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CAPTAIN TOM.

By ST. GEORGE RATHBORNE.

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A NOVEL.

BY

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CAPTAIN TOM.

CHAPTER I.

HOW THE SHELLS FELL IN THE QUARTIER LATIN.

At exactly one o'clock on the morning of the ninth of January, 1871, a great shell hurled from the Prussian stronghold at Chatillon drops upon the roof of a house in the Quartier Latin in doomed Paris. A mournful, rushing sound is instantly followed by a ripping and tearing, in turn succeeded by a muffled explosion, then comes a dreadful silence.

In a corner of the upper room a man fully dressed has been sleeping on a cot. The tremendous shock arouses him; he flings back the covers and sits up, looking around with a coolness that is amazing.

Darkness everywhere save above, where a ragged hole in the roof marks the route taken by the iron intruder. The man gives a whistle to indicate his surprise.

"A close shave, by Jove! That was meant for me. Confound those Prussian gunners, to break my rest in this way. Ugh! that is a cold wind

coming in through the new entrance. It is impossible to sleep longer. Perhaps I may find something to interest me outside."

Listening, strange sounds come to his ears. The French forts answer the Prussian guns. Mont Valerien is aflame, and the thunder of artillery makes the very earth tremble. Besides there is heard the weird shriek of passing shells, their awful bursting, with perhaps the falling of innumerable bricks or stones.

Astonishing as it may seem, this man takes a match and lights a candle with a hand that never so much as trembles. Surely he must be made of ice, or have nerves of steel, to show so little emotion during such a tumult.

Shielding the flame as much as possible from the current of air that rushes in through the rent in the roof, he surveys the desolate scene. The rafters hang downward, plaster lies broadcast over the floor, which in turn is torn and wrecked where the iron sphere passed downward.

A fine dust fills the air; the house would perhaps fall only for the support given on either side. As it is, the building is ruined.

While the cool inmate of the upper floor thus surveys the wreck of his quarters, the light falls upon his own face and figure. It reveals a tall, well-knit form, and an American countenance, more remarkable on account of its firmness than because of any claims to manly beauty, although Captain Tom Pilgrim has never been accounted a homely man.

Satisfied that his den is no longer habitable after this remorseless visitor from the Prussian guns at Chatillon has plowed a passage through it, the

American dons an outer coat, together with a soft hat, and picking up a few little articles, such as a revolver, etc., walks toward the staircase.

He remembers for the first time that there are others below, and wonders whether the iron monster has done more than bring damage upon the property.

On the stairs he meets Monsieur Blanc, his host, a small but voluble Frenchman, who denounces the Prussians for ruining him, and expresses gratitude that "monsieur le capitaine" is safe, all in one breath.

Everywhere is seen wreck and ruin, for the shell seems to have dropped as perpendicularly as though coming from the clouds.

Even the door is out of plumb, and only by a muscular effort does the American tear it open.

He passes out upon the streets. The Quartier Latin is receiving an undue proportion of the enemy's projectiles, and on this night in particular the citizens are fully aroused to a realization of their perilous situation.

Until recently the Parisians have laughed at the siege—they saw so little of its horrors, as the battles have been fought at a distance—and the official reports published each day predicted a Prussian retreat immediately.

Now the bombardment was begun, and houses, bridges, and churches lie in ruins. Starvation is not the only fate that threatens. There is a terrible death fluttering in the air, accompanying each hurtling bomb. The humor of the populace has changed, and actual fear is seen upon many a face.

The streets are not crowded, but here and there stand squads of men and women, discussing the

last terrible phase of the siege, hurrying this way and that to note the devastation caused by some bursting shell—perhaps to collect relics at the same time, for their fear has not entirely overcome their cupidity.

Lights are seen; for the great city is not yet reduced to darkness. Fires burn in three distinct quarters, but whether caused by bursting bombs or through the carelessness of pillaging vandals, it is impossible to tell.

Captain Tom saunters along, taking in the strange sights to be met with on this night of the hottest bombardment yet experienced, and keeping a watchful eye for friends, of whom he has a number in the beleaguered city.

Several cabs rattle along the paved streets. Each bears the significant red cross, and, no doubt, contains a wounded man from the front—an officer of rank, perhaps—whose position entitles him to a bed in the Necker Hospital on the Rue de Sevres, though from the reckless manner in which the shells descend it would probably be safer to have kept the wounded leaders in the forts outside the city.

Here and there are nuns hastening to give their assistance to the wounded, each under the protection of the red cross.

The scene is full of excitement. Here is a house in ruins, just beyond a shell tears a gaping hole in the street, sending the *debris* all around in confusion, and killing several citizens who chance to be near. Through a side street that debouches upon a boulevard a company of mobiles march amid the cheers of the Parisian crowd, which is nothing if not demonstrative.

The glare of a bonfire lights up the scene, and

glints upon the polished chassepots carried upon the shoulders of the soldiers from the provinces. All around are evidences that the war has come home to gay, thoughtless Paris, and yet her citizens, half starved as they are, never dream but that it is a hideous nightmare, and some fine morning the enemy will awaken to find himself in a trap—when the army of rescue that is always coming, but never arrives, reaches the scene.

Thus sauntering along, the American finds that he has reached the Boulevard des Capucines. Near-by towers the hotel generally sought, after the Louvre, by foreigners, and known as the Hotel de la Paix.

Even in this quarter Paris is alarmed. The Prussian guns seem capable of reaching every point in the city, and at any hour the deluge of iron may be hurled upon this section. Indeed, one shell has already shattered a house not a stone's throw from the caravansary.

Captain Tom has had an object in heading for the boulevard. He looks into each face he meets, as though under the belief that here he will find the one he seeks. Sometimes it is a well-dressed citizen, again a man of the bourgeoisie stamp, wearing a blouse and Tyrolese hat, or perhaps a military individual, strutting along with the importance that only a French petty officer can assume.

While thus engaged he reaches the hotel, and a hand presses his arm, while a voice says:

"What does this mean, Captain Tom. You declared you were bound to sleep the night through in spite of the bloody racket, and yet here I find you on the boulevard."

The speaker is, like himself, a foreigner, but his

voice and language bespeak the Briton. Others besides the daring American have allowed themselves to be shut up in Paris, from motives of curiosity, love of adventure, or something else that may be developed later on.

Captain Tom laughs. It is a cheery sound, and has won him many a friend in times past.

"I give you my word, Lord Eric, I slept as sound as a dollar so long as the affair was confined to screeching and smashing all about in the Latin Quartier, but when a beastly shell dropped into my room, and left me exposed to the weather, I drew the line at that, and concluded that there might be some queer things to be seen on the streets. Something—I can't explain what—drew me to your hotel. Perhaps it was because I saw our friend, Colonel Julas, being carried in an ambulance to the hospital, or it may have been just a notion on my part."

"Pardon me, my friend, it was more. Yes, even the hand of fate."

"I am far from being a fatalist, Lord Eric," returns the American, at the same time giving his companion a queer glance, for he hardly knew how to take him at times; milord is a peculiar combination—a puzzle to those who know him.

"Listen! At this very moment I have issued from the hotel here with my mind set upon seeing you. Behold! the first person against whom I run is Captain Tom. What do you call that but fate?"

"It is a queer coincidence, certainly—I admit that; but what has occurred to make an interview with me so essential! Has anything happened since I parted with you at nine at the Champs Elysees?"

The Englishman twists his neck around as if to

make sure that there is no one near to spy upon their movements. Then he takes hold of his companion's sleeve and draws him into a niche formed by the hotel wall.

It not only screens them from the observation of passers-by, but serves to keep off the chilly January night wind that sweeps down the elegant boulevard.

There is something mysterious in the very actions of the Briton, and the adventurous Captain Tom anticipates a revelation that will arouse his sluggish blood. This man has seen so much of life in his time that ordinary events do not move him.

Having fully satisfied himself with regard to their security, milord speaks, and even his voice seems to be full of deep mystery, so low and strained is its tone.

"What I have to tell you concerns a certain lady friend of yours. Perhaps you can give a guess as to her name."

"Let me see. Is it the fair Alsatian, Linda?"

"Hit it the first shot! Shows where your heart must be, captain. I have not come any too soon to warn you."

"Bah! I have passed unscathed the battery of brighter eyes than hers. Linda is beautiful. It amuses me to play the gallant once in a while, though I am more at home in the woods, or on the deck of my dainty little yacht than in the presence of ladies; but as to warning me of the danger, my good friend——"

"Wait! You do not understand me, captain. It is not danger from her eyes, of which I warn you. The peril comes from another quarter, but in connection with the fair Alsatian."

Captain Tom puffs at his cigar while his companion thus speaks. He seems to be pondering the words.

"Ah! you have reference to a jealous rival. I shall have to meet him some morning at sunrise in the Forest de St. Germaine, or perhaps the Bois de Boulogne, with swords or pistols. I suppose I can depend on you, my friend, to second me, for I shall fight, if challenged, just for the adventure."

"Blast the luck, Captain Tom; you run on like a Derby winner. Hark, man! This danger does not come from within, but from without. It is the military authorities you have to fear."

The words, though thrilling in their nature, do not seem to arouse any alarm in the breast of the American, who merely shrugs his shoulders in the French style he has learned so well, and remarks:

"Is that all? Please explain, milord."

"It is known that you have been intimate with this beautiful lady for some time. You have sent her flowers, driven her in a carriage, and even forced her to accept presents of food that are worth their weight in silver during the siege."

"In brief, I have treated her as a lady friend, for whom I have a warm admiration. I am rich. Whose business is it if I choose to send flowers to one of the fair sex?"

Captain Tom is indignant. He feels that some one has been meddling in his private affairs, and this is an interference he never will brook without being heard from.

Before speaking further the Englishman pokes his head out from the niche, and takes a survey of their surroundings. A fiacre dashes past as though containing a messenger who bears important tid-

ings. Down the boulevard a crowd of citizens advance, singing the "Marseillaise," and shouting that the Republic has come, "Vive la Republique!"

In another quarter a detachment of gendarmes, under a commissaire of police, sweep the boulevard of all gathering crowds. Already the authorities of Paris feel the mutterings of the coming storm. The enemy within will play greater havoc than the Prussians ever can. The dreaded hydra-headed Commune is nearly in the saddle, after a retirement of over twenty years. Paris will soon be under the heel of the oppressor.

In their immediate vicinity all is quiet, and Lord Eric sees no cause for apprehension. What he has to say can be told without danger of being overheard, at least so far as he can discern.

The American has had his natural curiosity aroused by this time, and the strange actions of his friend are calculated to augment such feelings on his part.

Still he asks no more questions, satisfied that Lord Eric will tell all when he has gone through his little stage business. Perhaps the American has seen him carry on in this way before, and make much out of a mole-hill.

"I need not tell you how I have obtained my information, my friend. It is a beastly shame, you know, but, all the same, I have no doubt regarding its accuracy. When I tell you that the secret police have received positive instructions from military headquarters to watch your every movement, you can understand why I am so particular about being seen in your company, and at this hour."

"Confusion! Lord Eric, you harp on in the one strain. Tell me why I am under suspicion."

"Because you admire the fair Alsatian. You send her costly presents, ride with her; in a word, because you are her friend."

"Answer me plainly, man. What do they say she is?" and his hand grips the Briton's arm until he winces under the pressure.

"Listen, then, my friend. They have learned that the lovely Alsation is a German spy!"

CHAPTER II.

"GIVE HER UP, OR YOU SHALL SHARE HER FATE."

The words "German spy" are almost hissed in the ear of the American, who has maintained his clutch upon Lord Eric's arm.

"The duse you say!" he answers, and it is evident that milord's announcement has not awakened as much wonder as the other had expected.

"Whether you are guilty or innocent will not matter much, once you fall into the hands of the authorities, Captain Tom. It is a march to the Prison La Roquette, and the guillotine by morning, or perhaps a file of zouaves, a box for a coffin, a brief order, and you are no more. These are stirring times in Paris. See these citizens approaching. If I were to step out and denounce you as a Prussian spy, do you think they would ask for my proofs or wait to hear your defense. The chances are your head would adorn the end of a pike carried by some rough from Belleville inside of thirty minutes."

"Perhaps," returns the other, quietly, "unless I put the whole of them to flight."

The Englishman surveys his companion in the

dim light of the distant bonfire, as though astonished at his nonchalance.

"Bless my soul, Pilgrim, I believe you would be equal to it. I haven't forgotten your adventure in the catacombs with the gang of robbers. But make your mind easy. Eric Bullard is the last man in Paris to betray you, even if you are guilty. I'd sooner cut my hand off than prove false to a friend."

"A thousand thanks, milord; those words do you honor. I need not question your motives in seeking me."

"They were to warn you, so that you might visit the fair Linda no more, since death lies in the cup, pleasant though it may seem."

"From my heart I thank you. One favor I have to beg, rude though it may seem."

"Name it. If in my power——"

"There is no question about that. Since I am under suspicion I beg that you will no longer appear to be my friend."

"You fear that I may be dragged in also?"

"No good can come of it. If we both live through the siege we may renew our friendship."

It is a singular request, but milord understands that something underlies it.

"As you say, my friend. It would be better if you accompanied me to the Minister of the Interior, explained your position, and gave your solemn word of honor that you would never again see the lovely Alsatian."

Captain Tom shakes his head.

"That were impossible, milord."

"Why so?" impatiently.

"Because I go from this spot to see the woman the authorities have declared to be a German spy."

The Englishman seems shocked.

"It is a shame for such a bright, jolly fellow to invite annihilation, for that is the inevitable result when a man runs against the machinery of the Paris police. I am bound to believe that you are either a reckless dare-devil, ready to risk your life for a sou, or else what they suspect is true."

"And that I am a German spy!" laughs the American, carelessly.

"Hush! for Heaven's sake, man! If the ears of that rabble caught your words nothing could save us from their fury."

"Bah! they are a lot of jackals! A few well-directed shots among them would scatter the pack and send them howling down the boulevard. However, I have no desire to invite such attention. While I thank you again for your friendly warning, milord, do not believe that I am insensible to the fact that for three days and nights I have been shadowed; at the Mabille, such as it is in these desolate times; dining at the Cafe de Madrid, where conspirators are wont to meet; even when accompanying the remains of my friend Duval, who fell in the last useless sortie, to Pere la Chaise, the noble cemetery, risking the fire from the Prussian guns—I have been aware of the fact that some one was watching me."

"Yet you will defy fate by visiting again at the house of that enchantress. Well, man is a strange creature," remarks the other, in a philosophical way, that draws out another of those cheery laughs from Captain Tom.

"Perhaps at some future time, when you know all, you will understand what now seems a dark mystery," he says, soberly.

"Then you confess there is a mystery? Why not take me into your confidence? Make me a sharer in your secrets."

"That is generous of you, milord, but I must firmly decline your offer. We part here. I know not whether the fortunes of war will ever bring us together as friends again. Remember your promise to cut my acquaintance until such time as this affair is all over."

"Do you mean to hold me to that?"

"Most religiously, milord. If we meet again I shall scowl at you like an Italian bandit, and expect you to do the same."

"Perhaps so," mutters the puzzled Englishman, as he returns the warm hand clasp.

Standing in the niche he watches the stalwart form of the American moving down the boulevard, and shakes his head sadly.

"Blast the luck! I like that chap. He is a man any one might go wild over; strong as a horse, bold as a lion, and yet no woman could have been more gentle than Tom Pilgrim when he handled my wounds after that boar hunt in the Black Forest. Yes, confound it, I love him because he is a man after my own heart; but I'm afraid he's been foolish enough to mix up in some business here that may cost him his life. It is not love that takes him to the side of that fair Alsatian, but what then? I can't even guess, unless—— Great Heaven! I wonder if he is in the employ of the French general? Nonsense. The idea is too absurd. I'll go inside and get a little sleep, though the poor devils in the region of the Latin Quartier will have small peace with that infernal din about their ears." Saying which the philosophical Briton once more re-enters

the great caravansary and seeks his desolate room. Provisions have long since grown so scarce that the hotels could not supply their guests, who may still lodge in them, but must seek their food elsewhere.

Captain Tom saunters along with the same careless step. He again approaches the region where the German shells are falling at the rate of one a minute. In spite of the danger, crowds are in the streets, and each explosion is the signal for a great rush toward the scene.

Various sights greet his eyes, and he finds much to engage his attention. All the while he is advancing with a certain object in view.

He meets groups of soldiers hurrying in the direction of the forts—mobiles, zouaves, or it may be a squad of mounted chasseurs. There has been secret word brought in of a contemplated Prussian advance from the north, while the Krupp guns on the heights of Chatillon keep up the bombardment, and Governor Trochu seeks to strengthen the defenses there.

Excitement grows as the night becomes older.

Down the street comes a howling mob of men—yes, and women, such Amazons as the Revolution made notorious.

What is the cause of the tremendous racket?

A single, exhausted figure flies before them.

Hear what they shout—"Death to the spy! To the lamp-post with the Prussian!"

Now they overtake the wretch. He is a coward, and shows no fight. Innocent or guilty, it matters not; the name is as good as the game to these desperate communists, and in a twinkling the poor devil is swinging from the nearest lamp-post.

Captain Tom sees and shrugs his shoulders, for he

remembers what his friend Lord Eric has warned him of. Such a fate as this would be his should the mob find out that he has been signaling to the Germans in any way—by the use of colored lights, for instance.

He does not avoid the terrible figure, but walks straight forward. No one knows the nature of a Parisian crowd better than this man, who has made a study of them. Some of the leaders glance at him, but he bears his American citizenship in his face, and they do not question him. Americans are, as a general thing, the friends of France in this unhappy war.

A new clamor breaks out, and Captain Tom turns his head to discover the cause. He is electrified to see a number of the mob, mostly the Amazons, chasing a female.

Where she has come from, what she has done, he cannot say. All that he knows is the fact that the poor creature flies toward him. She does not shriek or fill the air with her cries, but looks like a fluttering bird endeavoring to escape its tormentors.

The American feels all his manhood aroused by the sight. Whenever he has been appealed to for help, especially by a woman in distress, he has generously thrown himself into the breach.

Straight up to him the girlish figure flies, as though she has an intuition that here she may find a rock of refuge.

Captain Tom feels a wave of indignation sweep over him when he takes note of the delicate figure that crouches at his feet.

"Oh, sir, you are a gentleman! Save me from these terrible creatures!"

She speaks in French, but Tom is almost as famil-

iar with the language of diplomatic correspondence as with his mother tongue. He sees the beseeching attitude, and imagines a sister of his own in such a position.

In an instant his decision is taken. He will save this poor girl from her enemies, no matter what the personal risk. At times like this a really brave man never stops to consider the danger. He does not say "how many," but "where are they?"

With an involuntary movement he steps in front of the poor girl and faces her foes, who by this time have almost overtaken her.

At the sight of a man before them instead of a weak, terror-stricken girl, the mob abruptly pauses and glowers upon him. The constituent members of this mob are like a lot of wolves, hungry and desperate. Already the horrors of the siege have been felt among the lower classes. The rich were wise enough to lay in a supply of food in time, but the poor have to take the pitiful allowance doled out by the authorities, and upon the faces of many a haggard look has come—the imprint of famine's gaunt hand.

To face such a crowd of half-crazed, vengeance-seeking people is something few men would care about doing.

Captain Tom might be averse to it under ordinary circumstances, but men are often brought into action through certain means over which they have no control.

His manner is that of a gladiator. With the girl behind him he stands there and waves back the dozen "citizens" who have pursued.

"Stop!" he cries, in French. "What has the girl done? Why do you chase her?"

A Babel of voices answer him. Each Amazon shrieks out some accusation, and the hoarser voices of the men join in.

"She is a witch! We would burn her!"

"She is a Prussian spy! The governor would shoot her on the Trocadero."

"We must have her. Give her up, or you shall share her fate!"

The clamor grows in volume. It is perfectly terrible now, the shrill voices of the Amazons cutting the air like knives.

Captain Tom is unmoved. He stands there like a rock, with the object of their wrath between the wall of the house and himself.

His hand is no longer raised to warn them back, but it now grasps a revolver, while the light of battle shines in his gray eyes. The American is on his mettle. He has been appealed to by one in distress, and stands here as the champion of helplessness.

Let the waves of Parisian communism beat against him. They will be dashed back as from a rocky barrier.

Perhaps the sight of the revolver has something to do with the mob halting. At any rate the Amazons and their backers come to a stop, forming a ragged line before him, which a neighboring bonfire lights up in a fantastic manner.

The picture is one an artist might seize upon to make his name famous. The crouching figure of the poor girl, her indomitable defender, the dozen awful creatures from the slums of Paris, rendered doubly desperate by the want of nourishing food, upon them all the flickering firelight playing in

fantastic humor. Captain Tom himself could never get the picture out of his mind.

It looks just now as though they are bound to come to blows, that another little engagement will be fought upon the streets of Paris, such as becomes more frequent with each passing day of the siege, for the iron of the Prussian host is pressing closer and closer upon the throats of the beleaguered citizens as each sun sets behind the wintry hills.

The American does not await the storm. He seeks to bring matters to a climax.

The sooner these things are over the better. Captain Tom believes in prompt action, for on more than one occasion he has seen the side that takes an aggressive part, though inferior in numbers, come out with victory perched upon its banner.

"Listen, fellow citizens of Paris. The enemy is thundering at our gates, and every man is needed to save the city. This is no time to make war on the helpless, or to cut one another's throats. You accuse this girl of being a Prussian spy. Prove it, and I will no longer defend her, but until you do, I stand before her, and death to the one who dares molest her!"

Mutterings arise.

These hardened creatures admire courage, but at the same time they are averse to giving up their prey.

Having had a taste of blood, their appetites are whetted, and it really matters little to them where their next victim comes from.

No country in the world has been so covered with the blood of its people as poor France. When scourged by the Revolution her rivers ran red with the slaughter of her citizens. In the city of Nantes

alone thirty thousand were put to death with every conceivable torture.

A mob in Paris is about as ugly a crowd to manage as the world can produce. Captain Tom, who has been all over the globe, feels he would rather face as many bigoted Hindoos on their native sod as these inflammatory elements from the lower dens of the city.

There are as yet no signs of giving way. Instead the scowls grow blacker, and gleaming knives are seen in the begrimed hands of the human panthers who form the half-circle around the spot where the American stands at bay .

He shoots one glance up and down the street. It is a narrow thoroughfare which he has taken in order to make a short cut to his destination. Above tower the houses, and from numerous windows heads are thrust, some of them adorned with the red cap indicating the Commune.

What Captain Tom seeks is the presence of troops. If a squad of the National Guard, armed with their Snider rifles, would only appear, he feels that all would be well. Up to this time there had been troops in every quarter. They had even become monotonous in his eyes. Now, when he would give a great deal to see the red trousers of the zouaves, not a soldier is in sight. One could easily be led to believe that the city is destitute of them, and ready to be given over to the mercy of the mob.

Plainly, then, if Captain Tom is to save the girl who has appealed to him for her life it must be done by the power of his arm alone, since no outside assistance is near.

After his little speech the line presses even closer. His eye in ranging along the crowd marks the

man who seems to be the evil spirit, urging the Amazons on to an awful crime.

This personage is a sinister-looking man, with a brown face and snapping eyes. He has a way of inciting the hags onward, though it takes little to do that.

When the American demands the proof, numerous eyes are turned upon this man, and the hands of the nearest push him forward.

"This is her accuser. Francois, speak! Tell the American what you know!" they cry, all the while glaring at Tom's charge as though ready to tear her to pieces.

The man seems very unwilling to be thus brought to the front rank. Still it is only a poor, weak girl whom he has to face, and he puts on a bold front characteristic of the swaggering gamester of the boulevards.

"Monsieur le American, your motives are honorable. We admire bravery, but it can avail yonder wretched creature nothing. She has refused the only chance of life, and she must die!"

The poor girl makes a move as if to face her accuser, but Tom places a hand on her head as if to reassure her.

"Monsieur, your charges! your proof?" he asks, in a steady tone that sounds like the ring of steel smiting steel.

"You shall have it, monsieur. Then we will execute the judgment of Paris upon the traitress. Look! here is a letter written in German. It is addressed to 'My Friend,' and in it the writer sends thanks for the information received. Listen, citizens, while I read two lines. 'The King Wilhelm

will reward you. All Prussia rejoices in so true a friend. Let us hear again from you.'"

A roar greets the reading of this effusion, and it looks as though the tigers can no longer be restrained from their prey, but Captain Tom waves them back with his revolver.

"Wait!" he thunders.

It is a voice to command, and these jackals cringe before him, just as Tom said they would when talking to Lord Eric.

Francois has become emboldened. He feels that victory is within his grasp, and waving the fatal document above his head he looks like a disciple of Satan urging his hosts onward.

"Let me see the document, Francois."

The man holds back, dismayed, but those nearest urge him to comply.

"Yes, let the American read her death warrant! Then he will defend her no longer," they cry.

Captain Tom's hand grasps the paper. The fire burns fiercely enough for him to see the odd German characters upon the page.

"It is true. This letter has been sent to a Prussian spy in Paris. Do you swear you saw this girl reading it, Francois?"

The man sees no trap, for excitement has a hold upon him. Eagerly he cries:

"I swear it, monsieur—on my life!"

Captain Tom's face is grave. He realizes that the situation has become such that he may be drawn into the toils, accused of befriending a German spy, but not once does he shrink from what he believes to be his duty.

"What say you to this accusation, mademoiselle? This man swears he found you reading this traitor-

ous letter sent from the Prussians! Are you guilty or innocent?"

The crouching figure springs erect now. The clustering curls are swept back by a quick movement of the head. Captain Tom will never in his life forget what follows.

"Monsieur, fellow citizens, hear me! That base man has sought to make me his wife! Because I loathe him I have refused. He then persecutes a friendless girl, and now brings this accusation against me. In his haste to condemn he has forgotten. He swears I was reading that paper. That is false. Look at me. I am blind."

CHAPTER III.

A MYSTERY OF THE CONVENT.

A convulsive shudder passes through the frame of Captain Tom when he finds a pair of apparently sightless eyes fastened upon him. They seem to appeal to his heart for help.

A groan goes up from the crowd, and angry glances fall on Francois. The caprice of a mob is as changeable as April weather. It takes but a little thing to veer it around like the vane on the stable roof.

Captain Tom is quick to note and take advantage of this change in the tide. He sees how swarthy Francois trembles and looks scared.

To strike while the iron is hot is his motto.

"Messieurs, look at yonder craven beast! He has assailed the character of this young girl. He is a coward, and no Frenchman. Let me tell you my belief. If he were taken and searched perhaps evi-

dence would be found that would prove him a spy."

Hardly are the words out of Captain Tom's lips than with a roar the Amazons hurl themselves upon the giant. He fights like a demon, and at one time threatens to escape, but others come to the assistance of his enemies, and down the street they capture him, holding his arms while the search is made.

Ere five seconds more have gone a shout is heard. Hands are raised aloft, bearing papers that have been taken from the person of Francois—papers that contain mystic marks, plans of the fortifications, and figures estimating the number of troops in Paris.

"Hang him!" is the cry.

A rope appears as if by magic, and the noose is slipped over the man's neck. Then with jest and shout they drag their intended victim in the direction of the nearest lamp-post.

Captain Tom makes no effort to save the man. Indeed, after having learned that this wretch had insulted the blind girl, and sought to make her the victim of the mob's fury, he even feels a savage satisfaction in the thought that justice is about to overtake the fellow.

Just at this moment occurs something not down on the programme.

A shell, cast from a Krupp gun on the heights of Chatillon, drops into the street not forty feet beyond the surging crowd. There is a blinding flash, a terrific explosion, cries of horror and alarm.

The bonfire still burns.

Captain Tom has been knocked down by the concussion, though from the way in which his head aches he at first imagines that a piece of the shell has brained him.

He struggles to his feet.

Such a sight as that which confronts him! It is enough to fill one with horror. That particular Prussian shell has done more damage than any yet sent into the doomed city.

Half a dozen of the Amazons lie upon the street maimed or killed; others crawl away, or, rising to their feet, hasten to the shelter of door-ways, as though fearing a repetition of the disaster.

Down the street a flying figure catches the attention of the American. It is the giant Francois. Satan looks after his own, and this engine of destruction, sent from the earthworks of his friends, has passed by, leaving the German spy unscathed.

"We may meet again," mutters Tom.

Then he suddenly remembers the blind girl. He fears that she may have been injured by the terrible explosion, and turns to find that she is no longer at his side. He looks around in bewilderment, not able to tell where she may have gone. It is too much to believe that she could have passed out of sight down the street in this short space of time.

He eyes the houses near him suspiciously, as though under the impression that one of them may have given her ingress.

Then, marking the locality in his mind, he leaves the scene of the explosion. Already people are flocking to the spot from every quarter just as buzzards scent carrion afar off. So these vultures of the great city flock to feast their eyes on the sight of blood.

Captain Tom has been greatly agitated by the recent events. As he walks along he mutters to himself, and certain words let fall in a voice above a whisper give an indication to his thoughts.

"It is the irony of fate. Surely that voice, that figure, was Myra's; but blind. Great heavens! what does that mean? Is this a dream? Am I awake? Perhaps the continual roar of the great guns has unsettled my reason. Nonsense! Things are perfectly clear before my eyes. Either that girl was Myra, whom I met so strangely at Rome, or else one who strangely resembles her. What could bring her here? It was under the shadow of the obelisk on the Monte Pincio that I last saw Myra, and she was not blind then, for the bright eyes made sad havoc with the battered element I call my heart. There is a mystery here, and I cannot solve it now, but I will come again to this place and look for the girl I saved from the mob's mad fury. Just now I have something deeper to play."

He ceases to commune aloud. If his thoughts are still on the subject there is no outward manifestation of the fact.

Thus he finally finds himself in front of a convent. The gray walls rise before him cold and pitiless. He looks up the street and down to see whether the "shadow" is in sight; the dark form that for days and nights has followed him wherever he may have gone.

Nothing can be seen of a suspicious nature. Perhaps the pursuit has been given up.

He faces the convent. The door is near by, and ascending the few steps he pulls the bell.

Paris no longer knows silence. Her citizens sleep with the distant growling of the Prussian siege guns, the heavier detonations of Mont Valerien, and the bursting of shells among the houses, as their lullaby.

The evil days have come when "children cry for

bread, and there is no bread in Israel." Famine threatens to be a worse foe than the foreign foe encamped about her walls.

In this quarter an occasional shell drops, and already the convent has been badly used. By some accident its gray walls have been picked out by the German gunners miles away as a good object at which to sight their guns in the day-time.

In answer to his ring a black-robed figure comes to the little wicket in the door, exchanges a few words with the American, and then opens the heavy iron barrier, inviting him to enter.

He has been here before, and the way is familiar; so he passes on to a small parlor or reception-room, where the gas burns low.

Here he awaits the coming of one for whom he has inquired. It is a strange hour to make a call, but of late Paris has known no night since the terrible bombardment began.

While he sits there Captain Tom allows his thoughts to range backward. He finds his curiosity regarding the young girl very keen.

