

# Cynthia's Chauffeur

By LOUIS TRACY  
Copyright by McLeod & Allen, Toronto

(Continued)

His only consolation was provided by the knowledge that the risk to a stout Mercury was as slight compared with the tortures endured by a French-guilt racer, with its long wheel-base and low chassis. After a couple of miles of semi-miraculous advance his respect for Smith's capability as a driver increased literally by leaps and bounds.

But the end was nearer than he thought. On reaching the top of one of those seemingly interminable land waves, he saw a blurred object in his mirror. Soon he distinguished Cynthia's face-colors, her dark hair, and his heart throbbled exultantly when the girl flattered a handkerchief to show that she, too, had seen.

## CHAPTER VI.

A Midsummer Night's Vagaries

Cynthia, notwithstanding that spirit ped pail, was rather pale when Medenham stopped the car close beside her. She had been on tenter hooks during the past quarter of an hour—there were silent moments when she measured her own slim figure against the car's seat and half-formed resolutions to take to her heels along the Cheddar road.

At first, she had enjoyed the run greatly. Although Edouard de Valleron Smith was a mechanic, the man was a first-rate driver, and he spun the Du Vallon along at its best speed. But the change to good macadam and to none soon made itself felt, and Cynthia was more troubled than she cared to show when the French flier came to a standstill after pattering and jolting alarmingly among the ruts. Marigny's excited questions evoked only unintelligible grunts from Smith; for all that, the irritating truth could not be withheld—the petrol tank, as a petrol tank, is not a petrol tank; it is a petrol tank to be filled with petrol, but, by some strange mischance, the supply usually held in reserve had been left at Bristol.

restored her to a disconsolate chapter on some before midnight, and he was crying enough to admit that if he had not then succeeded in winning her esteem by his chivalry, his unobtrusive tenderness, his devoted attentions—about all his flow of interesting talk and well-turned epigram—the fault would be his own, and not attributable to adverse conditions. It was at a surprising, therefore, that he failed to choke back the curse which he muttered as he saw the quick rise to his lips when the throb of the Mercury's engine came over the crest of the hill. Never had he so called dragon more terrible to the holder, even in the days of knight-errantry. In an instant his well-considered project had gone by the board. He saw Cynthia, he saw her face, he saw a skulking plotter driven into the open, a self-confessed trickster uttering at the mercy of some hapazard question that would lay bare his pretenses and cover his counterfeit rhapsody with ridicule.

If Cynthia had heard and hearing understood, it is possible that a great many remarkable incidents that embryo would have passed into the mists of what might have been. For instance, she would not have deluged the notice Count Edouard Marigny's further existence. She would not have met him he would fill a place in the landscape comparable to that occupied by a migratory beetle. But her heart was captivated by the cry of thankfulness quite drowned in her ears the Frenchman's furious oath.

Mrs. Devar, having had time to gather her wits, called her fellow-conspirator to retrieve her fellow-conspirator's shattered fortunes.

"My dear Cynthia," she cried exultingly, "do you say you are not ready for this? It is not I, but the cherub, that is out of commission. Didn't you see me go the Salome and when you were there on the screen?"

"Ah! the car is broken down. I do not wonder—this fearful road—"

"The road seems to have strayed out of Colorado," she said, "and we are short of petrol. Please give some to Monsieur Marigny, Fitzroy. Then we can hurry to Bristol and the Count must pick up his chauffeur on the way."

Without more ado, she seated herself by Mrs. Devar's side, and Marigny realized that he had been robbed of a golden opportunity. No more to the Devar woman; but Cynthia back in the Du Vallon that evening; it would need the exercise of all his subtle tact to induce her to re-entertain him at any subsequent visit.

He strove to appear at his ease, even essayed a few words of congratulation on the happy change that brought the Mercury to rest in the hands of the imperious young lady cut short his limping phrases.

"Oh, don't let us waste these precious minutes," she protested, "but he had not allowed for the difference between the Lat. and the Anglo-Saxon. Cynthia might weep she might even attempt to run, but in the last resource she would face him with dauntless courage."

