

The Lady
OF THE
Mount
By **FREDERIC S. ISHAM**
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"The Strollers"
"Under the Rose"
—Etc.—
Illustrations by
RAY WALTERS

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glass windows, she saw at last him she sought; in one of the chapels, near the white marble monument to her mother, was his Excellency; but, not alone! Before him stood, or half crouched, the man Sanchez, who now was speaking.

"Shall I ring for your Excellency's servants and have the noise stopped?" Grottesquely he bowed, the while watching like an animal studying its prey. "Beppo! Where are you—fat rascal! Consign these swine to the gibbets! What! You can't obey because your ears have been cut off and your throat slit? That's too bad!" Fiercely the man laughed; then waved his arm toward the window, as if calling the Governor's attention to the sounds of demolition; the abrupt breaking of glass! Patter! Patter! Merry little bullets, presents from the people, your Excellency! Metayage, your Highness!

Still the other said no word; a figure, so motionless and white, it seemed but a wraith pausing at the side of its own "narrow house." A louder clamor without; a more vivid brightness of the red, yellow and purple hues, like a sudden wealth of strange flowers strewn on the marble floor, and again Sanchez laughed. "Too bad! But 'tis I who must pay first! Who owe so much! Has your Excellency his strong box with him? Ah, he leans on it! Such a fine one, all of marble! Not easily broken into—or out of! Eh, your Excellency?" Swinging back something bright. "Full payment, this time! Not coppers, or round bits of lead, but steel, beautiful steel!"

Held to the spot by the abrupt terror and fascination of the scene, the



"Here is something that belonged to your father."

Governor's daughter had made no sound, fearful of hastening the inevitable; but at the moment the man, with a last taunting word, launched forward, a cry, half articulate, burst from her lips. It was drowned by an other voice, loud and commanding, which rang out from the entrance to the church.

"Sanchez!" Perhaps the call disconcerted him; robbed the old servant's eye of its certitude; his arm of its sureness, for the blow aimed at his Excellency the latter was enabled to evade. At the same time, as with singular agility he moved aside to save himself, the hand the Governor had been holding in his breast, shot out like an adder. It struck viciously; stung deep—full in the side of his tormentor.

"That for your metayage!" But a momentary expression of satisfaction was, however, permitted his Excellency; the petty tragedy became overshadowed by the greater!

"The Bastille! Our Bastille!" And again a shower of bullets, directed in hatred, fell upon the church, because its windows were priceless; shone with saints of inestimable value! In the chapel, an aumbry and a piscina were struck; around the Governor, glass began to clatter and break into bits on the pavement, when suddenly he wavered; his hand sought his heart, then felt for and clung to the monument, as if abruptly seeking support.

"Why did you do it, Seigneur?" As my lady, exclaiming wildly, ran to her father, Sanchez, from where he lay, looked up to his master.

"Call out, I mean? Not that it matters much now!" His implacable glance, swerving to the Governor, lighted with satisfaction. "The people have paid. And 'twas I—showed them the way!"

"It was you, then—who broke faith in the negotiations for the exchange of prisoners?"

A smile came to the face of the old servant. "I had to," he said simply. "I alone am to blame. No one knew; except, perhaps, the poet, who may have surmised! It was treachery for treachery!" with sudden fierceness. "You could not have done it, nor your father, nor any of the seigneurs before him!" The young man seemed scarcely to hear; his glance had again sought my lady. "But I am only a servant—and in dealing with a viper I used its own tricks! Did you think I had forgotten those stripes? Or the blow he gave your father—in the back?" A moment Sanchez's hand fumbled at his coat; drew out a bag of oleikid. "Here is something that belonged to your father. I took it from his breast the day he died, thinking some time—I can't tell what—only it contains a letter from the former lady of the Mount! When my master got it, he told me to pack a few be-

