

THE DWARF'S SECRET.

Where am I to leave those wounded men, said the head of the ambulance corps... It was about ten o'clock at night when the wagon stopped its burden at the place indicated by the priest...

CHAPTER XV.

Benedict's grief at sight of her betrothed exceeded her strength. She was as pale as Benedict himself. Her eyes were dimmed with tears; she shook her frame; her knees bent under her; she fell prostrate, her face hidden upon the bed...

"It is all your own fault," said Xavier. "If you had married him he would not have been here." "Yes, he would," said Sabine. "I would have been the first to urge him to take up arms in defence of his country..."

Drawing a revolver from his pocket, he pointed it at Sulpice when an officer interposed. "Have no fear," he said, "but it is better for you to come with me to the guard-room than to remain at the mercy of this drunken fellow..."

is intended for you. I will readily place the whole of it at your disposal. Only ask to be left to my own thoughts, and that no one will disturb my last moments." "At the first sound of his voice Sulpice trembled. He rushed over to the pallet, seized the prisoner's two hands, and in a voice of mingled joy and tenderness cried, 'Xavier, my brother!'"

the death, so here's a chance for you to escape. The young man sprang forward eagerly. But Sulpice was before him. Heising the weapon which the man was offering to his brother, he bent it across his neck with astonishing strength, broke it, and threw the fragments to a distance. "Way did you do that?" cried Xavier. "To save you," answered the priest, calmly. "Miserable calvinist!" cried the keeper, "not content with preaching lies, you want to hinder those who are about to take up arms for the Commune..."

effort, raised herself on tiptoes to see, and with a cry of joy threw herself into the arms of Sulpice. The Commune would have required her brutally, but a woman interposed, and the hapless girl was clasped for a moment to that generous and noble heart which so soon must cease to beat. "I followed you," said Sulpice, "I followed you, she cried frantically; 'if they murder priests, surely they will murder Christian women. If you die I cannot live.'" The Abbe Sulpice pressed Xavier's hand. "Yes, today," he said, "I said die, today I say, live. Save yourself, first; by the tumult; you cannot help me; stay by the tent. Take Sabine away from this scene of horror..."

CHAPTER XVI.

It had seized its prey at last, that ferocious beast called "the people of Paris," which during eighty years has made such violent efforts to become supreme master of France. It howled, it fairly shrieked for joy, to see in its power the two classes of men whose lives are spent in maintaining peace and good order; the priest, who educates children to virtue, and the gendarme, belonging to that picked body of soldiers, sworn to carry out the law even at the expense of their lives. Truly, witnessing the unreasonable hatred evinced by these wretches against men whose only crime was the defence of justice against injustice, the preservation of the rights of property, and even of human life, it was plain that their sole object was impunity to commit every possible mischief, and more especially those worthy of capital punishment. Calm and dignified the prisoners walked among that furious crew. They, the soldiers of duty, who had upheld the honor of the French flag on many a hard-fought field, and won their crosses and medals by many a wound. Yet they were not insensible to their fate. Bitter anguish filled the hearts of these bronzed and bearded gendarmes, at thought of their wives and children left unprotected, and whom they were never to see again. Besides, this was being led to execution like cattle to the slaughter; death would have had no terror for them on the field; even yet their hearts would have leaped for joy at the sounds of battle. But to die at a street corner, to be shot down at the hands of ruffians, seemed to them too terrible. They asked themselves what crime they had committed to merit so terrible a chastisement. "If I were alone in the world," said a gendarme to the Abbe Sulpice, "it would be all one to me. I am a soldier, that means I have courage to face death. I am a Breton, therefore I have the faith; but my wife is ill, and my poor little ones are not even walking yet. Who will take care of the widow and the orphans? They will be obliged to beg, and if the news of my death should likewise kill the mother, public charity will have to take the children as beggars, pariahs. It is terrible, so terrible that I am tempted to ask now, when about to appear before my Judge, whether I can expect justice?" "Yes, comrade, and more than justice, for, if possible, mercy seems among the divine attributes, to precede all others. Your death will be repaid to your children. Your death of justice. It will be done. We fall to-day, but our murderers have more to fear than we. Martyrs in a holy cause, we are sure of an eternity purchased by our death, but what have these poor wretches to expect? Covered with the blood they have shed, tracked like wild beasts, despair in their hearts and blasphemy on their lips, they will die cursing their fellow beings; or they who survive will dearly expiate by a life of anguish the murders of to-day. As to your children, be assured there are many noble souls who will be touched by their helpless state, and in the name of the Master I serve, I dare to promise you protection for them." "While they spoke thus their little group had passed on to the Boulevard des Amandiers, through the Rue de Paris, and along the Boulevard des Capucines. Men in the dress and air of clerics performed a sort of triumphal march, often drowned by the singing of the Marseillaise and the frenzied shrieks of the populace. The Communists, irritated by the calm recollection of the doomed man, sought to disturb the peace of their last hours by furious words, and even blows. Ever and anon their progress was interrupted by an accession of furious people. Women, who might have served to personate the furies, wearing red coukades and flaming red ashes, heaped insults upon the priests, who prayed aloud. One of these miserable creatures seized her child, and tossing it on her shoulder, cried out in a coarse voice, "See the oppressors and murderers of the people are passing by. They are going to be shot. When you are big, you must show your hatred for them as your father does." The child, with its pretty, rosy face, looked with innocent amazement at the poor prisoners, and recognizing its father among the Communists, held out its little arms to him. The wretch took the child and kissed it twice. As he did so he heard a sob just behind him, and turning saw the big tears rolling down the bronzed face of a soldier. "My children, my poor children!" cried the gendarme. "See!" said the child, "that poor man is crying. Why is he crying, papa?" "Because he is going to be shot in the name of the Commune!" answered the father. The child, not understanding, made a movement as if to wipe away the tears from the man's eyes. But the mother, seeing the child roughly, was soon lost in the crowd. Meanwhile the by-standers laughed and jeered upon the probable demerit of the accused when they were really face to face with death. An old priest fell down. He was dragged up brutally, amid a shower of blows; but accepting the arm of a soldier, he went on bravely, fearing to appear irresolute. The sad procession proceeded along the Rue de Paris, where it is crossed to the right by the Rue Haxo. The spot appointed for the massacre was the Cite Vincennes, the entrance to which was at No. 83, Rue Haxo. They reached this place, which was well known to manufacturers of all sorts, by crossing a small kitchen garden, and a large courtyard, stretching out in front of a large detached building, dingy in appearance, where the insurgents had established their headquarters. Somewhat to the left was a second enclosure, which before the war had been intended to be used as a hall for

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