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CHAPTER I.

A BOLT FROM THE BLUE.

"I do not drink with a thief!" D'Entragues spoke in clear, distinct tones, that rose above the hum of voices, and everyone caught the words. In an instant the room was still. The laughter on all faces died away, leaving them grave; and twenty pairs of curious eyes, and twenty curious faces, were turned toward us. It was so sudden, so unexpected, this jarring discord in our harmony, that it fell as if a bolt from a cannon, or a shot from one of Messer Novarro's new guns, had dropped in amongst us. Even that, I take it, would have caused less surprise, although for the present there was a truce in the land. Prospero Colonna turned half round in his seat and looked at me. Our host and commander, old Ives d'Alegres, who was pouring himself out a glass of white vermouth, held the decanter in mid-air, an expression of blank amazement in his blue eyes. Even the Englishman, Hawkwood, who sat next to me, was startled out of his habitual calm. Every eye was on us, on me where I sat dazed, and on D'Entragues, who was leaning back slightly, a forced smile on his face, the fingers of one hand playing with the empty glass before him, whilst with the other he slowly twisted his long red moustache. I was completely taken aback. Only that afternoon I parted from D'Entragues, apparently on the best of terms. We had played together and he had won my crowns. It is true he was not paid in full at the time; but he knew the word of a Savelli. On leaving, Mmc. D'Entragues asked me to join her hawking party for the morrow, and he urged the invitation. I accepted, and backed my new perruque against D'Entragues' old hawk Bibbo for ten crowns, the best of three flights, and the wager was taken. Never, indeed, had I known him so cordial. I did not like the man, but for his wife's sake was friendly to him. Of a truth, there were few of the youngsters in Tremouille's camp who were not in love with her, and some of us older fellows too, though we hid our feelings better. I was grateful to madame. She had been kind to me after the affair of San Miniato, when a Florentine pike somehow found its way through my breastplate. Indeed, I may say I owed my recovery to her nursing. In return I had been of some service to her in the retreat up the valley of the Taro, after Fornovo—she called it saving her life. In this manner a friendship sprang up between us which was increased by the opportunities we had of meeting whilst the army lay inactive before Arezzo. Long years of camp life made me fully appreciate the society of a woman, remarkable alike for her beauty and her talent; and she, on the other hand, felt for me, I was sure, only that friendship which it is possible for a good woman to hold for a man who is not her husband.

