

TAVERNAVY

A Tale of the Red Terror

BY BURTON E. STEVENSON.
Author of "The Marathon Mystery," "The Holladay Case," "A Soldier of
Virginia," etc.
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CHAPTER IV.
A Scent of Danger.

I bore the blow with such stolidism as I possessed, and even made some show of listening and laughing at M. le Comte's account of our meeting and subsequent reconciliation. Both women were unaffectedly delighted with the story, which, indeed, was told with a wit and spirit quite beyond my reproduction. As I write these lines, I am again impressed with the wide difference between the awkward country boy who sat scowling in that pleasant company and the accomplished and finished gentleman who did so much to entertain it. For I know that my assumption of ease and interest could have deceived no one. All of us, I think, looking back over the mistakes and gaudieries of our youth, must feel our cheeks crimson more than once; certainly mind you when I think upon the sorry figure I made that evening. But when I started to set this history upon paper, I determined not to spare myself, nor will I.

But who could have sent the message? I asked madame when M. le Comte had finished the story.

"I cannot even guess," he answered.

"How was it delivered to you? How came you to believe it?"

"I believed it," he explained, "because it was brought to me by one of our old servants—Laroche, whom I left in charge of the stables."

"Ah, true," murmured madame. "Laroche disappeared nearly a week ago. I fancied he had run away to join the revolutionists."

"Perhaps he did," said her husband, quietly.

Madame looked at him with a start of alarm.

"The revolutionists?" she repeated.

"It was the man who sent the message? But why? What was his object? Ah, I know," she added, with sudden conviction. "It was to deprive the Vendean of his sword, in order that they might be defeated."

M. le Comte smiled as he looked down into her fond, admiring eyes.

"Ah, my dear," he said, "my sword is not so powerful as that. The Vendean will win their battles just the same without me. I think the message was merely the bait for a trap—"

"From which you have escaped!" she cried triumphantly, and clapped her hands.

"Yes," he agreed, but there was still in his face a certain anxiety which she perceived.

"What is it, Henri?" she demanded.

"You are not now in danger?"

"He threw off his preoccupation with a laugh of genuine amusement."

"In danger?" he repeated. "No—or, at least, the only danger to which I am exposed at this moment, madame, is that of falling in love with you more violently than ever!"

"For shame, sir!" she cried, blushing like a girl. "You forget that we are not alone."

"On the contrary," he answered. "I think our example is most excellent one for our young friends yonder," and he looked across at us with beaming face, and with a meaning in his eyes which I tried in vain to fathom. "I have," he said, "I will profit by it."

"Monsieur! Monsieur!" protested madame, restraining him, yet unable to preserve a stern countenance.

"Besides," he added, laughing more and more, "it delights me to confuse that pert young lady sitting opposite you yonder, to make her blush as she is doing at this moment—and I swear, she is blushing. What a pair of children! If their parents had only the good judgment to betroth them—"

"Monsieur!" interrupted madame, more sharply. "You will not break your promise! There was to be no wedding!"

"And I will say none; pardon me," broke in M. le Comte. "The temptation was very great, and he looked at us, laughing."

But I bent above my plate, all pleasure in the meal struck from me, for suddenly I found myself groaning beneath my burden. Ah, yes—if our parents—

"What is it, monsieur?" asked a low voice at my side, and I raised my eyes to find myself gazing into the brown depths of two loved. "You sighed," she added, seeing that I did not understand.

"Did I?" I said, wondering somewhat that she remained so untroubled by the fire of gallantry which had been turned upon her. "One is apt to sigh when there is something one desires very much and yet may not possess."

"Perhaps I can help you," she suggested, and I saw again in her eyes that light which should have set me in my guard. "If it is my smelling-bottle—"

"No, thank you," I answered, with dignity. "I do not need it."

"So you refuse to confide in me, even when I offer you my aid?"

"I fear that," even if I cannot aid me, madame; and if anyone in the world could, it would be you."

"I am not fond of riddles, M. de Tavernay; and it seems to me that you have just propounded one."

"I spoke," I replied, "and as plainly as I could."

"Oh, you mean it is my wits which are deficient! I must say, monsieur."

"I meant nothing of the sort," I protested.

"No matter," she broke in. "Nothing is so wearisome as to have to explain one's meaning—unless it be to listen to the explanation. I am sure it argues dullness somewhere. I am sorry that I bore you," I returned, stung to a sort of desperation. "I had hoped that I might, at least, continue to furnish you amusement."