"I assure you I would not have had this thing happen on any account," he said in a voice that vibrated with sympathy. "Indeed, pray your pity in my own behalf, Miss Vaurean. After all, it is I who suffer the agony of failure when I meant only to please. You will reach Bristol this evening, a little late, perhaps, but quite safely, and I hope that you will laugh then at the predicament which you look so ill-starred."

"No," the only road," persisted Medenham, "is to return to it some two miles in the rear. Had you followed your present path much farther, it would be a village quite near. My chauffeur has gone there for petrol. Someone would have told us of our mistake."

"There is no petrol to be bought at Blagdon, which is a mere hamlet on the downs. Anyhow, here are two gallons—ample for your needs—but if you can take any more, I have no doubt you will be compelled to wait till he returns, Monsieur Marigny."

Though Medenham did not endeavor to check the irascible Marigny, he did not let the latter utter a word not to have uttered to the two concluding words. Had he ransacked his ample vocabulary of the French language, he would have found a dozen upon another set of syllables offering similar difficulties to the foreigner. It was quite evident that his accurate pronunciation started the accomplished driver. Each arrived at the same conclusion, though by different channels; this man was no mere chauffeur, and the fact rendered his marked hostility all the more significant.

Nevertheless, for the moment, Marigny concealed his uneasiness; by a display of good humor he hoped to gloss over the palpable absurdity of his earlier statements to Cynthia.

"I seem to have bungled this business very badly," he said airily. "Please don't be too hard on me. I shall manage to bring you to Bristol, you in Bristol. Au revoir, chere dames! Tell them to keep me some dinner. I may not be so very far behind, since your ladies will take some time over your toilette. I shall—what you call it—scorch like mad at what I have found that careless scoundrel, Smith."

Cynthia had suddenly grown dumb, so Mrs. Devar tried once more to relax the tension.

"Do be careful, Count Edouard," she cried; "this piece of road is dreadfully dangerous, and when all is said and done, another half hour is now of no great consequence."

"If your chauffeur has really gone to Blagdon, he will not be back under an hour at least, but unless you wish to wreck your car you will not attempt to follow him."

With that he bent over the head lamp, and their audience fell spectators of Marigny's scornful face. He could no longer pretend to ignore the Englishman's menace. Still, he was powerless. Though quite calm in anger and barked desire, he dared not provoke a continued silence already warranted by the two ladies. He forced a laugh.

"Explanations are like swamps," he said, "the farther you plunge into them the deeper you sink. Do not tell me, please, as for Mrs. Devar, I shall crawl. As for Miss Vaurean, she that she does not care what becomes of me."

Cynthia weakened a little at that. Certainly she wondered why her model chauffeur chose to express his opinions so bluntly, while Marigny's

staring at the hotel. Cynthia, apparently, had shared his thoughts so far as they concerned Simmonds.

"I suppose your friend Simmonds will reveal his whereabouts during the evening," she said, while dissembling herself of her wraps.

"Devar had already alighted, but the girl was standing in the car and spoke over Medenham's shoulder."

"Of course, he may not be here," was the answer, not given too loudly by the accent that Miss Vaurean's details to the perplexed James, and there was no need to let either of them overhear his words.

"Oh my! What will happen, then?"

"In that event, I should feel compelled to take his place again."

"But compulsion, as you put it, tends rather to take you to London."

"I have changed my mind, Miss Vaurean," he said simply.

She tilted her head. There was just a speck of coyness in her manner as she stooped nearer to the car.

"You believe that Simmonds would not have found me at that wretched lane-to-night," she whispered.

"I am quite sure of it."

"But the whole affair was a mere stupid error."

"I am only too glad that I was enabled to put it right," as said with due gravity.

"Cynthia," came a shrill voice, "do make haste, I am positively starving."

"Guess you'd better lose Simmonds," breathed the girl, and an accountable fluttering of her heart induced a remarkably high color in her cheeks when she sped up the steps of the hotel and entered the brilliantly lighted atrium.

