most fatal maladies of the mind; she would weep and shut herself up for long intervals in solitude and darkness. Then her young attendant, Alice, would seek her, sit down beside her, and fulfil in her turn the office of consoler, as Philippine had done to her father.

Alice was an orphan, and being attached from childhood to the service of the young countess, she loved her with a sisterly tenderness, and with the devotion of a heart which has concentrated its affection on a single object. Her only sorrow was the grief of Philippine, for her life having been consecrated to her young mistress it was indifferent whether she served her in the Louvre or in England. When her gaiety and the cheerfulness of her discourse had excited a shadow of hope in the heart of the young countess, the latter would say to her: 'When I am married to Prince Edward I will espouse you, Alice, to some English nobleman, and you shall be the first lady of my court.' Alice would reply, 'No, no! I will never leave you; I will live and die maid of honor to the queen!'

To pass their time they often read alternately books of piety and recreation which Philippine had brought with her from Flanders; they sang duets, and embroidered on the same frame.— Sometimes they cultivated a few sickly flowers on a kind of terrace between two towers, where they were allowed to walk. Now and then they obtained permission to enter the chapel; and happy indeed were they when they were able to pray before the tabernacle, where their God was a willing captive.

No news reached them; no one spoke to them of Flanders, and often Philippine would say, sighing, 'Oh! they cannot have forgotten me. My parents think of me. Robert has given me his word of honor; and if they do not come to deliver me, it is because they are not able. But Edward, my affianced; cannot he claim his bride?'

One day, however, the chaplain of the Louvre, who was occasionally allowed to see Philippine, and in whom the sight of so much misfortune inspired the deepest compassion, said to her:— 'They say, noble lady, that the Count of Flanders, your father, has joined with the powerful

Edward of England, to demand your liberty. May God grant it, for His greater glory!'

After hearing this, Philippine could not sleep every moment she expected to hear the sound of footsteps and voices which had before preceded the entrance of Robert de Bethune. She constantly imagine her brave brother appearing before her, with the words, 'Thou art free!'

During whole months this hope sustained her, though nothing occurred to confirm it; for the chaplain either knew nothing or dared say nothing further. At length, not able to bear the suspense any longer, she ventured to question the governor.

'King Philip le Bel has been victorious in all his enterprises,' replied he; 'he has triumphed over Flanders, as his great grandfather, Philip Augustus, of illustrious memory, did before him. The city of Lille has capitulated, and your brother Robert, noble lady, is indebted to my lord's clemency for being allowed to retire with his arms and baggage.'

'And did not King Edward come to his assistance?' cried Philippine, eagerly.

'King Edward brought with him but a very small troop of men-at-arms; and it is decided that now he will recross the sea to his own kingdom.'

Philippine made no reply, but despair again took possession of her heart. Some time after, the governor, without being questioned, said to her:—

'My lord the king has concluded a treaty with the court of Dampierre, by which he becomes master of the greater part of Flanders.— The city of Bruges has submitted to its suzerain and the king has put a garrison in the principal towns.'

'Great God! all is lost!' said the princess, clasping her hands and exchanging with Alice a look of the deepest affliction. 'My father will be ruined, and I shall die a prisoner!'

The governor was not devoid of humanity, and could not help being moved at witnessing such grief. 'Noble lady,' said he, in a low voice, 'do not lose courage; they say that the Sovereign Pontiff solicits your deliverance.'

'Alas!' replied she, 'it is the work of the common Father of the Faithful to have pity on the unfortunate; but the king, my godfather, will he listen?'

'Lady,' said Alice, when they were alone, 'the King of France has a daughter.'

'Yes; her name is Isabelle. I hoped to see her before going to England. But why do you speak of her, Alice?'

'The king of England has a son!'

'My betrothed cannot betray his faith!' cried Philippine.

'Alas! my noble lady, I believe that King Philip has some great motive for keeping you captive. May God grant that my fears be groundless!'

CHAPTER V.

Some days after, on the eve of the Nativity of our Lady, Alice had obtained permission to go to confession to the chaplain. When she came out of the chapel a gaoler opened the door leading to the staircase of the great tower, and she slowly ascended the steep steps. At the top of each flight there was a landing place, surrounded with stone benches, and lighted by loopholes, through which a glimpse of the court could be obtained. At the second of these Alice sat down to rest. She was lost in holy and peaceful thoughts, when a word pronounced close to her attracted her attention. Some one was speaking in a neighboring room, and Alice heard the words distinctly.

'The king would be much obliged to us,' said a man's voice, 'if we freed him of this little Philippine. She is in his way, for he wants to marry his own daughter to the heir of England. One thrust of a dagger into the heart of this Flemish girl would be well paid.'

'If I were sure of that,' said the other voice.

'Try it: it will only add another rag to the bundle of your general confession.'

'Oh, it's not that that hinders me, but the fear of the gallows.'

'Oh, no fear of that: it is in behalf of the king, and the Seine would receive the body. I tell you in confidence that Master Flotte wishes to do this little service for his sovereign.'

'Master Peter Flotte! But does he pay well?'

'You'll see.'

'But what must I do to find out?'

'Go this evening to the little princess's room, the key of which I have taken from the governor's bunch, and there give her the death-stroke.'

'It is settled then. This evening!'

Alice had not lost one word of this horrible dialogue; she recognized the voices of two of the officers of the prison. Trembling with weakness and terror, she with difficulty staggered to her apartment, and there reflected in silence.— No human aid could save Philippine; but had not heaven revealed to her this dark secret that