

# THE FAVORITE

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## LITTLE STITCHES.

BY E. L.

Oh, thoughts that go in with the stitches  
That women so quietly take,  
While castles are built with the needle,  
And bubbles are rounded to break!

You see, in your kerchief hem, Freshman,  
A dotted line fairy and fine;  
But see you the prayers, low and tender,  
Pricked in with the lengthening line?

Betrothed! as you bend o'er the trousseau,  
Absorbed in your rose-tinted dream,  
Speak low, as you censure the seamstress  
For waver and knot in the seam.

In 'broidery dainty and foreign,  
That falls at your waist, can you see  
How trembled the hand of a novice,  
In spite of the vigil-taught knee?

For throbs of a woman heart smothered,  
And cries that no penance can still,  
Are lifting the wreath and the roses,  
Are echoed from girdle and frill.

Oh, terrible, blood-reddened ladder  
Of loops hung on poverty's hands,  
Up which goes the foot of Oppression,  
To gather gold out of its strands!

Waits yonder no echoing thunder,  
No lightnings to smite from the cloud,  
When falling tears rust the swift needle,  
And thread ties the neck of a shroud?

Ah, beautiful stitches so tiny,  
Where brooding love waits in the nest,  
In shadow of motherhood coming,  
Half fearful, yet consciously blest!

What happy hopes lie in the gathers,  
Or lurk in the robe soft and fine?  
What buds underneath the leaves silky,  
What day-dreams run on with the vine?

No tale can you tell, little stitches,  
Such tales as you might, if you could!  
From founces that cover a ball dress  
To seams in a holy monk's hood!

## FEUDAL TIMES;

OR,

## TWO SOLDIERS OF FORTUNE

### A Romance of Daring and Adventure.

(Translated especially for the FAVORITE from  
the French of Paul Duplessis.)

#### CHAPTER XXXI.

##### THE KING'S JESTER.

Once out of the house, the chevalier walked away at a rapid pace. His head on fire, and the blood boiling in his veins, he felt the necessity for violent exercise to calm his excitement. He paid no heed to the direction in which he was going, his mind entirely employed upon the incidents of the strange interview of the evening.

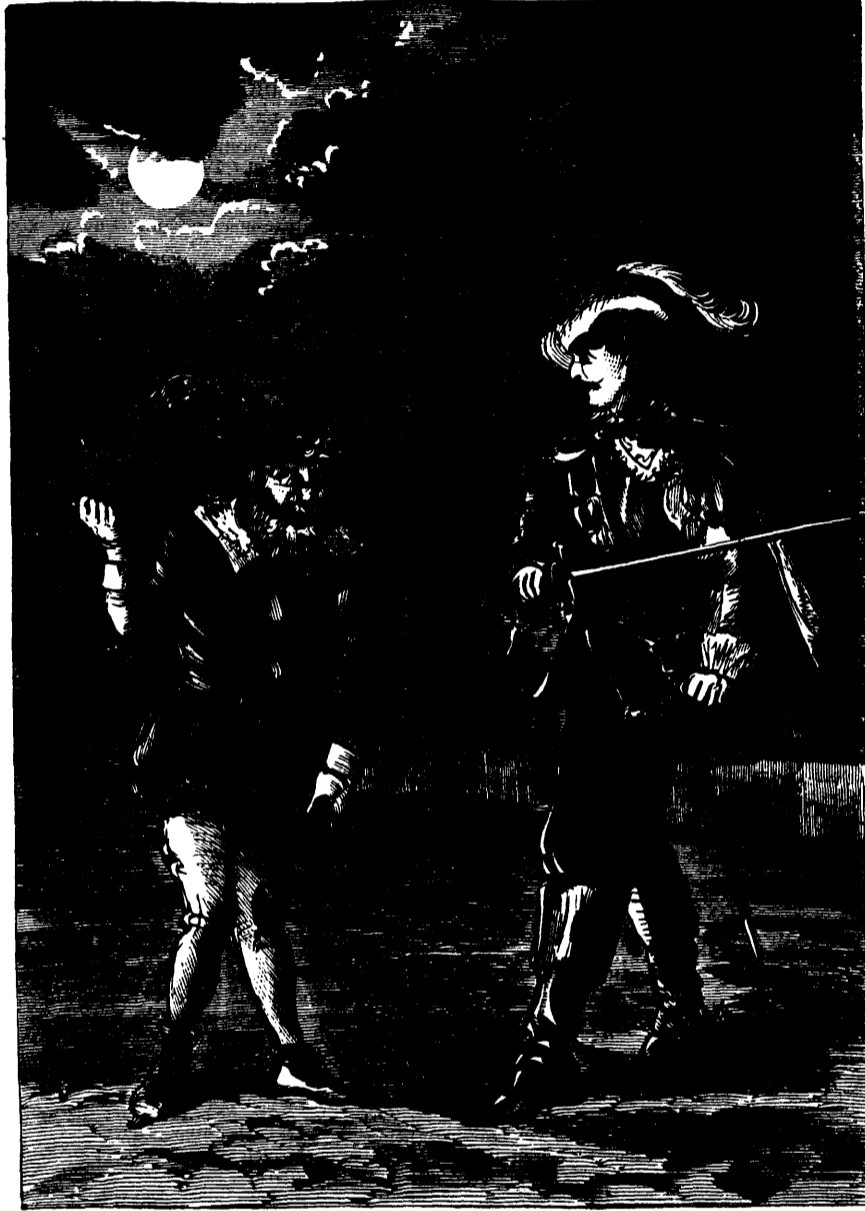
A violent shock suddenly recalled him to what was passing around him at the moment. Absorbed in his thoughts, he had unconsciously turned down one of the narrow and deserted streets in the neighborhood of the Marché-aux-Chevaux. His first movement was to spring backwards several paces; his second, to draw his sword.

