

The Castle of Lies

BY ARTHUR HENRY VESEY
(COPYRIGHT, 1906, BY DUNNELLON & COMPANY)

CHAPTER XVI.—Continued.

The suite allotted me was at the end of a gloomy corridor. I threw open one of the narrow windows. The noisy stream below, beating futilely against the walls, almost deafened the voice of the servant as he asked if he could be of assistance to me. I looked out. There was a sheer drop of some 50 feet.

That fact vaguely disconcerted me. The words of Dr. Starva were a jarring note that sobered my excitement. When I had dressed I was almost prepared to find the massive door of my chamber locked or barred. I had entered the spider's web audaciously enough. To escape might be less simple.

The dinner was simply but well served in a small dining-room. Had my situation been less serious I might have felt some humor at the elaborate deference shown me by my companions for the benefit of the two servants who waited on us. Even Dr. Starva followed the lead of Madame de Varnier in solemn if cynical obedience.

But did Madame de Varnier believe me so complaisant a fool, that, like another Bottom, I was expected in this modern Midsummer Night's Dream to accept this deference without question? I became more and more convinced that she did not. Once she even referred to the events of the night before in such a manner that I believed her not ignorant of my true condition. If she were persuaded that I had been acting a part then, that would account for her confidence in expecting me to continue acting that part. It would give her encouragement that I was the willing tool she looked for.

And suppose that she really believed that, did she think that I expected no reward? She had hinted that in serving her ends I was to serve myself as well. But Madame de Varnier was not the kind of woman to believe that a man would be allured by a promise so vague. Then the reward?

She had protested that she had not expected me to fall in love with her. She had protested that, but in the same breath she had confessed a half-resolve to bring me to her feet. Now as she exerted every charm of coquetry she was giving the lie to her own words. Oh, the reward was obvious enough, if I chose to take it.

"We will smoke our cigarettes in my favorite music room. You must hear Dr. Starva play on the 'cello. You have had the piano carefully tuned, Jacques?"

"All is in readiness," replied the servant, as he preceded us with candles.

Dr. Starva had pushed back his chair eagerly. For the first time since I had met him his face lost something of its heavy sullen expression.

"My fingers have not the practice," he said modestly, "but to play with Madame de Varnier—ah, that is worth while."

We were in the music room that Madame de Varnier had described to me so enthusiastically the day before. Dimly lighted with wax candles, paneled in dark oak to the ceiling, the floor waxed and polished to a dazzling luster, it was a room almost bare, but it had its melancholy charm. There was little furniture. At one end of the room was a row of carved seats built into the wall. There were no pictures or tapestries. The one touch of color was the vivid flame of blazing logs.

"The strife of the world, its lies and its shams, I leave behind when I enter here," said Madame de Varnier sentimentally. "Look, I throw open this casement. The noisy Aare drowns my voice. Beyond, you see the moonlight on the valleys, and still beyond, the mountains. This is your seat. Once this was a chapel; in these carved seats the monks chanted vespers; in the seat of honor which you occupy drowsed the father superior. When you hear the enchanting melodies of Dr. Starva you will not have lived in vain."

This hour at least was innocent. Perhaps it was the lull before the storm, but why should I look for clouds when the heavens were clear?

The long, darkly paneled room, its shining floor seeming to rise and fall mysteriously in the flickering firelight, the noisy murmur of the stream below, the white moonlight that struggled feebly through the casement windows—all had its charm. And these two adventurers, unscrupulous and conscienceless, had abandoned themselves for the moment to the joy of their music.

I looked over toward Madame de Varnier. The shaded light of the candles fell on her white shoulders. The splendor of her beauty had never seemed more seductive.

I asked myself incredulously if this drowsing woman was the desperate adventuress whom Locke had warned me against.

Slowly she looked over at me; I seemed to draw her eyes toward me. She smiled vaguely, a smile that was adorable—yes, I could almost persuade myself that it was the smile of an innocent girl. For a moment I was content to forget the unpleasant task that was before me; to invest even the monster by her side in the garb of humanity.

The servant who had shown me to my rooms appeared at the door, letters on his salver. I held up my hand warningly to him that he should not disturb them, and motioned that he bring the letters to me. He did so without either of the musicians noticing his entrance.