What could bring a blind girl out upon the streets at such an hour? Had a shell demolished her home? How could she run to him and beseech his assistance if blind? How did she know he was an American even before he had uttered a single word?

These are pertinent questions.

They worry Captain Tom immensely.

With an impatient gesture he turns away from the contemplation of such mysteries, and glances around at the walls. Then he picks up a book lying on the table, and idly turns the pages.

It is an album. Faces interest him deeply, and he looks from page to page. At the very last he

finds himself gazing upon the picture of a young girl. Back of her can be seen dimly the walls of the famous ruin, the Coliseum.

The man holds his breath. He has made a discovery that appalls him. Under the figure is written the name "Myra." It is the girl whom he left in Rome, who has eluded his search so long, and whose counterpart he has rescued on this very night.

Why should the picture of the pure and artless Myra be found in the album of this plotting German spy, Linda Dubois?

CHAPTER IV.

"WINE IS A MOCKER! TAKE CARE, CAPTAIN TOM."

The rustle of a woman's drapery arouses Captain Tom from the reverie into which he has unconsciously fallen while gazing at the sweet face in the album.

He looks up. In the narrow door-way stands a woman. She wears the dress of a nun, but it is a mockery, for her cheeks are aflame with the roses of health, such as can never be seen on the face of a sister who denies herself the pleasures of the world, and fasts in the solitude of her cell.

The vail will hide these tell-tale cheeks should she choose to go abroad upon the streets, and even the lower classes, the *canaille*, respect the dress of a sister and the red cross she carries when upon an errand of mercy in war times.

Captain Tom is not surprised at anything this remarkable woman might do, but he pretends to show astonishment.

"The dress becomes you, Mam'selle Linda, but why assume it? Do the rules of the convent require such sacrifices from each guest?" he asks, accepting her white, shapely hand.

She laughs merrily.

"Dear me, no, monsieur. It is mere caprice on my part. I am curious to see how the siege goes on. I would travel the streets unmolested, and in this garb I am able to go and come where I please. Most of the nuns are out now looking after the wounded, of whom the hospitals are full. They threaten to turn the churches into hospitals, and Notre Dame as well as this convent may echo with the cries of the wounded. The Lady Superior is an old friend of mine, and would do much to assist me, knowing that I mean to write a book on the siege of Paris."

She is seated near him now, and he continues to survey her closely.

"Mam'selle, pardon me, but you are a remarkable woman, the most gifted lady I ever met. This wonderful book, when it appears, for whose reading is it intended—the French who are shut up in Paris, or the Germans who surround her walls?"

The fair Linda takes no offense, but smiles and shakes the truant vail back from her face.

"Wait and see, monsieur. You may be surprised to find your ideas permeating my book, for I honestly confess that much of my knowledge of military technique was gained through you."

Captain Tom winces. At the same time he smiles inwardly, if such a thing can be, for he has been grossly inaccurate in all things pertaining to the defense of Paris when engaged in conversation with the fair Linda.

"You are a complete mystery to me, mam'selle. Think how strangely we have met. First, months ago, long before the siege began, I had the pleasure of stopping your runaway horse on the Boulevard Montmartre. Our acquaintance began there.

"Later on we met by chance at the Louvre, in the Musee Egyptian, where I find you deeply engrossed with the relics from the pyramids, and especially some curious little metal vials said to contain love powders, strange poisons, and the like, used in the times of the ancient Pharaohs.

"A third time we lose sight of each other, and again our meeting is brought about by fate in a singular way. Walking with my friend, General la Croix, in the Faubourg St. Honore, we see a string of captured Uhlans being brought into the city. The fortune of war has thrown them into the hands of the French, and all along the streets they are subjects of curiosity and insult.

"I see a lady in a carriage draw near. Behold! it is you, mam'selle. One of the Uhlans, an officer, a splendid specimen of manhood, attempts to break from the ranks; he shakes his fist at you; he cries out that you are a traitress, and deserve death; that you have deserted your lover and the native country of your mother's people to seek the delights of Paris.

"I see you shrinking back, appalled. I realize that this officer has once been your lover. He is dragged back into line, and the procession goes on. Later, influenced by more than mere curiosity, I endeavor to find him in order to hear more about you in whom I am so deeply interested, but he has already been exchanged. Some hidden power has set the wheels in motion for him.

"I see you often after this. We ride and walk together. You take me into your confidence with regard to your book. When last we parted you told me this was to be your future address, and that I could see you here at any hour. I have come."

While the captain speaks the fair Alsatian has regarded him closely. She is playing a deep and dangerous game, and this man has entered it in a way she had not calculated upon when arranging her plans.

At first he has been, as she believes, her dupe; her dupe now she loves as only one of her country can. The stalwart and brave American has become a hero in her eyes. All other games must play a minor part to the one in which she would make him her slave.

She thinks she has captured him with her charms of face and figure. That, like other men before—the Uhlan officer, for instance—she can hammer his heart to suit her humor.

That proves what a poor judge she is. Perhaps she may be able to read her own sex better.

"It is a strange hour, Captain Tom. Tell me why you have sought me?" she says, in her round, velvety voice, so like the soft purring of a cat.

He hardly dares to tell her all, but may say enough to appease her curiosity. Quick wit is needed, so that suspicion may not be aroused.

"Listen, mam'selle, and let me tell you something that may interest you. We have seen much of each other during this time of siege, and you will pardon me if I say I have taken unusual interest in you —and your book."

The woman in the nun's dress taps her foot on the floor nervously, and shrugs her shapely should-

ers as she listens. This reference to her book sounds like sarcasm. It may be possible that Monsieur Tom does not have so much confidence in the production of the volume as he has given her to believe.

"Proceed," she says, lightly.

"Under such circumstances, you remember, I obtained for you a steady and faithful body servant, one Mickey McCray, who has, I understand, served you faithfully all this while."

"Devoted Mickey. He is a diamond in the rough," she murmurs.

"Nor has my friendship ended there, my dear Mam'selle Linda. I have come here at this strange hour to prove that, though my heart beats not in sympathy with the cause you love, I still regard you highly. In a word, mam'selle, I am here to save you."

The woman shows emotion. Her eyes glitter like stars, and even in this moment of supreme trial her thoughts are more of the man than connected with her own danger.

"To save me!" she repeats, in her velvety voice. "How good of you, Captain Tom. No doubt you risk much in coming. What danger threatens me now? Has the count decided to raid my fortress, the convent, and carry me off, or does my military admirer, the general, intend to fight a duel with you because of my poor flirtations?"

"Neither, mam'selle. The warning I bring you concerns yourself alone. You must leave Paris."

She laughs in a strange way.

"What you say is absurd, Captain Tom. Leave Paris, indeed! Why should I go; how can I pass through the lines?"

"You will have no difficulty up to seven to-morrow night, when the gates are closed, provided you show this passport from Trochu. If you remain after that hour it is—death!"

"Death!"

"I have said it, mam'selle. The governor, who gave me this pass, will insist on the full penalty of the law if you are found within the walls after the gates close."

She awakes to a full sense of the danger menacing her. All thoughts of love are put aside. The woman gives way to the patriot.

"Monsieur le Captain, you can tell me what it is they accuse Linda Dubois of being?"

"They say you are a spy, mam'selle. That, instead of gathering facts for a book, you transfer them to the hands of the enemy. I believe one of your tools has been captured."

"Poor Francois!" she says, musingly. "He always said the guillotine would be his fate, but now it may be a sergeant and his file."

Francois! It is the name of the man who led the mob after the girl; he who had so narrowly escaped annihilation at their hands.

Captain Tom realizes this; remembers that the fellow chased the girl whom he believes to be Myra, and putting things together, glances toward the album holding her picture. Dimly he attempts to form a theory, but it falls to pieces for want of connecting links.

"Do you admit the fact, mam'selle? You need have no fears of me, for the document you hold proves my friendship."

"Yes," she says, boldly, endeavoring to magnetize

him with her sparkling eyes. "I admit the truth of the charge. I am a spy."

"You are as bold as you are beautiful," he says, with something of irony in his tone.

Although Captain Tom can admire a woman like Linda Dubois she is not the kind of being to capture his heart. The girl Myra, whom he had found and lost in Rome, and whose image has haunted him ever since, is of an entirely different type, and appeals to softer feelings within his heart.

"Tell me, Monsieur Tom, what induced you to spare me? You, whom I have learned within six hours to be in the employ of the French government. Why did you secure me this chance of escape?"

She hangs her whole existence on this sentence, holding her very breath while awaiting his answer.

If he will only say, "Because I love you," what cares she that the heavens are black above her; that the nature of her mission to Paris is no longer a secret, and an ignominious death very near? Love with a woman reaches beyond all else, and Linda Dubois possesses a heart of fire, coquette though she may have been.

Captain Tom does not fall into the trap. His regard for the lovely woman has never gone beyond the admiration point, though he would think it poor policy to say so now.

"It does not matter, mam'selle, what the motive may have been, I am enough interested in your welfare to intervene when the authorities have declared your life forfeited. I come with this paper. I warn you of the danger. You can quietly leave Paris and be safe among your friends."

"And if I refuse to go"

He shrugs his shoulders in the French way.

"That is your lookout, mam'selle. I should be sorry to hear you make such a decision," he says, solemnly, "for as sure as the French forts are thundering their defiance at the foe just now Governor Trochu means to have you pay the penalty of your—indiscretion, if you remain in Paris."

Her manner changes.

"Captain Tom, twice have you saved my life. Tell me what I can do in return. There is nothing too great to ask, if it lies in my power to grant."

He is deceived. Forgets the nature of the woman with whom he deals; falls into a little trap, as it were, headlong.

"I know of nothing, mam'selle, unless you would tell me who the young girl is whose picture is in yonder album—she at the Coliseum. How you became acquainted with her. Where she may be found at present——"

He stops abruptly. Something in her face and eyes warn him. Just as the rattlesnake whirrs its note when strange feet draw near.

"You are deeply interested in Myra?" she asks.

He assumes indifference just in time.

"She makes me think of a sister whom I lost years ago. Her name was Myra, too. Never mind, mam'selle, another time will do as well."

His words appease her. The angry look vanishes, and a smile covers her lovely face.

"Then you expect to meet me again some day, Monsieur le Captain?"

"It would be strange if fortune did not bring us together again," he replies, rising.

"You are not going so soon, monsieur?"

"It is as well. I have finished my business here; why delay? Besides, my duty calls. It is as you

say, I am in the government employ. My grandfather was Lafayette's dearest friend, and I seek to repay the debt we owe to la belle France."

"You will drink a glass of light wine with me?"

He looks into those glorious eyes. He is lost!

"Certainly, *ma belle*, with pleasure," he murmurs.

The woman in the nun's dress leaves the room, and Captain Tom seats himself again.

He is yawning behind his hand when a very singular thing occurs.

A figure glides into the room noiselessly, and lays a folded paper on the table at his elbow.

Turning, the girl places a finger on her lips, motions to the table, and vanishes.

Captain Tom jumps to his feet.

"Bless my soul! This is odd! That was Myra herself or her wraith! What next, I wonder? Nothing wrong with those eyes. Jupiter, how their glance thrills me. What does this paper mean? Quite dramatic, I declare!"

He tears it open and reads:

"Wine is a mocker. Take care, Captain Tom!"

CHAPTER V.

THE SNAKE THAT LAY IN THE AMBER GLASS.

There can be no mistaking the nature of the note.

It comes in the form of a warning, proving that a man may be in double danger within the walls of besieged Paris.

The fact that Myra has sent it gives the brave American a peculiar feeling. He is threatened with a rush of blood to the heart, a very dangerous symptom among young persons.

"Bless her," he murmurs, "beautiful mystery that she is. I save her from the mad populace, and now she returns the favor. Something within tells me this is not the end."

It may at any rate be the end of him unless he heeds the warning conveyed in Myra's note, for danger hangs heavy over the head of Captain Tom, danger from more than one source, threatening to drag him down into the maelstrom which is about to rend fair Paris.

Being a man of action instead of a dreamer, the American immediately sets his mind upon the game that is upon him.

In one sense it is not a very great surprise, this fact of his being threatened by the fair Alsatian. She has been playing a desperate game with Captain Tom as an antagonist, and, as present appearances would indicate, has lost.

What her object may be in endeavoring to drug him he does not pretend to analyze just now, but it must be a deep one.

She knows he is in the service of the French government, while she works in secret with the German flag next her heart. This alone makes them foes; but Captain Tom has seen much of the world, and unless he makes a terrible mistake the fair Linda cares more for him than an ordinary individual. This fact adds another strange link in the chain that is being forged around him.

These things pass through his mind with great rapidity, and he has about made up a plan of action, when he hears the rustling of feminine garments, that indicates Linda's return.

She comes with a bright smile, bearing a small silver salver, on which is a bottle of wine and two

glasses. Her guest is sitting just where she left him. Linda glances at him keenly, but reads nothing upon that impassive face, for Captain Tom is not in the habit of betraying his thoughts.

While she sets the salver on a small table, he endeavors to make up his mind how his wine is to be doctored. Surely, as it comes from the bottle it will be pure, for Linda means to drink in company with him.

Thus he decides that the drug must already have been dropped into the goblet intended for him, or else her white fingers will manipulate it as she pours out the wine.

Keen though his eyes are he fails to detect any such action on her part, and yet when she passes the amber goblet toward him, keeping the opal tinted one herself, he is quite certain the thing has been accomplished.

Now comes the trying moment. He knows it may be death to him to swallow the contents of that glass, but in what way will he avoid it. With such a beautiful temptress smiling in his face, it were almost impossible for the ordinary man to resist the decree of fate—he would be strongly urged to seize his glass, clink it against her own, and swallow the decoction prepared by her fair hands.

Men have gone to their deaths with their eyes wide open before now, when the blow has been struck by a woman they loved, and history will continue to repeat itself many times ere this hoary old world of ours gives way to the ravages of decay, and drops back to the cold, cheerless order of a moon.

In this instance one thing saves Captain Tom—

he is not in love with the fair Alsatian, no matter what the state of her feelings toward him may be. Thus he is able to control his actions and work out the plan for his own salvation.

As he takes the glass she offers him his hand touches hers, and it seems as though a flash of electricity must have passed through his whole system, such is the strange feeling which he experiences.

Not by a single sign does he betray the fact that he is aware of the danger menacing him. He takes the fatal goblet—the rich odor of the wine reaches his nostrils—it gives him the idea he has been hunting for.

"Pardon, mam'selle, but unless I mistake, you have respect for a vow, however lightly taken."

He says this gravely. The Alsatian turns pale. Is he about to refuse to drink?

"Merci, monsieur, you have not forsworn all our native wines—you have not become a teetotaler since last we rode past the *cafes chantants* on the Champs Elysees, stopping to taste the best poor Monsieur Jacques can put before his guests in these troublous times?"

The American laughs lightly.

"Oh, mam'selle, it is not so bad as that. I have not forsworn the wines you Parisians drink like water, but once upon a time I made a solemn vow that never again would I taste this particular vintage unless it had that peculiar piquancy which a little grated nutmeg alone can give."

Linda utters an exclamation—her face at once loses its frown—she is again smiling.

"I fear you may think me foolish, but an old bachelor like myself sometimes falls into the evil

practice of indulging these idle fancies—no doubt they are selfish——"

"Say no more, Monsieur Tom. Why should you apologize for such a simple thing? It is I who should beg pardon for not anticipating your wants. Have the goodness to excuse me for a moment and I will see whether they have such a thing in the house."

He is about to murmur, "With pleasure," but thinking the words too significant, merely bows and smiles. The fair Linda sweeps out of the room, only too anxious to obey a bachelor's whim.

Ah! the coast is clear. Captain Tom has been reclining indolently in his easy-chair, but he speedily loses that look of apathy. Hardly has the rustle of feminine garments passed beyond his range of hearing than he bends forward, takes the glass that he has deposited upon the tray, smells of its contents, holds it up so that the light shines through the rich wine held within, and then shakes his head, as if baffled in the attempt to discover the identity of the drug it contains. In addition to several other accomplishments, Captain Tom is interested in the strange elements of the science of poisons—toxicology—and he has fancied it would be easy to discover the nature of the scheming Alsatian's drug.

He does not mean to stop there. Danger lurks in that amber goblet, and cannot be dislodged any too soon. Already he has seen the opportunity. There is an open fire-place in the room, where a fire, made down for the night, smolders. He turns toward it, glass in hand, bends down, empties the wine in among the ashes, and then rises with a grim smile of satisfaction.

Taking out a snowy pocket-handkerchief he ruthlessly thrusts it into the goblet, which he instantly cleans with the neatness and dispatch of a high-toned waiter at the Hotel de Louvre.

Still he is not done.

The glass must be filled again just as the fair Alsatian left it. Captain Tom's hand is as steady as a rock while he allows the ruby fluid to escape until a certain imaginary line upon the goblet is reached.

Then he sets the bottle down with a grimace at its lightened condition, and inwardly hopes Linda will not have her attention called to the lowered line of its contents.

He is careful to place things just as they were, and then leans back in his chair with a sigh of satisfaction. Fortune has smiled upon him. It was not so very difficult a matter, after all.

Thus a short interval passes, and then, attracted by a rustling of the curtains in the quarter where Myra had vanished, the American looks up to see that sweet face among the folds of the portiere. One finger is pressed upon her lips, indicating silence; she shakes her head, blows him a kiss, and is gone.

Captain Tom feels strangely agitated. There is a volcano within his veins that threatens a speedy eruption. Somehow the presence of the girl whom he has so singularly met on several occasions always thrills him in this way. His thoughts are interrupted, for he hears Linda coming. She enters the room, breathing hard, as though it has been something of an effort to reach the culinary department of the sacred convent.

Still her face is marked by triumph, and she holds

aloft a nutmeg grater as a victor might the spoils of conquest.

"Ah, Captain Tom, cruel tyrant, see what I have done to humor your caprice—reddened my cheeks by the exertion until I look only fit for the kitchen."

The bachelor, thus brought to the bar, vehemently protests, and declares that he never saw her look more charming, which compliment from the man she loves has the effect of making her eyes sparkle, though she rattles on:

"You are like the rest of your sex, monsieur —gay deceivers all. You have learned in Paris to flatter. Do not shake your head and look displeased. I am not a silly girl, but one accustomed to reading men."

All this while she has been scraping the nutmeg into his wine, until the surface is covered with the floating dust, at which stage Tom firmly but gently clasps her wrist.

"Enough, mam'selle. A spoon, if you please, and then we will drink to our meeting again, when this cruel war is over."

"I shall never forget that it is because of your regard for me, Captain Tom, that I am indebted for my life. But for that these Parisians, who are shut up like rats in a trap, would before this hour have taken me to the Prison La Roquette, and perhaps to the guillotine in front."

Her dark eyes are fastened upon his while she thus speaks, and the man of nerve, who has hunted tigers in the jungles of India, feels more uneasy under this glance than he ever remembers has been his lot when facing a striped Bengal devil among the tall grasses beyond his bungalow.

This woman is dangerous, whether she hates or

loves; her dazzling beauty renders her doubly so; she has a keen mind, and when battling for some object which has become sacred in her eyes, whether country or lover, will not allow any scruples to stand in the way to success. With her "all's fair in love or war."

Captain Tom idly stirs the contents of his glass, but his mind is aflame; he puzzles over the meaning of this scene, and resolves to make a desperate attempt to solve it.

He is afraid of no danger, and once he has made up his mind nothing of an ordinary nature can cause him to change it.

The time has come; he removes the spoon and raises his glass.

"Mam'selle, you and I, by the fortunes of war, chance to be on opposite sides, but that should not make us foes, any more than it prevents us from each toasting the cause dear to our hearts. Here, then, is to the Right; may it succeed no matter on which side it lies."

"I can drink to that toast, Monsieur Tom," the fair Alsatian cries immediately.

They drain their tiny glasses.

"I pity you, monsieur," she laughs, evidently noting the grim look which he cannot keep from showing upon his face as he quaffs the villainous compound; but Tom is game to the backbone, and at once boldly declares:

"Ah! that was nectar fit for the gods! and all the more delightful because it has been brewed by such lovely fingers. I don't wonder some of the ancient worthies we read about thought it a privilege, when about to commit suicide, to have the fatal glass handed to them by one they loved. I should im-

agine, as you must perceive, mam'selle, that it—what the duse was I about to say— well, it doesn't matter anyway, for really I must be going. You see, the fellows in the works on Mont Valerien will be out of ammunition, and I chance to know that provisions are being received in Paris by the underground passage. Jove! what ails me, anyhow? Do you know, my wits seem wandering. I believe you must have intoxicated me with one of your divine glances, my dearest Linda," he rambles on, while he clasps her white hand, raising it to his lips several times in a sort of maudlin way. "I can't remember ever having experienced this strange sensation before. Why, my eyes are like lead—my senses reel! Confusion take it, I fail to see anything but dancing lights. I shall not let you go, Linda. This must be a vertigo, caused by anxiety and improper food during the siege. It will soon pass. Just now I would give all I possess for a wink—of—sleep."

The Alsatian's face is gleaming with triumph, but she looks upon the American with love, not hate; a troubled expression might also be seen upon her face, as though in her mind she is uneasy concerning the future.

She passes the free hand caressingly over Captain Tom's white brow. How tenderly it lingers among his thick locks.

"Sleep and fear not, Tom. Your Linda is here. She will watch over you. Sleep—sleep "

The soft tone of her voice alone is a lullaby; how she lingers upon his name; it thrills the man to realize that this scheming beauty loves him; he thinks of the rattlesnake of his native country, so velvety soft, and yet quick as lightning to resent

the coming of an intruder. Somehow this fair German spy makes him draw a comparison with the serpent, whose warning rattle has been the last sound in many a poor doomed wretch's ear.

Murmuring low words, disconnected and in reality meaningless, poor Captain Tom finally lies back in his chair, as in a stupor. Mam'selle Linda ceases her caressing movement—she bends down and looks into his face.

"At last, my king!" she murmurs.

A fascination draws her down close to his mustached face, then turning she suddenly leaves the room.

Hardly has she passed beyond the portals of the door than the apparently sealed lids of the American's eyes fly open, and he breathes:

"That was a treacherous kiss; but in the discharge of his duty I trust Tom Pilgrim can endure much. I impatiently await the siren's next move."

A great surprise was in store for Captain Tom.

CHAPTER VI.

MICKEY M'CRAY.

The man who thus breathes his thoughts half aloud is a peculiar mixture. He has never known what fear was in the face of a human or brute foe, and yet his heart is troubled when he thinks of the lovely Alsatian who has expressed her love for him. A woman might make him tremble where no other power under heaven could have the same effect.

He lies in the chair perfectly motionless, but his

mind is very busy endeavoring to solve this strange enigma.

One thing is evident; it has not been poison which Linda placed in the amber glass. The snake that lurked there was only calculated to steal his senses away and leave him powerless.

Why?

Captain Tom has decided to adopt a bold course, and discover, if he can, what the motive of the Alsatian spy may be. He does not believe she is acting wholly from her own will; some power there is behind the throne that forces her to thus make a prisoner of him. He has already made up his mind with regard to one point. It has been suspected by Governor Trochu and his generals, for some time past, that in Paris there is a certain league banded together with the purpose of conveying information to the hated enemy.

These spies have thus far managed to outwit the keenest detectives in the city, which has for long years had the reputation of possessing the shrewdest officers in the world.

From time to time their dire influence has been felt, and always at the expense of the brave men who defend poor Paris. A sortie is made at a point believed to be weak, and lo! the desperate Frenchmen rush into the jaws of a blind battery; they are mowed down, and the retreat becomes a panic. It is planned to blow up one of the Prussian forts on Chatillon, but at the hour arranged for the explosion, a regiment of Uhlans drops into the secret works, and behold, every engineer is gobbled—the plan is a failure.

These little incidents have a depressing effect upon the French forces; they know their plans

have been betrayed by some one who is trusted; they are ready to meet the Prussians of King William and Bismarck face to face, and fight to the death, but the consciousness of foes within the councils of their leaders unnerves them, rank and file.

It is with the great hope of learning something about this secret cabal that Captain Tom resolves to take the risk, and allow himself to be the creature of circumstances.

He is not long left alone, for again the rustle of the curtain tells him some one comes; then he feels a soft hand passed over his face.

What is this that drops? Tears! Great heavens! who cares enough for him to weep over his fate?

He is tempted to partly open his eyes, but a low voice comes to his ear—he will wait. The words that fall are in French, but Tom understands it as well as his mother tongue; his ears greedily drink in all that is said.

It is Myra, and she mourns over him as a mother might over a wayward child. A queer comparison, perhaps, and yet there is something in her words and manner that make Captain Tom feel a culprit.

"Poor Captain Tom! It is as I feared. Her eyes have bewitched him. He forgot my warning, and like others before, he has paid the penalty. He saved me, and in spite of his folly I must keep him from this dreadful fate. How noble he looks, and, how brave No wonder she loves him in her tiger way, but she shall not have him; his fate does not lie that way."

The soft hand passes over his brow. For the life of him Captain Tom cannot refrain from suddenly opening his eyes.

She sees him, and starts back with a little gasp of alarm, but the bold adventurer has already imprisoned that fugitive hand, and is pressing it rapturously to his lips.

"You—are—not drugged, Monsieur Tom?" she whispers, astonishment and delight struggling for the mastery.

She makes a faint show of dragging away the little hand he is figuratively devouring, but he will not allow such a thing.

"Yes, drugged with happiness when you are near, *ma belle.* I believe if I were dead and you touched me life would come again."

"Fie, monsieur, you rave," she breathes, placing a hand over his mouth, which he promptly kisses.

"Plainly, then, mam'selle, I heeded your warning."

"And the drugged wine?"

"Was soaked up by the ashes in yonder fire-place. It was a pity to waste it so, but," with an expressive shrug, "under the circumstances I thought it best. How can I thank——"

"Say no more, monsieur. This is no time for wasting words. Your life is in danger."

"I know it," he replies, laconically, looking up into her sweet eyes, as though he would turn her words to another meaning.

Blushing, the girl goes on:

"You must leave this building—at once!"

"Impossible, mam'selle. I am drugged, you know," he replies, grimly.

"You will fall into the power of the secret league that all Paris knows about and fears, yet cannot put a hand on a single individual member."

"For that reason only I remain."

She catches his meaning at last, and a look of mingled admiration and alarm shows itself upon her face. She lets fall a little French exclamation of despair.

"Can nothing turn you from this determination, Monsieur Tom?" she entreats, wringing her hands, which at last she has freed from his clasp.

"Nothing—save death."

He says it quietly. Captain Tom is far from being a boaster, and can hardly be influenced to speak of adventures in his career which would make other men heroes.

"It is a pity, and you so handsome, so brave. But you may succeed—*mon Dieu*, who knows?" with a sudden inspiring thought.

"I mean to," says the captain, quietly.

The girl suddenly starts and listens.

"I hear voices—they come! *Au revoir*, Monsieur Tom, and remember I may be near when least you expect it. You will see strange things. The good Father above protect you and save poor, unhappy France!"

She is gone as suddenly as she appeared; these words have been breathed into the ears of the American rather than spoken, and he is left there alone.

Not for long; already has he caught the sounds that frightened away his good angel, and it is evident that the speakers approach, so he once more lies in his chair as though bereft of his senses, his head resting on his left shoulder.

They enter the room. A man's voice sounds among the others, and its full, rich tones arouse a warm feeling in the heart of the American.

It is Mickey McCray.

The latter is a man of considerable education, and

as smart as he is witty. He has looked up to Captain Tom as his savior, and would lay down his life if need be for the American. Like his employer, Mickey is a rolling stone, a soldier of fortune, ready to float with the wind, but when once set in his way, impossible to move.

The manner of their meeting was singular, and may be briefly mentioned. Strange things occur in Paris every day, and none may wonder that an impulsive Irishman like Mickey McCray usually found himself in a scrape with each revolving twenty-four hours.

Months before, when the siege was only talked about as a mere possibility, Captain Tom found himself one of a crowd of thousands pressing around the Tour de St. Jacques in the Rue de Rivoli, and gazing upward. From mouth to mouth word went that a crazy man had gone to the top of the tower to leap off as the result of a foolish bet. The excitable French temperament showed itself, and there was as great a commotion in the neighborhood as though the ghost of Bonaparte had appeared.

Then a man was seen on top of the tower. It was from this place history tells us the signal for the massacre of the Huguenots was given nearly three hundred years before. This figure advanced to the edge above and then seemed appalled at the sea of faces below. A thousand tongues shouted out to him, arms were waved to keep him from his mad purpose. Then several gendarmes made their appearance on the high tower of St. Jacques, and the madman was in custody.

Captain Tom, urged by curiosity, fought a way in to see the prisoner, as he suspected he was a foreigner, an Irishman, and when he heard Mickey

McCray's story he was tempted to laugh, only that the poor fellow looked so downcast in the hands of the officers.

It was only a wager. A companion had made a bet that he could have two thousand persons gathered around the tower in the time it took Mickey to mount the stairs, giving five seconds to a step. He had circulated this startling report, and won the wager, but afraid of the fury of the crowd, he had fled, leaving the victim of his practical joke in the toils.

Captain Tom took to the Irishman on sight.

He recognized a kindred spirit, and following to the police headquarters had interceded for the now alarmed Mickey. By some secret power the American got him off with only a warning never to attempt such a feat again, for the authorities seemed determined to believe that his wager was really to make a jump from the Tour de St. Jacques, trusting to the good luck that hovers over fools and Irishmen to save his life.

From that hour Mickey McCray had been the devoted friend of the American. There is nothing under the sun he would not attempt if Captain Tom expressed a wish.

Why he is in the service of the fair Alsatian, the spy of Von Moltke, the reader can doubtless guess with little trouble. It has not been done without a deep purpose, and the American now seems in a fair way to reap the full benefit of his strategy.

Three persons enter the apartment. They are Linda, the Irishman, and a nun. As the German spy has so great an influence over the Lady Superior, the lay sisters and nuns are ready to obey her slightest request:

"You see," says the fair Alsatian, it is as I told you. He appears to be dead, but in truth he only sleeps."

Mickey takes up one of the American's arms and lets it drop; it falls heavily.

"Begorra, it's precious little life there is in his body. If I could gabber French like a parrot I'd be after giving ye my opinion of this business, bad luck—murder" dancing like a dervish in a Constantinople mosque.

"What ails you?" demands Linda, eying the man suspiciously, as though she fears that he may have taken leave of his senses.

"Sure's it's my belief a rat bit me toe, or else I stepped on a bloody tack," roars McCray, all the while perfectly aware of the fact that it has been the foot of Captain Tom that has so suddenly descended upon his own with a grinding empasis.

The effect is gained. Stopped in the middle of his tirade, Mickey does not again attempt to free his mind, and the disclosure of his own relations with the American is for the time being at least rendered obscure.

The nun has not a word to say; perhaps she is under a vow of eternal silence, and though ready to hear and do whatever those in a position to order may command, she must never again allow her voice to be heard.