"Who are you, and what do you want?" he demanded of a man whom he saw before him.

"Ah, monsieur!" replied the man addressed, in a shrill and suppliant voice, "it is heaven that has sent you to my aid! Come quickly!—lose not a moment!—she is dying!"

"Who are you, I repeat!" again demanded Sforzi, still holding himself upon the defensive, for fear a trap should have been laid for him.

"On whose account do you invoke my assistance?"



"THE KING'S JESTER."

tion," replied the man. "My wife is dying, monsieur. Heavens!—time is flying!—she is already dead, perhaps—my gentle Catherine!"

The voice of the stranger indicated so keen and sincere a sorrow, that Raoul felt all suspicion of foul play speedily vanish from his mind.

"Monsieur," he said, "dispose of me as you wish: I am quite at your service. If, by abusing my humanity, you lead me into any snare, heaven will punish you. I would rather expose myself to be betrayed than refuse to assist any one who asks my aid. What danger threatens your wife, and in what way can I be of any service to you?"

"Ah! fear nothing; I am the most inoffensive and most honest creature on the face of the earth. I never did harm to any creature in my life. Come with me—come!"

The speaker took Raoul by the hand, set off running with prodigious rapidity, and in a few moments stopped before a house of mean appearance. Raoul remarked that the door stood wide open.

"Monsieur," cried the stranger shrilly, "while I return to the side of my beloved Catherine, will you go in all haste to Bel-Esbat for Monsieur Bernard Albatia, the physician-astrologer, and bring him back here with you?"

"But Bel-Esbat belongs to his majesty," said Raoul; "and if I am not mistaken his majesty is at this moment there. I shall not be able to gain admittance; but even supposing I were to succeed in speaking with Monsieur Albatia, what should I answer if he asked me the name of the person who had sent me?"

"You are right, monsieur; I have lost my wits. Tell the astrologer that it is the Sane Madman who has sent for him. He will understand. As to getting into Bel-Esbat, nothing is easier. The palace is guarded to-night by a hundred gentlemen. Any one of them will instantly conduct you to Dr. Bernard Albatia. Good heavens! in my anxiety I had forgotten to close the door of my house. If any one should have entered during my absence I should be lost. Catherine is so beautiful—so beautiful! They would carry her off from me! What!—you are still there! Fly! fly!"

The strange individual sprang into his house, leaving Raoul a prey to doubt and bewildering surprise. For a moment he hesitated. The extraordinary behavior and incoherency of the language of the stranger made him fancy that he had been accosted by a madman. At length, however, he was carried away by feelings of humanity, and decided on risking the gallery of the gentlemen on guard, in fulfillment of the commission with which he was entrusted. With all speed, therefore, he took his way to Bel-Esbat.