As for Medenham, though he had carefully mapped out the exact line of conduct to be followed in Bristol as at a post-mortem, he was not a porter certain answers to the questions of Marigny and the Count. Unaided by the glamor of light or position he had won this delightful girl's confidence. She believed in him as she would never again believe in Count Edouard Marigny; what that in such a moment, none can tell but his point of view; it did not occur to him that Cynthia might already have regretted the impulse which led her to utter her thought aloud. Her point of view was of the Marigny type revealed to Swendenburg in one of his philosophic trances. "The inhabitants of Mars," said he, "account it wicked to think one thing and speak another—to what one thing with the face expresses another." Happy Marigny, perhaps, but not quite happy Cynthia, still blushing hotly because of her daring suggestion as to the disposal of Simmonds.

But she was deeply puzzled by the mishap to the Du Vallon. Unwilling to think evil of anyone, she felt nevertheless that Fitzroy (as she called him) would never have treated both Mrs. Devar and the Frenchman so cavalierly if he had not anticipated the very incident that had happened on the Mendips. Why did he tamper with how did he really find out what had become of them? What would Simmonds have done in his stead? A hundred strange doubts thronged in her brain, but they were pushed in confusion before that more intimate and insistent question—how would Fitzroy interpret the questions that remain in her service?

Meanwhile the Swedish seer's theory of Marigny speaking and thought acting in unity was making itself at home on the pavement in front of the hotel.

Medenham learnt from the hall-porter that a motor-car had reached Bristol from London about five o'clock. The driver, who was alone, had been called for Miss Vaurean, and was told that she was expected but had not yet arrived, whereupon he went off saying that he would call after dinner.

"Another shuffer ken a bit later: an axed the same thing," went on the man, "but he didn't have no car, an' as left no word about calling again."

"Excellent!" said Medenham. "Now please go and tell Captain Devar that I wish to see him."

"Here!"

"Yes, I cannot leave the car. He must be at liberty, as he is in evening dress, and the ladies will not even downstairs under half an hour."

Devar soon appeared. His mother had managed to inform him that the substituted driver was responsible for the complete collapse of Marigny's project, and he was puffing with annoyance, though well aware that he must lose Loutlay.

"Well," said he, strutting up to Medenham and blowing a cloud of cigar smoke from his thick lips, "well, what is it, my man? Has anything happened?"

"Of course I'll oblige you in that way, my lord. Who wouldn't care the slow reply."

CHAPTER VII.

Wherein Cynthia Takes Her Own Line

When the Mercury, shining from Dale's attentions, halted noiselessly opposite the College Green Hotel on the Saturday morning, Count Edouard Marigny was standing there, the Du Vallon was not in evidence, and its owner's attire bespoke other aims than motoring, at any rate for the hour.

Evidently he was well content with himself. A straw hat was set on the back of his head, a clematis stuck between his lips, his hands were thrust into his trouser pockets, and his feet were spread widely apart. Taken altogether, he had the air of a man without a care in the world.

He smiled, too, in the most friendly fashion, when Medenham's eyes met him.

"I hear that Simmonds is unable to carry out his contract," he said cheerfully.

"You are mistaken, a second time, monsieur," said Medenham.

"Why, then, are you here this morning?"

"I am acting for Simmonds. If anything, my car is slightly superior to his, while I may be regarded as an equally competent driver, so the contract is kept in all essentials."

Marigny still smiled. The Frenchman of mid-Victorian romances would have shied from this point by indulging in an inimitable string of puns on days Parisians of the Count's type do not shrug—with John Bull's clothing they have adopted no small share of his stolidness.

"It is immaterial," he said. "I have sent my man to offer him my Du Vallon, and Smith will go with him to explain its humors. You, as a skilled motorist, understand that a car is of the feminine gender. Like any other charming demoiselle, it demands the services of tact—it yields willingly to gentle handling."

Medenham cut short the Count's

pleasantly turned phrases.

"Simmonds has no need to avail himself of your courtesy," he said. "As for the rest, give me your address in Paris, and when I next visit the French capital I shall be delighted to analyze these subtleties with you. All most admirable! But the really vital question before us to-day is your address in London, Mr. Fitzroy. Marigny dived on the surname as if it were a succulent oyster, and, in the undeniable surpluses of the moment, Medenham was forced to relieve that "Captain" Devar, formerly of Horton's Horse, had dared all by telling the confederate the truth—some part of the truth. The two men looked squarely at each other, and Marigny did not fail to misinterpret the dubious frown on Medenham's face.