"Really," she cried, casting me a brilliant glance, "that is a bad riposte! Come, we are quite here."

"With all my heart," I agreed; "especially since you have removed your button."

"Well, finish it!" she cried, her eyes dancing. "Finish it!"

"While I am too gallant to follow your example," I added, reluctantly.

"Good!" she applauded. "Touche! I assure you, monsieur, you are not boring me in the least. All you need is a little practice—you hesitate, as all beginners do, to drive the point home."

"I am not bluntness," I interrupted.

"On the contrary, I am of a disposition the most amiable."

"And there is still about you a slight clumsiness," she went on, not heeding me.

"Remember, I have never been to Paris," I reminded her, "nor even to Orleans."

"I shall not remember it long," she responded, "for there will soon be nothing about you to suggest it."

"I believe my thanks."

"Especially if I may remain near you," I said.

"Oh, that, of course!" she agreed.

"Well, you have my permission, and you will find M. le Comte most hospitable. So remain, unless this mysterious business of yours is imperative."

"It is," I said, my face clouding again. "I must get out at daybreak."

"Ungallant man!" she retorted, looking at me with sparkling eyes. "Do you ask a favor only to refuse it? Do you understand what you are saying?"

"Only to tell you, madame," I murmured, disconsolately, "and I would have rather cut off my right hand than utter those words."

"Still the riddle," she cried, "with a gesture of despair. 'Really, monsieur, you weary me. Whatever it is you desire, I advise you to ask for it. You get nothing in this world without asking—and when it is refused, taking it just the same.'"

"But when one may neither ask nor take, madame," she said.

"Oh, then," she retorted with a shrug of the shoulders, "one is certainly in a bad way. One would better stop desiring," and she turned her shoulder to me in the most impudent manner possible, and gave her attention to M. le Comte.

"The Vendean who will re-establish monarchy in France," he was saying, his face alight. "Those peasants are unconquerable. There are 200,000 of them, peaceful men, tilling the soil, tending their herds, as they had always done, with no thought of resisting the republic until the republic attempted to take from them their priests and to draft them forth to fight on the frontiers. Then they rose as one man, fell upon their oppressors, routed them, cut them to pieces among the hedges. Now they are back in their homes again to make their Easter; that over, they will march against Thouars and Saumur."

"But, M. le Comte," I protested, forgetting for a moment, my own troubles in the interest of the narrative, "the kind of that sort can be successful only near home and in a most favorable country. For a campaign, troops must have organization."

"That is true, my friend," he agreed. "Well these troops are being organized. Once the Bocage is free of the Blues, our army will be ready to cross the Loire, take Nantes, advance through Brittany, Normandy and Maine, where we shall be well received and at last march at the head of a united northwest against Paris itself. I tell you, M. de Tavernay, the republic is doomed."

His eyes were sparkling, his face flushed with excitement. An electric shock seemed to run around the board and madame sprang to her feet, glass in hand.

"What is it, Henri?" she cried, and as she rose to drink the toast, I had a vision of a boy of 13 issuing triumphantly from the gate of the temple to avenge his murdered father.

"And may God protect him!" added M. le Comte, as we set our glasses down.

"There was gloom for a moment in our hearts, and I, at least, felt the stark horror of the revolution as I had never done—I saw more clearly its blood-guiltiness, its red-madness. For, in our quiet home at Beaufort, the delirium of Paris had seemed far away, almost of another age and country."

We had shuddered at the stories of the September massacres, not only as one shudders at any tale of horror; even yet we scarcely believed that the king was really dead. It seemed impossible that such things could happen. Just as the body pushed beyond a certain limit of pain grows numb and suffers no more, so the mind, after a certain time, refuses to be impressed. It was thus with the reports which came from Paris, as one followed another, each more terrible than the last. Not even the actors themselves in that hideous drama comprehended what was passing there; they were but chips in a maelstrom, hurried hither and thither, utterly powerless to stay or to direct the flood which hurled them on and finally sucked them down to destruction. We of Beaufort were far off the beaten track, and of too little consequence to cause the tide of revolution to sweep in our direction; so it had been with me, such a distance that we had caught only the faint, confused murmur of it. True, our peasants had, for the most part, deserted us; our fields were untilled, our flocks unattended; there was no money in the till of the miller, such a distance that personally we had experienced no danger and expected none. We had been content to sit quietly by while France wrought out her destiny, pitying those less fortunate than ourselves, and hazy in our safety which our obscurity won for us.