She is as large and strong as Mickey himself, and is apparently used to lifting burdens, which would explain why Linda has brought her to this place. At a word from the Alsatian, whose stay in Paris is limited to twenty-four hurs, unless she wishes to die, these two raise up the seemingly senseless form of Captain Tom.

Linda leads the way, light in hand, her somber garments causing her to look like some strange priestess. The lamp-light falls upon her handsome face, and a close observer would notice the various emotions that play by turns there. Evidently she has deeper interests in this game than any one suspects.

They pass through gloomy corridors. The convent is almost deserted now, since there is such a demand for nurses among the wouunded defenders of Paris, so that they meet but one or two sable figures on the way, and these shrink into cells at one side to allow the strange procession to pass by. From some distant chapel come the voices of a band of sisters chanting a matin hymn, for it is nearer morning now than midnight. Above all else sounds the roar of battle upon the hills around Paris, the deep throbbing sound of the heavy Krupp siege guns, and the nearer reports from the French forts.

Even as they wend their way along there comes a crash tha makes the solid walls quiver. A shell has struck the convent, its tower of gray stone has been hurled down a wreck, but the voices from the cloister instead of ceasing in deadly fear appear to grow louder.

Linda Dubois smiles grimly. These shells cannot fall too often or work deadly destruction upon fair Paris too rapidly to suit her humor. She hates the city, hates all in it, but one, and he is now seemingly hepless and in her power.

They have descended a long sloping corridor, and are now in the cellars of the convent, where doubtless all the treasures of the order have been buried against the fatal day when the Germans shall occupy the capital of the world. Perhaps the French

have never forgotten the fate of Moscow during Napoleon's campaign, and fear that the same doom will come upon their own beloved city.

Under the orders of the imperious woman Mickey and the nun deposit their burden on the stones. Then they raise a large flag in the corner of the cellar, which act reveals a flight of steep steps.

In going down Mickey carries the burden alone, and is not surprised to have a whisper wafted in at his ear:

"Say little, but notice everything. Above all, stand by to aid me."

He presses the arm of Captain Tom to prove that he understands, then with the help of the nun the American is carried along a corridor cut in the rocks, until finally Linda gives the word, and he is laid down.

Watching his chance, Captain Tom takes a glimpse above. What he sees is well calculated to make a less venturesome man shiver. The walls of the cavern are covered with thousands of skulls and bones from the arms and legs of human beings. An inscription is over all. He reads even with that one glance what many travelers have seen—"*Tombeau de la Revolution.*"

CHAPTER VII.

THE CONSPIRACY OF THE CATACOMBS.

They have brought him to the Catacombs of Paris, in whose great caverns it is calculated the bones of some three million human beings have accumulated. At periods like the Revolution deaths oc-

curred with such alarming frequency, a thousand or two a day, that even the church-yards were full, and some wise statesman conceived the idea of emptying them and removing the burial grounds outside the city. So the bones of the hundreds of thousands were collected and carried on funeral cars amid religious ceremonies to the great caverns which had once been stone quarries, but were henceforth to become the Parisian catacombs.

These underlie about a tenth of the city, and in some places houses have been known to sink into the caverns. At all times they are esteemed gloomy places, and have been the refuge of more than one desperate gang of thieves whose ultimate destiny must be the galleys at Toulon.

Captain Tom recognizes the place. He has been in the Tombs of the Revolution before. It does not surprise him very much to learn that the secret cabal of foreign spies have their rendezvous here; really, a more fitting place could hardly be selected.

There is one main entrance to the catacombs, with some eighty odd steps, but a score or two minor entrances afford ingress. At times these have, for various reasons, been closed up by the police authorities, and thus far during the siege the people have been kept out of the caverns.

Should the Prussian shells continue to fall as they have been doing this night in the Latin Quartier the distracted populace will demand that the catacombs be opened, in order that they may seek refuge there from the storm of iron hail rattling about them.

When they have deposited Captain Tom upon the cold rock they stand there listening.

Sounds from above are but faintly heard in this underground place—even the heavy discharges of

cannon a few miles away seem to be but a vibration of the earth, very delicate.

They are out alone in this city of the dead. Another light flashes into view, persons advance toward them, Linda holds the lamp, and eagerly she makes signals.

They are returned. The fair Alsatian breathes a sigh of relief, and then, as if seized by a singular impulse, she bends down and looks in the face of the man lying there. Captain Tom's nerves are wrought up to a high pitch by the exciting events that have already occurred, and those impending, but he has proved himself a cool customer, and does not flinch under her close observation, even with the lamp held near his eyes.

Men advance, and the American hears the deep guttural German. It would be fatal to a person to speak it upon the boulevards or in the *pensions* and *cafes chantants* of Paris at this time, when everything German is hated so bitterly, because the guns of Von Moltke are knocking at the gates of the proud capital.

They come up, and although Captain Tom knows the risk he takes he cannot resist partly opening his eyes and peeping at them, these daring spies who have risked their lives in Paris in order to send word daily to their countrymen.

He has expected to see Germans, and the shock is therefore all the more severe. Not one of them would be taken for a Teuton upon the streets. They are apparently Frenchmen, but the manner in which the Northern tongue is spoken proclaims their true nationality.

Captain Tom sees much in that one look. The man upon whom his startled eyes fall first of all is

a prominent officer connected with the defense of the city, one of Trochu's right hand men, and upon whom suspicion has never once fallen.

One of the others the American also recognizes, while two are total strangers. He believes he would know them again, though.

Strange greetings pass between them. The nun has vanished, perhaps retiring through the dark corridors to the convent, her mission done. Mickey McCray stands there with a blank look upon his face. It is astonishing how foolish the Irishman can appear when he desires.

The men watch him suspiciously, but Linda sets all fears at rest by declaring that Mickey cannot speak or understand more than a word or two of the German language, so that his presence would not interfere with their consultation.

With that they launch forth, plans are discussed, comments made upon the defenses and weak points in the French lines, and confidences exchanged concerning the positive end that now seems so near at hand.

Little do they suspect that a pair of ears are drinking in every word eagerly. Captain Tom has allowed himself to be brought here for this very purpose. He is French in heart, though an American by birth, and in this bitter war between Gaul and Teuton all his sympathies are with the race of Lafayette, his grandfather's personal friend.

What he hears may cause these four men to be shot some fine morning at the city gates, or under the French ports. The chassepots of the National Guard have sent more then one spy to his long account since the siege of Paris began.

Presently the talk becomes personal. The officer

in authority demands to know how the American comes here, and what are his relations with the government. His tone intimates that he would also like to understand what concern Linda has in his welfare.

She tells much of the story—at least they know that Captain Tom is a secret agent of the French.

This seems to be enough. Captain Tom hears a peculiar click-click. It sets his teeth on edge, knowing that this means the drawing back of a revolver's hammer.

"It is only a question of expediency," says the confidant of Governor Trochu, for it is he who has drawn the weapon.

In a moment it will touch the ear of the American—a pressure of the finger and his doom is sealed. Still he moves not; his grit is simply astounding, since almost any man must have sprung into life at such a menacing peril.

Captain Tom is ready to take the risk. He banks upon a human emotion, and that is love. Nor has he made a mistake.

Mickey McCray has drawn a long breath, and is just on the point of hurling himself upon the general in his impulsive Irish way, when his quick eye notes something. A small, white hand has clutched the weapon of the officer, and with the firmness of iron turned it aside.

"What would you do, madman?" asks Linda, looking into the man's face.

He mutters an exclamation.

"Rid the world of a dangerous man—one who has given our people much trouble I am sure. Come, Linda, release my weapon. It is but the fate of a spy at any rate."

"You forget, general, he is my prisoner, not yours. I choose to spare his life."

"I believe you are in love with him," cries the other, with some show of passion.

"You are at liberty to believe anything you like. This man saved my life. I shall not see him injured by you."

Her manner is superb. Captain Tom never came so near being in love with her as he does at this moment, when she keeps the eager revolver of the traitor general from ending him.

"Do you know what I've a great notion to do?" rates the man, grinding his teeth.

"Let us hear, general."

"To tear my hand away from your clasp and finish him where he lies."

"You will not do it, general. I will tell you why. It is because you are a coward, and you know that I would avenge such an act on the spot."

He shivers under the look of this woman, for she has spoken words of truth. Although daring much in his capacity of a spy in the councils of the French leaders, he dares not arouse Linda Dubois to do her worst.

"Would you shoot me?" he asks, reproachfully.

"Try me and see."

With that she casts his hand from her, and at the same time draws a small revolver from her bosom.

The man looks into her face, sees something there that tells him to beware, and puts away his own weapon.

"As a favor to you, *ma belle*, I spare the American's life, but if he lives let him beware how he crosses my path."

Her lip curls in derision, for Linda has a very poor

opinion of this man, by whose side she has worked in the interests of her king.

"Depend upon it, Captain Tom is able to take his part, as you will find to your cost if ever you run across him," she replies.

"But why have you brought him here?" he continues, watching her suspiciously.

"I have my reasons. Listen, and I will tell you as much as I choose. In the first place I wished you all to recognize my zeal in behalf of our cause, for, although I will not allow you to murder this brave man in cold blood before my eyes, it is nevertheless my intention that he shall no longer be of service to the enemy."

"By making him your husband, Linda, you might take him into camp," suggests the general, with a sneer.

She ignores his presence, or at any rate pays no heed to his words.

"I have brought him here for another reason. If our plans hold good, in two days more the German engineers will have succeeded in reaching the catacombs in their underground operations; then, while the darkness of night hangs over all, whole brigades will pass through to appear with the rising sun in the center of Paris, whose doom will then be sealed.

"For reasons of my own I desire that this man, my prisoner, general, should be secreted in this tomb at that hour."

"You do not say what your reasons are; perhaps I can guess them."

"You are at liberty to do as you please," she replies, coldly. "As for myself, I have been warned to leave Paris inside of twenty-four hours; when

the gates shut to-morrow night at seven my fate is sealed if I am found."

"And they know you to be a spy? This is singular forbearance. Ah, I see, you owe it to him!"

"That is why I save his life. I have some sense of gratitude if I am Linda Dubois."

"What favor do you wish to ask of me?

"You are quick to guess that I desire anything! Still it is true. Can you spare a couple of your men? Francois at least will no longer dare to show himself upon the streets."

"I see you have heard of his narrow escape. He has become alarmed. The rope was very near him a few hours ago. Jacques also is a marked man. Both are at your service."

"A thousand thanks. I wish to leave them with my man to watch over the American. They are faithful?"

"As true as the magnet to the pole," declares the general, while to himself he adds, "so far as my personal interests are concerned."

"Then I accept your offer, general. Give them orders to obey me, while I speak to Mickey."

The officer took his men aside; by accident they are close to the form upon the rock, so that Captain Tom hears every word that is spoken, and it may be set down as certain that he listens with the deepest attention, since the conversation so closely concerns his interests.

"Listen, Francois, Jacques. I will leave you to guard this American. See to it that by morning he is a dead man."

"How shall it be done?" asks the fellow called Francois, who hates Captain Tom on his own account, since he has recognized in him the man who

turned the fury of the populace from Myra upon himself in the streets of Paris.

He has hardly recovered as yet from that terrible peril, and will never forget his fright.

"It will be easily accomplished. Pretend that he is trying to escape, fall upon him, and give him the knife."

"And if the Irish devil interferes——"

The general shrugs his shoulders:

"*Parbleau!* there are two of you; what more do you want?"

The men nod grimly.

"One word more, general—the pay?"

"Twenty gold Napoleons to each if you succeed. Failure may mean your death, for I chance to know something about this man. He is a hard fighter when aroused," giving the form of poor Captain Tom a touch with his boot.

"Consider it done," says Francois, "and I only wish the time was at hand now."

"Patience, man. Revenge is all the sweeter for being delayed. Here comes the fair Linda. All is arranged," he said to her; "my men are transferred to your service. Order them as you will. As for myself, with Antoine I will accompany you to your hiding-place, and there look over the latest maps. Then we can signal the news from the old quay. The police may see the rocket ascend, but when they rush to the scene the place will be deserted."

"That is satisfactory, general. I see you are determined we shall be friends for the benefit of the flag under which we fight," taking out a minute German banner and kissing it.

"We will forget everything save that we belong

to the Fatherland, and are sworn to the service of our king, Wilhelm. I have something to show you, sent by Bismarck himself. Come!

She turns and gives Mickey one look.

"Remember!"

Then she moves away.

When Linda is gone the tomb seems to have lapsed back to its original darkness, for her presence has brightened it. The heaps of skulls, the cryptogram formed of human bones upon the walls, whose meaning few can decipher—these things stand out with hideous distinctness under the blaze of the lamp which has been fastened to a bracket in the wall.

Captain Tom is satisfied. He has been amply repaid for what he has endured, and although his eyes have seen little, his ears have been open.

In one thing he is disappointed; he has not yet been able to fathom the secret of Linda Dubois and Myra. He remembers the latter exclaiming, "I am blind!" and yet her eyes have at another time dazzled him with their brilliancy—strange eyes, indeed, they must be to change their nature at the will of their owner.

This is a personal matter; it will do to ponder over at some future time, but just at present other things demand attention.

His own situation is precarious, since his guards have received instructions to make away with him as soon as possible; but Captain Tom worries little on that account.

Cautiously he opens his eyes and surveys the scene. The two guards are whispering together near the pile of skulls, while Mickey watches them suspiciously.

The American moves his foot a trifle and taps the Irishman's toes. In an instant the latter bends over him.

"They mean to murder me. Take care of one when the time comes, and leave the other to me," whispers Tom.

Already the guards have seen Mickey's move.

"Get up there. We understand—you would go through his garments. That shall be our pleasure after——" and a suggestive nod completes the sentence, spoken in French.

Mickey obeys orders without a word, but he is on his guard, and when these fiends of the tomb attempt to carry out their plan of murder they will be apt to believe they have run up against an Irish buzz saw.

The general's orders were explicit. He desires that as little delay as possible may occur, and hence it is expected that in a short time Francois and his companion will get to work.

Inch by inch Captain Tom is pushing his arm down. The movement is so slow that it does not attract attention, but all the while it draws nearer his pocket where lies the faithful weapon which in more than one desperate encounter has never failed him.

Once he gets that in the firm grasp of his hand, and he dares defy double the number of foes that now confront him.

All he asks is a fair show. A brave man needs no more to prove his courage.

By this time Francois and his colleague have determined to earn the forty Napoleons without any further delay. They exchange a glance that means volumes.

Jacques places himself between the Irishman and Captain Tom, but as soon as Mickey sees that the decisive moment is at hand he jumps at the burly spy with the fury of a stag hound.

It is a circus to watch Mickey fight. He uses every muscle in his body, and although he has an antagonist much larger than himself, his agility amazes the enemy, who finds it hard to understand whether Mickey means to stand upon his head or climb on his back.

At any rate Jacques is wholly taken up here, and cannot offer any assistance should his companion require it

On his part Francois has leaped toward the prostrate form of the American, and as he thus advances he gives vent to the cry:

"He recovers! he would escape! Death to the American spy!"

CHAPTER VIII.

CAPTAIN TOM ON DECK.

Francois' alarm is all moonshine, of course, for as yet Captain Tom has not moved at all, but it serves the purpose of the man from Alsace, who desires to make it appear that he is about to leap upon a desperate enemy endeavoring to escape, and not a helpless man lying there senseless and still.

There is enough French blood in him to give the desire for dramatic show. Think of a soldier bearing a pardon for a man about to be shot, sitting upon a hill-side for hours with his horse nibbling the grass, waiting until the crowd gathered, so that he could dash headlong among them, waving the paper and shouting, "Pardon!" at the very moment

when the file of soldiers were ready to fire! That is what Francois once did when serving his time in the French army.

When he utters his cry of alarm he is not a dozen feet from the prostrate American, and advancing at such a pace that the latter will have no more than sufficient time to sit up ere his enemy is upon him.

The man is in deadly earnest, for he has drawn a cruel-looking knife shaped much like a Malay creese, and with this he doubtless intends to earn the Napoleons that are dancing before his eyes in such mad glee.

At this critical instant from out the gloom beyond the range of the lamp-light a figure flashes. It crosses the intervening space with the speed of a spirit of the air.

Francois sees and he recoils.

"Myra!" falls from his lips.

"Coward! poltroon! you are only brave enough to stab a helpless man. Stand back! you shall not lay a finger on him!"

Captain Tom is sitting up now, but no one pays any heed to him.

Francois glares at the girl, who, like a spirit of light, has intervened between himself and his intended prey.

Once he has professed to love this girl, but subsequent events have caused him to change his mind, and he hates her most cordially. We have already seen how, in the blackness of his fury, he attempted to set the mob on her, under the pretense that she was what he really turned out to be—a German spy, and how a bomb from the Krupp gun at Chatillon was the only thing that saved him from the fury of the enraged populace.

Now he looks as though he could tear her to pieces. She stands between his vengeance and Captain Tom, as if her small figure could defend the American.

"Out of the way, viper!" hisses the man.

He brushes past her. She clings to his arm with loud crys of alarm.

"Captain Tom, awaken! arouse yourself! The saints preserve you, or all is lost! Awaken!"

Her voice resounds through that weird place where the bones of the victims of the Revolution lie.

Francois, so enraged that he knows not and cares not what he does, gives his arm a desperate swing. Unable to maintain her hold, Myra is thrown to the rocky floor.

The brute has conquered the weak girl, but his triumph is short-lived. One more step forward, flushed with his recent exertion, and he comes face to face with—a man.

Captain Tom, as he sees Myra swung around so roughly and cast to the floor, feels every muscle and nerve in his whole athletic frame swell with renewed animation, eager to avenge the injury.

As though made of steel springs he bounds to his feet. To the astounded Francois he seems just eight feet in height. The coward shakes as though he has the ague. It is one thing to slay Captain Tom in his sleep and quite another to meet him face to face with that black look upon his face.

He walks directly up to Francois, his eye piercing in its intensity, burning into the other's very brain. True, the German spy holds a terrible weapon in his hand, but his arm must have forgotten its cunning—at any rate he does not make the slightest

movement toward using the weapon upon his enemy.

Captain Tom's bearing awes his craven soul; he acts like a man magnetized.

His master deliberately plucks the knife from that murderous hand, and tosses it over among the grinning skulls, where it falls with a ghastly clatter.

In so doing the American has one glimpse of Myra rising to her feet and pressing a cobweb of a kerchief to her cheek. It is only a scratch, to be sure, but her precious blood has been shed by this miscreant.

The thought adds to Captain Tom's fury. His hand seizes Francois by the throat with a grip that threatens to crush the bones.

He shakes him as a terrier might a rat, and each time the terrified wretch's teeth strike together like Spanish castanets.

Between the shakes the American athlete growls out words something like these:

"Strike a lady, you miserable whelp! Try to turn the Amazons of the faubourgs upon her, will you? I would shake the last breath from your carcass only that I have a better fate in store for you. Do you hear, you coward? I am going to hand you over to Trochu, who has longed to make an example of every known German spy in Paris. He will soon have you fit food for the fishes of the Seine. That shall be your doom, you insulter of women, you valiant jackal, bold enough to put a knife in the back of a sleeping man. Why don't you shriek aloud for mercy? Are your lips palsied, or do you scorn to ask a favor of me?"

He gives his victim one last shake, and then looks

into the man's face, to discover that it is growing black under his terrible grip. This causes Captain Tom to remember that all of his power has been thrown into this effort, since the indignation aroused by the cowardly act of Francois has nerved his arm.

He tosses the wretched man aside as one might a cast-off glove, and then turns around, to discover that Myra has vanished again, while the Irishman is dancing a hornpipe or a jig near the body of his fallen foe.

Mickey has almost killed the fellow, but when his antagonist humanely desists, seeing the wretch helpless at his feet, the man has an opportunity to recover his breath.

As he desires to make prisoners of them both, Captain Tom draws some stout cord from his pocket and fastens their arms.

The men have become sullen. It is possible that the treatment to which they were subjected had something to do with the matter. At any rate, they look ugly, as though realizing what their doom will undoubtedly be.

The American pities them not; they knew the risks they were taking when they accepted the hazardous duty of serving as spies upon the movements of the Parisians, and now that fate has come upon them, the best they can do is to meet it with as much fortitude as they possess.

Captain Tom does not care to remain longer in the dismal catacombs. If one of these prisoners can be influenced to confess everything in order to save his life, which is very likely, Governor Trochu and his generals are likely to hear some very interesting facts concerning the effort of the shrewd

German engineers to bore under the hills a passage that shall connect their camp with the underground city of the dead.

Even as it is, enough has been learned of the plan to defeat it, although it has already become patent to the American that the doom of fair Paris is near at hand, since the anaconda toils of the besieging armies have been so constructed that they are now able to throw shells into the city on one side of the Seine, and must speedily convert it into the most gigantic ruin of the century, unless the obstinate spirit of the half-starved inhabitants is crushed, and a white flag sent out asking for terms from the Prussian field marshal or the king's son, Frederick.

Mickey McCray, under orders from the other, speedily arranges the two prisoners. They are fastened together, for Francois has recovered now, with not one word to say. Then the Irishman drives them before him like a yoke of oxen.

It suits his humor to amuse himself from time to time at the expense of the wretches, and even Captain Tom has to smile at some of the witty fellow's sallies.

They leave the Tombeau de Revolution, and by a passage reach other similar caverns where the bones of the victims are piled high, until one stands aghast at the multitude of relics, and comes to the conclusion that Paris has more dead to the square acre than any city extant, not even excepting Rome.

In this way they gain the corner of the triangle; from this point their course changes, and in making for the main entrance they keep going farther away from the hills.

"Halt!" exclaims Captain Tom, and as the strange procession brings up he places his ear close against the wall of rock.

Strange sounds are borne to him—the pick-pick-pick of determined workers in the bowels of the earth. Have some of the old convicts who were once upon a time wont to labor in these quarries returned to the scene of their life work?

He knows that these sounds proceed from the German engineers, who have already bored a way under the city walls. In two days, he remembers, the plot must culminate, but it may be sooner; no time is to be lost.

They move on. At length the entrance is gained, which to them must be an exit. Here they find a strong guard, and questions are asked, but Captain Tom answers them all. The officer begs them to proceed to headquarters, and escorted by several soldiers they leave the darkness of the catacombs behind, and in the early dawn of that January day once more walk the streets of beleaguered Paris.

CHAPTER IX.

A LITTLE AFFAIR UNDER THE WALLS OF PARIS.

General Trochu, in command of the defense of Paris, can seldom be found at the house where he has made his headquarters during the earlier part of the siege, having of late betaken himself to the forts on Mont Valerien. Perhaps he has a deep reason for this. The story of repulse has become so old by this time that doubtless even the patience of a Parisian mob must be worn threadbare. Once the people of the faubourgs cheered Trochu when-

ever he appeared, for in their eyes he was the hero who was to teach the impudent vandals how not to take Paris. Now, months of this business, with scanty food that grows less day by day, and a consciousness that partiality is shown to the rich in the distribution—these things put the people into an ugly state of mind.

Paris is getting in fit condition for the horrors of the Commune.

At any hour it may raise its hydra head, and the first object of its hatred will be the chief of the army.

Doubtless Trochu knows this, and being a wise as well as a brave man, he feels safer at this desperate period among his Franc-tireurs in the forts than upon the boulevards.

On this occasion, however, they are fortunate in finding the general at headquarters, where he has come to secure certain papers.

The great man looks wearied, but greets Captain Tom with warmth; he has great respect for the American who proves his friendship for France at the peril of his life.

An audience is granted, and the story, so far as it relates to matters in which General Trochu can have an interest, is soon told.

A fierce light shows upon the governor's face.

If it is impossible to dislodge the determined enemy who has settled down around the gay capital, he can at least find some satisfaction in dealing him an occasional severe blow. A success once in a while will keep up the spirits of the people and make them have confidence in him.

For months the daily talk has been of an army from the provinces that would come up in the rear

of the German forces, give them a dreadful blow, and raise the siege, but since the bombardment began this hope has dwindled away to a mere nothing.

The general thanks Captain Tom in the extravagant style that is so natural to a Frenchman, and reveals enough of his hastily formed plans to give him an idea as to what he means to do.

Then the two culprits are taken to prison, from which they will come out later and see a file of soldiers accompanying them to the Bois de Boulogne, or somewhere outside the city gates—a few brief orders, a double roll of musketry, and Paris will be rid of two men who have long been secret foes.

Captain Tom seeks rest.

The bombardment about ceases with the coming of morning, but in the evening the iron spheres will again begin to fall upon the half of the beleaguered city nearer Chatillon, to be kept up with great regularity all night long.

At a certain hour Captain Tom awakes and refreshes himself with cold water, of which, thank Heaven, these greedy Germans have not yet been able to cut off the supply.

Then he proceeds to a restaurant near by, and partakes of a frugal meal. Few persons can afford to patronize such places now, and many of the eating houses have closed, but along the Champs Elysees there are a number that still keep open and make a brave show with a scanty larder and slender patronage.

When he has satisfied the inner man as thoroughly as can be done in a city which has been consuming itself for the last few months, Captain Tom hails a fiacre. Few of these are to be seen on the streets; the reason is very plain, since horses are in

demand for food. Funerals even, of the rich, are limited to one vehicle.

Thus he picks up Mickey McCray at a certain place, and together they seek the mouth of the catacombs.

All is quiet here, but ever and anon a company of Franc-tireurs, or one perhaps belonging to the National Guard, passes down the steps.

Having the pass-word, our two friends find no difficulty in entering, and when they reach a certain point witness the preparations that have been made to repulse this shrewd game on the part of the Germans.

Trochu is not personally present, but he has his representative in a smart young officer. Soldiers are massed in waiting and eager to pounce upon the luckless engineers who have done such wonderful work.

The utmost silence is imposed. They can hear the throbbing blows that indicate the near approach of the enemy. At any time now it may be expected that the German engineers will break through the wall and enter the cavern.

An order passes along. All lights are put out, and the French soldiers wait like restless hounds held in the leash while the game is near.

It is not for long. The indomitable power of perseverance that has carried the Germans thus far in their tunneling operation brings about the final act in the drama.

There is a sudden burst of light and a rattling sound, as of fragments of stone falling. Then low exclamations of delight in the deep voices of Germans are heard.

Not a man among the French soldiers moves or

makes a single sound. If they were formed of the solid rock they could not remain more silent.

Captain Tom watches the thin wall being battered down; he sees a dozen Germans in the glare of their lanterns; but these men do not as yet suspect their danger. Just back of them can be noticed a company of Uhlans, brought into this place for an emergency, as they are esteemed the most determined fighters among the host that surrounds Paris.

It is a strange spectacle, especially when one considers that this thing actually occurs at a point inside the walls of the French metropolis.

Captain Tom is close beside the officer who has been left in charge. He knows that the other is a dashing soldier, and has his orders, hence this silence does not surprise the American.

Colonel Duprez awaits the moment when the German engineers have knocked away enough of the wall to widen the breach and allow the passage of several men at the same time.

When this has been done he gives the signal—it is one single word:

"Now!"

The Franc-tireurs, those tigers of the battle, who know not the meaning of the word fear, leap forward, as if shot from a cannon.

They spring through the opening; they are upon the astounded engineers before the stolid Germans can imagine what is the matter; some shots are fired, then the French soldiers rush down upon their inveterate foes, the Uhlans

Now comes the tug of war. A volley stretches a number of the Franc-tireurs low, but over their bodies sweep others; on they rush, coming in contact with the Uhlans. There is a distinct concus-

sion, fierce yells, shots, and all the awful sounds of a terrible battle.

How strange it seems, such a desperate engagement under ground, and in the catacombs at that, living men engaged in deadly work here in the tomb of millions.

The Uhlans fight like brave men, but one by one they are cut down. Their leader is a large, handsome man. Captain Tom believes he has seen him before somewhere, for surely his face is familiar.

When all seems hopeless this man is noticed to give some signal—perhaps a soldier is waiting back in the darkness to carry it on.

An instant later the Uhlan captain goes down with half a dozen Franc-tireurs at his throat. If these fierce fighters allow him to live it will only be because they respect bravery even in a hated enemy. These free fighters take few prisoners in battle, for with them it is death.

"Forward!" shrieks the little colonel, who fancies he has a chance ahead to achieve immortal renown.

If his men can rush along this tunnel, perhaps they may create consternation at Chatillon, providing it extends so far. Who knows but what it may be the turning point in the whole siege, and looking back men will speak with pride of the valiant Jules Duprez, colonel of France-tireurs, who by a bold stroke brought consternation into the ranks of the foe, and drove the first nail in the German coffin.

He leads his men on through the rude tunnel which these unlucky German engineers have spent long weeks in boring. Lights are carried by many, others stumble along as best they can, but all are animated by the one mad desire to burst into the enemy's works and strike a blow that must create conster-

nation, perhaps by spiking the great Krupp siege-guns that nightly send their iron hail into the devoted city.

They make fine progress, and each soldier's heart burns with the desire to create havoc in the midst of the foe.

Without any warning the lights are all suddenly extinguished, and each man is thrown down by a strange concussion of air—a great wave seems to rush through the tunnel, accompanied by a frightful roaring sound. It is as if the earth were groaning.

Can it be one of those terrible convulsions of nature—an earthquake.?

All is still, then the voice of the little colonel is heard in the loud command:

"Lights!"

Men pick themselves up, some more or less bruised by the fall; matches are produced, and one after another the lanterns, such as remain whole, are once more made illuminating agents.

The colonel has already guessed the truth, for his keen sense of smell detects burned powder in the tunnel.

"Comrades, we have lost the game; they have exploded a mine—our passage is blocked. Nevertheless, we will go on and ascertain the worst. Forward!"

It is just as he supposed—an explosion has taken place, and the tunnel rendered a ruin. Soon their passage is blocked by masses of rocks; the powder smoke almost stifles them. There is nothing for it but to turn back. They are terribly disappointed, but at any rate break even with their German foes—indeed, the advantage would appear to be on their side, since they have not only frustrated the crafty

design of the enemy, but taken prisoner his engineers and those of the Uhlans left alive.

Captain Tom is with them, desiring to witness and participate in the affair. He was thrown down with the rest, but has received no injury.

When he comes out of the catacombs he has an idea in his head, which he desires to put into practice. His first inquiry is for the Uhlan captain—is he dead or alive?

To his satisfaction, he learns that the brave man has not been killed. With other prisoners, he was at once dispatched to the prison known as La Roquette. Some ambulances had been in waiting, which bore the wounded to a hotel, now used as a hospital. As one was left over, the captured Prussians, as far as possible, were stowed away in it, and driven to prison.

Captain Tom, having made up his mind, is not to be diverted from his object by a small thing. He, too, will go to the Prison La Roquette, although it is quite a distance away.

Accompanied by the faithful Mickey McCray, he saunters along, noting here and there the damage already done by the bombardment. France has lost much of her gay humor of late; upon the faces of her citizens can be seen an ominous expression, as though they are worried over the outcome. From a matter of pride it has now grown to be a serious business, and many haggard faces attest this fact.