A quarter of an hour sufficed him to reach the retro of Henry III.

After replying to the challenge of the sentinels, on reaching the entrance to the palace, he addressed himself to one of the company of one hundred gentlemen who was pacing to and fro.

"Monsieur," he said, "will you be so extremely obliging as to have me conducted to Dr. Ber-

nard Albatia, his majesty's physician-astrologer?"

"It is altogether impossible for me to do that, monsieur," replied the gentleman, politely. "Orders, the most severe, forbid any one, excepting the Queen-mother and Messieurs de Joyeuse and d'Epemon, to enter Bel-Esbat after nine o'clock at night. All that I can do for you is to send a message to Dr. Albatia, to tell him that a person requests to see him. What is your name, monsieur?"

"Dr. Albatia does not know me," replied Raoul, greatly embarrassed; "but I am sent to him by a person of his acquaintance."

"Then the name of this person?"

Sforzi felt himself on coals of fire; he feared to ruffle the temper of the gentleman who had received him with such exquisite urbanity. Indeed, the only answer he could return must in all probability savor strongly of the impertinence of an ill-timed jest or a mystification.

"Monsieur," he said, lowering his voice, "I am too well assured of your familiarity with political mysteries, to think of entering into any long explanation with you. You will, I am sure, understand me in half a word: I am no more free to tell you my name than that of the person who sends me on my present errand. The least indiscretion would expose me to certain disgrace. I shall be infinitely obliged to you, therefore, if you will cause Dr. Bernard Albatia to be informed that the Sane Madman has sent for him."

"The Sane Madman!" repeated the gentleman in astonishment—"why not? Since France has been overrun by the Italian race, mystery and intrigue reign in the city as well as at Court. The Sane Madman—so be it."

Ten minutes after the departure of this gentleman, a white-bearded man of tall stature, and grave and solemn countenance, came from the Hôtel Bel-Esbat and informed Raoul that he was ready to follow him. It was Bernard Albatia, the favorite astrologer of Henry III.

When the chevalier and the physician were sufficiently far from Bel-Esbat, not to fear being overheard by any of the guards who were moving about the place, Albatia turned towards him.

"Monsieur," he said, "I am at loss to understand why Sibillot has sent you to me. Are you intimate with him? Have you his confidence?"

By the light of the moon which now shone forth unclouded, Raoul observed that Maître Albatia was looking distrustfully at him.

"Monsieur," he replied, "I am absolutely ignorant of the personage whom you call Sibillot. This is the first time I have ever heard the name pronounced."

"What!—you do not know Sibillot?" cried Albatia.

"Not that I am aware of."

Raoul's answer appeared to cause the astrologer excessive astonishment.

During the rest of the way, neither of them exchanged another word. It was not until they had arrived in front of the old house inhabited by the man called by the astrologer Sibillot, that Bernard Albatia broke the silence.

"Monsieur," he said, "I thank you greatly for the trouble you have taken in coming for me this evening to Bel-Esbat. I am your much obliged and very humble servant."

The astrologer bowed gravely to the young man and raised the knocker of the door, Raoul arrested his arm.

"Maître Bernard Albatia," he said, "I am not habitually curious, and do not ordinarily mix myself in the business of others, but I am sensitive on the question of my own self-respect. Now, as what is passing here at this moment appears to me to be somewhat suspicious and worthy of my attention, I intend to ascertain the meaning of this mystery, and of the part I have been made to play in it, so to speak, against my will. I beg you will tell me who this Sibillot is, and what is the danger which threatens his wife Catherine?"

"Monsieur," replied the astrologer, in a constrained tone, "it does not seem to me very generous on your part thus to take advantage of the accident of my having mentioned the name of Sibillot. The danger incurred by Catherine is only such as is perfectly natural, and does not in any way arise out of the commission of a crime, as you may have supposed. I hope that this statement will suffice to remove any doubts you may have, and induce you to abandon the resolution you have just expressed."

"You are in error, Maître Bernard. The man who defends himself before he is accused is rarely innocent. You have used the word 'crime'—that has decided me to enter this house. Not another word, I beg. At the same time I will add that if my suspicions prove to be unfounded,