husband of madame made some rallying allusion to our match for the morrow, and offered to drink to him. His reply is known. The silence which followed his speech was so utter that one may have heard a feather fall; and then some one, I know not who, laughed shortly. The sound brought me to myself, and in a fury, hardly knowing what I was doing, I jumped up and drew my dagger, but was instantly seized by Colonna and Hawkwood. The latter was a man of great size, and between him and Colonna I was helpless. "Give him rope," whispered Hawkwood, and his voice was kind, "this is not an affair to be settled with a poniard thrust." The whole room was in an uproar now, all crowding around us; D'Entragues half-risen from his seat, his hand on his sword, and I quivering in the grasp of my kind enemies. Old Ives d'Alegres rushed forward, "Silence, gentlemen!" he called out, "remember I command here. Savelli, give up that dagger; D'Entragues, your sword. Now, gentlemen, words have been used which blood alone cannot wash out. M. d'Entragues, I await your explanation!" "Lie!" I shouted out, "you will give it to me at the sword's point," and big Hawkwood's restraining arms tightened over me. "Thanks," replied D'Entragues, "you remember the sword at last; a moment before I saw in your hands your natural weapon." "A truce to this, sirs! I await you," interrupted D'Alegres. "Your pardon," said D'Entragues. "Gentlemen, you want an explanation. It is simple enough. We have a thief in our midst, and he is there." "A thief!—Di Savelli!" called out a dozen voices, and Ives d'Alegres said: "Impossible! you are mad, D'Entragues." "No more, sir, than you, or anyone of us here. I confess, though, I thought I was mad when I first knew of it, for this man has been my comrade, we have fought side by side, and he has borne himself as a gallant soldier. I thought I was mad, I say, when I first knew of this; but the proofs are too strong." "What are they?" D'Alegres spoke very shortly. "You shall have them. You all know there have been a series of unaccountable thefts amongst us lately. The duchess' rubies have gone. Hardly a lady but has lost some valuable, my wife, amongst other things, a bracelet. The thief did not confine his attentions to the fair sex; but visited us men as well. They were not common thefts. From the circumstances attending them, the robber must have known us intimately, and had easy access to our quarters. Up to now the matter has been a mystery. A lot of people have been wrongly suspected, and two poor wretches are now swinging on the gibbet, condemned for nothing that I know of." "It was done by my orders, sir," said D'Alegres, "the matter is beside the point." "I stand corrected, general. Some little time ago a fortunate chance revealed to me who the culprit was. I made no sign, but set to work until complete proofs were in my hands." "You have said so before. Why beat about the bush? If you have proofs, produce them." "A moment, sir. May I ask any of you to state what your most recent losses have been?" "My medalion by Cimabue," put in Visconti, in his drawing voice. "Fifty fat gold crowns in a leather bag," grumbled Hawkwood, "the residue of Albot Basilio's ransom. God send such another prize to me, for I know not how to pay my lances." "There was a little laugh at Hawkwood's moan, but it soon stilled, and, one by one, each man stated his latest loss. "Gentlemen, you interrupt M. D'Entragues. Let us end this painful scene." "There is but one thing more, sir. I ask you now to have this"—D'Entragues indicated me with an insolent look—"this person's quarters searched." Whilst he was speaking, D'Alegres gave a whispered order to a young officer, who left the room immediately, although with a somewhat discontented air at being sent away. As D'Entragues finished, the door was opened, a couple of files of Swiss infantry entered, and with them Braccio Fortebraccio, our provost-marshal. At a sign from D'Alegres one of the files surrounded me, the other D'Entragues, and Braccio called out in a loud voice: "Ugo di Savelli, and Crepin D'Entragues, I arrest you in the king's name!" "At your service, provost," said D'Entragues, with a bow, "my sword is already given up. May I ask, sir," he continued, turning to Alegres, "if you will put my proofs to the test?" "At once, Provost, lead your prisoners to M. di Savelli's quarters." "Thank God!" The expression burst from me, so great was my relief. I was sure of being acquitted, and madame or no madame, I should kill D'Entragues the following day, even though I knew Tremouille had sworn to hang the next man caught duelling within the jurisdiction of his camp. We were, as I have stated, at Arezzo, and had passed the winter there, in the trace following the expulsion of the duke of Bari from Lombardy. It had, however, become necessary to mummage the pope, who was hit deep in intrigue as well as crime, and Tremouille leaving Monsignore d'Amboise in Milan, marched south, and

with the aid of our Florentine allies held the Borgis and Spain in check. Acting under the advice of Trevulzio, Ives d'Alegres, and others, the duke had not entered the town; but kept us in camp near Giove, outside the walls. The gates of the city and the citadel were, however, at the same time strongly garrisoned, and Trevulzio held command within. It was all the more urgent to keep the main body of the troops outside the walls, as they were composed, with the exception of a few French regiments, mainly of mercenaries, and by holding the town with picked men, upon whom he could rely, Tremouille would be able, in case of any change of front on the part of his mercenaries, to have them between two fires. Ives d'Alegres, who then acted as lieutenant general to the duke, was immediately in command of the camp, and had fixed his headquarters in a large villa, the property of the Accolti, and it was here that the supper, which ended so disastrously for me, was given. My quarters were but a bow-shot or two away, in the direction of the town. When we reached them I was surprised to find at the door my servant Tarbes in the hands of two of the marshal's men, a half troop of French lancers drawn up before my tent, and my own small cottoffa of ten lances, which I had raised for the war by pawning my last acre, all under guard. As if any attempt at rescue were possible! I saw in a moment that this accounted for D'Entragues' late arrival at the supper; but entered the tent surer of the results. A dozen blazing torches threw a clear enough light, and Alegres briefly requested the provost to begin the search. The practiced hands of the field police did this very effectually, but to no purpose, and I felt that the faces of all were looking friendly towards me. D'Entragues seemed nervous, and his pallid cheek was pale. "Send for Tarbes," he said, and at a word from the provost my knife was led in. This man was a Spaniard, whom I had taken into my service, some little while ago, on the recommendation of D'Entragues. Except on one occasion when he lost, or maybe stole, a pair of silver spurs, for which I cutted him roundly, he had served me well. At the present moment he seemed overcome with fear, trembled in every limb, and refused to look at me. "Signor Tarbes," said the provost, "do you know what the wheel is?" The man made no answer, and Braccio went on: "Signor Tarbes, we want a little information which I am persuaded you possess. If you give it freely we will be merciful; if you prevaricate, if you attempt to conceal anything, we will do to you what we did to the death hunters after San Miniato—you remember?" "Speak freely, Tarbes. There is no fear," I added. "Even your master, the excellent cavaliere, advises you, and I must say advise-