Crowds there are upon the streets, for your true Parisian is nothing if not inquisitive, and wherever a shell has done damage scores of people gather, to point out each detail, secure mementoes, talk of the siege, and air their opinions.

Some keep up bravely. Ladies are even seen walk-

ing along clad in their seal-skins, viewing the sights as calmly as though this were a gala day instead of Paris in her death-throes.

Sad scenes greet the eyes also, and Captain Tom inwardly groans when he notes how many small coffins are being carried in the direction of the cemetery, whither his feet lead him. It is hard on the children of Paris; deprived of milk and the nourishing food which their systems require, they are stricken down by hundreds.

Horses being so scarce, as a general thing the little coffins are carried by hand.

Captain Tom mounts the Boulevard de Charonne, and enters the cemetery, desiring to get a view from the summit of the hill Charonne, on whose slope the famous Pere la Chaise is laid out.

Reaching the mortuary chapel on the crown, he sweeps the scene with interest. Far away can be noticed the points where the Prussian batteries are posted; occasionally a wreath of smoke is seen, after a certain time comes the distant hollow boom. Perhaps Issy or Valerien will reply, but no general engagement is on.

A bell is tolling mournfully. Below a number of men are digging a long trench, and at the other end therein coffins are being piled three deep, to be covered by the cold earth.

Snow lies around. It is the most dismal period of the year at ordinary times in Paris.

Fancy the darkness that has fallen upon the great city after months of siege, with her lines gradually contracting, and her food supply reaching the starvation point.

The end is not far away, and even gallant Frenchmen must realize that there can be but one result,

and that further resistance against fate is folly.

Captain Tom borrows a telescope and scans the distant hills, looks down upon Belleville, where the poor inhabitants are daily put to great tribulations in order to keep from freezing, and have cut down every tree on the boulevard; then he calls Mickey, and the two walk down the hill to the exit that will bring them to the gloomyP rison of La Roquette, in front of which stands the terrible guillotine, soon to do its work at the hands of the Commune.

It seems appropriate that the condemned in La Roquette should look from their cells upon the slope of the cemetery; perhaps it has been more through design than accident that this building has been placed next the grave-yard. At any rate, it saves time—prison, guillotine, grave, in quick rotation. Captain Tom shrugs his shoulders as he passes the instrument of death and mounts the prison steps.

CHAPTER X.

THE PRISONER OF LA ROQUETTE.

The prison looms up before him, its cold walls grim and remorseless. Over the door might well be written, "He who enters here leaves hope behind," for many have passed in, never to emerge until the day of their execution arrives.

It is now under military rule, as is nearly everything in poor Paris, even the bake-shops having a guard to see that the daily rations of so many ounces of black bread are doled out to the hungry people as their names are called.

Captain Tom salutes the guard and demands to see the officer in charge. Ordinarily the soldier

might ignore such a request, but there is something about the American that impresses him. Besides, he mentions the name of General Trochu, the governor of the city.

He calls to a companion, who glances at Tom, and moves off. In a few minutes an officer makes his appearance, with whom the American enters into conversation.

A little note which he carries on his person, signed by the general, gives him the entree he desires, and the officer begs to know how he can serve the friend of Trochu.

"There were some Uhlan prisoners brought here a short time ago?" says Tom.

"We have received all sorts and conditions of men."

"But these were captured in the catacombs under the walls of Paris. I myself had the good fortune to learn that German engineers had run a tunnel under the walls, meaning to turn the horde of vandals into the midst of the city; we surprised them, a number were slain, and some prisoners taken."

"Oh, yes, I remember now. The thanks of all Paris are due you for your noble work. We might have been surprised and the city taken had their plan been carried out."

"The Uhlans were brought here?" persists the Yankee soldier of fortune, paying little attention to the officer's suave flattery.

"That is so, monsieur."

"The officer in charge was a large, fine-looking man—am I right?"

"His name is Captain Johann Strauss. I had met him before."

"Indeed!" Captain Tom believes he is in a way to

pick up what information he desires before seeking the presence of the Prussian, with whom he has determined to have an interview.

"Captain Strauss has been in La Roquette before —only last evening he was exchanged. Behold! with the coming of noon he is once more a prisoner!"

"Brave men must be scarce in their ranks if they have to use one soldier so frequently. It is my desire to have a private interview with this Uhlan giant. Can I be accommodated?"

The officer twirls the piece of paper in his hand, and shrugs his padded shoulders. Then he twists each end of his waxed mustache and bows.

"With this document we can refuse monsieur nothing in the line of reason. Be pleased to follow me."

With that he leads the way along the corridor. Their boot-heels cause a peculiar clanking sound in that grim place, where all is so silent. Here and there sentries pace up and down, carrying each a chassepot at the shoulder. Every soldier salutes the officer in turn.

At length they pause before a cumbersome door.

"When monsieur is ready to come out, knock twice on the door. You hear, guard?"

The soldier salutes.

The heavy door is thrown open. Captain Tom strides in, and from the click at his back he knows he is locked in the cell.

Coming from the glare of the sun upon the snow without, his eyes are at first unable to distinguish anything save the fact that the cell is of good size and lighted by a single small window, across which run iron bars.

Gradually his eyes grow accustomed to the semi-

gloom, and he discovers the tall form of the prisoner standing there surveying him.

The Prussian looks like a caged tiger. He has been overcome and made a prisoner when he endeavored to fight to the death. His appearance is that of a desperate man, who cares little what becomes of him.

Captain Tom, while he stands there, makes up his mind that something besides threats will be necessary in order to make this man talk if he takes a notion to remain silent.

"I beg your pardon," he says, in excellent German, "but the sunlight on the snow has almost blinded me. You will excuse my rudeness."

The other shows surprise, and when he speaks it is in a deep, musical voice.

"You speak German; you are not a Frenchman, then?" is what he says.

"I am a countryman of brave General Phil Sheridan, who rides with your leaders to see war as it is conducted in Europe."

"An American?"

"Yes. You are Captain Johann Strauss?"

"Such is my name."

"Recently exchanged?"

"Even that is so."

"You must like La Roquette, to come back so soon, captain."

The Uhlan giant laughs good-naturedly now.

"It is the fortune of war, that is all. At any rate it will only be for a short time."

His meaning is significant. Paris is doomed, and when King William's army takes possession the doors of every dungeon that holds a Prussian or Bavarian prisoner must fly open as if by magic.

"You passed through the streets when captured before. I saw you, the people rushed to stare like so many spectators at a show; they marveled at your size, for Frenchmen are not generally large. I heard many remarks made complimentary to your brave manner, and, Captain Johann, I saw you turn red with anger, shake loose the hold upon your right arm, point your finger to a beautiful lady near by, and call out in German, denouncing her for proving a traitress to her country."

The Uhlan giant is strangely affected; he presses his hand against his head, and his look is one that even a brave man might dislike to see upon the countenance of an adversary.

"That lady was Linda Dubois, a native of Alsace-Lorraine, whose mother was a German. I am interested in her past. I have come here to exchange confidences with you, Johann Strauss. I can tell you something that will, I believe, give you much joy, but I desire, in return, to have the vail lifted from certain mysteries, if you are able to do it."

His earnest manner holds the attention of the giant, who bends down to look in his face, an expression of puzzled wonder marking his own countenance.

"You love Linda Dubois?" says Tom, boldly.

The other nods his leonine head eagerly.

"I would die for her. I madly adore her. She has been the one bright star of my life. When I discovered her in Paris, and realized that she had deserted the country of her mother, my heart turned to fire. I cared not then how soon death found me out. You see my state, perhaps you have come here to mock me, but, by heavens, you shall not go hence to tell that traitress, who loves you, it may be, that Johann

Strauss writhes because a fickle woman twists his heart as I twist your accursed neck!"

He advances a step; his demeanor is terrible, and Captain Tom knows that in a personal encounter he would have his hands full to keep this mad giant from fulfilling his threat.

Still he does not snatch out his revolver; he has not come to that point when he dares not face a single unarmed man, no matter whether he be athlete or giant.

"Hear me, Captain Strauss! If, when I am done speaking, you still have the desire to twist my neck, I'll give you an opportunity to do it, if you can. Meanwhile let us be men, and reason together. I see no cause why we should be mortal enemies, nay, rather our circumstances should make us friends."

The giant calms down, though he still glowers upon Captain Tom.

"One thing," he snarls, "are you her lover?"

Captain Tom dares not hint that Linda has become infatuated with him. It would throw the German into a paroxysm of rage, and utterly spoil any chance of asking him questions. He can truthfully reply in the negative.

"I have known the Mam'selle Linda for some time. We have been good friends; I respect her for her good qualities, nothing more. She is brave and devoted to the cause she loves, as was her mother."

"Bah! why, then, came she to Paris, where our enemies are? Those women who love the Fatherland are over the Rhine," cries the prisoner.

"Listen, Herr Strauss. That is the secret. Will you promise to answer any question I may ask, provided that I remove your suspicions?"

"I promise—if it does not concern the army."

"It is a mere personal matter. You shall see. As to Linda Dubois, if you went to Bismarck and told him she was a traitress, he would laugh in your face. Hear me, madman! That beautiful girl loves her country's cause so well that for many weeks she has risked her life in Paris as a secret agent of Von Moltke."

"A spy?" gasps Johann Strauss, eagerly.

"That is the plain American of it. To my knowledge, she has sent many messages beyond the walls to the besiegers, and when it was no longer possible to write Linda has made signals with colored fires. On a dark night red, white, and blue balls would rise from some lonely hill-side, soldiers rush thither, but they would find nothing, for Linda or her agent had flown. Thus she has kept the enemy informed in one way or another as to how we poor devils inside the walls were getting on. I tell you all this, Johann Strauss, because you love her."

"And you, are you a German in heart?" asked the Uhlan, quickly.

"That cuts no figure in the game, mynherr. I am, as I said, an American. I had influence with the governor, and he agreed to spare the life of this beautiful woman if she would leave Paris by the hour of seven to-night. I have given her this warning—if Linda Dubois is found inside the walls after the gates close there is no power under heaven that can save her from the common fate of a spy."

The big Uhlan shivers at this—his heart has had new life given to it by the intelligence that the woman he loves has not been false to the country he fights for, and now this strange American, who seems to know so much and yet so little, coolly tells

him that she must die unless she flies from Paris within a few hours.

"Can I do anything to save her?" he asks, thinking he reads a peculiar look upon the face of his visitor.

"Perhaps—I will carry a note to her from you, begging her to fly, on condition that you answer my questions."

"I have already promised."

He seizes the paper and pencil Captain Tom hands him, and sitting down, hurriedly writes for several minutes. Then he hands a note to the American.

"Read it if you like, monsieur."

"It is none of my business. I shall endeavor to place this in her hands at once. Now, my good friend, pay attention."

"I am ready."

He awaits the questions of the American with the same cool indifference that would probably characterize him should he be holding a point that was a coigne of vantage in a military way, holding it with twenty men, and a thousand devils of Franc-tireurs rushing up on all sides of the hill to annihilate them.

"You have known Linda a long time?"

"Since childhood."

"And loved her, too?"

"Always. We roamed the woods together. I fought for her as a boy. I am ready to do it as a man. Heaven made us for each other, and the man who takes her from me—if I live, I will tear his heart out at her feet! Linda is mine!"

"I simply asked that to make sure that you knew her and her family well."

"I think I can say no one knows them better."

"Then you must be aware of the fact that there is a mystery connected with Linda Dubois?"

The big Uhlan is silent.

Captain Tom knows he has struck the right nail on the head, and with quick, strong blows he proceeds to drive it home, after the vigorous manner that is a part of his nature.

"Linda Dubois left her home before you went to the front—she was known to be in Berlin, to have apartments in a fine house on that famous street Unter den Linden, a little more than a stone's throw from the palace. There was much that was strange in her actions while there. She came and went at all hours, messengers brought her letters; in the light of present revelations we can understand that she was in communication with Bismarck, preparing to act as his spy in Paris, to feel the public pulse here and keep him posted.

"But this is not all. Linda Dubois was at the same time engaged in another business, which more intimately concerns me, because it is connected with one I love."

"Ah! you, too, love?" cries the Uhlan, as if delighted to discover this fact.

"Yes, and it is on this account I am here. I desire to know the secret of Linda's power over the young girl Myra."

Johann Strauss shows signs of uneasiness.

"Is it Myra you love, monsieur? I am sorry to hear it. You have heard of the fatal upas tree—so your love may prove fatal to that child."

CHAPTER XI.

PLAYING WITH FIRE.

Captain Tom hears these words with the utmost astonishment, and not a little consternation creeps into his heart.

Are they prophetic? Can this Uhlan giant raise the vail of the future and see what is about to happen? It is absurd. Johann Strauss has the appearance of an ordinary man, and would never be taken for a seer.

Perhaps he means something else; the American's face turns red. and then pale.

"You do not intimate, Herr Strauss, that I would injure that young girl? I have seen much of the world, and been concerned in many strange adventures, but, as Heaven is my witness, never yet have I——"

"Say no more, monsieur. I am not guilty of meaning such an evil thing. You do not know—you cannot know——"

"Then suppose you tell me," says Tom, coolly. "You promised, and this has no bearing on the movements of the army, I am sure."

Captain Strauss seems puzzled.

"I would like to, in order to save Myra, but I hardly know whether it would be proper. Still, you are a man of honor, I believe, and you will do what is right. Yes, I will speak."

"Sensible man," declares the other, stoutly.

He prepares to hear something strange, and yet what comes to him almost takes his breath away, from its character.

"You can understand the feeling that has animated all Germany in this war; the people are in it heart and soul—even the women. Societies have been organized for all manner of purposes, for the national feeling runs high, but the strangest of all, perhaps, was the one which Linda Dubois organized while at the house on Unter den Linden.

"This secret band was composed of young women—unmarried women, anyway. They took upon themselves a binding vow never to marry any one but a German.

"So earnest were they in this that a terrible punishment was to be visited upon the head of any one who was luckless enough to wed a man who belonged not to the Fatherland.

"Now, you understand my meaning. If you win poor Myra's heart you wreck her life, for her fate is pitiable, whether you marry her or not. I warn you in time, I hope, monsieur."

Captain Tom almost gasps for breath; he has never dreamed of such a thing. What could have induced a young girl like Myra to enter into such a terrible league? What was the consequence of marrying a foreigner? Would death ensue?

He had heard of such leagues among the Socialists of Germany and the Nihilists of Russia, but never believed that even in the heat of war times sensible women in Germany would bind themselves by such a vow.

"Are you sure of what you say—that Myra is a member of this society?" he asks, looking for a loophole.

"I am almost sure of it. Linda once showed me the list. She keeps it concealed in that house in Berlin. I believe it contained Myra's name. Myra has

been true-hearted for Germany all the while; her cousin, Meta, and some of her friends, took sides with France. It was this fact that caused Linda to arrange this society. We Germans approve it, of all but the terrible penalty; but then we never believed that any true German fraulein would dream of taking a husband outside. Make your mind up that this is a terrible reality, and if you love blind Myra, see her no more."

A drowning man grasps at a straw, and so Captain Tom sees something to seize hold of in the last words of the German.

"You say Myra is blind?" he asks, his eyes glued upon the other's face.

"Certainly, you knew that?"

The American is doubly mystified. He remembers what the girl cried out on the street when the mob threatened, and yet Captain Tom is ready to swear that he has looked into as bright a pair of eyes as ever a girl played havoc with among the hearts of men. He knows not what to say, he feels as if his breath were taken away.

Can Johann Strauss help him? He does not fancy any man reading the actual pain in his heart, so he crushes the feeling, and tries to penetrate no deeper into the mystery.

Later on he calls himself a fool for not having questioned the Uhlan more closely when he had the opportunity.

He must give Myra up, but the thought causes him a pang. Who would dream that a man who had seen so much of the world as this soldier of fortune must finally fall in love with a little Alsatian girl, so that his heart receives a severe wrench when fortune snatches her away from him.

He pursues the subject a little further with respect to this singular band or society, and learns several interesting things that make him wish he could be in Berlin just then to ease his mind, and read that fatal list.

Then he says good-by to Johann Strauss.

"We may meet again; who can tell the fortunes of war? I shall deliver your note, and endeavor to influence Linda."

These are his last words. He shakes hands with the prisoner, and as his eye takes in the Uhlan giant's magnificent form, Captain Tom mentally figures on what chances he may have, if at some future time fate decress that they two shall struggle for the mastery.

A double knock on the door brings the guard.

Captain Tom leaves the cell in a more thoughtful mood than when he entered it; and his heart feels sore over what he has heard.

Myra is lost to him, then. He has seen many a beautiful flower in his day that only needed the stretching out of a hand to gather, but he refrained; now that he would secure this little wild rose, it is plucked from his grasp.

He does not quite despair, for Captain Tom has more than once fought with fate, and beaten his adversary in the game. The future may develop some gleam of hope.

Mickey McCray is found waiting in the corridor, and silently follows the captain. He is an anomaly of an Irishman, for he knows when to keep his mouth shut.

Try as he will, Tom cannot keep his thoughts off the subject that is uppermost in his mind.

"I could swear that her eyes were the brightest I

ever saw, and yet, when she looked up at me in the street—my God! she was blind! What can I think —are there two Myras? If so, am I in love with Myra who can see or the one who is blind?"

Reflection only causes deeper perplexity, and at last, realizing the hopeless condition in which his love affairs are entangled, he makes a violent effort, and for the time being dismisses the subject.

Other things demand his attention, for Captain Tom has become mixed up in several little affairs of moment, in his earnestness to serve the French government.

Calling Mickey to him, he confides an errand to his care, and presently the faithful Irishman is cantering down the Champs Elysees.

Then the American calls to the owner of a fiacre near by; the man asks a fabulous sum for the use of his vehicle, as horses are scarce in a city where the people are living upon horseflesh. Making a bargain, Captain Tom is soon flying along in the direction of the Latin Quartier.

He is cheered several times on the road thither, as excitable individuals, noting his speed, fancy that he must be a Government messenger carrying important dispatches. The inflammable populace is always looking for the "grand movement" that never comes.

Ruins meet the eye here and there; really, those German gunners have got the range fairly well, and are doing much damage. A few weeks of this steady work will be apt to lay one half of Paris in ruins, and it is certain that these stolid Prussians will keep up this everlasting hammering, now that they have begun, until something gives way. Ah! the convent at last.

He seeks the entrance. The lay sister admits him, and again he awaits the coming of Linda in the same room where his strange adventure of the preceding night took place.

Captain Tom manages to seat himself in a darkened corner; the thick walls of the building, with its numerous angles, keep much light from entering through the peculiar windows.

Presently there is that flutter of a dress again, and some one enters. It is the lovely Alsatian. Linda looks around her in a manner that betrays some nervousness, for she cannot imagine who her visitor may be; perhaps the secret agent sent by the government to make an arrest, for they may have repented their respite.

Now she discovers the dark figure of a man; he advances toward her. The Alsatian is thrilled to hear him speak, her limbs almost give way beneath her weight.

"Mam'selle Linda, I greet you."

She finds her voice, but it is only to gasp:

"Captain Tom!"

"*Oui,* mam'selle, it is, indeed, no other. Rest assured that I do not entertain hard feelings toward the fair Linda for the part she took in my abduction last night."

"You—know—monsieur?" she cries.

"I know all. When you entered the lists against me, lady, you had for an antagonist one who has seen too much of the world to be easily hoodwinked. I did not drink the drugged wine."

"But—I saw you."

"That was an optical delusion. When you went for the nutmeg my good angel warned me, and I

gave the contents of the amber glass to the ashes. After that I filled up again."

"Ha! that would account for the bottle being nearly empty. I was amazed; now I see. But, Monsieur Tom, you lay like one dead."

"Easily done."

"You allowed yourself to be carried down into the catacombs."

"I rather enjoyed it, especially the part where you stood between my life and the weapon of the general. He is a fine rascal, that man, and I am sorry that I shall never have the opportunity to meet him in open battle. I would enjoy running him through with a sword some early morning in the Bois de Boulogne."

"I detest him myself, monsieur," she says, endeavoring to become calm, for Tom's appearance has caused her much mental excitement and wild speculation, "but you may have the pleasure you speak of some day—why not?"

The American smiles in a peculiar way.

"Thanks, but I would hardly care to cross the River Styx to engage in a sword combat with a disembodied spirit."

His meaning breaks upon her with the sudden rush of a hurricane.

"*Mon Dieu!* the general is not dead! You have not killed him, Captain Tom?"

A clock in the corner strikes the hour. Tom counts the strokes aloud.

"Five," he says, quietly. "Mam'selle, in twenty minutes more the sun will set behind the western hills. As his last border vanishes from the view a gun will sound—we hear the boom of cannon all day and all night, but the sunset gun is never for-

gotten. Hardly will the echoes have died away than under the walls of Valerien a line of soldiers look along their rifles, an officer gives the word, a volley rings out, and four condemned men drop back into the rough coffins that await them."

A cry of horror breaks from her, her face is ashy pale now, and the blood seems to have also forsaken her lips.

She puts out her hand and plucks at the sleeve of the man who tells her this terrible thing, plucks at it as though she doubted her senses, and wished to be sure of his presence.

"These four men, who are they?"

How changed her voice is—one would almost think it was a man speaking, such is the hoarseness that characterizes her tones.

"The general who would betray Paris into the hands of her foes, and his three comrades. Mam'selle Linda, you have played with fire—it is dangerous. This time you have escaped, but those who were with you——"

He ends the sentence with a shrug of his shoulders that is more suggestive than words.

Linda Dubois feels as though a cold hand has been placed upon her heart. One moment she is like a woman of ice, the next a creature of fire.

Captain Tom had better be upon his guard, for such a tornado of passion sweeps over her at the thought of ruined plans and hopes that she may forget the fact of being desperately in love with this bold American, and only remember him as the author of her woes.

"You are the cause of this disaster; you, Captain Tom. If I were a man——"

"You would be keeping them company, mam'selle.

Thank your stars, then, that you are a woman, and that I admire you. But let us talk of yourself; two hours remain, and the gates of Paris will close. You know the penalty of remaining within the walls?"

"Yes, I know; their fate will be mine. In such a case my sex will not save me," she says, moodily, for her heart is set on remaining in Paris until the soldiers of Von Moltke enter, and she shall see the German flag waving in triumph over the proud city of the Gauls.

"Here is something for you."

She takes the paper, and when her eyes drink in its contents, after pressing close to the poor light that comes in at the window, the woman shows signs of emotion.

"What! Johann a prisoner again! Only last evening I was secretly instrumental in bringing about his exchange. How does this happen?"

Evidently she has not heard of the affair in the catacombs under the walls of Paris, so Captain Tom tells her as briefly as possible, not forgetting to speak of the Uhlan captain's bravery, for he would like to make this girl love his rival, since he cannot himself reciprocate her affection, which he considers dangerous to his peace of mind.

"Ah! yes, Johann is brave, else he would never have had my regard. I adore brave men, monsieur, no matter under what flag they fight. For a coward I have contempt. It is to you, then, the failure of this wonderful plan is due. Ah, Captain Tom, I know one man who would give much to make you feel the pressure of his iron hand, that is Bismarck. You have done more to ruin the plans of the German forces than any living soul in Paris. A while ago you said it was fortunate I was a woman. Now

it is Linda Dubois who declares that it is a lucky thing you are Captain Tom, else would I be strongly tempted to save Von Moltke much trouble by ending your life here and now."

The Alsatian has a pistol in her hand, and although Tom seems perfectly cool and collected he keeps a keen eye upon the weapon, since he does not wish to shuffle off this mortal coil, even at the hands of such a lovely creature.

"You will not attempt such a thing, Mam'selle Linda. I should very much dislike to use violence, but, indeed, unless you put away that little plaything I shall feel under the necessity of taking it from you, and in the struggle your beautiful white hands might be scratched. Come, be a good girl; keep that for your enemy, not for one who has proved his friendship as I have done."

His words soothe her; at least she obeys, although with a bitter laugh.

"You see your word is law, Captain Tom. So you still claim to be my friend; you do not hate me since you have learned that I am a German spy?"

"Heaven forbid! I respect a brave woman, and I admire your daring, even while I deplore the fact that one so lovely should put herself in danger of such a cruel death."

"My beauty, as you call it, belongs to my country. If I could coin my blood into success for German arms, gladly would the sacrifice be made. That is what German girls are made of."

"Heavens! I don't wonder your cause has prospered, then. Your soldiers would not dare face their wives and sweethearts with defeat. Such enthusiasm would conquer the world. They have not known

it in France since Bonaparte's time. But time presses—you will leave Paris?"

"Yes, I wish to live," she replies.

"You will tell me how you go?"

"It matters not to you, Monsieur Tom."

"We may meet again?"

Her face is close to his, he notes the almost haggard look upon it, but lays it to the serious nature of her position, not realizing the depth of this singular woman's passion for him.

"Heaven willing—yes."

"Then farewell."

He presses her hand gallantly to his lips, and turns and leaves her, having said no word of the mystery hanging over Myra, or betrayed his secret.

CHAPTER XII.

MONSIEUR MICKEY "STRIKES ILE."

When the sunset gun sounds the doom of the four men under the walls of the fort on Mont Valerien it must not be supposed that Paris is rid of every spy or manipulator of an intrigue; far from it. Within the walls are scores and even hundreds who secretly sympathize with the German cause. Others there are who hate all forms of government, and long for the hour to come when blood shall flow upon each street as in the days of Robespierre and the Revolution.

The recognized meeting-place of these malcontents and conspirators has been a *cafe chantant* known to every one about Paris.

Here, at the Cafe Madrid, the wildest schemes ever concocted by human brains are aired—mys-

terious meetings have been held, and to all appearances the place is a hot-bed of treason.

Why has not the government stepped in and put a stop to it? The authorities laugh at such men, feeling that their utterances are only like the foam on a mug of Bavarian beer.

Perhaps they keep a secret agent present to pick up stray crumbs that fall from the table. He may be the man who vaunts the loudest—who knows? These detectives of the prefect are shrewd fellows, as a general rule.

When Monsieur Tom leaves the convent and Linda Dubois he heads in the direction of the *cafe chantant.* Why he does this might be explained by a note that lies in his pocket, and which he has read over half a dozen times, until each word is burned upon his brain.

The lights have already sprung up here and there, but Paris is poorly illuminated now, save when some fire blazes forth.

In his walk Captain Tom meets several persons of importance. One quiet-looking man, whom he passes with a salutation, is the person probably more feared than any other in Paris—the head of the police machinery, the prefect.

Crowds line the sidewalks; there is little else for the citizens to do nowadays but gather and talk over the situation, for trade is stagnant. They feel that they are living over a volcano, and are more in dread of the *canaille* than the Germans—the mob that mutters always near by, and which, when it once breaks loose, will murder and burn, and plunder friend and foe alike.

No wonder that the citizens look anxious. Many of them hope the surrender may occur before it is

too late; others keep on expecting that the French nation will strike the Germans a blow that must cause them to rush back over the Rhine faster than they came—hopes that are doomed never to be realized, because there is now no "little corporal" to turn out a hero Napoleon.

Sedan has killed the ardor of the provinces, and they are resolved to let Paris, which brought about this war, look out for herself.

Sauntering along, Captain Tom sights the Cafe Madrid at last. His thoughts turn in another quarter, and he wonders where Mickey can be.

There is an old proverb among the Spaniards to the effect that if one speaks of the evil one he will appear—modernized, we have it, "Speak of an angel, and you hear its wings."

So Captain Tom has hardly conceived the idea that he has a man hanging out somewhere in this vicinity than he becomes aware of the fact that Mickey is pretty much on hand.

Loud voices are wafted to his ears. There is a vigorous dispute of some sort occurring just in front of the particular *cafe chantant* toward which the American is strolling.

He hears the Irishman's well-remembered voice raised in anger; evidently Mickey has dropped into a street brawl of some sort. Captain Tom increases his pace as though he experiences some interest in the matter. His face does not express any feeling one way or another, and it would be impossible to tell from his looks the state of his mind.

Never has Paris been more ready to respond to any street sensation—a dog-fight will gather such a crowd that a boulevard may be blocked. They have been shut in so long, poor devils, with such scant

amusement, that any incident is seized upon to divert their minds.

Already a score of men—yes, and women, too—surround the spot whence the voices rise, and dozens more gravitate thither from all directions; heads are thrust out of numerous windows—heads innumerable.

It seems like magic; the scene of the disturbance is in one minute the cynosure of a thousand eyes, and far up and down the street the excitement extends, like the waves that mark the dropping of a stone into a large pool of still water.

In ten seconds Captain Tom pushes his form among the crowd. A man here and there looks angrily up at him, but gives way, as though there might be something about the American's manner that marks him one born to command.

Now he sees the two who are the center of such attraction. The lights from the Cafe Madrid shine upon them, and their faces at least are rendered conspicuous.

Of course it is Mickey; he dances around like a bantam rooster, his fists clenched, and alternately thrust under the nose of the taller man, with whom he seems at loggerheads.

One glance Captain Tom takes, and he grinds his teeth as he sees the face of Mickey's antagonist. It is a countenance that, once gazed upon, could hardly be forgotten. The man is in the dress of a captain of cuirassiers, though he has evidently made some feeble attempt to disguise this fact.

"Of all men, that Mickey should quarrel with him! But I have faith in the Irishman; he is nobody's fool, and who knows what game he may have in that long head of his?"

These muttered remarks prove Captain Tom to be a sensible man, at least, in the fact that he has faith in those who work his will. Trust a man who has roamed all over the world, from the jungles of India to the steppes of Siberia, through desert places, and the busy marts of men, to have a keen insight of character. This shrewd traveler seldom goes astray in his reckoning, and he has put his trust in the Irishman a long while back.

Mickey can talk very little French, but his actions are more suggestive than words, and no man who finds an Irishman dancing like a hornet around him, be he Greek, Russian, Turk, or Hindoo, could mistake his meaning—it signifies war to the knife, and plenty of it.

Nor is Mickey's tongue idle; he keeps up a jargon of sounds, occasionally falling into a French exclamation, as if to add force to his words.

There can be little doubt that the big French cuirassier does not want to fight, for some reason or other, and that Mickey is equally determined to make him. If words fail, he is ready to try other means.

"Ye bloody frog-eating parleyvoo. Run into a gentleman on the pavement, will ye, and nearly knock him in the gutter? It's time one was tachin' ye better manners, and bedad, it's meself that can do it. Take off your coat and defind yourself, ye bog-trottin' omadhaun. Sure I can break every bone in your body and not half try. Gintlemen, will ye be after looking at me twig his handle as neat as you plaze, the cowardly cur."

With the last words the agile Mickey suddenly dashes his hand into the face of the puzzled cuirassier. Between finger and thumb he catches that

long nose, which he tweaks with a remarkable vim.

That last straw breaks the camel's back. The burly Frenchman gives a tremendous roar of rage and pain. It is like the outburst from a vicious lion when he feels the searing iron pressed against his hide.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE CAFE MADRID.