The sonata of Beethoven swept to its glorious climax. I started to my feet to take the letters to Madame de Varnier.

But without a pause Dr. Starva be-

gan a tender romance. The woman sat at the piano, her hands falling idly to her lap.

Again she smiled across the room at me. But now it was no longer spontaneous. The lips held something of that indefinable cruelty of that woman of the Renaissance made famous by Da Vinci. I frowned; I refused to meet that smile.

Then, as I looked down deliberately, I felt myself turn pale. A shudder convulsed me.

I was gazing in horror at an envelope that bore the interdicted stamp of Bulgaria, the death-mask.

Did she know the ghastly significance of that double stamp? Was she one of the desperate band that had doomed Ferdinand?

I resolved to play a hazardous experiment. I would thrust that stamp under her eyes without warning. Consummate actress though she was, she would find it difficult to repress a tremor if she were guilty.

Dr. Starva's head was still bent lovingly over his 'cello. I reached the piano without disturbing him.

I placed the letters in front of Madame de Varnier, the envelope that bore the death-mask on the top of the little pile. I watched her closely.

She took the letters carefully in her hands. The stamp at once arrested her attention. She regarded it with a frank curiosity. She even called my attention to it.

"It is one of the new issue," she whispered, so as not to disturb Dr. Starva; and continued to sort her letters.

I was almost convinced of her inno-

cence, but not quite. I had yet my experiment to play.

She had opened one of the letters and was engrossed in its contents. As for Dr. Starva, he was lost to the world.

I took the envelope that bore the mysterious symbol, and placing it in such a manner that the death-mask could be most easily seen by the woman, I began to trace the likeness of Prince Ferdinand, meanwhile watching her intently.

Her letter was short. Its meaning had excited her strangely. For some time she was regardless of my action. But presently she followed the motions of my pencil as I traced the eyes closed, in death, the drooping mouth, and the gaping wound.

Still my pencil moved slowly but carefully over the features of the doomed prince. I began to think I must be more explicit after all.

And then her hands fell lifeless on the keys. The crash echoed discordantly in the empty room. Dr. Starva looked up in angry surprise. Madame de Varnier had fainted.

Dr. Starva shuffled rapidly to her side; he shook her shoulder.

"Sophie! Sophie!" he cried, and then he saw the letter and its stamp.

His face was suddenly distorted. His hairy hand closed over the letter. She held it rigid even in her unconsciousness. He bent her jerky fingers with cruel strength. Now he looked at me with the suspicion and hate of a savage beast brought to bay.

"How much do you know?" his blazing eyes asked. "And if I do know?" mine answered.

Slowly Madame de Varnier opened her eyes. Equally anxious, Starva and myself watched her recover consciousness.

I was quite convinced now that she had not been aware of the significance of that stamp. The horror that had deprived her of her reason for the time being proved that. The fierce haste with which Dr. Starva had snatched the letter from her lifeless hand and had concealed it, bore out my conviction. Then if my surmises

were correct, would she communicate to Dr. Starva her newly acquired knowledge?

"It was the heat, I think, and the fatigue of the journey," were the first words she spoke. I heard them with relief. Beyond question she wished to conceal from Starva that she had seen the death-mask.

Whether he was satisfied with her reasons was less certain. He paced the length of the room, his head bent in thought; his intertwined fingers, moving agitatedly, betrayed his concern. Madame de Varnier carefully avoided my gaze and played idly. But I noticed that if Dr. Starva had been enraged that she had seen the letter with its death-mask, Madame de Varnier was anxious that he should not know of the existence of the letter that had excited her. It had fallen to the floor. When his back was turned she had stooped swiftly and placed it in the bosom of her dress.

Was the letter she was so careful to hide from him merely personal? Or was its message of moment? If so, if we were concerned with the strange game these two were playing, it meant that either mistrusted the other.

I welcomed such a possibility. That fact might simplify my own action. At least it showed that Madame de Varnier was not abjectly the creature of this infamous scoundrel.

The strained situation was happily relieved by the entrance of the servant who had brought in the letters. Instinctively the three of us assumed a certain unconcern, as is the manner of the world before servants.

He brought a card to Madame de Varnier. She took it from the salver quietly, but her hand trembled as she read the name engraved on it.