Now, I was suddenly brought face to face with the question: What was my duty? Was it to stay at home and permit these scoundrels to have their way unquestioned? Was it not rather to join the army of La Vendee and add my atom to its strength, to do what in me lay to render that campaign against the cannibals at Paris not a dream but a reality? For at last I understood. Those hideous tales were true. The fall of France lay at the mercy of the wisest of her people—

"Still pondering the riddle?" asked my companion, and I turned to find her again regarding me with a provoking scrutiny.

"No, madame," I said, "was thinking of when M. le Comte rides back to the Bocage, I will accompany him."

Her eyes flashed a swift approval.

"That is a man's place!" she said. "That is where I would be, were I a man."

"You will wish me God-speed, then?" I questioned.

"Yes—provided, of course," she added, looking at me searchingly, "that you are free to go."

"Free to go!" I repeated, and my chin fell on my breast. What instinct was it gave her this power to stab home whenever she chose?

"Then you are not free to go?" she queried, eyeing me still more closely.

"I confess," I stammered, "that it was not to do a white cockade I left Beaufort."

"But surely any mere personal matter of business may be put aside when one's country calls!"

"Alas!" I murmured, "this is not an affair of that nature."

"Well," she said coolly, "you must of course, decide for yourself, monsieur; more especially since you seem to wish to shroud yourself in a veil of mystery."

"Madame," I said desperately, "I should like your advice."

"But I understand nothing of the matter."

"For shall understand, if you will do me the honor to hear me."

"Would not M. le Comte's advice be of more service?" she asked with a sudden trepidation which surprised me.

"No," I said decidedly, "not in this

instance. I hope you will not refuse me."

She glanced at my anxious face and smiled curiously.

"Very well," she assented. "Proceed, then."

"Oh, not here!" I protested, with a glance at the others. "Perhaps, after dinner, mademoiselle, you will walk with me in the garden."

"In the garden?" she repeated, in an astonished tone, and looked at me with lifted brows.

"I know that it is a great favor I am asking," I continued hastily.

"Yes, it is more than that," she broke in sharply. "It is not convenient. What strange customs you must have at Beaufort, monsieur! Are the young ladies there accustomed to grant such requests?"

"I do not know," I answered miserably. "I have never before preferred such a one. I am not familiar with etiquette—with the nice rules of conduct. If I have done wrong, forgive me."

I saw her glance at me quickly from the corner of her eye, and my heart grew bolder.

"It is a beautiful garden," I went on. "I saw it this evening from my window. There are paths, seats—"

"I am familiar with the garden, monsieur," she interposed, drily.

"And the moon will be full tonight," I concluded.

"The more reason I should refuse you," she retorted. "It will be a dangerous place. Though I am ample able to take care of myself," she added.

"I do not doubt it, mademoiselle," I agreed, humbly, "especially with me. That has already been proved, has it not?"

"Yes," she said, with a queer little smile. "Yes, I think it has."

"Believe me, it is not a ruse," I added, earnestly. "I am not capable of a ruse, which I am not. God knows I should like to walk with you there, but not to tell you what I shall tonight have to tell you."

"I looked at me again, with a strange mixture of timidity and daring.

"Very well, M. de Tavernay," she said at last. "In the garden, then—provided, of course, that Madame consents."

"Thank you," I said, my heart warm with gratitude. "I shall attend to that," and she smiled a little as she glanced across the board. "But I know that it is not discreet; I am falling a victim to my curiosity. You have picked it most successfully. Although I can never solve a riddle for myself, I cannot rest until I know the solution. I hope your riddle will be worth the risk."

"It will," I assured her, and fell silent, nervously myself for the task which lay before me.

"But will you hear what this tyrant is saying!" cried madame. "That I must leave the chateau to dwell amid the fogs of England—"

"Or beneath the blue skies of Italy," said I to myself.

"Really, madame, I fear the chateau is no longer safe for you. The Revolution is looking this way—and not with friendly eyes."

"Does the revolution, then, make war on women?"

"Have you forgotten Mdlle. de Lamballe?"

Madame went white at the retort, almost brutal in its brevity.