All cauton is thrown to the winds. Five seconds ago the cuirassier, for some reason, could not be tempted to pick up the gage of battle, and now nothing can tempt him to let it lie. He is crazy for the Irishman's life. Nothing but blood can wipe out such an insult in the eyes of a Frenchman.

Now he is at the throat of Mickey McCray, just as eager for business as the foreigner, but he meets a master at the art of self-defense, and blows are rained upon his face with almost the rapidity of a trip-hammer's fall.

Blinded, the burly cuirassier strikes to the right and left. The Irishman dodges, and lands another double blow, one fist after the other, in his enemy's face.

The crowd cheer the brutal sight; such things please most of the lookers-on, whose instincts are not very refined. While war, with all is horrors, is going on around them, why should they not enjoy a miniature battle here?

So they laugh and applaud. It matters little who comes out of the engagement a victor so long as the scene affords them amusement. Captain Tom says

nothing, but watches the Irishman closely as he endeavors to discover what the other is up to, for he cannot believe Mickey McCray has gone into this peculiar business without a deep motive.

Hammer and tongs they are at it now, but Mickey gets in a dozen blows to one that is received. This sort of work cannot last long; already the Frenchman feels his face puffing up, and unless something occurs to bring about a change he will be blinded by his smaller but exceedingly tough antagonist.

He changes his tactics. This is in one sense a wise move, for the man who keeps on in the old path, no matter how misfortunes block the way, seldom gets there.

Perhaps Frenchy may not succeed any better under the new method, but it will not be for the lack of a trial at any rate. As a boxer the Irishman is his master, but at close quarters perhaps superior weight may tell.

So the character of the affair is changed, and the two men, clasped in each other's arms, fling themselves wildly about. The cuirassier has his clothes partly torn loose, and presents the appearance of a badly demoralized man.

Down they go upon the street, the Irishman underneath, as though he had given way before the heavier man's weight; but in a twinkling Mickey is on top. They roll about like two curs engaged in a street fight, while the crowd laughs and applauds.

The stout cuirassier has had enough; he no longer thinks of glory or revenge. If some one will only save him from this fire-eating Irishman he will be a happy man.

He has been badly used. Mickey clutches him at all points, and the man bellows lustily in fear. A

chance comes; he scrambles to his feet to fly, and with Mickey clinging to his back like the Old Man of the Sea upon the shoulders of Sinbad the Sailor, rushes through the crowd and down the street.

Captain Tom leans against the corner of the Cafe Madrid and chuckles as he recalls the oddity of the scene. The crowd dwindles down to the usual number to be found passing along the street at this hour.

Ten minutes elapse. Tom still leans there, as though quietly waiting. Then a figure glides up and touches his arm. He looks around and sees the hero of the late engagement—Mickey McCray, a broad smile on his homely phiz.

"Well?" says the American, only that and no more.

"Struck ile that time, Master Tom," replies Mickey, at the same moment putting a crumpled paper in the hand of Captain Tom.

In the light of this revelation Mickey's strange actions become intelligible to Captain Tom. He sees a method in the other's madness, as it were. Although an Irishman may engage in a scrimmage just for the love of it, Mickey could not have this laid at his door just now.

The American greedily accepts the crumpled paper that is thrust into his hand. People pass by, but no one notices them. The bombardment has begun, and the crash of Prussian shells can be heard among the houses of devoted Paris.

"You took this from the cuirassier, Mickey?" asks the American.

"Yes, I had him pretty well searched while I fought with him, and just got track of the paper

when the varmint started to run. He had it secreted in a hidden pocket in the rear of his coat."

"Do you think he knew you were after it?" pursues the man who holds the paper.

"He was afraid of such a thing, since all the while he tried to protect his rear. When the retreat came the gossoon was so badly scared that he forgot everything else but the idea of making his escape. I wouldn't be surprised if he was runnin' yet."

"You are mistaken, Mickey. By this time the cuirassier has discovered the loss of his paper. I doubt not he stands a block or two away, trying to screw up courage enough to steal back and find the missing document. If it is not on the street, he will be sure it has been taken from his person, and of course his suspicions will be aroused."

"Faith, that's true for ye, sir."

"Then we'll arrange it so that the man may discover his paper—after I read it."

Mickey laughs softly, for he has already guessed the nature of the other's plans, and has a great veneration for Captain Tom's shrewdness as well as bravery.

The American lights a cigar—it is not the finest in the world, but by this time Paris has been reduced in her supplies, so that habitual smokers have to put up with an inferior article of tobacco, or take to pipes, something Captain Tom abominates.

When he has his weed in full blast, Mickey catches onto the idea—with each puff the fire end of his cigar makes a certain illumination, and he is thus enabled to read the paper which is held in such a position that the glow falls upon it.

As he crumples the paper again in the shape he found it, Captain Tom emits a grunt.

"Mickey, take this and place it on the street in front of us, where it would not attract the attention of the casual passer, but be found by one in search of something that is lost."

The Irishman comprehends, and obeys. They can just see the paper, and await further developments. Captain Tom has said little regarding the contents of the missive taken from the demoralized cuirassier. At the time Mickey returns from placing the decoy, Captain Tom makes a remark to this effect:

"Just as I expected, my boy—the *cafe chantant* is a spider's web, into which your humble servant, as the fly, has been invited to enter—'such a charming little parlor you never yet did spy.'"

He says no more, but simply waits, leaning back in the shadows, and taking an occasional dreary puff at the wretched weed.

Thus minutes glide away. The crowd still saunters past, and at this hour the tide seems to be down the street—later on it will be reversed.

Mickey has fallen into a reverie, and perhaps his thoughts wander to a certain green isle where the evils of war are not being felt, and where damsels with blue eyes fascinate the heart. Mickey has a horror of a black-eyed sweetheart in Paris, who orders him to do her bidding in an imperious way; and, madly in love with her as he is, the honest fellow sometimes sighs for the lassies of old Ireland.

A hand touches his arm, and he awakens to the fact that Captain Tom seeks to draw his attention. Looking beyond the pave, he catches sight of something crawling along the street. Surely it must be a dog. No, it rises now in passing a stream of light coming from a window, and the Irishman recog-

nizes the peculiar face and disordered dress of his late antagonist, the once gallant cuirassier.

Now he is down again on all-fours, eagerly searching as he advances, and yet keeping one eye on the alert, as though dreading lest that wild terror of an Irishman might leap out upon him from some obscure nook. No doubt he has had all the fight he wants for one night; better the advent of the Prussian host than another experience at the hands of the human threshing-machine by which his fervor for life had been nearly whipped out.

As he thus slinks and crawls along the street, the cuirassier seems to have eyes in all directions. Only one thing could tempt this man back to the locality where his punishment has been received—he must endeavor to find the paper which is missing from his person.

When his eyes fall upon something white, he gives utterance to a gurgling cry, and throws himself upon the object with all the joy of one who recovers a lost pocket-book.

They hear his delighted exclamations, and see him examining the paper in the ribbon of light that emanates from a near-by window; then he stows it away upon his person with trembling eagerness.

"Speak to me in a loud voice," whispers Tom, who has a streak of humor in his composition.

Trust an Irishman for grasping the reins of an idea with promptness; Mickey guesses what Captain Tom's scheme is like a flash.

"Arrah, now, its meself that'd be after enjoying another scrap with a parleyvoo frog-eater. If ye say that runaway sojar around, just let me know, and I'll take care of him, so I will."

Mickey gets no further than this, nor is there any

necessity for continuing. When he opens up, in a loud voice, the cuirassier is about twenty feet away, and at the time Mickey speaks of taking care of him, the fellow is probably half-way down the other corner. He has given one startled look around him, and shot along the street like a man possessed.

Captain Tom laughs a little; then with an impatient exclamation he hurls his cigar out into the middle of the street.

"Hang the tobacco! It makes me dizzy to smoke such stuff. I shall be glad to get out of Paris, just to enjoy a good weed again. Strange what a slave a man is to his cigar. Really, I quite envy your devotion to the little black-brier pipe you smoke, Mickey, though I never could come to one."

Mickey asks no questions, but looks at his companion in a quizzical manner, as though the thought suggests itself that the captain will find it a difficult job to get out of Paris with that close cordon of German troops all around, commanding every avenue of escape.

After a time Captain Tom consults his watch and notes the time.

"Half an hour to wait yet," he mutters.

"For what?" says Mickey, quickly, suspecting something of the truth from the fact of the other remaining so near the Cafe Madrid.

"Before the fly walks into the spider's web," returns the American, coolly.

"Do ye mane to enter that devil's hole, captain?"

"My duty calls me there—besides, I hope to unravel a certain mystery that has been giving me much trouble of late. Don't worry yourself, Mickey, my boy; I am well prepared," with a deep signifi-

cance in his words which even the sharp-witted Irishman does not understand.

"Captain dear, am I to go with ye?"

It is hard to withstand the wheedling tone, but Tom has his plans arranged—besides, Mickey has had enough excitement for one hour at least.

"Not this time, my boy. I've something else for you to do in connection with our escape from Paris," he says, quietly, but the words give Mickey a decided thrill.

"Escape from Paris, is it, captain dear? Sure it's meself as would welcome the change. Perhaps Mickey McCray is fickle, but it's himself as always did prefer blue eyes. Captain"—possessed of a sudden alarming fear—"ye wouldn't be after laving me behind in the crowd. That would be the death of me entirely."

"Never fear, old friend, when I go you shall accompany me if there's a show."

"Bless me sowl, I can't conceive how ye are going to get through the lines." Then, as an idea comes, suggested by the late futile endeavor on the part of the German engineers to reach the heart of Paris: "Perhaps they have an underground road beyond the Prussians."

Captain Tom laughs lightly as he tells his comrade not to bother his head over the matter, as all will go on without his worrying.

The hour grows later—soon the time will have arrived which Captain Tom has set as the period of his entrance to the *cafe chantant.*

The note in his pocket says nine, and it is usually his rule to keep an appointment to the second. True, he has not agreed with any one to be here, but the writer of the note that has been slipped into his

hand on the boulevard during his afternoon walk seems to have assumed that Captain Tom will come.

He shows no nervousness as the time draws near, which is worthy of remark, because the man feels that he is about to enter a trap. Truly this American's nerves must be made of steel, since nothing seems to disturb him.

Five minutes only remain, when he turns to Mickey and gives him a few plain directions with regard to the work ahead. A clasp of the hand, and Captain Tom is alone.

A clock in a church steeple near by begins to slowly strike the hour. Captain Tom steps out from the dark shadow and looks down the street. A miserable gas-lamp burns feebly about a hundred feet away, a mockery of a light, since it only serves to show pedestrians how dark it is around them.

Just at this instant, however, Captain Tom's attention is attracted directly to this lamp. A man lounges underneath it, as though watching the passers-by. Captain Tom draws out a white handkerchief—as he holds it up, the man under the street-lamp answers the signal by one of like order.

Convinced that all is well, Captain Tom immediately enters the cafe, just as the last stroke of nine is sounding.

The place, as is usual, contains quite a number of loungers, some of them peculiar enough in their dress and manner to be marked as persons of consequence. Here many of the wild spirits of Paris assemble to rant and air their important opinions. The very atmosphere is rank with treason, and the fate of Paris has been decided dozens of times each day by wiseacres who know more than the brave generals at the head of the army of invasion.

Captain Tom walks among these men without paying any attention to them. They are the barking dogs that do not bite. Somewhere about the premises will be found the more dangerous creatures.

The Cafe Madrid is one of the few restaurants that remain open—lack of supplies has caused the temporary closing of most of the cafes that were wont to be such an attraction on the Champs Elysees and other thoroughfares.

Even the Madrid has been shorn of its glory to a great extent. True, crowds are there day and night, but crowds without the means to pay the enormous price demanded for ordinary fare—crowds that accept their daily rations from the hands of the authorities, and take their dessert in upbraiding the army of defense, the governor, and every one concerned in holding Paris.

Captain Tom glances unconcernedly around, and then walks up to the proprietor, with whom he has a short conversation. The latter has evidently been expecting him; at any rate, his face lights up with an eager expression as soon as he sights the American. With a suave manner, he shows Captain Tom a door in the corner.

"Pass through that, monsieur; then you will find a hall, and at the end a door. Open this without fear—the rest I leave to yourself. You have judgmen,t discretion, good bearing. You will be repaid for your trouble," as the American slips some gold coins in his hand.

Captain Tom opens the door, passes beyond the portal, and closes it behind him. He is now in the hall mentioned by mine host. A light burns dimly, and he can see that all is just as the other has said.

He pauses a minute—it is to collect his thoughts

and form a definite plan of action. It is a strange motive that brings Captain Tom to this den of the communists, and those who intrigue for the downfall of Paris—peculiar, because love is at the bottom of it.

The note resting in his pocket is signed by a name with which to conjure—Myra. He believes in it, and yet knows there is a trap somewhere for his unwary feet. Myra has saved him once—will she conspire at his ruin now?

Used to depending upon himself in all emergencies, this man is quick to act should a sudden change be necessary in his plans. He stands there irresolute for a brief time, and then, striding forward, places his hand upon the knob of the door.

A voice reaches his ear; since he has shut out the confusion of tongues ever present in the cafe, he can hear better, and this sound undoubtedly proceeds from beyond. The voice is that of a female, and it excites a singular emotion in the breast of the American. French are the words that are spoken; but love is the same in every language he hears; and his heart is quickened. Then, again, an awful fear strikes him, as he remembers that he has come here to enter a trap. If Myra is the lure, can she love him?

His thoughts go back to the swarthy crowd of low-browed men in the outer room of the cafe. Are they to rush in upon him at a certain signal, and avenge the death of the four spies?

Captain Tom knows the plot is deeper than that, though his death is the main object of it all, which fact proves the man's wonderful nerve in voluntarily seeking danger. It is like walking into the lion's den for a man of his class to keep an ap-

pointment at night at the notorious Cafe Madrid.

Captain Tom has heard that wonderful voice breathe his name, coupled with endearing words. He stills the riot in his heart, and is once more the man of ice. Then only he turns the knob of the door and enters.

CHAPTER XIV.

"MOCK ME NOT, MONSIEUR TOM; I AM BLIND!"

He sees a small apartment, with a single light burning; it has but one occupant, and that is Myra. She sits at a table, dressed for the street, and with her face covered by a vail; but Captain Tom cannot mistake that exquisite figure—his heart would tell him the truth even though his eyes failed him.

She has started at the opening of the door, and her head is poised. He hastens to advance into the room with mingled emotions—joy at seeing the object of his regard, and sorrow because he has reason to believe she has entered into a league with his enemies.

Captain Tom speaks her name, and she holds out a hand, which he clasps.

"You are punctual, monsieur," she breathes.

"That is a part of my business in life; but, mademoiselle, you understand I am surprised at this place of meeting."

"Of course—I expected it. You must forgive me, Captain Tom, but in these times there are some of us who have no homes. The convent no longer dares offer a shelter. I have friends at the Cafe Madrid, so I come hither. What does it matter?—it

will not be for long," with a bitter ring in her voice.

"You would reproach me, mademoiselle?" says the other, quickly.

"I do not understand—you have caused the downfall of Von Moltke's best spies, yet you saved me, whom you knew to be a sympathizer of the Germans, from the mob led by that detestable Francois, who is, thank Heaven, no more."

Captain Tom comes very near declaring that his motive in the one case was a strange power, sometimes known as love; but his discretion stills his tongue, as he realizes that it would be folly to give way to such emotions now. Besides, he imagines that they are not as much alone as a casual glance would seem to indicate.

There is a closet in the room, also some hanging curtains that appear to bulge more than ordinary drapery usually does. He believes that eavesdroppers are concealed in these places, only waiting for a signal to show themselves.

The most cruel blow of all is that this signal is undoubtedly to be given by Myra, who has lured him there to his ruin.

Was ever a lover in a worse predicament?

He protests that never yet has he warred on women—that only for his intervention Linda Dubois must have shared the fate of the others.

"Tell me—you should know, Myra—has she gone from Paris, that wonderful woman, or does she remain in hiding, determined to see the end which must surely come?"

"It was you who warned her, therefore I can see no harm in speaking. Linda has gone—by this time she is beyond the German lines. She has seen Bismarck, Von Moltke, Frederick, and is heading for

Berlin, bent upon a mission, as fast as horse or railway can take her."

He thinks there is something of triumph in her voice, and feels a vague uneasiness, as though that secret mission concerns him. As yet he sees no reason why he should suspect such a thing, and still there is some sort of whisper in his heart that connects him with it.

He remembers what Johann Strauss has said about the house on Unter den Linden—Linda Dubois keeps strange things there—the list of those who belong to that dreadful society is there, and Myra's name among the rest.

Why does she fly to Berlin? He would give much to know, and yet, if plainly asked, it is hardly probable that he could explain his reasons. Can Myra tell—will she give him satisfaction? He is mystified—bewildered. This girl warned him of the danger in the wine; she mourned over him while he lay apparently senseless in the chair—still later she stood between him and the murderous Alsatian, Francois. He can hear her voice ringing in his ears yet as she beseeches him to awaken and fight for his life. Now this same girl has lured him to the *cafe chantant*—lured him to ruin, as did the sirens of old, after the sailors had safely passed the terrors of Scylla and Charybdis.

Captain Tom is apt to lose all faith in womankind, unless he finds a solution to this mystery. At any rate, he will ask Myra one question—she can do no more than refuse him.

"This mission of Mademoiselle Dubois—is it a government one, or does it concern only her private fortunes?" he queries, showing little anxiety, although his heart beats strangely fast.

She does not reply at once, but it is evident that she reads him better than he suspects, and with a woman's cruelty tantalizes him by holding her peace.

"You do not answer. Surely, that would not betray her secrets. I am interested in Linda—she owes her life to me, in one sense. You can tell me, as it will go no further. Come, Mademoiselle Myra, why this silence?"

She gives a low laugh, that Captain Tom does not like to hear from the lips of the woman he loves, for it tells of a spirit that is far from the perfection he adores—it seems to cut him like a knife, and he shivers.

"Probably there is no need, monsieur; I was simply reflecting. Yes, I may tell you alone that Linda Dubois, speeding for Berlin as fast as post and railway can take her, goes upon a purely personal mission—love, hate; yes, all the human passions are bound up in it; and you, Monsieur Tom——"

"Have I an interest in it?" he demands.

"Such is my impression. But you forget you address a lady, that you clutch her wrist as you would the collar of a hound."

"Pardon, a thousand pardons," stammered Tom, becoming conscious that in his eagerness he has overstepped the lines that always mark the conduct of a gentleman.

Her words are of such a peculiar nature that the soldier of fortune can well be excused for feeling his coolness in a measure desert him. What would he not give for some key by means of which this mystery might be explained? Is it useless endeavoring to seek an answer from the same source whence came this information? Nothing venture,

nothing gained, and Captain Tom is not the man to miss an opportunity.

He assumes a winning manner, and earnestly begs mademoiselle to give him some clew regarding his connection with the fair Alsatian's mission.

For the time being he forgets or ignores the presence of the men behind the curtains and in the closet, who are there with malice toward himself alone; he is so interested in what he asks that he seems to even have some influence upon the girl.

"Monsieur Tom, perhaps I did wrong to excite your curiosity, but what does it matter? *Mon Dieu!* you cannot follow. Your passport might take you out to Valerien, but how could you get beyond the German lines? Be content to let it rest. Some day you may know all—if you live!"

The last three words cause Monsieur Tom to shrug his shoulders. He has seen girls before now, but never one who interests him as does Myra. She plainly does not intend to tell him why Linda Dubois has started for Berlin in such haste after leaving Paris. Perhaps he can find this out for himself.

As quick as a flash he determines to adopt a certain line of tactics, which he believes will bring about a measure of success.

While she plays with her intended victim as a cat does with a mouse, he may be working his way closer and closer to the truth, until, ere the climax comes and these concealed conspirators show themselves, he shall strike a clew and uncover a prize. That is his game, and he goes about it in his usual quiet manner that disarms criticism and suspicion.

"Mademoiselle knows a gallant Uhlan officer, by name Johann Strauss?" he asks.

"Yes—he is a prisoner—Linda told me."

"He was a prisoner. Strange news reached me while on the way to this place, in obedience to the summons conveyed in your note. The man I saw in La Roquette has escaped."

"It is impossible!" cries the other, and yet her tone is one filled with half-suppressed excitement, which gives Monsieur Tom the sudden thought that Myra may be deeply interested in this gallant officer. Why not, since the whole game appears to be one of cross purposes?

"I admit it would seem so on the face of it all, but facts are stubborn things. I was assured that Johann Strauss had escaped," continued the American, watching her closely.

"It may be only a subterfuge; they have killed him, perhaps, and wish to disguise the truth. Tell me, is what you say true?"

"I had it from a friend whose word I can believe as well as his oath. It seems that the Uhlan officer was wanted at one of the forts, to meet the governor, who desired to ask him plain questions concerning that affair of the tunnel. On the way there, they were fired upon from an old house, and the escort was thrown into confusion at the idea of a scouting party of Prussians so nearly in the city. The lead flew like hail, and the men, demoralized, sought shelter. When they had time to look about them they found their prisoner gone. The alarm was given, a large force searched the ground, but up to the last advices not a sign of the party had been discovered."

"Brave Johann!" murmurs the girl, beneath her vail, and Captain Tom somehow hears her without

a feeling of jealousy—which fact he could not explain himself if examined.

"You care much for that brave man," he says, with deep meaning.

"Why should I not?—he fights for the Fatherland, and my soul is bound up in that. Yes, Johann's life is very dear to me."

How charmingly frank she is. He delights to hear her speak, for it seems like a fresh wave of pure air from the mountains; and in Paris they long for this, having tasted the burnt powder-smoke for months.

"And yet—you saved me, when Linda had plotted my downfall?"

She makes a pretty gesture of penance.

"Ah, monsieur, that was a sad mistake."

"A mistake!" almost roared the American; "to save my life a mistake! Come, Mademoiselle Myra, you are hard on me."

"At any rate, it was a pity. Linda did not mean you harm—she used the drug for a personal purpose of her own. Had you been under the influence of that drug, who knows what changes there might now have been—the great tunnel plot would have been a success—yes, even Paris might have been in the hands of the Germans."

"That is true, but it grieves me, *ma belle*, to hear you say you regret your share in the work. Was it cruel, then, for me to save you in the street, when that tiger, Francois, baffled in his love-making, attempted to set the mob of Amazons upon you? Tell me that."

A rippling little laugh comes from under the vail, and Captain Tom hears her reply:

"Oh, Monsieur Tom, you are a man—it is only

right for you to help a female in distress at any time, without asking where her sympathies lie. Gallantry must be found wherever a true American goes. You see, we think highly of your nation over here."

By degrees he nears the point where he expects to effect his object—at the same time it is his intention to approach it so naturally that her suspicions may not be aroused.

This strange idea that has been running riot in his brain of late must be settled at once for all. He desires to know whether it is a substance or a shadow which he loves, and the man who has been a soldier of fortune in three wars, can be depended upon to find a means when so much is at stake.

Those who lie in wait must have patience—their time will come before long. Just now it is Captain Tom's inning.

"Myra, I had an interview with Johann Strauss in prison. He is a brave man. I told him of Linda's peril, and he begged me to take a letter to her from him."

Just as he expects, the girl utters a low cry, as if he has touched a secret spring, which indeed is the truth, since she loves the man who is madly devoted to Linda.

It is upon this love that Captain Tom depends to win his case; he is lawyer enough for that.

"Monsieur, what was the nature of that paper? Perhaps you would not object to telling me, since I am deeply interested," she pants.

"I will do more—read it to you, for, as he was a prisoner and she a spy, I could not let a communication pass between them without taking a copy of

it to prove its innocence. Here it is, mademoiselle, in plain black and white."

At the rustling of the paper Myra starts; she half expectantly puts out her hand. This is the supreme test, and Captain Tom is quick enough to seize the opportunity.

"Take it, mademoiselle; see for yourself what Johann has written to Linda, as he begs her to fly from Paris. I know now why I saved the copy—it was that you might read it."

He speaks hurriedly, feeling that she cannot resist the temptation; for Linda is her rival, beautiful Linda, who has stolen Johann's heart.

A pitiful little cry escapes her lips, not unlike a heart-broken moan—the outstretched hand falls nerveless to her side.

"Will you not read, mademoiselle?" he asks, leaning forward and rustling the paper.

"Mock me not, Monsieur Tom," she cries, with a groan. "You have forgotten—I am blind!"

CHAPTER XV.

THE MEN BEHIND THE CURTAINS.

An electric thrill passes through the frame of the American soldier when Myra bursts out with this lamentation. While she speaks, some power causes her to grasp the vail that has up to this moment concealed her countenance, and with a movement she tosses it aside.

There is revealed the same girlish face Tom has so often seen, and which has even appeared in his dreams of late.

He fastens his attention upon the eyes, and how

his whole nature is stirred when he sees the same pitiful, sightless orbs upon which he gazed in the street, after saving Myra from the fury of the mad mob.

Strange to say, this is what he has hoped to see—it gives him a chance to solve the problem that has of late been puzzling him. He believes in striking while the iron is hot, and there can be no telling how much longer these concealed men may be held back.

"You are Myra?" he exclaims, catching the girl by the wrist.

"Yes, I am Myra," she breathes.

"It was not you who warned me that the wine was drugged—who held the arm of the would-be assassin in the catacombs, calling upon me to awaken. Tell me, Myra, who was the angel to whom I am indebted for my life? She had eyes as bright as the stars—they have been shining before me ever since. Speak her name. You are a woman, and you love—have pity on me, and breathe her name."

Thus wildly imploring, the American gazes into her face. He knows it cannot be the girl of the catacombs for several reasons—she had eyes full of dancing light, while Myra's sightless orbs tell a different story; there is not the faintest sign of a scar upon the cheek where he saw the blood after the men had hurled aside the woman whom he had taken for Myra.

No matter what she says, he can never again believe that; his eyes have been opened, and he realizes that it is another he loves.

She seems under a spell; he has conjured her by the love she bears the Uhlan to tell him the truth, and it proves to be the one sacred motive that may

influence her. Perhaps something of jealousy rankles in her heart, for she realizes that Linda has gone, and Johann Strauss is free to follow. The green-eyed monster may make the most gentle maid cruel and uncompromising. It has wrought greater wonders before now, and will so long as the world swings along, and human passions throb.

"I will tell you, Monsieur Tom—why should I not, since it may be the only satisfaction you can have? It was my poor self you saved from those terrible Amazons on the streets of Paris. It was my cousin Meta who paid my debt by saving you, and thus incurred the deadly hate of Linda."

"Meta!" Tom allows the name to escape his lips in a caressing way—it has leaped into his heart and taken possession there.

The girl laughs—strange how his feelings have changed toward her already.

He even discovers that Myra can be heartless and cruel—peculiar qualities to find in a blind girl.

"Meta will be more to your way of thinking, Monsieur Tom, since her heart is with France. Mine is where it has always been—you see my colors," and she flashes from the bosom of her dress a diminutive German flag, which she presses rapturously to her lips.

Captain Tom is not yet satisfied. He has more to learn, since new thoughts and suspicions have been aroused within.

"Johann Strauss told me a strange story when I visited him in prison. Listen, Myra, and let me know whether it is true or not. It may be the last favor I shall ask, and you owe me something, I believe."

"Speak on, monsieur—I listen."

"He told of a strange band or society which Linda organized in Berlin, the members of which, to show their love for Germany, vowed never to marry a man who was a foreigner. Is this true?"

"As you say, monsieur."

"Myra, you belong to that circle?"

"I glory in the fact," and her manner is evidence of the pride she takes in the consciousness that she is faithful to her country.

"And Meta—she would not join?"

He endeavors to calm his voice, but there is a perceptible tremor in it, which of course she instantly detects—trust a girl for that.

"There is no ground for your fears, Monsieur Tom—Meta would sooner die than wed a German—her heart is with France, the little traitress—but no, I cannot call her that, since we belong in the border country, and in Alsace-Lorraine even brothers go different ways."

A load has been taken from Tom's mind. He realizes that Meta can be won, that there is no chasm between them which cannot be bridged by his love, such as must have been the case had she come under the vow taken by these young women in Berlin.

Strangely happy he feels, and yet something still seems gnawing at his heart—a few words spoken by Myra have given a vague sort of uneasiness.

He looks at the girl of Germany as she stands there under the light of that one lamp—how like a goddess she appears, holding his destiny in her small hand.

"Tell me, strange girl, where can I find Meta? Is she in Paris still? Shall I see her soon?"

"That is impossible, for she has accompanied Linda—they are far on the road to Berlin."

This is his fear—she has said it—Meta has gone away, in the power of the woman who hates and who knows how to strike.

The cold hand clutches his heart, for he feels that Meta is lost—there is no friend to warn her of danger, and Linda will surely visit her vengeance upon the girl who has really been the cause of her plans failing.

Captain Tom turns upon Myra again, and his voice has a new ring in it—he pleads no more, but commands, and she recognizes his right to ask questions that are pertinent, because they concern his life happiness. When this man is aroused, there are few who can resist him—men cringe before his aspect, and women admire.

"Tell me, does Linda hate Meta?" he asks.

"I am sure of it," comes the reply.

"And why?"

"In the first place, she knows my cousin is the cause of her plans failing. Had you taken the drugged wine, as I said before, Monsieur Tom, who knows but what ere now Paris would have been forced to capitulate."

"There is another reason—tell me that."

The blind girl laughs in his face.

"*Mon Dieu!* how stupid you men can be! To me all is so very plain. I am a woman, you see, and can read others better than if I could see. You love Meta, Monsieur Tom, and Linda loves you. Plainly, then, that is a good reason for her hating poor Meta."

The American realizes that this is no time for mincing matters. Besides, Linda's secret has already been known to him.

"Myra, tell me, in the name of Heaven, what do

you think she will do to harm that innocent young girl?" He once more falls back to entreaty in his distress of mind.

The blind girl shakes her head.

"Who can tell what deviltry may not be hatched in the brain of a jealous woman? Even I, poor blind creature as I am, have felt the torments of the monster. Linda is lovely, but she can be terrible when aroused, and her whole soul is wrapped up in you, Captain Tom."

"She is a vampire if she could harm one so innocent because I love her. I have never professed to understand women, but surely she could not be so blood-thirsty as that."

"Live and learn, Monsieur Tom; you have much to discover about my sex. Probably you have never seen a woman whose heart was torn by the mad fingers of jealousy—a woman beautiful as an houri, enraged because her charms fail to win the heart she covets. Look back, monsieur—history tells us more than once that such women have been capable of visiting their vengeance most cruelly, not upon the man they loved—no, they always hope to win him back after the object of his passion has been removed from the path."

It can easily be surmised that these words do not calm the hot blood that is rioting through the American adventurer's veins.

He hears, and naturally pictures every conceivable danger as menacing Meta.

She is in the company of the false Linda, traveling toward Berlin, with no one to warn her—who can say that she will not be arrested as a French spy, and doomed to a terrible death? Such a fate would perhaps suit the temper of Linda.