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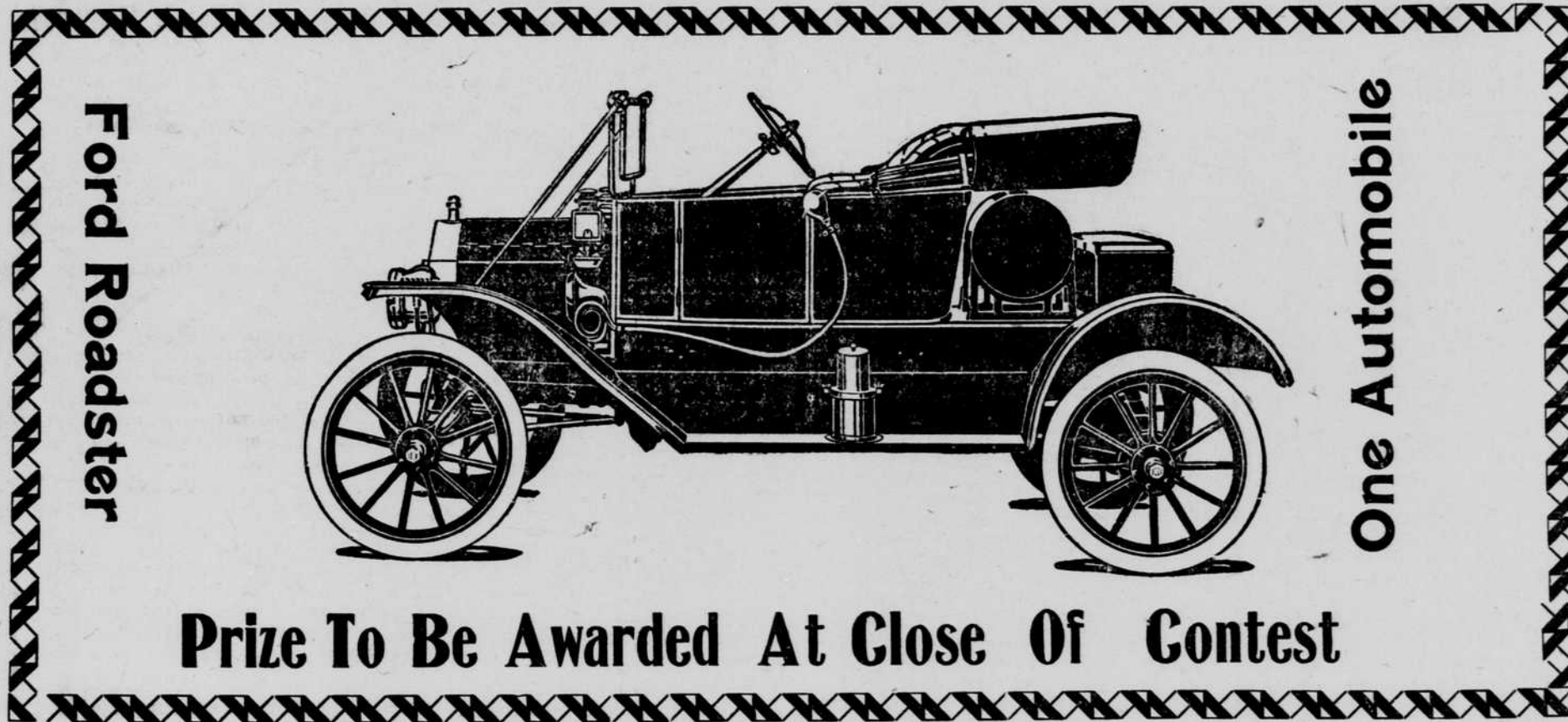
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longings—that we were going—never to return!"

Sanchez' voice broke off; again he strove to speak; could not; put out his hand. Mechanically the Black Seigneur's closed on that of the old servant; even as it did so, the latter's fingers clutched suddenly; ceased to move. In the church now all was silent, but without arose discordant sounds, cries, harsh and vengeful, for the Governor!

Starting, the Black Seigneur gazed about, toward him they were clamoring for, now lying still, at the base of the monument. Then releasing the fingers, that seemed yet to hold him, the young man sprang forward, as my lady threw herself wildly, protectingly, over her father. At that touch, the Governor's eyes opened; met hers; the Black Seigneur's!

Nearer the door, now rang the shouts. His Excellency seemed to listen; to realize what they meant; to him—his daughter—

"The Governor! The Governor!" "Tremblez tyran! Tremblez!" An ironical flash lit up, for an instant, the dying eyes. He, soon, would be beyond reach of these dogs—canaille! But she? His gaze again rested on the Black Seigneur; in that tense, fleeting second, seemed reading his very soul!