"But that was the canaille of Paris," she protested. "There are no such monsters here in Poitou."

"Ah, my dear," said I to her husband, sadly, "I fear there are monsters of the same sort wherever there are suffering and degraded men and women. And since it is us they blame for their suffering and degradation, it is upon us they try to avenge themselves. Besides, since the republicans are trying to entrap me, they will doubtless be coming here; and not finding me, they may throw you into prison as the surest way of causing me to suffer."

"We have loved you," cried madame.

"We will defend ourselves."

"The tower was not built to withstand artillery," her husband pointed out; "and even if the republicans have no cannon, they need only camp about it and bid their time to starve you into surrender, since you could expect no aid from any quarter."

"But to leave the chateau—to abandon it to pillage—oh, I could never endure it!"

"Better that than to lose it and our lives together. Yes, decidedly, you must set out tomorrow."

"Tomorrow!" echoed madame, in despairing tones.

"M. de Tavernay will accompany you as far as Poitiers, at Poitiers, Mdlle. de Chambrey."

"Charlotte goes with me to Italy, do you not, my dear? It was arranged, you know, that you should remain with me."

"I do not know," Charlotte stammered, turning very red. "I think, perhaps, I would better stop at Chambrey."

For some reason which I could not fathom, both monsieur and madame burst into a peal of laughter, while my companion turned an even deeper crimson.

"As you will," said her hostess, when she had taken breath. "I myself think that you might do worse, happy as I would be to have you with me."

"Why cannot you stop at Chambrey also, madame?" questioned Charlotte, her face slowly regaining its normal hue. "At least until you find some friends also bound for Italy? You will be quite safe at Chambrey."

(Continued Next Week.)

DADDY'S GOOD-NIGHT STORIES

By Farmer Smith.

THE DANDELION BRIDGE.

Funny Bug was very tired. He was still a long way from home.

"That Stretchy Worm was very good company," he thought. "I wish he could have taken me the whole way home."

Suddenly Funny Bug came to a standstill.

"Oh, for the Stretchy Worm!" he thought, as he found himself right on the bank of a little brook.

"How I am going to get across that I don't know," said Funny Bug.

We walked up and down along the brook looking for some way to get over.

"Oh," he said again, "if only the Stretchy Worm were here; he could get me across so easily."

It was beginning to get very dark, and soon the stars came out.

Funny Bug was very sleepy.

"I guess I'll just lie down on the bank of the brook until morning," he said to himself, "and then maybe I can get across in some way."

So he lay down under a toad stool and slept soundly until the sun came up.

When Funny Bug opened his eyes almost the first thing they lit upon was a nice little dandelion.

An idea popped into Funny Bug's head so quick it almost made him jump.

He hunted around and found a rose bush. Picking off a stem full of thorns Funny Bug went over and knelt down beside the dandelion. He began to saw back and forth with the rose stem and soon the thorns began to cut through the dandelion.

When he had almost sawed through the dandelion stalk Funny Bug gave it a push and it fell down right across the brook, making a nice little bridge.

"I'm a pretty bright fellow, if I do say so myself," said Funny Bug as he hopped joyously across the brook.

FUNNY BUG AND STRETCHY WORM.

The Wombie Bird had carried Funny Bug far, far from home.

"I don't see," said Funny Bug to himself, "I don't see for the life of me how I am to get back home."

"I'd give my cane to get home," he said aloud.

"Then hand it over," said a voice right beside him.

Funny Bug jumped about a foot.

"My hat," he said. "Who are you?"

"I'm the Stretchy Worm," it said. "Didn't you say you would give your cane to get home?"

"Indeed I will," said Funny Bug.

"Or along," said the Stretchy Worm, "cool along, I least I can get you part way home."

Off they started, the Stretchy Worm and Funny Bug. The Stretchy Worm traveled so slowly that Funny Bug often lay down a while and rested while the Stretchy Worm ambled ahead. Then up Funny Bug would get and start on a run and catch up with the Stretchy Worm.

Suddenly right beside them they heard loud, angry voices.

"I tell you I saw it first," said one voice.

"Well, I got to it before you did," answered the other.

Funny Bug parted two weeds and looked through. There were two Sniffewits quarreling over a hat. Funny Bug's hat! Wasn't Funny Bug glad to see that hat? Well, I guess he was. "Hey, you fellows," he shouted, "that's my hat. Hand it over."