He descended a step or two, and crossed the pavement leisurely, dropping his voice so that it might not reach the ears of a porter, laden with the ladies' traveling boxes, who appeared in the doorway.

"Why would you quarrel?" he asked, with an engaging frankness well calculated to reassure a startled eavesdropper. "In this matter I am anxious to treat you as a gentleman. Alas, don't hurry off instantly and tell Simmonds to ring the Du Vallon here. Leave me to explain everything to Miss Vaurean. Surely you agree that she ought to be spared the unpleasantness of a wrangle—or, shall we say, an exposure? You see," he continued with a trifling animation and speaking in French, "the game is not worth the candle in a few hours, but the matter will be in the hands of the police, whereas, by reaching London to-night, you may be able to pacify the Earl of Atholstoun. I can help, perhaps, I will say all that is possible, and my testimony ought to carry some weight."

Medenham was thoroughly mystified. That the Frenchman was not yet aware of his identity was now clear enough, though, with Devar's probable duplicity still running in his mind, he could not allow the puzzle presented by this vaulted half-knowledge. Again the other attributed his perplexity to anything except his real name.

"I am willing to befriend you," he argued emphatically. "You have acted foolishly, but not criminally, I hope, in your anxiety to help a colleague who forgot the fine distinction which the law draws between meum and tuum."

"No," said Medenham, turning to the porter. "Put the larger box on top of it—the locks outward. Then you will find that they fit exactly. Don't be a scoundrel; the puzzle puzzled the Count, with a certain heat of annoyance making itself felt in his



Now, you two—what are you discussing?

patronizing tone. "Miss Vaurean will come out at any minute—"

Medenham glanced at the clock by the side of the speed indicator. The time was five minutes past one. He was being pursued by a young man, Mrs. Devar, he commented dryly.

"But why persist in this piece of folly?" growled Marigny, to whose reluctant consciousness the idea of failure suddenly presented itself. "You must realize by this time that I know all about your car. A telegram remains in my own hand, and the authorities on your track, your arrest will follow, and Miss Vaurean will be subjected to the gravest inconveniences. Savvy!"

"No, no! If you will not deign to fair means I must resort to foul. It comes to this—you either quit Bristol at once or I inform Miss Vaurean of the trick you have played on me."

Medenham turned and picked up from the seat the pair of golf driving-gloves which had caught Cynthia's enquiring eye by reason of their price. He drew on the right glove, and buttoned it. When he answered, he spoke with irritating slowness.

"Would it not be better for all concerned that the lady in white retreat you profess to be so deeply moved should be permitted to continue her tour without further disturbance? You and I can meet in London, monsieur, and she then have much pleasure in convincing you that I am a most peaceable and law-abiding person."

"No," came the angry retort. "I have decided. I will not permit my self to overlook your offense. At whatever cost, Miss Vaurean must be protected until her father learns how his wishes have been disregarded by a couple of English bluffs."

"Sorry," said Medenham coolly.

"He alighted in the roadway, as the driving seat was near the curb. A glance into the vestibule of the hotel revealed Cynthia, in motor coat and veil, giving some instructions, probably with regard to letters, to a deferential hall-porter. Walking rapidly round the front of the car, he caught Marigny's shoulder with his left hand.

"If you dare to open your mouth in Miss Vaurean's presence, other than by way of a commonplace remark, I shall forthwith smash your face to a jelly," he said.

A queer shiver ran through the Frenchman's body, but Medenham had shied from this point by indulging in an inimitable string of puns on days Parisians of the Count's type do not shrug—with John Bull's clothing they have adopted no small share of his stolidness.

"It is immaterial," he said. "I have sent my man to offer him my Du Vallon, and Smith will go with him to explain its humors. You, as a skilled motorist, understand that a car is of the feminine gender. Like any other charming demoiselle, it demands the services of tact—it yields willingly to gentle handling."

Medenham cut short the Count's



Look again, Devar! The man wilted under those stern eyes.

The bacillus that causes scarlet fever has been discovered by Dr. F. B. Haskory, pathologist of Boston City Hospital, and his assistant Dr. F. M. Medler.