"Et la belle comtesse, sa fille!" cried the menacing voices.

A tremor crossed the Governor's face; his pale lips moved. "Forget! Save her!" An instant his eyes lingered persistently on the young man; then passed to his daughter; as they did so, slowly the light, more human and appealing than any that had ever shone there before, went out of them.

My lady's fair head dropped until it lay on her father's breast; unconscious, she seemed yet to shield him with figure inert. But only for a moment!

"Et la belle comtesse!" Stooping, the Black Seigneur snatched the slender form to his breast; ran back to the altar. There, looking around him, as one who made himself familiar with the place, his glance apparently found what it sought—a small stairway, entrance to the crypt. At the same time he started to descend, the people swept into the church.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

On the Sands.

A man, bearing in his arms the motionless form of a woman, paused later that night in the shadow of a low stone hovel, near the lower gate of the Mount. As he crouched beneath the thatch projecting like the rim of an old hat above him his eyes, eager, fierce, studied the distance he had yet to traverse from the end of the narrow alley, where he had stopped, to the open entrance at the base of the rock to the sands. The goal was not far; but a few moments would have sufficed to reach it; only between him and the point he had so long been striving to attain, an obstacle, or group of obstacles, intervened. Before a bonfire of wreckage of stuff—furniture and household goods—several ragged, dissolute fellows sat with bottles before them, drinking hard and quarreling the while over a number of glittering gems, gold snuffboxes and trinkets of all kinds.

"Add the brooch!"

"No! Look at the picture! Her ladyship, perhaps!"

"They have not found her?"

"No; for all the searching! But she is somewhere; can't have escaped from the Mount. And when the drabs and trulls lay hands on her!"

"Ay, when!" casting the dice.

The man, peering from the alley, hesitated no longer; behind sounded the footsteps of others, and gathering his burden more firmly, he strode boldly forth toward the group and the gate. At his approach, their talk—a jargon of "thieves' Latin" that smacked more of the cabarets of Paris than those of the coast—momentarily ceased; beneath lowering brows, they stared hard.

"What have you there, comrade?" said one.

"Look and see!" answered the man in a rough tone.

"Poor booty! A woman!" quoted another with a harsh laugh. "You're easily pleased. As if wenchies were not plentiful enough on other occasions, without wasting time on a night like this, when diamonds and gold are to be had for the searching!"

"And silver plates and watches and rare liquors!" cried a third in knaves' argot. "Every one, however, to his taste; An you prefer a light-of-love to light such as these have," juggling with the gems, "you but stamp yourself a fool."

"You're welcome to your opinion, my friend!" The man with the burden spoke brusquely. "Good night!"

"Stay; why such haste? You seem not a bad fellow. Set the wench down. We'll have sight of her, and, perhaps, with coarse expletives, "if she's a pretty face, and a taste for this fiery liquor the old monks laid down, we'll find a gewgaw or two to her liking!"

But the man made no answer; was

him steadily. "On the Mount is, or should be, plenty for all! Go seek for yourself!"

"Fardil!" softly. "Here's one dares speak his mind!"

"I speak plainly," in a tone of authority, "and you would do well to heed!"

"Perhaps," interposing. "What say you, comrades?"

Evil smiles illumined evil faces; they, who had just been on the point of blows among themselves, now regarded one another with common understanding. One weighed tentatively that delicate weapon, a spontoon; a second stroked his halberd, as liking to feel the smoothness of the shaft, while a third reached for a gleaming "Folard's Partizan." And in the glare of the fire every implement showed sign it had been used that night. The point of the spontoon was as steel crusted o'er; the ax of the halberd might have come from a boucherie; the blade of the "Partizan" resembled a great leaf at autumn-time. This last waved perilously near the unconscious burden; had the man made a movement to resist, would have struck; but the black eyes, only, combated—held the blood-shot ones. Though not for long; again the weapon seemed about to dart forth; the man about to hurl himself and his burden desperately aside, when, from above, came the sound of hoarse laughter and singing, and simultaneously a number of peasants, Bretons by their dress, burst into view.

"Eh, cockatoo, what now!"