Since the siege began, Captain Tom has not up to this hour had any desire to leave the city on the Seine. Now he feels an eagerness to pass beyond the lines of the besiegers, to overtake these two travelers, and tear Meta from the power of the false Linda.

The thought is useless, and his impotent condition makes Tom more eager for wings to bear him over those watchful encircling lines, away to the border, where he might yet intercept Linda and the girl she takes with her to Berlin, with dark vengeance in her mind.

"Why does Meta go? Her heart is with France, you assure me; then why should she so readily accompany Linda to the German capital?" he asks, still groping for light.

She answers him calmly, remembering why he has been brought here.

"Linda has deceived her with a story to the effect that Basil has been taken and is a prisoner in Berlin, so that Meta's heart draws her."

"Who is Basil?" demands the American lover.

"Her only brother."

"Not dangerous, then. I would to Heaven I knew of a chance to leave Paris now—how gladly would I avail myself of it."

"For Meta's sake I am sorry, monsieur, that you must remain—sorry that my religious sense of duty to my country must overshadow my gratitude to you, and make me seem an ingrate—but patriots know nothing else save stern duty."

He knows what is coming, and does not feel the least tremor of fear—it is his purpose to take the reins in his hands at this point, and manipulate things to suit himself.

"Mademoiselle, do not worry over what cannot be helped. Captain Tom has never depended on luck or any other power to help him out of a tight place. You see this weapon, mademoiselle; it has been my best friend in time of need. Suppose you were attacked by footpads in the Pyrenees and in great danger. All you would have to do would be to take this silver whistle, raise it to your lips, so, and blow a shrill note, to bring me to your rescue. Sound the signal, and see how I would come to aid you."

She thinks not of the double meaning, but with a low laugh raises the silver whistle. Captain Tom sees, in a glass, the curtains trembling violently—then a head is thrust out, and some one makes violent gestures of threat and appeal.

Myra heeds not—she is blind.

The silver whistle is now at her lips, and in another moment she will give the sound the American wants.

As the man in hiding realizes that he cannot make her understand, he seems about to proceed to more extreme measures; but just at this moment Captain Tom whirls around, the light flashing from his revolver, and like a tortoise drawing in its head, the fellow ducks behind the curtain again.

Ah, Myra blows the fatal note, little suspecting that in so doing she is striking a blow against the cause she loves so well.

A groan comes from back of the curtains; the man who hides there is no fool, and he realizes that Captain Tom has a method in all this. But for the fact that he has a great veneration for a revolver in the hands of an American, he might be tempted to rush out and expedite matters.

Captain Tom knows who has won, but he shows no great interest in the matter, as his thoughts are far away from Paris, on the road to the German capital, where Linda hastens with her unsuspecting *protege.*

"Mademoiselle Myra," he says, quietly, and yet with the least suspicion of a sneer in his voice, "not many minutes ago you professed to feel sorry that duty to the cause you love must make you seem ungrateful. It is the fortune of war that already the tide has turned and is running in the opposite quarter. It grieves me to be compelled to war against members of the opposite sex, for whom I have such respect, but if they will enter into the plots and plans of soldiers, they must accept the consequences."

"What do you mean, Monsieur Tom? Your words convey a vague threat. Perhaps you do not know that——"

"Pardon, mademoiselle, I know all. You have three men behind yonder portiere, and several more in the closet yonder. I fear them not—alone I would meet them in battle, and let them see how we Americans can face the music—teach them tricks learned upon many a bloody battle-field in our late civil war. But I have thought it best to do this thing in another way, in order to keep the peace and create no excitement in the Cafe Madrid. You yourself have given the signal on this silver whistle—behold the result."

While the blind girl cries aloud in anger and vexation of spirit, Captain Tom advances to the door.

CHAPTER XVI.

"THE CHANCE HAS COME!"

A knock comes upon the door. Captain Tom has drawn the bolt.

"Enter!" he cries, in French.

The door opens, and a man dressed in sober black walks into the room.

"Ah! good-evening, Monsieur le Prefect of Police. Mademoiselle Myra, allow me the pleasure of an introduction. And these gentlemen, his deputies from the Central Office. It is a great pleasure, I assure you, monsieur."

The silence of death falls upon the room, and all eyes are bent upon the curtains, which seem to tremble as though in a draught.

"Monsieur le Prefect, if there are arms secreted here, they are most apt to be found behind yonder curtains, or in this closet. As it is dangerous for loyal men to prowl about in such a den of plotters, permit me to suggest that it might be wise to first send a dozen bullets ahead, and look for the arms afterward."

Captain Tom's words are distinct enough to be heard all through the room. There is at once a movement seen, the curtains shake like the sail of a vessel in a squall, and it is evident that the terrified conspirators are tumbling over each other in their eagerness to emerge before the expected volley comes.

Their mad evolutions result in tearing the curtains from their hooks, and over the three roll, so

tangled up as to be almost smothered. A head protrudes from the struggling mass, and a hand is held up, while a voice bellows:

"Mercy, Monsieur le Prefect! We are men of Paris, who have been deceived! Our intentions were honorable—patriotic. It is Barbe the butcher who appeals to you."

"And here is Monsieur Jean, the Student, dancer of the Jardin Bullier, who delights all Paris with his heels—Monsieur le Prefect will not cast gloom on the hearts of the fair sex by annihilating the pride of the Closerie des Lilas," cries a lithe young chap, crawling out from the tangle.

In him the American recognizes a student whom he has seen in times past taking a leading part at the garden which comes nearest to the Mabille. Young men bring their sweethearts to dance, and as the hour grows late, the scene becomes so wild that respectable persons depart. Jean, the Student, has evidently made a better use of his heels than his brain, since he is proud to be called the beau of the Jardin Bullier, but even that may not save him, once he has fallen into the clutches of the Prefect of Police, that quiet man who balances the destinies of so many people in his scales.

By this time another hubbub has arisen; men are beating on the door of the closet, and calling aloud in anxious tones:

"The door is locked! We surrender—we are innocent, Monsieur le Prefect! Let us out, and hear our story!"

Captain Tom has seen enough—he knows Myra will not be injured, though she, too, may be sent out of the French lines, as was Linda. He has received positive assurance of this from the man

who rules Paris. Just now his only wish is that he may cross the lines as easily, for his whole soul is wrapped up in Meta and the unknown danger that threatens her.

He waves his hand—Monsieur le Prefect understands and returns the salute.

Then Captain Tom turns and leaves the room, the last sound he hears being the angry sobs of a baffled woman.

He thinks no more of the perils of the past, for such men meet danger as it flies.

They live not in the past, but the present and the future.

When the American walks through the outer room of the *cafe chantant*, he notices that several of those present survey him curiously, including the landlord himself. Perhaps they have known that it was a spider's web he entered, and wonder how it comes that he walks away unharmed. It is not every fly that thus escapes the silken meshes that are woven to entrap him.

He reaches the open air, how cool and refreshing it seems after the close room he has left.

Ah! the great dogs of war are making the earth tremble under Paris—the Krupp guns are again throwing their terrible missiles into the doomed city, and from the rapidity of their fire it seems as though the enemy were determined to make that night a memorable one in the siege.

Now a shell bursts in a house, and a shower of bricks and mortar falls across the street; anon it is a bridge that is struck, or perhaps a church tower; this section of Paris begins to show positive signs that the bombardment is not an effect of the imagination.

Captain Tom consults the first clock he comes across, and groans as he notes that it is not yet ten —two whole hours to pass before the time arrives when Mickey is to report.

What shall he do—how can he kill time? He thinks of the theaters and gardens, but they are almost dead in this time of siege—those who were wont to frequent them have a greater panorama to watch all day from the hills, and remain up nearly all night to see the flash of the Prussian guns, hear the screaming of the shells passing overhead, and then running to witness the desolation they cause.

So he wanders the streets.

They are far from deserted—even a threatening storm from the south, and the danger from bursting shells do not keep the Parisian crowd indoors—it is only once in a life-time they are permitted to witness a siege, and as to the bombardment, that is a luxury they have never dreamed would fall to their lot.

Really, they act like children let loose from school. Here and there they run; where a bomb explodes they gather, confident that lightning never strikes the same place twice.

Captain Tom has been interested in these things himself previous to this time, but now he has his mind set about something else.

Will Mickey succeed—is there a way to leave the beleaguered city? He hopes and yet despairs, knowing how tightly the German forces have drawn around Paris, with the intention of closing all avenues of communication with the outside world.

The minutes drag on—it is now eleven, and a shell has created great havoc in the street near where Tom loiters, dropping back of a Red Cross ambu-

lance bound for Necker Hospital on the Rue de Sevres, and completing the work begun by Prussian bullets.

All the wounded are slain, the driver's head is almost taken from his body, but the doctor who has accompanied the vehicle is not touched. Such are the vagaries of war. A crowd rushes up, the wounded horses are slain, to be divided among the half-starved *canaille*, and when soldiers come along the dead are carried away.

Such fearful scenes are beginning to appear upon the streets of Paris; hitherto they have been confined to the forts and hospitals.

They usher in the new reign of blood that is soon to visit this unfortunate city, hitherto the gay capital of the world of pleasure.

An old soldier, Captain Tom sees this thing with a shrug of the shoulders. He learns that none are wounded, and nothing can be done to help those that are dead.

He converses with the surgeon a while, and as the soldiers bear away the broken wagon, in which the dead have been placed, and from which drops a trail of blood, the American once more paces up and down the street.

There is the hole where the fatal shell struck—how these gruesome iron spheres tear and demolish when they drop. Herr Krupp must be proud when he hears what a share his pets have had in subduing Paris.

Again Tom groans at the slow passage of time. Surely the minutes are leaden. He wants to know the worst. If Mickey's mission is a failure, they must turn some other way. If he has to disguise himself as a German, and attempt to run the gant-

let, with the risk of being shot as a spy, Captain Tom is determined to find some chance to leave Paris.

Twelve at last!

The midnight hour is marked by even a fiercer outburst from the Krupp batteries, and the shells sweep the Latin Quartier of the French capital with more destructive force than at any previous time.

Captain Tom whistles as he hears them dropping now on one side and anon on the other, occasionally exploding overhead, and often simply burying themselves in the buildings.

"This is becoming dused hot," he mutters, as a screaming overhead tells of the swift passage of a shell. He waits to hear the result, and then continues: "It is only a question of days now before the Germans walk into Paris. Well, the sooner the better, since we have been fairly beaten. I only hope morning won't see me inside the walls."

If the minutes were long before, they seem doubly so now. One o'clock comes, then two, and finds no change in the programme; for there are as many people abroad, the shells continue to drop, and Captain Tom paces his beat as furious as a baited bear —angry because fortune makes sport of him.

Like the rest of the human family, he is short-sighted, and cannot recognize the favors of fortune until they are upon him. What he now deems a calamity is really a blessing in disguise. He is not used to being made the sport of an idle wind, and sometimes has been known to utter Napoleon's boast, "Circumstances—I make them!"

Game to the backbone, he will not leave the rendezvous until daylight, but as the time goes on,

Captain Tom realizes that never in all his life has he passed such a night.

It is not a great while now before morning, and the bombardment has dwindled down to a shot every five minutes.

Hopeless and desperate, Captain Tom still sticks to his post. Suddenly he discovers a figure advancing along the street. Can that be Mickey? What has happened to him? He comes staggering like a drunken man, and Tom's first thought is that the Irishman must have yielded to temptation and imbied too heavily.

Then he notices that his clothes are in tatters, and whip behind him as he advances. This causes new thoughts to enter his head, and his faith in Mickey McCray remains.

He rushes forward to meet him. Mickey gives a groan that is desolate and sad—it tells the story before a word is spoken.

"It's all lost, Captain Tom! The bloody Prussians have discovered the secret path! Didn't I fall into an ambush and get kotched?"

"What!" shouts the American, "have you been a prisoner of war this night?"

"That's the truth, sir. Twinty Prussians had me in their hands—bad cess to them. I was to be shot sure at the rising of the sun," returns the Irishman, with becoming modesty.

"But you escaped—how?"

"By the favor of Providence, knocking me guard over and running for me life. Tare an' ounds, but it was a hot chase! I scratched through the bushes, over twinty fences, through three houses out beyant Belleville, and finally reached the lines, to be nearly

shot for me pains. It's a bad job I've made of it, I fear, Captain Tom."

Mickey is disconsolate, but this is the very thing that cheers the other.

"Never mind," he cries, "Heaven will help us yet, my good fellow. We can bide our time."

Brave words!

They have hardly been uttered when there is a peculiar hissing sound heard over their heads, at which cautious Mickey prostrates himself upon the pavement. Then comes a frightful crash as the bomb explodes down the street.

Captain Tom has just noticed two men hastening toward them—the streets are no longer crowded at this hour—and when the smoke clears away they are seen lying on the pavement.

"This way, Mickey," he cries, and in a moment he is beside the latest victims of Prussian shells.

One man is stone dead, the other dying, and bending over the latter, Captain Tom discovers a friend.

"Good heavens! you, professor?"

The dying man groans and looks up.

"I recognize you, Captain Tom—you are a true friend to France. Put your hand into my inner pocket. You feel some papers—take them out."

"I have them, wet with your brave blood," says the American, quickly.

"Swear to me that you will endeavor to deliver them—it is very important."

"I promise—if there is any show. Where are they to go, professor?"

"Lift me up—I am dying fast. That packet holds the last hope of expiring Paris. If it can be placed in the hands of General Chanzy within two days, the city may be saved."

"Chanzy! he is a hundred miles away to the north; how could one reach him?" exclaimed Captain Tom, with a consciousness that the supreme moment has arrived.

"I have the means—it is yours. Go, and the God of battles watch over you. Two blocks down this street is an empty lot—in that a balloon hangs, eager to cleave the air; all is in readiness. My assistant courier and myself were hastening there when—— Air—your promise, captain! Heaven save poor France!" and the American, kneeling there, realizes that he holds a dead man in his arms.

Gently he places the professor down, and then springs to his feet—the blood leaps like molten lava through his veins until he seems to be on fire.

"Mickey, did you hear that? The road lies before us—we prayed, Mickey, my boy, and the chance, thank God, the chance has come!"

He waits not to see what Mickey does, but speeds down the street like a tornado.

Mickey clatters along at his heels, with new life infused in him by the wonderful opportunity that has arrived.

Thus hastening along, they reach the open lot, where, surrounded by buildings, a huge silk globe swings and tugs in a powerful way at the ropes that hold it down. Daylight is already at hand, and yet several lanterns, hung around, help to show the faces of the crowd.

A man is in the car—the American hardly notices him, but pushes forward with an air of authority, calling in French:

"Stand by to cut the ropes!"

Then he springs into the car—Mickey makes a misstep, and very nearly finds himself left, but

Tom's strong hand clutches him by the collar, and he drops over the side.

"Bless my soul, it's Captain Tom!" calls out a well-known voice, and Lord Eric rushes forward to shake hands, but just at that moment the ropes are cut, and the balloon shoots upward. A roaring sound is heard—cheers from ten-score of throats arise—then the daring American hears that bull-like Saxon voice above all else, bellowing out:

"Hurrah for Captain Tom!"

CHAPTER XVII.

THE VOYAGERS OF THE CLOUDS.

The balloon mounts upward like a bird, impatient at long restraint, the hoarse shouts of the crowd below die away, but the last sound heard by Captain Tom, from the city that lies in semi-darkness underneath, is the deep voice of the Englishman, shouting, in stentorian tones:

"Good luck to you, Captain Tom!"

As they draw upward the light grows stronger, and the strangest sight of their lives is presented. The sun peeps into view beyond the horizon, and yet in the valleys below darkness still lingers to a certain extent. They can make out the limits of the great city spread under them, with her lights still burning, though scanty in number. Even the explosion of a shell is distinctly seen, as the noise also comes to their ears.

Will the balloon be discovered by the watchful eyes of the Prussians? Knowing the fate of one other monster of the air that has attempted to leave Paris, Captain Tom doubts not that they will be

seen. Much depends upon whether they can keep out of range.

One thing favors them—there has been a temporary lull in the breeze, and this allows them to reach a good height before commencing to drift over the German camps.

The light grows fast below, and looking down, they can now make out the environs of Paris, her forts and other defenses.

Then it is noticed that they are drifting slowly in a northerly direction, being a mile or more above the surface of the earth.

The German lines come in view; it is easy to trace them by the cannon glinting in the early morning light. Even the roll of a drum reaches their ears—can it be reveille or an alarm?

Such a sight as this has never before been given to the American, and he can only gaze upon it with intense wonder.

At the same time, while he drifts over the enemy's works, he wonders what effect it would have, what consternation it would cause, could he drop certain explosives into the forts.

Another cannon sounds; how plainly they hear the whistle of the shell through the air; one would think it was traveling near by, and not on a plain far below. Heavens! what a shock it gives them when the shell bursts not a hundred feet behind the balloon. What if one particle of iron strikes the silk of the great globe—it must tear a hole that will cause the gas to escape, the balloon to collapse, and their descent will probably be at the rate of a mile a minute. Well, there is one satisfaction—they will never know what hurt them.

Thank Heaven, the first shot has not succeeded in

doing any damage, but others must follow, and sooner or later the catastrophe may come upon them.

That cold clutch upon his heart is only a passing one, for in half a dozen seconds he is himself again. With Captain Tom that means bold, brave, and watchful.

They must float over miles of hostile camps, and presently a dozen guns will be aimed at them from as many different quarters. Thus the doom of the balloon and its occupants will be sealed, unless something prevents.

What can be done? For the first time Captain Tom remembers that there is another occupant of the car besides himself and Mickey. He whirls around upon this individual with the abruptness that characterizes his movements when in action. It has made him a tiger in battle.

One glance he takes at the man, and then, without asking him a single question, seizes upon some sand-bags and begins to toss them overboard with lightning rapidity. Joy! the balloon makes a clear jump with the passage of each bag; relieved of so much weight, it begins to mount higher.

There is no doubt of this, for they can feel the climbing motion, and objects below, though the shadows have been chased away by the coming of the sun, seem to be farther off.

This has been done just in time, for from half a dozen quarters come the deep-throated discharge of cannon, all of which are undoubtedly elevated to an angle of at least forty-five degrees, so as to send their iron missiles upward toward the lazily floating balloon.

The Germans know that this balloon certainly

carries important dispatches, and the most desperate endeavors will be made to accomplish its destruction.

It mounts higher—Captain Tom ceases to cast out the sand-bags, for he realizes that they are now at an altitude beyond the reach of the bombs, which burst far below them with deep-toned growls, as though furious at defeat.

Then he leisurely leans over the bulwark of the basket and surveys the magnificent panorama spread before him. It is a noble sight, but would make the heart of a Frenchman bleed to see the hated army of Prussia encamped upon the hills around his beloved Paris, in possession of Versailles, the railroads to the frontier over which provisions for the immense host come, and stringing out for many miles in either direction.

France is in the grasp of an octopus; nothing remains for her but an honorable peace, and the surrender of border territory.

Captain Tom sees more. His eagle eye notes the fact that dark clouds are rushing up from the southeast, telling of a storm. This lull in the wind is but a forerunner of what is to come.

He sees even more than this. Looking down upon the camps of the Prussians, as the balloon slowly passes over them, his attention is directed to a certain spot where men, seeming like ants, are wildly running.

What is that swaying object? The truth bursts upon him suddenly, and he realizes that it must be a rival balloon—perhaps one captured by the Germans at some past time, and held in readiness to send in pursuit should the beleaguered Parisians

attempt to get dispatches out of the city by an air-ship.

This gives a chance of complications—perhaps a duel in mid-air, where a single bullet would rend the stricken balloon and send its passengers down to a terrible death.

Oh! for a breeze to waft them on! There must be some delay in sending up the rival balloon, which, of course, is to their advantage. Every minute counts now.

Upward climb the storm-clouds—they bring with them a strong wind, a regular gale, and it will be well for Captain Tom and his party if they are in a higher strata when this strikes.

Clouds begin to drift between the earth and the three occupants of the air-ship; at times all is obscured below by a mass of fog.

Through an opening Mickey catches a glimpse of the Prussian balloon—a far-away roaring sound announces the coming of the southern storm, perhaps sweeping in from the Bay of Biscay, or even whirling up from the blue Mediterranean, in the quarter of Marseilles.

"Begorra, she's risin' fast!" shouts Mickey, in the most intense excitement, as he cranes his neck to look into the gulf below.

"The storm, do you mean, old chap?" asks Captain Tom, who has been casting a glance aloft, as a sailor might look to his rigging when the howl of the tempest sounds over the watery waste.

"Oh, no, the Dutch balloon, Captain Tom, dear," returns the Irish sentinel.

This information draws the attention of Tom to the region below. He has a fleeting glimpse of the Prussian balloon, rising like an immense bird not a

great way behind them, and then the whirling clouds shut out the view.

Fierce rushes of air sweep the dark masses of fog-banks toward the north-west. There are tremendous struggles of different currents in the mass of clouds, that appear like giants in a battle for supremacy. If the other air-ship is caught in a gale like this, the chances are that it will be destroyed.

Even at their height they feel the wind, and begin to sweep rapidly toward the north. As this is what they have desired, it gives them a feeling of exhilaration. The German camps will soon be left behind, and when a chance comes to descend, it will be upon the soil of France, free from occupation by the enemy.

Whether the storm ascends, or they dip into the midst of it, none of them are ever able to tell, but suddenly the balloon begins to turn around, and act in a frantic manner—now careening over and whirling the basket or car through space at a rate that causes its occupants to seize hold of the sides and gasp for breath—anon making a whirl in a new direction with such rapidity that the supports of the car threaten to give way under the strain.

They are in the midst of a hurricane that has sped northward from the warm shores of Africa even at this time of year. It may not be felt to any extent upon the earth, but there is certainly war among the clouds that sweep along on this January morning, over the battle-fields around Paris.

Captain Tom does not lose his head, which is a fortunate thing—had he become rattled, they might have been lost. The whirling wind-clouds have no mercy, and should they be caught in a vortex some accident must occur.

It does not take much to cause a catastrophe to a balloon that floats a mile or more above the earth. Those who venture aloft with such a frail support between heaven and earth run peculiar risks, and their lives can be said to be suspended by a single hair, like the sword of Damocles.

Again Captain Tom, holding on with one hand, tosses out a sand-bag—the unknown passenger imitates his example, and once more the balloon, lightened of a portion of its load, mounts into space. Thank Heaven! they leave the worst of the storm-clouds below them, and reach the single current of air, that bears them along as speedily and yet without danger.

"I seen 'em," declared Mickey, nodding sagaciously, as he looks at the raging masses of fog and vapor below.

This time the other is quick to catch his meaning, for he believes he has had a glimpse himself of what the other speaks about.

"The German balloon, you mean?" he says.

"Yes. It was having a high old time, whirlin' around just like I seen a priest, or dervish, in Cairo, down in Egypt—bedad, it makes me poor head swim to think of it. If the gossoons in the Dutch balloon ain't dizzy by this time I miss me guess."

"I hope we will see no more of them," says Tom.

He hardly notes his words, for his attention has been directed to the stranger. Up to this time he has only given the other a passing glance, but now he stares in startled surprise, for he has suddenly discovered that the passenger carried by the balloon is a woman.

True, she wears the garments of his own sex, but there can be no mistaking the fair skin and curly

hair. He is amazed, for it is certainly a most astonishing thing to find a female up in the clouds.

The woman's eyes meet his—there is a look of deep perplexity, and even alarm, in them, which causes brave Captain Tom some uneasiness, for an idea that is very probably the truth has flashed into his mind.

The argonaut of the air would not be apt to take a female with him in his perilous voyage among the clouds, unless it was his wife. If this proves to be the case, Tom must endeavor to keep the truth from her, at least for the present—there is no telling how she may take it, and a crazy creature in the frail car of a balloon would not be a desirable thing.

Bending down, he whispers a few sentences to the Irishman, depending upon Mickey's quick wit to grasp the situation, and receiving a grunt in reply which tells him he is understood.

Then Captain Tom turns upon the other.

"Pardon, madam," he says, in his best French, "unless I mistake, you are the good wife of my friend, Professor Leon Valeau?"

She nods eagerly—her breath comes in quick gasps, and her eyes are fixed upon his. Captain Tom knows what she is about to ask, and that it is for the interest of all that he prevaricate, but it requires a tremendous amount of nerve to do it with those clear eyes looking him through.

"My husband—he came not—strangers took possession of our ship—where is my Leon—what have you done with him?"

Her hand is on his arm, her liquid eyes close to his face, and Captain Tom suffers more in passing through this experience than if he were facing hostile cannon. His nature is frank, and deception

foreign to it, but he feels that a duty has been thrust upon him, disagreeable though it may be.

"Your husband could not come; truth to tell you, madam, he was slightly wounded, and begged me to take his place. Perhaps you have heard him speak of me—Captain Tom?"

"Indeed, I have, monsieur. But if he sent you, how about the dispatches?"

"For General Chanzy? They are here on my person. See, I prove it to you—— Confusion! I forgot—you see, madam, the courier who carried these was killed at the same time the professor received his wound; it is his blood upon the packet—that is all."

She looks at the stains; how these marks would convict the American; but he is willing to sacrifice himself for the general good.

"Was—my husband badly hurt?" she continues; and Tom, having put his foot into it, feels that he must go through to the end.

"I don't think his wound is painful, madam. These things generally begin to hurt about the second day. I beg you will not worry—no good can come of it. The best surgeons in the world are in Paris, and Professor Leon will receive all the care he needs. Try and think of our own situation, madam—think of poor, suffering France. We must get these papers to Chanzy, if it is possible. What worries me is the fact that I know little or nothing about the handling of a balloon."

He has gone about it in the right vein, by appealing to her patriotism; her face loses some of the horror that settles there, and she even smiles in a wan sort of way.

"Leave that to me, Captain Tom. I have not

accompanied the professor among the clouds twenty times, to remain ignorant. Yes, I will take charge of the balloon, for his sake—and for France."

"Hurrah!" cries Mickey, waving his old hat above his head—"Joan of Arc has come back to save her counthry! Three cheers for the gineral!"

CHAPTER XVIII.

A TAP ON THE SHOULDER.

Their condition seems more hopeful now that they have discovered in their fellow-traveler one who is capable of taking the helm, so to speak, or at least manipulating the ship of the clouds. All trace of the rival balloon has been lost; whether it has been destroyed or swept away toward the Belgian frontier, it is next to impossible to say.

Their desire is to drop at some place within the boundaries of France, where the dispatches can be sent by courier to the general.

If left to themselves, Captain Tom and Mickey would not know how to delay the progress of the balloon, but the professor's wife directs them to again lighten the load, so that they may shoot up and reach a more favorable current of air.

Thus they drift along in the sunshine for hours, while the war of the elements goes on below. The air is cold, and they suffer to some extent from this, but it is a dry, bracing atmosphere, entirely different from any they have experienced upon the earth.

Captain Tom looks at his watch, and discovers that it is nearly noon. At the same time he realizes that it has been many hours since he tasted food, and is actually hungry. There is no neighboring

restaurant to drop upon and supply this aching void. What was it the dying professor had said about all supplies being on board? Every well-regulated ship carries provisions on a cruise; it doesn't make any difference whether it sails the air or on the sea.

With the inspiriting thought the adventurous soldier of fortune begins to cast about him, and speedily discovers a hamper, into which he peers. There are certain supplies for the balloon, and a small package, which, upon being opened, discloses enough edibles for a single decent repast.

Thus they are provisioned for the time being, and a mug of cold tea gives them drink.

The female aeronaut gently but firmly refuses to touch a bite. Captain Tom knows the reason why, and his heart reproaches him for the deception he has put upon her with respect to the man she loves; he calls himself a brute over and over again, and yet dares not undo his work, for much more depends upon their safe arrival than the life of one man. When France is in the toils, what does one Frenchman's life represent?

The storm is passing away below, but it is not safe to descend even yet. Captain Tom asks questions concerning the manipulation of the balloon, not from idle curiosity, but with a motive in view. He believes the time will come when he may use the knowledge thus attained to good advantage.

"You see, we are drifting almost west now. The upper current will soon control the lower. Already the edge of the storm is breaking over the Rhine, and before midnight it will be upon Berlin."

Thus their guide shows them many things that are useful, and Tom does not hesitate to ask ques-

tions. The day is declining. Below them the clouds are dispersing before a strong westerly wind, and glimpses can already be had of the earth.

Captain Tom, among other things, has come across a pair of field-glasses of fair power, and, knowing the value of these things from experience, he quickly adjusts them to his sight. This makes it a pleasure to look down upon the earth—he can even see men and women running about and pointing upward, proving that the balloon has been discovered through openings in the clouds.

Where are they? Captain Tom has a map of the country handy, and spreads it out. Then he again surveys the scene. The peasants below undoubtedly wear the costume of the French people, but he believes they are very near the border.

Thus he notes the flowing of a river, takes a glance at a distant town, marks a railroad destroyed, and points out what has undoubtedly been a terrible battle-field not many months before. Snow mercifully hides much of the dread work, but enough remains to tell the truth.

"That is Sedan," says Captain Tom, pointing downward, and all look with strange emotions upon the field where the last of the Napoleons lost his throne.

What shall they do? To descend now would be dangerous, for this part of the country has been in the hands of the enemy for some time. Still, they cannot remain where they are long, since the current of air will send them on toward the Rhine. Should such a thing occur they would have more trouble than ever in making their escape, for even the peasants would be intensely hostile.

A hurried consultation ensues, and it is finally

decided to remain as stationary as they can until night falls upon the scene, when they will risk all by a descent.

At length the face of the earth is blotted from their vision, which gives those unused to the sight a queer sensation, for around them the sun still shines brightly.

When the flaming orb finally ducks behind the black storm-clouds still scurrying along in the west, the guide announces that the time has come for their descent.

This is always perilous, and especially so when dropping into inky blackness, with a swift current of air in the lower region. It is a strange sensation that passes over Captain Tom when the professor's wife opens a valve, and allows a certain amount of gas to escape. He had experienced the dreadful *mal de mer* in crossing the English Channel, as even old sailors do, and can compare this peculiar qualm to nothing else.

Full directions have been given—the two men stand ready to cast over a few sand-bags at the proper moment to ease their descent.

They strain their eyes to see through the inky wall of darkness below. Straight almost as a plummet they fall, and Tom realizes why so much gas has been allowed to escape when he hears the fierce rush of the wind around them.

But for this the air-ship must have become the sport of the atmosphere, and have been carried many miles away, if not overturned.

Almost directly below Captain Tom discovers a light, and upon this he keeps his eye. Thus he is able to tell when they draw near the earth, where the atmosphere is heavier.

"Now!" comes the signal, and over like a shot go the weights; sother follow in their wake, until the balloon no longer sinks, but moves along some twenty feet or so from the earth.

Quick as thought Tom tosses the grapnel, attached to a long and stout rope, overboard. Presently he feels it trail along the ground—now it grasps an object—there is a slight shock, and they go swinging on—it must have been a fence, or something, which has given way.