"It bears your arms, however;" Braccio pointed to a little metal plate on which they were distinctly engraved. "You must, I am afraid, submit to the further indignity of being searched," said D'Alegres. "There was no hope in resistance, and I endured this. Braccio himself searched me, and almost as soon as he began pulled from an inner pocket of my vest a small key, attached to a fine gold chain. "Here is the noble knight's key," he exclaimed, "and see; it fits exactly!" He turned it in the lock, opened the valise and emptied the contents out on a rough camp table. A low murmur went up, for amongst the small heap of articles were Hawkwood's leather bag, and madame's bracelet, whilst something rolled a little on one side, and fell off softly to the turf. A soldier picked it up, and placed it face upwards on the table—the lost medalion. "One by one D'Alegres held up the articles, sadly, and I looked round in my agony on the faces of those who but an hour ago were my friends. They had all shrunk back from me, and I was alone within the circle of the guards. D'Entragues stood with folded arms, and a smile on his lips, and Tarbes glanced from side to side, like an ape seeking chance for escape; I looked towards Hawkwood, but even his face was hard and set. "I do not see the duchess' rubies here," said D'Alegres. "I am prepared to produce them to-morrow," replied D'Entragues; "in the meantime, I trust you have sufficient proof." "Give M. d'Entragues his sword; you need not fight this man," D'Alegres added, pointing to me, "even if he challenges you. Were you a French subject," he said to me, "I would hang you in your boots; as it is, I will submit the case to the duke." D'Entragues, I hold you to your word about the rubies. Provost, see that your prisoner is carefully guarded. You will answer for him with your life." "Prisoner, your excellency! There are two." "I have restored M. d'Entragues his sword." "There is still another," and the provost pointed to Tarbes. "Pah!" exclaimed D'Alegres, "hang him out of hand—come, gentlemen!" "One by one they went out. Not another look did they give me. I heard the tread of feet, and the sound of voices in eager conversation, dying out in the distance. I stood as in a dream. Tarbes had been dragged away speechless, and half fainting. When he was outside he found voice, and I heard him alternately cursing D'Alegres and D'Entragues and screaming for mercy. Braccio touched me on the arm. "Come, signore," he said, "you, at any rate, have a few hours left." [TO BE CONTINUED.]



Opened the valise and spread the contents on a high camp table.

you well," continued Braccio. "Signor Tarbes, you will now show us," and he rubbed his hands together softly, "where the valiant knight, Ugo di Savelli, keeps his prizes of war, the spoils of his bow and spear—I was going to say fin—"

JAPANESE HUMOR.

Some Stray Samples of It That Have Been Found in the Newspapers.

