

"We come to thank you for the blow struck this night from this house! That it rid us of one of our worst foes was a small thing, girl. But that it put heart into our burghers and strength into their arms at a critical moment was another and a greater thing. Which shall not, if Geneva stand—as stand by God's pleasure she shall, the stronger for this night's work—be forgotten! The name of Mère Royaume will at the next meeting of the Greater Council be inscribed among the names of those whom the Free City thanks for their services this night!"

A murmur of stern approval that began with those in the house rolled through the doorway and was echoed by the waiting throng that filled the street.

She was weeping. All it meant, all it might mean, what warranty of powerful friends, what fame beyond the reach of dark stories, or a woman's spite, she could not yet understand, she could not yet appreciate. But something, the city's safety, the city's gratitude, the countenance of these men who came to her door blood-stained, dark with smoke, reeling with fatigue—came that they might thank her mother and do her honour—something of this she did grasp as she wept before them.

She had but one thing to ask, to desire; and in a moment it was given her.

"Nor is that all!" The voice that broke in was harsher and blunter than Baudichon's. "If it be true, as I am told, that a young man of the name of Mercier lives here? He does, does he? Ay, he lives, my girl. He is safe, have no fear. For the matter of that he has nine lives, and"—Captain Blandano continued with an oath—"he has had need of all this night, God forgive me for the word! But, as I said, that is not all. For if there is any one man who has saved Geneva, it is he, the man who let down the portcullis. And if the city does not dower you, my girl——"