We had all three heard that name before. Its crisp, Anglo-Saxon nomenclature gave one the impression of a strong, dogged personality that pursued, and yet pursued.

"Captain Reginald Forbes!" That was the name she read in a low voice.

CHAPTER XVII.

Captain Forbes Intrudes.

There was a silence lasting several seconds. Panic was written on both their faces. Evidently they had looked

at each other.

I pointed silently to the card she still held in her hand.

"There is one factor to be reckoned with."

She tossed her head in defiance. "Dr. Starva has reckoned with him already, my friend. Perhaps not in the best way, but effectually at least. And the other?"

"Well, there is myself." "If you were an enemy that might be more serious, I admit. But I have reckoned with you. You are to be my friend. You are to help me."

"That remains to be seen. But the third and most serious factor is treachery," I added quietly.

"My God! Treachery!"

"Do you trust Dr. Starva absolutely? Dare you tell me that the death-mask had as little meaning for him as for you, until I showed you that significance?"

"But you understood its meaning as well as he. Who are you that you should have this knowledge?"

"I know, perhaps, more than you think, Madame de Varnier."

"It is incredible," she cried passionately, "that I, the Countess Sarahoff, should be in the dark, while an American tourist—"

The name had slipped out in her anger; she bit her lips.

"Oh, you need feel no consternation. I might have called you by that name several hours ago."

"Since you know so much," she said in bitter disgust, "perhaps you know the service I expect to ask of you."

"I might make a shrewd guess at even that."

She sank back, her fingers interlocked supporting her head. She remained some time in gloomy thought. Suddenly a door slammed. I heard a faint shout; a tramping of feet. Then there was quiet again. I glanced at my companion. She was listening intently, her hands clutching the carved arms of the seat.

"Bah, I think I am a hysterical schoolgirl." She shrugged her shoulders in self-contempt. "Say that you know everything, monsieur, so much the better. It will save the trouble of explaining on the morrow. For I shall go on with my plan. There is danger, yes; but I have expected danger. It is too late to retreat. I have risked all on a single throw. I shall win. Say that there is treachery—I shall know how to deal with it. He is not indispensable. Yes, my friend, I have a plan that cannot fail."

"You are mistaken," I said obstinately. "Your plan will fail because, if Dr. Starva is not necessary to its success, I am. And I—"

"You will perform the service I shall ask of you. I hope, I trust, that you will do this service gladly. Not for myself, perhaps, but that you may bring happiness and peace to a down-trodden people."

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Watches for the Blind

Simple Invention That is Great Boon to Sightless Mortals.

The blind, like other mortals, wish to know the time exactly, and as very few of them are in a position to secure a good repeating watch, whose cost is always great, they have to be content with ordinary watches, and taking the crystal out of the face they ascertain the time by the angles and position of the hands, which frequent causes disarrangement of the timepiece.

In view of these difficulties a foreign firm has constructed a watch for the blind, which represents the figures in allegorical manner, and apparently is very convenient. The signs in relief are the following: One o'clock, one dot; two o'clock, two dots; three o'clock, a triangle; four o'clock, a square; five o'clock, a five-pointed star; six o'clock, an ellipse.

These same signs are repeated in bas-relief representing the hours from six to 12. The number of signs is

therefore limited to six, and it is very easy to ascertain from them the time of day. The hands are very strong and the watch has been used with good results.

Another watch for the blind has been invented by M. Pierre Tissot-Bersac, by which the blind can tell not only the hour, but also the minute. The hours are represented by figures of the Braille system.

Cause for Regret. A Scot who had been a long time in the colonies, paid a visit to his native glen, and meeting an old school-fellow the two sat down to chat about old times and acquaintances.

In the course of the conversation the stranger happened to ask about a certain Gordie McKay.

"He's dead long ago," said his friend, "and I'll never cease regretting him as long as I live."

"Dear me! Had you such respect for him as that?"

"Na, na! It wasn't only respect I had for himself, but I married his widow."

AROUND THE HOUSE

BEAUTY AND COMFORT IN APPOINTMENTS.

Plants for the Window Garden—Chintz and Light Washable Material Make Effective Hangings—Burlap to Be Popular.