The Japanese newspapers make nearly as much use of jokes as the American press and, in spite of the differences of languages and customs, American jokes are thoroughly enjoyed by the Japs when translated into their tongue. An example of Japanese humor is the story of two deaf men who, meeting each other one morning, indulged in this dialogue: First Deaf Man—Good morning. Are you going to buy sake (rice wine)? Second Deaf Man—Oh, excuse me; I thought you were going to buy sake. A toper, feeling "headachy" after a spree, had fallen asleep. He dreamed that he had found a sack of sake and licked his chops before tasting it. "How delicious!" he exclaimed. "It would be proper to report the find at police headquarters, but a windfall like this sake—no! no! Well, shall I take a glass? No, there will be nothing lost by waiting until I warm it. He was just going to set it to warm when the midday gun awoke him, whereupon he ruefully exclaimed: "Oh, what a pity it was I did not drink it cold!" Another story is about a dog: "You told me that when a dog barked he would leave off if one wrote 'iger' on his palm and kept his fist clinched. "A European dog flew at me as I was coming home late last night. So I stuck my fist out and just look how I got bitten." "Oh! Probably it was a dog who had not yet learned Japanese writing." In the Pursuit of Fashion.—Two young men having met in front of a haberdasher's shop, one of them waved his hand and cried out: "I have much to say, but business calls me home. I must put off the conversation for a few days, when I will see you at your house." The other asked him what this business might be; whether any of his family had been taken ill. "Oh, no," replied the first young man. "I have been getting a kerchief which my wife commissioned me to buy. The reason why I said I couldn't stop is that it would be an awful thing for her to fall behind the fashion while I was loitering on the way."—Chicago Chronicle.

CONGRESS CONVENES

The Senate's Session Lasted Only Thirty-Three Minutes.

THE OPENING SCENES IN THE HOUSE

The Disposition of Mr. Roberts, of Utah—The Seat Drawing Contest—The Reed Rules Adopted—The Initial Bills Introduced.

Washington, Dec. 5.—Promptly at noon yesterday Mr. Frye, of Maine, president pro tem, called the senate to order, the blind chaplain said prayer and then an appropriate tribute to the memory of the late Vice President Hobart was paid. The session lasted only 33 minutes and only the most formal and necessary business was transacted. After the adoption of the usual routine resolutions and the administration to the new members of the oath of office, Senator Sewell, of New Jersey, presented fitting resolutions upon the death of the vice president, the resolutions were ordered to be communicated to the house of representatives, and the session, on motion of Senator Keane, of New Jersey, was suspended.

In the course of the proceedings of the senate yesterday Senator Carter, of Montana, presented a memorial from some of the members of the Montana legislature against the validity of the "pretended election of William A. Clark to the senate." The memorial recites that Mr. Clark did secure and procure votes in this legislative assembly by the payment thereof, and by the promise of payment thereof, of large sums of money, and the assertion is made that by corruption and bribery Senator Clark was enabled to secure enough votes to compass his election as senator.

Washington, Dec. 5.—An enormous crowd witnessed the opening scenes in the house yesterday. The principal interest centered in the disposition of



SPEAKER DAVID B. HENDERSON.

Mr. Roberts, the Mormon representative from Utah. Those who anticipated a sensational denouncement were disappointed. The programme outlined by the republican leaders at their conference on Friday night was partially carried out. The objection to the administration of the oath to Mr. Roberts was entered by Mr. Taylor, of Ohio, as predicted, and he stepped aside without protest except to ask if by doing so he waived any of his rights. To this the speaker responded in the negative. Mr. Taylor offered his resolution to defer the case to a special committee and by mutual arrangement the consideration of the resolution was postponed until to-day in order that the routine business in connection with the organization might be transacted. The election of Speaker Henderson and his induction into office and the appointment of the usual committees to wait upon the president took place. The seat drawing contest with the usual amusing features went off without a hitch. The only feature out of the ordinary was the reception of the Reed rules for the present congress. They were adopted by a strict party vote.

While the roll was being called a large floral gavel from the Union Veterans' union of Debuque, Ia., and a beautiful basket of flowers from his old comrades from Hyde post, G. A. R., of Debuque, were placed on the speaker's desk.

Mr. Gardner, of New Jersey, then announced the death of Vice President Hobart in fitting words, referring briefly to his brilliant and useful career and the profound grief with which the nation had received the news that he had passed away. Later he said he would ask the house to set aside a day to pay appropriate tribute to his memory. As a further mark of respect, upon his motion the house, at 3:50 p. m., adjourned until to-day.

Lively competition occurred in the house for the honor of introducing the first measures. By general consent everything gave way to the caucus financial bill, after which the initial bills were as follows: By Mr. Tawney, of Minnesota, to reclassify railway postal clerks, and also a bill defining butter and regulating the sale of oleomargarine; by Mr. Flynn, for free homesteads in Oklahoma.

The first joint resolution was by Mr. Capron, of Connecticut, for a constitutional amendment against admitting polygamists to congress.