Many of these new-comers were hurt; few free from cuts; but none thought of stanching their wounds. Their principal concern seemed for articles they carried—heavy, light; valuable, pithy—spoils from the night. Two staggered beneath a great chest stamped with the arms of the Mount and its motto, and appeared anxious to hurry—perchance toward the forest on the shore where they might bury their treasure. Others had in their arms imposing pieces of silver; vases and a massive surcoat de table that had once belonged to the Cardinal Dubois. A woman, gaunt, toothless, wore a voluminous bonnet a l'Argus, left at the Mount by one of the ladies of the court; and waved before her a fan, set with jewels. She it was who called out:

"Eh, cockatoo!" shrilly. "Who would you be killing?"

"A selfish fellow that refuses to share!" answered he of the halberd, as if little pleased at the interruption.

"Refuses to share, does he?" she repeated, and, swaggering down, peered forward; only to start back.

"The Black Seigneur!"

"The Black Seigneur!"

Those who accompanied her—a rough rabble from field and forest—gazed, not without surprise, or uncouth admiration, at one whose name and fame were well known to that northern coast; but these evidences of rough approval were not shared by the alien sparkles. On my lady's finger the gem sparkled; held their eyes like a lure. Black Seigneur, or not, they muttered sullenly, what knew they of her he had with him; whose hand was not that of cinder-wench or scullery maid? Let them look at her face! She might be a great lady—she might be the Governor's daughter herself!

"The Governor's daughter!" All, alike, caught at the word.

"I'll not stop!" The man looked at



The Black Seigneur Gazed Only Ahead.

about to pass on, when the speaker noticed for the first time the woman's hand, white and small, hanging limply. "What's this? More jewels?" His exclamation was caught up by the others. "Not so fast, comrade! This sets a different face to the matter. Set down the booty, and," springing to his feet, "we'll see what it's worth."

"And if she were!" Sanchez, the Black Seigneur confronted them.

While, hesitating, they sought for a reply, quickly he went on. Who had a better right to her? The Black Seigneur! The Lady Elise! Harshly he laughed. Was it not fair spoil? His Excellency's enemy; his Excellency's daughter. Did they think treasure sweeter than revenge? Let them try to rob him of it! As for the ring? Contemptuously he took it from my lady's hand; threw it among them.

A few scrambled, others were still for finishing the tragedy then. The people versus the lords and their spawn. "Kill at once!" the injunction had gone forth from Paris.

As he spoke, one of the fiercest put out his hand; touched my lady, when the fingers of the Black Seigneur gripped hard his throat; hurled him so violently back, he lay still. Companions sprang to his aid; certain of the peasants interfered.

"Let him alone!"

"He speaks fair!"

"Bah! Tonight all are equal."

"Your Black Seigneur is no better than others!"

"You lie!" In a high tone the woman with the great lady's hat broke in. "At them, my chickens! Beat well these Paris rogues, who come only for the piling!"

"Yes; beat them well!"

But the rumpuses of the great city were not of a kind to submit lightly; curses and blows were exchanged; knives gleamed and swords flashed. Amid a scene of confusion, the cause of it stayed not to witness the outcome; running down the sloping way, soon found himself on the sands; then keeping to the shadows, passed around the corner of the wall.

Here, for the time concealed was he safe; gone followed, and, leaning

Clear Creek Items

Warren Edson was hauling alfalfa from Guy Richmond's Friday.

Mrs. Frank Potter, who has been ailing for some time, underwent an operation last week.

Mr. and Mrs. Ed Bishop are rejoicing over the arrival of a new baby girl at their home. This is the second daughter to bless this household.

A dance was given at Will Corey's Saturday evening.

Loren Hayden purchased a horse and buggy at Virgil Weller's sale last week.

Misses Grace and Maude Adams spent Sunday afternoon at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Geo. Zahn.

Miss Ruth Van Dyke visited with Miss Katie Smith over Sunday.

Mrs. Sam Hammond has been very sick for the past two weeks, but is reported better at this writing.

Mrs. Fielding returned Monday to her home at Tecumseh, Nebr.

Miss Lena and Fred Zwick visited Sunday at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Adam Zahn.

Clarence Fielding spent Sunday at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Winfield Haddix.

Miss Ruth Van Dyke spent Monday afternoon at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Geo. Zahn.

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