If one can get plants for the window garden from a florist, it is desirable to do so, as they will be well established in pots and may be transferred with little checking of their growth. For attaching boxes to the house, many sizes and varieties of metal brackets can be purchased at the hardware stores. These should be held in place by long screws that run directly into the upright joists of the house, and it is desirable to paint them the same color as the building.

This is the season when chintz, linen taffeta and cretonne seem the most beautiful fabrics in the shops. The various designs in flowers look almost real, and each year are prettier. Nearly every summer home, as well as many of the winter ones, are now hung with washable materials. They may be had in subdued or gay colorings. A room in which nothing clashes, though done in cretonne and wicker, is often more effective than one with massive furniture and heavy hangings.

One can now buy almost everything made in cretonne, from bed covers, window hangings, hat and shirt-waist boxes, to desk sets and bureau accessories.

If you cannot afford to have wicker furniture, and the old must be covered, have the slips made of flowered cretonne or linen taffeta. They are much newer and brighter than the old-fashioned cretonne ones. The flowered effects will give a cool appearance to the room. If a good quality is purchased, it will launder well. Do not have several kinds of figured material in one room, or it will have an inharmonious appearance.

Burlap is surely having its day this season and bids fair to become more popular as the summer advances. Not only the curtains, table covers and sofa pillows made from this material, but bureau covers and dressing table covers, many elaborately embroidered, are shown. However, burlap does sound a trifle heavy for one's dressing table in the summer, but the cushions for the window seats are certainly artistic and satisfying if chosen in the quiet tones of brown or green. Natural colored burlap is the most durable for the covering of window cushions, as the sun is often very bright in that spot. Some of these cushions lace at the edge with cord or can be coarsely buttonholed with a heavy rope silk of the same color.

HOUSEHOLD SUGGESTIONS.

Brown sugar is an antidote to salt; if soup or gravy becomes too salt, stir in a little brown sugar and it will become palatable again.

A new clothesline should be well boiled, then hung up to dry before it is used for hanging clothes on; it will last longer and be easier to manipulate when thus treated.

Keep parsley wrapped in a piece of rug every day in cold water, remove the cloth every day, shake it and wring out fresh and green many days if thus treated.

To remove a cake from a tin after baking fold a clean teacloth, put it on the table, turn the cake upside down on it, wring a cloth out in cold water and lay it in several thicknesses on the bottom and sides of the tin, which soon may be gently drawn off the cake. Take hold of the corner of the towel and gently set the cake right side up to cool.

Mustard, if quite fresh made, taken with meat helps to digest it. Do not use salt in mixing it, but first rub quite smooth with a little cold water and the back of a silver or bone spoon, then add just a little more water, a few spoonfuls gradually till it is of the right consistency. Thin mustard is generally disliked. Little should be made at a time to prevent waste, and it should be fresh at least each alternate day.

To Clean Grained Wood. Grained and varnished imitations of hard wood are best cleaned by rubbing well with cloths wrung out in borax soapuds, never letting the water touch them. Afterward they should be rubbed with flannel barely moistened with kerosene. If there is too much kerosene it will dissolve and blur the colors. Clean hardwood with a flannel wet in turpentine, and rub afterward lightly with boiled linseed oil. Take off spots with fine sand mixed in oil. Apply it with a leather and rub with clean leather afterward to bring back the polish.

Welsh Rarebit. While this is a favorite preparation for the chafing dish, it can be prepared just as well in an ordinary saucepan or a double boiler. Melt one tablespoonful of butter. Stir into it a teaspoonful of cornstarch, and when they are thoroughly blended stir in slowly one-half of a cupful of thin cream. Cook two minutes after the cream is all in, then add half a pound of mild cheese, which has been cut in small pieces. Season with salt, paprika and mustard. Serve as soon as the cheese is melted on rounds of toasted bread or crisp small crackers.

Favors for Bride's Cakes. Where the cake is to be distributed among the bridal party only a fashionable fad is to put in it not only the proverbial wedding ring, silver thimble and copper cent, each wrapped in paraffin paper, but also tiny silver skates, miniature motor cars, stick-pins, etc., one for each member of the party. Of course, this is not feasible where the cake is distributed among the whole number of guests.

Corn Oysters. To the contents of a can of corn add a cup of flour sifted with a teaspoonful of baking powder. Add a little salt and the beaten yolks of two eggs. Beat the whites stiff and add them to the mixture last. Drop and cook on a griddle the same as griddle cakes. Serve with melted butter or tartare sauce.