"Not so fast, not so fast," said Sniffewit No. 1.

"What will you give us for it?" said Sniffewit No. 2.

"I'll give you each an acorn," said Funny Bug.

Now, if there is one thing Sniffewits like it is an acorn. So they put the acorns in their pockets and Funny Bug put his hat on his head.

The Stretchy Worm and Funny Bug traveled on and on, and at last came to a wide, deep hole.

"How can I get across?" asked Funny Bug in dismay.

"Better that than to lose it and our lives together. Yes, decidedly, you must set out tomorrow."

"Tomorrow!" echoed madame, in despairing tones.

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(Continued Next Week.)

It is a Mistake

Many have the idea that anything will sell if advertised strong enough. This is a great mistake. True, a few sales might be made by advertising an absolutely worthless article but it is only the article that is bought again and again that pays. An example of the big success of a worthy article is the enormous sale that has grown up for Cascarets Candy Cathartic. This wonderful record is the result of great merit successfully made known through persistent advertising and the mouth-to-mouth recommendation given Cascarets by its friends and users.

Like all great successes, trade pirates prey on the unsuspecting public, by marketing fake tablets similar in appearance to Cascarets. Care should always be exercised in purchasing well advertised goods, especially an article that has a national sale like Cascarets. Do not allow a substitute to be palmed off on you.

Foxy Hiram.

"Well, now, if that ain't surprising!" ejaculated Mrs. Rypet, as she shaded her eyes with her hand. "There goes old Hiram Skinfint, and rather than step on a poor black ant he picked it up, and I bet he is going to drop it somewhere out of the reach of danger."

Her husband laughed knowingly.

"Not Hiram Skinfint, Mandy. He'll go down to Jed Weatherby's general store and order a pound of granulated sugar. Then while Jed is looking another way he'll drop the ant among the grains and tell Jed as long as his sugar has ants in it he ought to sell it at half price. Like as not he'll try to get Jed to throw in two or three raisins and a yeast cake. You don't know Hiram Skinfint."

Statistics Go Lame.

"Pears t' me thar's somethin' wrong with stertistics," remarked the "best inhabitant as he dropped into usual place on the loafers' bench.

"What's wrong with 'em?" queried the village grocer.

"Wall, ercordin' tew 'em," continued the o. l., "we orter hev had a th in teown ev'ry six weeks fer th' past tew years."

"Is that so?" said the grocer.

"Yaas," answered the other, "an' by ginger, we ain't had 'em!"

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He Rose to It.


"Do you know," said a little boy of five to a companion the other day, "my father and I know everything. What I don't know my father knows, and what my father don't know I know."

"All right! Let's see, then," replied the older child, skeptically. "Where's Asia?"

It was a stiff one, but the youngster never faltered.

"Well, that," he answered coolly, "is one of the things my father knows."—Harper's Bazaar.

HE ENJOYED IT.



Mrs. Talkalot—It's a wonder you wouldn't be careful about your own language. You make it a business to pick me up on little blunders.

Mr. Talkalot—No, my dear. I make a recreation of it.

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Well, Wasn't He Right?

The minister was addressing the Sunday school. "Children, I want to talk to you for a few moments about one of the most wonderful, one of the most important organs in the whole world," he said. "What is that that throbs away, beats away, never stopping, never ceasing, whether you wake or sleep, night or day, week in and week out, month in and month out, year in and year out, without any volition on your part, hidden away in the depths, as it were, unseen by you, throbbing, throbbing rhythmically all your life long?" During this pause for oratorical effect a small voice was heard: "I know. It's the gas meter."

Coming Down to Earth.

"Happiness," declared the philosopher, "is in the pursuit of something, not in the catching of it."

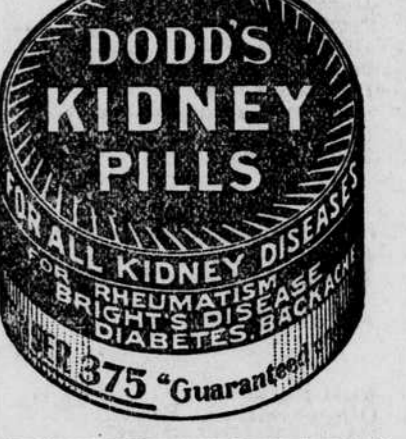
"Have you ever," interrupted the plain citizen, "chased the last car on a rainy night?"

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