Again the grapnel clutches hold, and tremendous shouts are heard as a terrified peasant is dragged along. They call to him to fasten the anchor to some tree, but he is too badly frightened, and thinks only of escape from its clutches.

At last comes another shock, and this time it seems to be permanent. By main strength they shorten the rope, for the balloon is not powerful enough to worry them.

Another anchor is cast out, and finally Tom himself slides down the rope to make fast. Thus by degrees the air-ship from Paris reaches *terra firma* almost on the border of France.

By this time several peasants have become bold enough to draw near. When they hear the voyagers address them in their native tongue, they show new interest. Captain Tom believes he can trust these people, and tells them that they are from Paris with important dispatches that must reach General Chanzy at the earliest possible moment.

Will they assist their compatriots in Paris? Where can a good horse be bought? They stand ready to pay any reasonable sum for such an animal.

The white-headed peasant whom Captain Tom addresses in this confidential way seems to grasp

the situation, and immediately dispatches a youth with hair like tow for a horse from his own stable. He gives Tom to understand that his three sons have been conscripts in the army, two being now dead, and that the cause of France is so dear to him that he is ready to sacrifice the other boy, or even his own life, in the good work. All the same, he eagerly accepts the Napoleons Captain Tom hands to him in payment for the horse. Truly, patriotism is sometimes combined with thrift.

The old peasant has news for them—news that makes Captain Tom grow anxious.

Strange though it may seem, the Prussian balloon, last noticed in the warring clouds just over the German camps around Paris, has descended not a mile away from their location.

Its descent was tragic, since one of the two occupants met his death, the other being badly injured, as he was dragged along over the ground for some distance until the trailing anchor caught in an old artillery wheel half-imbedded in the frozen earth.

The balloon collapsed later, but the one living voyager, after having his wound dressed, kept scanning the heavens for signs of the balloon that carried the French dispatches, and undoubtedly must have discovered their presence above.

All this Tom learns while waiting for the horse to arrive. He thus discovers that at any minute it is possible for the Germans to come upon them, for there are regiments still quartered near Sedan, and it must be positively understood by this time that the second balloon has come down.

He inwardly groans, and prays for the coming of that horse—that the professor's wife may escape in

a way the old peasant suggests. At that time he is utterly regardless of himself.

Later on it will do to remember the personal matter that has taken him out of Paris, and pursue his plans if the circumstances will allow.

At last the horse comes. The precious packet is hidden on her person by the brave madam. A grasp of the hand, a few parting words with the peasant, and they hear the sound of her horse's hoofs upon the road no more. She will follow the river some forty miles to Verdun, and if the railroad is in operation, continue her journey by that means—if not, she must trust to fortune, and the patriotism of the French people to take her to the presence of General Chanzy.

Captain Tom turns around as the last hoof-stroke ceases to be heard. Now he can think of himself and what lies ahead.

He suspects that they have descended close beside the wall of a fine old estate, and his questions confirm these things. Before the battle this was one of the finest places outside the palace, for the space of a hundred miles—now much of it lies in ruins. Here the French charged the enemy, who, hidden by walls and trees, mowed them down—artillery fire was turned upon the house, and the whole place made so hot that it no longer sheltered stubborn Prussians, with their deadly needle guns.

Under the cross-questioning of the American one fact is brought out—it is something Tom has been especially grasping for, and when he seizes it at last he feels a glow of triumph pass over his entire frame. The owner of this magnificent estate has made his own gas, and the peasant distinctly remembers the little tank adjoining the retort, being

behind a small rise of ground, has escaped injury during the bombardment.

This is glorious news. No wonder it enthuses Captain Tom. It seems as though there might be a sweet little cherub aloft looking with a favoring eye upon his fortunes.

He loses no time, but, leaving Mickey in charge of the balloon, climbs the broken wall, followed by the friendly antique—the peasant who once owned a horse which he has sold to the government for thirty Napoleons, to be the bearer of dispatches that may mean the salvation of France.

Captain Tom bears no hard feelings. Why should he, when this man leads him to the retort, and to his everlasting joy he finds the tank more than two-thirds full of gas.

Surely Providence smiles upon him. As it will be impossible for him to bring the balloon among the trees over the wall, some means must be found by which the coveted gas can be conducted to the depleted air-ship.

He has a long and hazardous journey before him —more than four hundred miles must be covered before he can reach Berlin, and it is positively necessary that the balloon, which has already done so nobly, should be put in the best possible condition in order to win future success.

Upon mentioning his dilemma to the old peasant, the latter opens the lid of a box, and Captain Tom fairly hugs himself in delight, for there, disclosed by the rude lantern his guide carries, lies a long, slender hose, used for some purpose in carrying the gas from the tank to another reservoir nearer the house.

He cares not a sou why the hose is here; he only

realizes that it serves him like a godsend—meets his every requirement. Seizing it, he attaches one end to the tank, and leaves word with the peasant to turn on the gas when he calls out. Thus he carries the hose over the wall—it seems as though everything must have been arranged to suit his circumstances, for he makes sure it will be long enough. In less than ten minutes they can be mounting upward into unknown space. Will that time be given to them?

He fastens the hose, and gives the signal. The hissing of the gas can be heard, and the balloon regains its buoyant shape. Just as Captain Tom is chuckling over his success, he feels a tap of authority upon his shoulder, and turning, faces a giant of a German officer, boots, sword, chapeau, and all.

CHAPTER XIX.

BEYOND THE RHINE.

The spectacle is refreshing, to say the least, and Captain Tom calmly surveys the officer who has touched his arm with such authority.

He looms up above the American, and upon his fat face can be seen a grin of satisfaction, as though he realizes that he has taken a prize.

"The dispatches?" he says, in German, while the awed peasants look on in stupefied wonder.

"I have none," replies Tom, nonchalantly, and his reply appears to anger the Teuton, whose hand now clutches his arm.

"Then you must come with me. You hear? We have a rope ready for a spy. You are not French—you come out from Paris," he grunts.

"That is true—I've had enough starvation. I'm in search of a square meal," declares Captain Tom, with Philadelphian assurance.

"Aha! that is what we will give you. A royal welcome awaits the man who tells us all that happens inside the walls of Paris. Herr Bismarck shall see you himself—he shall be glad to make your acquaintance."

"Come to think of it, I don't believe I care to make Herr Bismarck's acquaintance just now. Our opinions differ with regard to various things."

"Shall you come, rascal?" hotly exclaims the German.

"Not at all, my friend," coolly replies Tom.

"I will shake your teeth out, as a dog shakes a rat! You don't know me!"

"True, we have not been introduced, which shows the poor manners of these people. However, I have seen about all of you I care to. Take notice, Mr. Officer, that I have something grasped in my right hand with which I cover your stupid head. One pressure of the finger, and you will measure your six feet two upon the ground. They will dig you a grave here. Hark ye, man, be so good as to remove your hand from my arm—your grasp has become dused unpleasant."

The huge Bavarian officer hears and understands, for his eyes have looked into the loaded chambers of a revolver before now. There is something about the American that tells him to beware—that the other will keep his word and send him over the dark river into eternity with little compunction if he dares to disobey.

"My men—they are not far away. If I call, they will come like a whirlwind," he mutters.

His words have little effect on Tom, who sneers at his obtuseness.

"I believe you, my good fellow; but what would that avail you? They arrive in one minute, which is good time for such slow coaches as Bavarians—they find you lying here with a hole in your foolish head, while we are shooting far up into the sky, safe."

The huge officer growls a hearty curse.

This tells Captain Tom that he has given in to fate.

Every moment is precious, for there can be no telling when some of his men may fall upon the scene, and even the presence of one fellow with his needle-gun might destroy the balloon, and make their position desperate.

"Mickey McCray!" he calls out.

"On deck, captain dear," comes a soft voice.

"Sergeant, do your duty, search this man for weapons, and confiscate any fire-arms."

"Sure, I'm wantin' some meself, and I'll do it with the greatest of pleasure."

The Bavarian would resist, but a stern word from his captor convinces him that such a move would not be conducive to health. Captain Tom has influenced him, as he does all with whom he comes in contact—convinced him that he means exactly what he says.

There is a great deal in this personality.

So the Irishman does his duty, and, knowing the value of time, makes quick work of it. He finds one revolver upon the Bavarian, which he confiscates.

"Now," says Captain Tom, when he sees that the search is over, "start him going, Mickey, and then jump into the basket."

No sooner said than done. The Irishman grasps hold of the big Bavarian, and whirls him right about face. His manner is enough to tell the giant what comes next.

"Git, ye rascal! make tracks now it is, or by me grandfather's ghost, I'll walk over yees," and as he thus ejaculates, the man from Erin urges the officer on by means of several well-directed kicks.

Aided by his fears and this battering-ram in the rear, the Bavarian starts on a run, all the while bellowing out hasty orders to his men in a jargon that is almost unintelligible, until finally his long sword becomes tangled up in his fat legs, and the giant makes earth almost tremble with the violence of his fall.

Our friends have not waited for this, however. Captain Tom springs at once into the car of the balloon, and drawing a knife, stands ready to cut loose at the proper moment, for the air-ship has been secured by ropes instead of the anchor that held it at the descent.

Mickey loses no time, but as soon as he sees the tall Bavarian started on the down grade, his arms sawing the air like the old-fashioned wild-mills of Holland, he turns and makes for the basket, this time managing his entrance better than on the former occasion.

"Ready to cut loose, sergeant," comes from Tom.

"Give the word, captain dear, and it's mesilf——"

"Now!"

Captain Tom waits until he feels that Mickey has freed his side of the balloon, and then, quick as a flash, his keen blade severs the stout rope. They shoot upward as though sent from a gun.

"*Parbleu!*" shrieks the old peasant, in a deliri-

um of joy at seeing them defeat the enemy who has long held the natives down by the nose.

"Good-night, friends," calls the American.

They can hear the huge Bavarian howling to his men to hasten—ordering them to fire at the balloon, but mixing things up in such a ridiculous manner that it is really a wonder they do not take him at his word and give him a volley.

These sounds grow fainter as the balloon cleaves the atmosphere and mounts upward. Besides, they get the benefit of the strong south-westerly breeze that follows in the wake of the storm.

This is so violent that Captain Tom concludes to seek a milder sphere, and allows the balloon to continue rising.

When the instrument indicates a height of two miles they find themselves in a gentle wind that seems to bear them in the direction desired. Satisfied, they float on.

Sounds from below have long since ceased to reach their ears, and all that can be heard is the vibration of some cord attached to the balloon. A strange sensation it is truly, this floating above the world, but Captain Tom grows accustomed to a novelty very soon, and to see him manage the airship one would readily believe him to be an experienced aeronaut.

The atmosphere is clear below them, and they can see clusters of lights now and then that indicate the presence of some town. They do not seem to care much for sleep, at least hours pass by while they drift, and neither has as yet expressed a desire for slumber.

The soldier is studying the situation, watching the air-currents, and noting how his ship is carried

along. He is overjoyed when, by the aid of the stars, he makes out that they are heading almost directly for the German capital. Truly, it is better to be born lucky than rich.

His thoughts naturally roam ahead—he wonders where Linda and her charge may be. Will he follow them to Berlin? What a strange freak of fortune that has thrown this chance in his way, and yet, after all, how naturally it all comes about.

Finally he feels his lids get heavy, and leaving Mickey in charge, with positive instructions to arouse him should anything out of the common run transpire, he settles down for a few hours' nap. The balloon has hardly a motion—such easy traveling Captain Tom has never experienced on land or sea, and he speculates upon the good time coming, when all travelers may sail by air-ships. Thus he falls asleep.

At the proper time Mickey arouses him and gets a bit of a nap himself before dawn comes.

The first thing that greets their eyes upon looking down at the earth is a river—it is rather tortuous in its course, and presents a remarkably picturesque appearance, even when seen with snow upon the ground.

"The historic Rhine," remarks Tom, who has in times past floated for scores of miles upon the bosom of this same river, from Strasburg to Cologne.

With its palaces, castles, picturesque inns, monasteries, and cottages embowered in shrubbery, the Rhine has no equal in the world for scenery. Its memory haunts the traveler wherever he roams, and however weary he may be with picture-galleries, churches, and such sights, the thought of the

storied Rhine always comes to him like an inspiring breath of air.

They drift across.

It is indeed a strange journey to take, from Paris to Berlin by balloon, and especially so in war times, when railroad travel is almost impossible except one is armed with potent passes from the powers that be.

Their slow drifting, that has only carried them a hundred miles in ten hours, becomes a thing of the past, for with the rising of the sun they seem to reach a current of air that drives them on with the speed of an express train.

How exhilarating it all is! The panorama spread out below them like a great map is constantly changing.

After crossing the Rhine they see a few towns and villages. Then comes a dense forest, dark and forbidding. Captain Tom thinks of the fabled Hartz Mountains and the Black Forest, about which so many German legends have been woven.

It is about an hour before noon when Mickey calls his attention to the sun glinting upon the water of another river. This must be the Weser. They make fine progress, and Captain Tom's heart beats high with hope. He has always made it a point to succeed in everything he undertakes, and begins to have high hopes of saving the girl he loves. At the same time he frankly admits that much credit must be due the favoring winds that have wafted them on their way. About two o'clock they find themselves nearer the earth than before. This does not come from any dropping of the balloon, which steadily sails on.

It is because the nature of the ground has

changed, and they are now really above the famous Hartz Mountains. Captain Tom has one fear—some hunter may put a bullet through the great silk bag above, and once the gas finds even a minute outlet, it will rush to escape, with the result that a fearful split follows, and then—well, they will go into eternity with lightning speed.

He dares take no risk in this thing, so out go a few more sand-bags, and the balloon rises. They know the Elbe River lies not more than thirty or forty miles beyond, and hence keep on the lookout for this broad stream, beyond which is Berlin.

It is almost dark when they see the river far below them. Eagerly Tom looks to the north, and utters a cry of satisfaction.

"Do you see those lights, Mickey?" he asks.

"A city it is, sure."

"Magdeburg on the Elbe. Old fellow, we've come from Paris almost as straight as the crow flies."

"And whin do we r'ach Berlin?"

"A few hours more. Let me study my map. I don't want to make any mistake."

Darkness falls, and finds them speeding on with their wonderful steed just as fresh as at the start.

Not a word is spoken now.

Captain Tom stands and watches—he has allowed a small portion of gas to escape, and they have descended until they are now not more than half a mile above the earth, which lies there wrapped in mysterious darkness.

Thus far fortune has indeed been kind, and even the winds have been tempered to their necessity. In a sudden storm the inexperienced aeronaut might have done the wrong thing, and by a single mistake have sent himself and companion to a cruel death.

Thank Heaven, such an emergency has not arisen, and they are now nearing the end of the strangest journey on record, without an accident to mar its success.

The American is indeed grateful for the great favor shown. It gives him cause for hope that the future may also be favored with success.

They draw near a city—lights gleam brightly ahead, and Tom gravely announces:

"All out for Potsdam!"

"Say, do we change cars here?" calls Mickey.

"Keep your seats for Berlin. All aboard!"

They rush over Potsdam, and on again into the darkness beyond.

"Be the holy smoke, there goes a train! It's a race between us, so it is!" cries Mickey, calling the attention of his companion to a line of lights off to the left, that seems to be moving in the same direction as themselves.

"I wonder," says Tom, jokingly, "whether that's the lightning express from Paris. It would be quite a joke if we beat it in."

Many a truth is spoken in jest, and Captain Tom little suspects that the train whose lights he so carelessly watches bears a being very precious to him in one of the numerous compartments—the very girl for whose sake he is even now risking his own life in an invasion of hostile territory. Such are the freaks of fate.

"Look yonder," calls out the aeronaut.

"I see more lights. Sure, it's a great city that lies beyond," says Mickey, in some excitement.

"That is our destination, my boy—Berlin! All hands ready to make a landing!"

Captain Tom knows what danger lies before him,

and he gives plain directions as to what shall be done. The sand-bags are held in readiness to go overboard, also the grappling-iron. Then he pulls the cord, as directed by the professor's wife.

CHAPTER XX.

POOR FRANZ.

Down goes the balloon with a rush—a hissing noise tells that the gas is escaping, and Captain Tom, feeling that their descent is rapid enough, allows the valve to close. Then he grasps a sand-bag in one hand and the grapnel in the other, straining his eyes to see what sort of region they are about to drop upon.

When he gives the word, Mickey relieves the balloon of much weight, so that the downward rush becomes a gentle settling. Then out goes the anchor, and speedily takes hold.

In less than five minutes they are upon the ground. Captain Tom has decided upon his course. A lamp cannot be hidden under a bushel, and if the balloon remains here, inflated, all Berlin will know by morning that strange voyagers are in their midst.

He understands a trick or two, and without delay allows all the gas to escape from the great bag, which, when collapsed, almost fits in the basket or car. If this can be secreted now, all will be well, and the evidence of their arrival will not be apparent.

Tom leaves Mickey with the balloon, and starts upon a tour of investigation. He finds near-by some straw stacks, and one of these promises an asylum

for the air-ship. At present his sole idea is to hide it, for he does not dream he will ever again sail the azure skies as an aeronaut.

Back again to Mickey he hastens, and between them, by hard work, they manage to get the balloon to the straw stack.

Here an hour is spent in systematically secreting their faithful air-ship, during which time they are annoyed by a little cur that persists in standing afar off and barking.

Both feel the effect of their long fast, and something to eat must be obtained before they can proceed to business. A light shines from a cabin near by, and thither the two daring invaders make their way.

"Leave it all with me," says Captain Tom.

His object is to avoid doing anything that will bring them to the attention of the police. When upon the Western prairies of his own native country, Tom has more than once fought fire with fire. He believes in the remedy. To effectually prevent this cottager from communicating with the police, he will pretend to be a member of Berlin's "finest," and such is the fear felt by the common people for the secret agents of the government that the rack would hardly cause the man to betray him.

Before knocking on the door he takes a survey through the window. An humble peasant and his wife are seen. The man looks stupid, but the cottage has a thrifty appearance, and the hungry Yankee smacks his lips as he sees the array of provisions the good wife has stowed away in a peculiar dresser at one end of the room.

He immediately makes up his mind that nothing short of an earthquake or the sudden appearance

of a German troop will cause him to forego an assault upon that well-stocked larder.

With the butt of his revolver he knocks upon the door of the cottage. The sound alarms the couple within, and it is the woman who finally answers the summons.

When the door is opened Captain Tom marches in, followed by his faithful shadow, both with an extremely military step. The cottager, amazed, stands and trembles—his mouth is open, and his whole expression indicates sudden fear.

"Your name?" demands Captain Tom, who is an excellent German student, and as he speaks he draws out a formidable document.

"Franz Schleisenger," the poor devil manages to stammer out, his eyes glued upon the paper, as though he imagines it is his death-warrant.

"Just so," nods the strange visitor; "here it is in plain black and white. I am ordered to search your cottage for concealed weapons, bombs, printing-presses, anything, everything that can be used by the accursed Socialists to injure the government. In a word, my good man, you are under suspicion. I am an officer of the Secret Service of King Wilhelm. I will search your house. If I find anything suspicious, you and your frow shall sleep in a dungeon. On the other hand, if you are innocent, I shall so report you at headquarters. Lead on!"

His looks, his manner, are imperious—no wonder the wretched Franz cowers before him. The good wife is twice the man he ever pretends to be. She smiles upon the formidable agent of the government. These people fear their rulers much more than they love them.

"Franz has no heart. Look to me—I am the head

of this house. I will show you about, but you will find nothing—absolutely nothing."

Nevertheless, Captain Tom makes the search, but it is a very short one. The woman, who is young and comely, smiles to think that her blandishments have made a friend out of this government officer, who could at least have given them much trouble had he wished. Her stupid husband grins and frowns by turns—the latter when he sees the audacious inspector chuck his comely wife under the chin in a familiar way as he compliments her upon such a thrifty home.

"I shall be sure to speak a good word for you, Franz. You are doubly blessed in keeping aloof from these fire-brands of Socialists, and in the company of so handsome a wife. If I had time I would happily sit down and take a bite with you here, for my business has not allowed me to eat any supper, and I am sure so good a housewife must cook to perfection."

Artfully done. With true German hospitality, Franz and his wife beseech them to tarry and sup with them—the former because it pleases him to be on good terms with a member of the secret police, and his wife—well, Captain Tom's flattery has won her heart.

The Yankee pretends to consult with his assistant, who all the while fingers his hat in an agony of mind lest his captain may decide that they are in too much haste. Then Tom looks over his documents, nods his head, and smiles in his cheery way.

"We will stay," he announces, whereat the cottager and his wife begin to set the table.

What they place upon it makes the mouths of the hungry men water, plain food though it is. They

have not seen such a spread for months, thanks to the army that besieges Paris.

Soon they go at it with avidity. The good woman's eyes open as she watches her viands disappear, but Tom does not forget he has a tongue that can pour oil on troubled water, and to the very end, though her husband sits there aghast at the slaughter, she continues to press one thing and another on her guests.

Mickey has not spoken a word—simply because he is unable to speak German—but his companion informs the woman, as has been agreed upon between them, that his assistant is dumb.

All things must have an end, and when the two adventurers have fully satisfied the demands of their appetites they arise. The next thing is to enter the city. At such an hour a pass-word may be necessary, for all Germany is in a measure under military rule while this life and death struggle with France goes on.

"Assure me of your loyalty to the government once more. You have heard the pass-word that permits you to enter the city?"

The man, eager to show that he is of some consequence, at once replies:

"'The Watch on the Rhine!'"

"Good! I am satisfied. Madame Schleisenger, allow me to pay you for our entertainment. It is in French money—since Sedan there is plenty of it floating round, and there will be more before we are done with those frog-eaters."

She protests, and yet accepts the Napoleon. Frugal people are these folks of the Fatherland.

The two travelers are now ready to depart, and Captain Tom congratulates himself that they have

secured the much-needed supper without having aroused any suspicions to the effect that they are other than they seem.

"A word of caution, my good people, at parting. There are others under suspicion—they may be your neighbors. Keep silent about this visit. It will pay you to whisper it to no one. Good-night."

With this they depart, and Captain Tom throws back a kiss to the comely frow, which Franz pretends is meant for him, as he returns it, stepping in front of his wife. The last glimpse they have of them, poor Franz is rudely thrust aside, while his better-half stands on the cottage steps waving them farewell, and blowing innumerable kisses from the tips of her fat fingers.

Mickey has had hard work to conceal his merriment, and when Captain Tom removes the stopper, fearing he will burst with suppressed steam, the Irishman bends over and shakes like an aspen leaf.

He believes the man who can manipulate an affair like that need not fear the whole of Berlin, and Mickey never once questions the ultimate success of the project that brings them here to the heart of the German country.

Berlin, nestled upon the river Spree, lies before them. What strange adventures may they not experience ere they leave behind them the gay capital of the German world?

Fortunately Captain Tom has been here before, and is quite at home. He has even spent months in the art galleries, the tea-gardens, churches, concert gardens, and upon the streets of Berlin, watching the throngs that pass over the fifty bridges spanning the river Spree.

This knowledge promises to be very helpful to

them at this time, when all their energies must be devoted to the work in hand.

Although Berlin is really an inland city, she has the small river Spree for commerce. Besides, canals connect with the Elbe on one hand, and the Oder on the other, so that the queen of German cities is not badly off with regard to water communication.

When Captain Tom was last here it was in the piping times of peace, but he knows what it means to be on a war footing, and, as we have seen, he prepared for it when he forced the pass-word from the ignorant Franz.

As at Paris, the city gates are closed at a certain hour, and no one can pass in or out without the proper countersign. Still it is probable that a man as versatile as Captain Tom would find some other means of securing the pass-word, even if he had to creep up close to the gates, and wait until some one came along to give it to the guard.

They walk along the firm road which Tom has reason to believe will lead them to the city. The American is not without a plan of action, and has already made up his mind what he shall do when once within the shelter of the walls.

He is not friendless in Berlin, and can, he believes, depend upon one person to aid him, unless accident has befallen Carl Reuter since last he looked him in the face.

Ah! now they are near the gates of the metropolis. What if the words given by Franz be false—a nice pickle they will find themselves in, to be sure.

Tom's motto at present is "no risks." So they soon lie in wait within hearing of the guards, who laugh and joke each other, glad perhaps that they are

looking after the interests of Berlin rather than facing death in the rifle-pits around Paris.

Then some fellow shuffles up and tries to pass beyond the gates, but being unable to give the magic word, he is hustled off to the guard-house without ceremony, on suspicion.

Captain Tom gives his companion a dig in the ribs, as if to draw his attention to what must be their fate if they fail to pass.

Presently a man appears driving a donkey in a little cart—the guards know him well, as he takes vegetables and eggs into the city every day, but their training causes them to go through with the same formula, which would be put to a general if he happened to come along.

Thus the two figures crouching near catch the answer the man in the cart gives. It is:

"The Watch on the Rhine!"

Those inspiriting words have sent the German armies forward to victory in this campaign—it will ever after be a national song.

There is no more need of delay. The two balloon adventurers, who have come all the way from Paris with but one stop, are now ready to enter the gates of Berlin, hospitably opened to receive them. Perhaps they may find it more difficult to get out than it is to get in. Much depends on their actions while guests of Berlin.

CHAPTER XXI.

"EVEN THE WALLS HAVE EARS IN BERLIN."

They are in Berin at last.

The magic words have admitted them without a question, though Mickey declares the officer of the

guard looked at him very sternly, and has a dim recollection of having met the man before somewhere, under peculiar circumstances, though for the life of him he cannot remember where or when the meeting took place.

"I may think of it later; it doesn't matter a bit, we're inside now," he remarks.

Perhaps he may change his mind and decide that it does matter a great deal; but, "where ignorance is bliss, 'tis folly to be wise," and the Irishman is happy in his lack of knowledge.

As is quite natural, Captain Tom heads for the most prominent strasse in the city. When one desires to see the throbbing pulses of the great metropolis, a straight course is steered for the magnificent avenue known as Unter den Linden. It is only about a mile long, with the palace at one end and the Brandenburg gate at the other, but of majestic width, and with trees shading the walks in the summer time, bordered with the finest houses in Berlin, this avenue is a sight to see and never to be forgotten.

When they turn into this avenue, Captain Tom heads in the direction of the palace. The house that possesses the deepest interest for him is not more than two stones'-throw away from the great buildings where Wilhelm resides, the King of Prussia, whose dream it is to form an empire of all the German States, and thus rule all Germany.

The hour is not late, and the night clear and bracing, so that throngs can be seen upon the pavement. Berlin complacently reads the news from Paris, and knows that ere many days are gone the proud city of the Gauls, which was once under the wonderful Napoleon, the chief of the world, will be

in the hands of the German Army. Their time of triumph is close at hand, and upon nearly every face a smile is seen.

There are foreigners in Berlin at this time, plenty of them, so that the presence of our two comrades does not attract unusual attention.

They have a queer feeling when they compare this sleek-looking, well-fed crowd with the anxious, pale citizens recently seen upon the Champs Elysees, or pushing along the streets of the Faubourg St. Honore.

The thought of Paris makes Tom sad; he has a deep, genuine affection for the French capital, and a love for the people. The terrible situation has not fully come upon him until now, when he looks around to see all the evidences of plenty and comfort, and compares the prospect with what lies in the past.

In the shadow of the immense statue of Frederick the Great, the two men pause. Captain Tom has had a whiff of a fair cigar, and can stand it no longer. He secretly counts over his money, and finds to his joy that he has, among other pieces in his pocket, a German coin. That silver groschen will get him a weed. Joy! He demands of Mickey where he saw the nearest cigar shop. As all Germany smokes incessantly, tobacco is sold in many places, and one can be supplied with as good a weed as anywhere in the world, though they run rather dark and heavy, to suit the taste of the people. Spain is the only place your light smoker can have his particular bill filled, for there the natives dote on cigarettes and mild tobacco with a wonderful fragrance.

Tom soon plunges into a shop, and joins his com-

panion, puffing vigorously at a cigar, a look of contentment on his face.

"This is bliss!" he murmurs. "I tell you it is solid satisfaction, Mickey. I invested more than I expected—see, here's a package of loose stuff for your pipe. No more villainous stems ground up—take it, and be happy."

Mickey utters a low cry, eagerly tears open the packet, fills his pipe, and applies a match.

There were men in Paris during the siege who suffered more from the scarcity of good tobacco than they did from food. Such is the result of habit.

Feeling a thousand per cent. better, the two men again saunter along. Their actions are deliberate, for they want to excite no suspicion. To attract attention is the last thing they are desirous of doing.

Captain Tom is well posted, and he knows when he comes opposite the house for which he is all eyes. His eyes run over the building. Like the majority of houses in Berlin, Dresden, and other German cities, its front is stuccoed, and the lower or ground floor used for business purposes.

Above, the floors are divided into what in France or New York would be called flats.

Here they go under the name of *etage*, and run upward in rents as one ascends. In Berlin it is not unusual to live over a store, and many of the fashionables have their homes over places of business. In New York this would kill one's standing in society, but across the Rhine they have other means of gauging one's place in the social scale besides the house you live in.

Having made sure that this is the building, Captain Tom turns his eyes on the first *etage*. Lights are seen there. The sight of them thrills him through

and through. Unless he has made a mistake with regard to the house, Linda Dubois has reached Berlin. That means a great deal to him.

To make it positive is now his first desire, and leaving Mickey again to watch the passers-by, he saunters into the store under the flats. It is a fancy grocery, and the proprietor is a stout, pleasant-faced man. Tom ignores a clerk, and saunters up to the head party, when a little conversation in high German ensues between them, which might be translated thus:

"Good-evening, sir. I am an American, stopping with my family at the Hotel Royale; and as business will be apt to take me away, I desire to find a furnished *etage* where my folks may be comfortable through the summer. Price no object."

The man of business smiles and nods.

"I do not comprehend why you come to me, mynherr—I do not rent or sell."

"Very true; but you know every person in the neighborhood—they all deal with you, of course"—this makes his listener very proud, for it is a select quarter—"and you might be apt to know of any vacancies. They do things differently here from what I'm used to. I had a friend in Berlin, a Mademoiselle Linda Dubois; but to my sorrow, I found upon arriving that she was away, and had been for months."

Ah! how the unwary Teuton's face lights up. He puts his hand on Tom's shoulder.

"Mynherr, joy! The lady you mention is no longer abroad. She has returned home—this very night she came, looking as lovely as ever, and that, you know, is saying a great deal."

"How know you this?" asks Tom, seemingly in great surprise, the arch villain.

"Mynherr, the lady has the first *etage* above this store; she stood where you are, not one hour since, and told me to send up many things in haste, that they were starved."

"They? Then this lady was not alone?"

"She had a young fraulein with her—I have seen her before, I believe, though I thought Myra was nearly blind."

He has said it. Captain Tom's heart thumps against his ribs with excitement. Meta is here—she has come all the way from Paris with the plotting Linda, never dreaming that the other is laying a snare for her feet.