A UNION OF BEGGARS

AN ASSOCIATION IS FORMED BY FRENCH CRIPPLES.

Not Affiliated With Other Labor Organizations—"Northern Hobble" Originator of the Movement—Rules Adopted.

Paris—The latest development in unions hails from Marseilles, where the crippled beggars have met to form an association to protect their interests.

The originator of the movement is Francois Rosin, better known as the Northern Hobble, who is a globe trotter, celebrated for racing matches, to which he challenges any one who, like

himself, is condemned to wood in the matter of legs. M. Rosin summoned a meeting of his fellow cripples, 26 of whom answered the call.

Some came on crutches, some had wooden legs, some with no legs at all came sitting on little wheeled chairs, and some had no arms. All listened attentively while the convoker of the meeting explained his purpose.

"We must first of all struggle

against false beggars who exploit children borrowed from anywhere by making them dance around their miserable barrel organs, poor little kids for whom they pay seven francs a month to parents. That at least is the present rate.

"We must wage war against the contractors of mendacity who put beggars out on the sidewalks, covered with long blouses, which often conceal a perfectly sound body. These contractors take most of the money given to the beggars.

"We must finally put the public on its guard against all those beggars who, coming from goodness knows where, from foreign parts, shamming horrible infirmities, live on French public charity and so rob us."

M. Rosin was elected president of the new union without a dissenting murmur, and then the following code was drawn up and adopted:

Article 1.—Every member of the union must be French.

Article 2.—Members must refrain from singing or reciting songs or monologues against the Republican government, its officials, the police and clergy of any religion.

Article 3.—The duty of a member of the union who finds himself in a town exploited by sham mendicants or by beggars working under a contractor is to give information to the authorities.

Article 4.—It is clearly understood that to belong to the union a member must be crippled or suffering from some infirmity, visible or apparent.

Article 5.—Crippled or infirm women can become members.

Article 6.—No officer of the union shall receive any pay or indemnity.

After a short discussion it was decided that the union, in order to acquire the good grace of the government, should not affiliate with the Bourse du Travail or with the General Labor Confederation. But as it was thought well that the union should seek official recognition, a deputation, consisting of the president, secretary, treasurer and dean of the cripples, Celestin Marius, waited on the prefect.

Unfortunately the prefect was away on business, but if the reception given by the prefectural staff may be taken as a token the union is not likely to get any status from that officer.

Dwelling Where "Robinson Crusoe" Was Written Will Be Demolished.

London.—One of the most interesting "literary shrines" in England, the house in which Daniel Defoe penned the greater part of "Robinson Crusoe," is about to be torn down to make way for modern dwellings. This little old-fashioned house, set back from the Finborough road, Tooting, and in striking contrast with the modern shops which flank it on either side, is now practically just as it was 219 years ago when Defoe came to it with his family to begin a strange life of isolation. He lived at Tooting for 18 months and during this time and for 20 years thereafter is said rarely—by some, never—to have spoken to his wife or children.

The sole change that has been made in the house since Defoe's time was the substitution of a new front in the year 1785. Over the scullery on the second floor is the little room where Defoe worked over the literary masterpiece which has secured his reputation for all time. This, the smallest room of the 12 which comprise the house, was his sanctuary, and only he passed its portals. Here for whole days he would shut himself from his family, receiving his meals, the meager remnants of an impetuous genius.

During the time Defoe lived in this house he was hard beset by creditors.

Indeed, four years later, he was declared a bankrupt and was compelled to secrete himself to escape a term in a debtor's prison.

The old house is at present occupied by an aged woman and her equally aged husband. For a small fee they show visitors the room where Defoe wrote "Robinson Crusoe." In recent years the American pilgrims to this literary shrine have far outnumbered English callers.

Where Author of "Robinson Crusoe" Lived.

Rattler Came Into Kitchen. Mrs. Theillard, who resides near the railroad station, was startled the other morning to see a large rattlesnake glide into the kitchen, and throwing its head high in the air take a casual survey around. With the aid of a stick of wood Mrs. Theillard drove the reptile from the house.—Dutch Flat Cor. Sacramento Bee.

A Bedouin Encampment Algeria.