Tom mutters something about seeing the lady on the morrow, when she is rested; and then, thanking the proprietor of the store, he passes out.

Mickey hovers near, happy in being able to blow blue clouds of genuine tobacco-smoke above his head. This pleasure has been denied him so long that the aromatic taste of the weed is very sweet.

One thing Tom fears—he has so much foreign money on his person that if he tries to pass it right and left, suspicions may be aroused. He must seek a money-changer and put some of it into German notes and coin.

Here again his previous acquaintance with the city serves him well. Dodging down a certain narrow street, he quickly reaches a place where he has had dealings in the past.

The man remembers him as a profitable customer, and from this Polish Jew Captain Tom secures all the change he will need for some time.

Again outside, he hails one of the hackney dros-

kies that rattle along, makes a bargain with the driver to take them to a certain number on a strasse called Grun, and away they go.

Captain Tom is in deep reflection while they move along with a motion that would probably excite derision in the mind of a New York cabby, for in Berlin no one ever seems to be in haste; there is plenty of time for doing everything—life is too short to hurry.

At length, when Tom's second cigar is just about burned out, the vehicle draws up. They have reached their destination. Before dismissing cabby, Captain Tom means to see if his friend still resides here; in case the result is a negative one he will have to go to some hotel; the *du Nord* used to be his favorite in times gone by.

He chuckles to think this is not Russia, where the traveler is compelled to hand over his passport to the proprietor at the time of taking board, and as he cannot go away without this important document, the hotel people have a dead sure thing on payment. Should such a system have come in vogue here since the war began, our friends can hardly expect accommodations at a hotel.

He gives the knocker on the door a brisk rat-tat, and the sound reverberates through the house. Somehow he feels as though the building must be empty, the noise is so loud, but no, a light appears, some one unfastens a chain at the door, and the next moment Carl is before him.

Tom has his hand in an instant—they are old friends, and Carl owes his life to the quick wits of the American. It is a long story, connected with a gang of bandits in Corsica, and need not be told here, but Carl has never forgotten.

Knowing that he is sure of a welcome, Captain Tom waves his arm. Mickey recognizes the signal, and dismisses the driver of the hackney drosky. They need him no more.

All are soon within the house. Carl endeavors to seem glad to have Captain Tom as his guest, but the keen eyes of the Yankee from Philadelphia discerns the fact that he is uneasy. Why should this be so? Is he aware of Tom's sympathy with France, and does he suspect that the other is in Berlin on some desperate mission?

The American looks deeper, and soon guesses that it is on account of his own affairs that Carl, usually so genial, looks troubled.

With an effort, he chases this feeling away, and begs Tom to relate his adventures, for he knows the other has something to tell.

Nothing loth, the American branches out. He is a good story-teller, and can invest an adventure with much interest, although modest in all that relates to his own prowess. The brave are never braggarts.

So he tells all that has happened since last he saw Carl Reuter, who of course is greatly interested in what concerns the siege of Paris and the doings of his old friend.

When the narrator reaches the dramatic scene where he cuts loose with the balloon, Carl's face lights up with sudden joy; to the surprise of Tom, he detects a fierce light there. Still the German student says nothing, but smokes away at his pipe in the phlegmatic manner of his race, although it is evident he is thinking deeply.

At the conclusion of Tom's story, he bends over and seizes his hand in a fierce grip.

"A wonderful time you have had, my friend. I quite envy you. How we would have enjoyed that trip together. You say the balloon is safe and uninjured at the straw stacks of Franz Schleisenger. I know him well. That is good. An idea enters my mind. You may hear more of it in the future. Just now tell me your plans."

Captain Tom trusts Carl with everything; he knows the other, though a singular fellow, is as true as steel. Their meeting some years back at the university was peculiar, and somehow quite a friendship sprang up between them. Lately they again met in Corsica, and together defeated the plans of would-be bandits.

He tells Carl what his hopes are; if Meta can be warned she may fly with him. At any rate, she must be saved.

Carl shakes his head several times, as though he has hard knots to unravel. What can he be thinkin about? Captain Tom knows the man well, and begins to suspect something. Can Carl have been getting himself in trouble since last they sauntered along Unter den Linden.

He knows the nature of these German students—they are inclined to be wild and reckless. Russia is always on the verge of an outbreak through her students, who, being young men, seem to have a desire for greater liberty than the statutes of their country allow.

What if Carl has entered into one of the deep and dark plots which occasionally startle the civilized world? It is not unlikely. He has always been a ventursome spirit, and there is an underground current in Germany which ordinary eyes never see—where desperate men, and women, too, are bound

by fearful oaths to accomplish some desired object, whether it be the death of the reigning ruler, or the annihilation of some obnoxious officer.

Tom is nothing if not frank, and when this idea gets into his head, he cannot rest until he has it out with Carl. So he bluntly asks his student friend what hangs heavy on his mind.

Carl laughs in a forced way.

"Your eyes are as keen as ever, Mynherr Tom. There is no concealing anything from you. Know, then, that to-morrow morning I am about to engage in a duel."

"Bah! that does not disturb you, Carl. You have been concerned in too many," laughs Tom.

"But this time it is with swords, and I am but a poor swordsman at best."

"Well, here am I. In an hour I can teach you three tricks, any one of which is warranted to deceive your antagonist, providing he is not a marvel in the art of self-defense."

Carl's whole expression changes; joy beams from his face, and in a moment he has thrown himself upon Tom with an embrace.

"Do this, my friend—show me how I may kill this man, and you earn my double gratitude. It is his life or mine!" he cries.

"Oh, oh!" thinks Tom, "a love affair—rivals, no doubt," for he cannot imagine anything else affecting Carl so.

"I think we will have no trouble about that. You are an apt pupil, Carl. Consider the thing done, and your honor vindicated. But tell me, who is the lady?"

"Eh?"

"For of course there is a lady connected with this

affair—who ever knew it to be otherwise?" and Tom, who has had considerable experience in the ways of the world, nods sagely.

"There is no lady in this matter," declares Carl.

"What! Then this man is not a rival?"

"Not so."

"Then, in the name of all that's wonderful, how is it you hate him so bitterly? How has he injured you so that you long for his death? Come, I am curious—you know I am as dumb as an oyster, Carl, and Mickey here—why, a crowbar couldn't open his bull-dog jaws. Speak!"

The German student glares about him and bends his head nearer, while he mutters:

"Even the walls have ears in Berlin. The man I fight is a notorious police spy—he suspects, and he is doomed—I was selected for the work—he had the choice of weapons, which was unfortunate. If I fall, the next will take it up. Now, my friend, you understand!"

CHAPTER XXII.

THE FENCING DEN IN THE GRUN STRASSE.

Yes, Captain Tom grasps the situation—he realizes that Carl Reuter, with the impetuous manner that characterizes the German student, has joined some inner circle of Socialists, who are perhaps in sympathy with the Nihilists of Russia, and seek to overthrow the reigning power. In the land of the White Czar, there have of late been a number of tremendous upheavals—men and women high in the confidence of the powers that be have been detected plotting the destruction of the ruler, and bombs have been exploded even in the Winter Palace.

All through Europe a spirit of discontent underlies the fair surface—it is like the slumbering volcano, ready to burst out at any time. Tom knows full well there will soon be a terrible reign of blood in Paris—perhaps the plotters in Berlin aim to stir up a rebellion before the great armies come back.

He remembers the draft riots in New York city while the soldiers were away, for it happened that Captain Tom was at that time on his way to the front after being home on a furlough, and fought like a hero during those three days, by the side of the police, and he hopes it will never be his fortune to see such sights again. A battle is well enough, but mob violence must always be repulsive to a soldier.

"Yes, I comprehend, Carl. You have united your fortunes with some secret society. Don't think I'm going to moralize—you know I never did that in the old times. You understand your business best—besides, I never did profess to have much knowledge about politics in this benighted country. I have no interest in your connection with Socialists."

"Pardon, mynherr, but that is what troubles me—you are bound up with the people of the inner circle."

Carl almost whispers the words; and, as may be expected, they cause the American intense surprise. He looks cool enough, however, as he steps back and surveys his comrade.

"Explain yourself, Reuter. I never did like riddles, you remember."

"Easily done. I am violating no pledge in telling you, for you are no friend to the authorities. In the first place, you can come to me for assistance, and, as you have heard, I am connected with the most

desperate league ever known in Berlin, for the purpose of emancipating the people from their military slavery. But this is not all. The woman against whom you are pitted is a member of our order."

"Linda Dubois! Impossible!" cries Tom.

"Why impossible?" coolly demands the student, who has taken a pair of light but deadly swords from a drawer, and is testing them across his knee, until each bends almost double.

"Because I know her to be devoted to the German cause. Why, man, she has risked her life in Paris because of her love for Germany," and Captain Tom looks his expected triumph.

"Softly, my friend. You must not forget what I said about the peculiarities of our walls."

"I beg your pardon, Carl."

"As for Linda's patriotism, my friend, are we not all risking our lives for the country we love, just as truly as she did. It is not against Germany we war, but her rulers. If we are discovered, death awaits us, or at least imprisonment for life in some gloomy fortress, where our bones will rest forever. We know this, and still we love the Fatherland so well that we take our lives in our hands and accept the risk."

"You say she is a member of your order."

"Yes; and when I heard she had come back to Berlin I believed—until you corrected me—that her arrival had something to do with a grand *coup de main*, which the Sons of Germany mean shall startle the world."

Captain Tom of course cares nothing about all this, save as a means to an end. Why has the Alsatian beauty brought the young girl to Berlin? She has a double reason for hating her, and may have

some terrible plan of vengeance forming in her brain. Tom likens her to Corsican girls he has seen, who love with the affection of a tigress, and destroy all that comes in their way, as remorselessly as the reaper mows the chaff with the wheat.

"I am thinking, Carl—would it be possible that this same Linda Dubois might be in secret league with the police? Sometimes it happens that the authorities learn through a traitor all about such societies as your Sons of Germany; at the proper time there are arrests made, a number of young men, with perhaps an officer or two of note, and even some women of society, disappear from the circles that knew them. It is whispered that they have been concerned in treasonable affairs, and finally the whole affair is forgotten. I have known of several whose fate to this day is a dark mystery—a terrible uncertainty."

Carl smiles and shrugs his shoulders.

"None know the risks we take better than ourselves, mynherr. We hold our lives cheaply—for Germany. Even in the army we have our colleagues among officers of rank. It is such a conspiracy as that which existed during your late war, for the removal of your President, only far more general, and with a nobler purpose. On a certain day we strike, and lo! Germany is free."

Captain Tom sighs—he has seen others engaged in the same spasm for liberty, and their fate will undoubtedly be Carl's.

"Tell me what you think of what I said about Linda Dubois being a spy."

"It is possible—but we are bound to trust her. She knows the result of treachery—every member is sworn to take the life of a traitor! What you have

hinted at will put me on my guard. I shall watch her. If she is found having communication with Count Marborg, the head of the secret police, or any of his agents, it will go hard with her. But come, my dear captain—your promise to teach me a few tricks."

"With pleasure. Shall we have the bout here?" rising and removing his coat.

"There is a larger room back. Come, we will light it up. If you do not like these foils, there are others on the wall."

While Carl lights up, the American glances about him and sees that he is in what must be a gymnasium. It is something new Carl has started since last Captain Tom visited Berlin, and he explains that it is a club-room where the Turners, a club of athletes, meet.

No doubt all this is in the nature of a blind to deceive the police, and the students and others who gather here at stated times are bound together by other ties than would unite a mere society of athletes.

Upon the walls hang foils, boxing-gloves, guns, pistols, wire masks, gloves, and scores of things usually seen in a fencing den.

Tom selects a foil that suits him, and adjusts a wire face-protector.

It does not matter much to him how the duel comes out, save that Carl is his friend. He does not even know the man against whom the student has pitted himself, but by reason of his friendship, he is resolved to teach Carl what he knows about the use of a sword. Perhaps it will benefit him in saving Meta. Who can tell how strangely these things work?

He puts Carl through his paces, and they have a pretty bout, that interests Mickey, who claps his hands and cries "bravo!" when Captain Tom, with a peculiar turn of the wrist, twists the sword out of Carl's hand and tosses it to one side.

The soldier is a scientist—he has the art down to a fine point, and Carl is greatly pleased. He sets himself to learn with the assiduity that only a German could exhibit. Captain Tom's estimate is not overdrawn, and in an hour Carl has the three tricks mastered. His enthusiasm is great—he squeezes Tom's hand.

"You may have builded better than you knew, Mynherr Tom. Wait and see. If I live through this little affair of honor, perhaps I can find a way of repaying my debt. I have a plan—you shall hear it later. The cause of German independence has been advanced by what you have taught me this night," he exclaims.

It is growing late, and our friends are tired. They would get some sleep, and the student of the strasse Grun shows them to a room where there are several cots.

"Make yourselves at home. In the morning the old woman who keeps house for me will cook your breakfast. As for myself, you know at the rising of the sun I am either a dead man, or else the secret of the Liberty Band is safe."

So he leaves them.

The small windows look out upon the strasse, and as Captain Tom loves plenty of fresh air, he has one partly open. Tired men usually need no lullaby. The last sound Tom hears is the call of a watchman on the corner below. It is not far from midnight then.

He does not sleep soundly, waking a number of times. Once he believes he hears subdued voices outside, and creeping to the window, he listens, but the only sounds he catches are the songs and shouts of a party of hilarious students passing along some neighboring strasse.

Thus the night passes away, and morning arrives. With the coming of dawn various cries are wafted in at the window, for Berlin awakens early. Wagons rattle along the narrow strasse, and voices in earnest conversation proclaim that the people are astir.

What is the news from Paris? This is the first question on every lip, for the flower of the Prussian Army now besieges the French capital, and those in Berlin daily fear lest something may happen to cheat them of their prey. Rumors are rife of another French Army attacking the Germans in the rear and bursting the bonds of steel that have so long held Paris captive.

Captain Tom arises and dresses. Mickey slumbers on, and seems to be enjoying himself so hugely that the other has not the heart to arouse him; nor is it at all necessary.

Passing down below, he sees no sign of Carl, but on the table a note lies, addressed to himself. He reads:

"I am alive, look for me at 8:30. CARL."

Glancing at his watch, he finds it only lacks an hour of that time now, and determines to get a breath of fresh air.

Passing outside, he strolls along. The sun shines cheerily, just as though there might be no such things as sin, and crime, and death in all the

world, and particularly in the prim, quaint city of Berlin on the Spree.

People pass him by—he notices everything, because of an observing nature. Soldiers there are in plenty, for Berlin, with its neighboring military town of Potsdam, serves pretty much for a recruiting station, whence goes regiment after regiment to the front. Von Moltke plays the game of war as an expert does chess—he does not forget his line of defense, and at the same time keeps up a vigorous attack. His is the combination that nine times out of ten wins.

Captain Tom presently receives a shock. As he stands with the crowd upon the stone flags that constitute the pavement, to see a regiment marching for the cars, and bound for over the Rhine, he discovers, not ten feet away, the tall figure of a Uhlan captain.

Something familiar about the man's back causes him to draw his hat down over his eyes. Can it be possible?—this the prisoner of La Roquette, and in Berlin?

Thoughts surge through his mind. He remembers that the last he heard of Johann Strauss, the valiant Uhlan had been rescued by a daring party of his compatriots, who in some mysterious manner must have found their way inside the lines.

It is within the possibilities that he could reach Berlin if he was on the same military train that has carried Linda. Does his presence mean evil for Tom and his cause? The soldier of fortune fears so.

Concealing himself, as well as possible, he waits to make sure there can be no mistake, and as the big officer strides past him in the direction of the arsenal, he knows Johann Strauss has indeed come

to share in the closing scenes of the life drama in Berlin.

Guard-houses and sentry-boxes there are everywhere—soldiers are continually presenting arms as some officer rides by. The scene would astonish an American if he gazed upon it for the first time.

Tom turns to retrace his steps, and almost runs over a man who has been standing behind him. He hastens to apologize in his best German, and at the same time curiously observes the other, who is clad in civilian's dress, and looks like a sedate burgher. There is an expression of settled melancholy upon his long, cadaverous countenance—possibly he is troubled with a bad digestion. At any rate, Captain Tom sees nothing that he fancies there.

The citizen bows, and with a rather ostentatious manner, Tom fancies, declares no harm has been done. He seems ready to seize upon the occasion for entering upon a little conversation, and asks a few questions concerning military matters in the States, which Tom cannot but answer, although a little rattled over his nationality being so easily guessed.

As a usual thing he has been taken on sight for some English lord; not that he thinks this any great honor, as the American spirit of independence is too thoroughly bred in the bone.

Somehow Tom imagines his companion is too inquisitive by half, and he retreats within his shell, so to speak. At length, observing by his watch what the hour is, he begs the pardon of the melancholy burgher, and turns on his heel.

By the time he reaches the house on Grun strasse it will be half-way between the hours of eight and nine—breakfast will be served, and if Carl is alive he should be on hand.

A brisk walk, and he reaches the narrow street. Just as he turns into it, rapid steps sound close behind, and a hand plucks his sleeve. Turning, he sees Carl, but with a look of deep perturbation upon his young face.

"Carl! Thank Heaven, you live! Victory has come to you! Tell me, did the tricks I taught you come into good play? You are wounded——"

"Bah! it is a trifle. That counts for nothing—but I have just received a terrible shock. As I was passing along, I saw a man standing behind you in such a way that, turning, you must almost fall over him —I saw you engage in conversation with him, and my heart stood still."

"Confusion! Carl, why this talk? I have said nothing to attract attention. My words were all praise for Germany and its rulers. I was cautious."

"Very true, Mynherr Tom, let us admit that; but you know not to whom you spoke."

"A stranger, truly—a worthy burgher——"

"My friend, it was that most terrible and detested of men, Count Marborg, the head of the secret police!"

CHAPTER XXIII.

UNTER DEN LINDEN.

A man who has good control of his nerves does not betray what he thinks by extraordinary jumps and starts. Although the intelligence which is now given to Captain Tom is of the most astonishing character, he looks calmly at his student friend, who almost whispered these words in his ear, and then makes a movement of the shoulders learned in France.

"That is unpleasant news. Why should the count seek to make my acquaintance?" he asks, in a matter-of-fact voice.

"Because he has reason to suspect you."

"I have given him no cause—what should make him suspect?"

"Heaven knows—I do not claim to. When that man deliberately makes the acquaintance of any one upon the street, it is bad for that person. It generally points to—death!"

Captain Tom's chief worry is Meta. He fears that she may be dragged into the net by the plotting Linda, perhaps before he can even make an effort to save her.

Thus he has reason for great worry. As they walk home the two talk in low tones, and come to something of an understanding.

Then Mickey, who awaits them, not knowing that anything else has happened to excite alarm, and being interested in the duel, begs to hear the particulars. Carl can speak French, and in this tongue he briefly describes the meeting, how his opponent believed he had a dead sure thing of it, and went down with Carl's sword through his heart ere five minutes had gone, thanks to the tricks Captain Tom had taught the other.

"I waited until the doctor who was with us pronounced him dead—I could not afford to take any chances. Now the Sons of Liberty need have no fear, since his lips are cold. He can never betray their secrets."

The soldier of fortune notes how fiercely Carl speaks—he knows these students of old, but it takes the most tremendous cause to bring about such excitement on the part of a German. What could be

a stronger cause than love of country, and the risk of one's life?

"I remember your words last night, Mynherr Tom, and to-day something has occurred to make me think that perhaps you are right, and that Linda Dubois is not with us heart and soul."

Captain Tom is deeply interested, for what concerns Linda has a bearing on Meta. He looks Carl in the face, and his manner in itself is enough to ask him to continue.

"When Peter Rindhoff lay there upon the hard ground on the bank of the river, I knew it would be necessary to thoroughly search his person, so that in case he carried any papers that would be apt to betray us they would not be found by those who discovered the body.

"I made the search myself, and know it was thorough. The only evidence I found was a paper containing a list of members of our order, and this note. Read, mynherr."

Feeling that perhaps the note might interest him Captain Tom takes the crumpled paper.

Ah! he has seen that writing before! His eyes devour it.

"I cannot yet come to you, but continue so to do your duty that you may receive the thanks of your master. Be diligent and faithful. You know the reward. All goes well here, and the end is not far off. Then look for me. LINDA."

That is all. It is quite enough to convince Tom that his suspicions are correct, and that Linda Dubois is a spy upon the Sons of Liberty, even as she was upon the citizens of Paris.

He believes it is her intention to get Meta mixed

up with these plotters, so that her doom will be easily sealed.

Sometimes, when people plot so deeply, they overreach themselves, and this may be her case now. Since suspicions have been aroused concerning her fidelity to the society of which she is a member, she will have many eyes upon her movements, and may yet meet with the fate they have sworn to visit upon traitors.

A lovely woman may do much on account of her looks, but they will not save her when the lives of such men, and the sacred object they work for, are at stake.

Captain Tom has learned enough to know that danger lurks upon these wide streets of Berlin—danger for him. If the chief of the secret police has reason to suspect him then, indeed, must he be careful. To be thrown into a German dungeon, just when all of his cunning is needed to save Meta, would be a disaster.

It is not his nature to leave much for others to do, but in this case he decides that Carl may offer good advice, since he knows the lay of things in Berlin.

First of all, Meta must be warned of her danger—perhaps she does not suspect what the woman she has accompanied to Berlin is capable of doing, or how she can hate one who crosses her path.

Over the breakfast-table they converse in low tones, and Captain Tom learns a number of things that may be valuable to him. He also decides upon his plan of action.

When the meal is over Carl goes out, and in a short time a hackney drosky stands in front of the house. Captain Tom has meanwhile made changes in his dress and appearance. It is not hard to make

himself look more like a German citizen, for he has studied their ways and manner of dress. At the same time he does not put on too much, for fear of exciting the very comment he would avoid.

"There," he exclaims, as Mickey dusts him off. "I am ready to meet even the Old Nick himself, which in this case I presume means Count Marborg."

This individual is, no doubt, the last one in all the world whom Captain Tom cares to run across; but it is just as likely as not that he may see more of Count Marborg before he has a chance to leave the city on the Spree. Many people see him who have no desire for such a meeting, as the count possesses peculiar facilities for appearing in different places, and it is his business to look up those who would rather remain in hiding.

Captain Tom goes out.

The day is cheerless and overcast, threatening snow. Upon the crowded street Captain Tom drives. He might at another time be greatly interested in the odd sights that meet his eyes, for Tom delights in the variety of costume that can be seen in continental cities, especially from Berlin eastward—Vienna, St. Petersburg, Rome, Athens, Constantinople, and across in Alexandria, Bombay, Calcutta—he has been in them all, and remembers many strange things.

Just at present, however, his mind is too thoroughly engrossed with his business to pay much heed to singular sights. When a man is engaged in a game of life and death he has need of all his energies, both of mind and body.

At the proper place the vehicle stops, and he de-

scends, after which the drosky is driven around a corner, to await his pleasure.

He is not far from the house where Linda has her flat. There is a tobacco store opposite, from which the American can watch the house. Entering, he makes a purchase, and falls into a friendly conversation with the proprietor, all the while watching the opposite building, the steps of which are visible under the trees.

Vehicles drive back and forth and in endless procession, for Unter den Linden is the principal street of the city, and everything of importance that takes place occurs here. Now and then some royal personage drives by in state, and the people are duly impressed.

Tom's thoughts, while he stands there smoking and apparently watching the gay scene, are far away. He dreams of his native city, and again looks upon the crowded Chestnut street.

How different this wide avenue, and yet Tom cherishes many pleasant recollections of the city on the Delaware. Strange how fond we grow of our native land when wanderers in the world.

His reverie does not prevent him from being watchful. To the passer-by he seems to be idly amusing himself by watching the throng. Tom's thoughts have changed, and he now has Captain Johann in his mind. Then comes the memory of Marborg's face—it haunts him. That thin, sallow countenance can doubtless light up with the evil nature of a fiend, when the eyes of the count fall upon some victim who has been caught in the toils.

Talk about Satan—there he comes now, walking along alone! More than one person turns to look after him, all with fear, and sometimes the scowl of

hatred is seen on a face, for this terrible man is not an object of love to any of the Kaiser's subjects.

Captain Tom sees him coming. Not a muscle or a nerve trembles. This man of steel certainly has a wonderful control over his system.

He calmly takes the cigar from his mouth, puffs out a cloud of smoke, and idly allows his eyes to pass from one to another until some hidden force seems to draw them to the face of the Vidocq of Berlin. He feels a pair of burning eyes meet his for a few seconds, but Captain Tom neither flinches nor turns red in the face—indeed, a more contemptuous, indifferent expression could not well be assumed.

Then Count Marborg passes on, not even once turning his head. Tom's attention is now attracted across the avenue. A carriage has driven up and stands waiting.

Finally out comes a lady, and trips down the stairs. Captain Tom would know that face and figure anywhere, although it was in the Parisian convent he saw them last.

Yes, it is Linda!

She enters the closed vehicle, which passes down the avenue, heading for the palace. This is what the American has hoped for. He now has a chance to see Meta, since her keeper is gone.

Quickly he crosses over, and up the steps. The first *etage*, the grocery keeper said. He finds a bell, and rings it, then waits, with his heart in great suspense, for an answer.

How will Meta receive him. Has her mind been in any way poisoned by the fair Alsatian, so that she will look upon him in distrust? He strives to collect himself—this man who can face deadly cannon with a laugh, and meet even the terrible Count

Marborg's stare coolly, is trembling like a culprit at the idea of being face to face with a slip of a girl. Truly, man is a queerly organized being.

The door opens.

Captain Tom looks into a face that has haunted him in his dreams—he sees eyes that cause the blood to leap madly through his veins—he hears a voice that he can never cease to remember, crying out, "Wake up, Captain Tom!" as the slight girl endeavors to hold back the furious would-be assassin Francois, in the catacombs of Paris.

At sight of him Meta is amazed—she loses control of herself for one little moment, and allows a look of extreme joy to pass over her face while she breathes his name:

"Captain Tom!"

How her voice thrills him! He holds out his hand while he murmurs:

"I have come to see you." But by this time the girl remembers, and she recovers herself. Trust a girl of the nineteenth century for that, and especially when she has French blood in her veins.

"Monsieur is too late—my friend is out," she makes reply.

"But I did not come to see your friend—indeed, I have watched the house from across the avenue until she went away, because I desired to see you alone," he says, eagerly.

Meta flushes in spite of her self-possession—the woman who hesitates is lost.

"I do not know that I should grant you this interview," she says, slowly; the temptation is great.

"You must," replies Captain Tom, quietly, and with an air of authority few can repulse, "for I

have come all the way from Paris to see you—to warn you—to save you!"

This appeals to her heart; she smiles and accepts his hand.

"How kind of you. Pray, enter, Monsieur Tom, and you may tell me what this means, how you arrived at Berlin, and all things necessary."

It is what Tom especially desires, and he obeys with alacrity, following into a room that seems to answer the purpose of a parlor.

Here he sits down, and Meta draws near, her eyes full of a troubled light. Evidently Linda has deceived her, and she hardly knows which one to believe. Has Captain Tom followed the fair Alsatian, or can she accept his words as truth?

The American is no longer confused, for he knows he must make the most of his time. He rapidly sketches the many things that have happened since they last met in the catacombs, and even speaks of the secret band of which Carl is a member.

His desire is to convince Meta that she is in peril —that Linda has a dark plot in mind. To do this he has to speak plainly, but Tom is not the man to mince matters. Above all, he impresses upon her the necessity of secrecy. So earnest is he in his conversation that neither note the fact that a carriage has halted outside.

Just in time Tom hears an outer door open, and his look warns the girl. He makes some joking remark concerning Linda, when in the parlor door stands that self-same personage, a look of blank incredulity and gathering anger upon her fair face.

CHAPTER XXIV.

BISMARCK'S WATCH-DOG.

Captain Tom springs to his feet. Here is a miserable *contretemps* that must be met unflinchingly, for the eyes of love and hate are keen.

Fortunately he is equal to the emergency, and has already warned Meta as to the value of secrecy.

"You did not expect to see me here," he says, with a cheery laugh, advancing toward Linda.

She sees his outstretched hand, and the look of amazement gradually leaves her face. This woman is a good actress, and it flashes upon her that, no matter what she may think, she must not betray herself.

So she takes his hand, and at his touch, so magnetic to her, the fierce passion burns anew in her heart.

"*Mon Dieu!* I am amazed! I believed you were safe within the lines of poor Paris. You are a wizard, Monsieur Tom; who would have dreamed it was you who entered here?"

"Ah! you have heard of my coming, and hurried home to see me," he cries, looking pleased at the idea of such a thing, when in reality he is only fishing for intelligence.

"Behold, it is true, monsieur. I was just coming out of the—a house where I had some little business, when upon the seat of my carriage I found a note. Read it."

She tosses it upon the table, and picking it up he

finds a few lines scrawled as though the writer has written upon his knee—of course in German:

"If Mademoiselle Linda will return at once to her *etage* she will find a visitor whom she may be surprised to meet."

There is no signature, but Tom's mind at once flies to the count. He smiles pleasantly.

"This is strange—some officious friend, I presume, for I have many in Berlin. Let it pass. I trust you are not sorry to see me, mademoiselle."

Her face lights up; she cannot help it, for this man is her hero, her king, even though the fortunes of war have placed them on opposite sides. Perhaps she is seized with a wild hope that he may have changed his colors. His presence in Berlin—what does it signify?

Love grasps at trifles, even as a drowning man clutches at a straw.

"Tell me, my American friend, why you are here? How did you leave Paris?" she asks.

"Paris seemed dull after you left, *ma belle*. Besides, I had seen enough of war. The end is near. I have decided to seek brighter scenes. What more natural than that I should come to Berlin?"

His look says more than his words, and Linda, so shrewd in most things, is blinded now by her own love. It may be her undoing yet.

"But how could you pass the lines, monsieur—you, of all men, Bismarck would like to see!"

Tom shrugs his shoulders, remembering the thin-faced count and the dark fortress which may yet be his fate, unless death steps in.

"You remember I am something of a wizard in my way, mademoiselle. I found a means of passing

the lines. My presence here is positive evidence of the fact. I presumed you at least would be glad to see me."

A puzzled look is on her face.

"You do not seem to fear arrest. Have you forgotten that you did much to injure the German cause while in Paris?—that they may even consider you a spy"

He still smiles, entirely unmoved.

"My dear mam'selle, who knows this but you? And I imagine you are too good a friend to betray my indiscretion."

"Ah! you call it that now, monsieur—you are sorry you raised your hand against Germany?" she exclaims, impressively.

"At any rate, it is all in the past, mademoiselle. We will try and forget the horrors of the siege. I have come to see you—to renew our acquaintance, cut off by the hand of fate."

Could Linda but know how long he stood across the strasse, and waited for her to drive away, she might have some doubts regarding the truth of this statement. As it is, blinded by her passion, she yields to the fascination of the moment, and her liquid eyes beam tender glances as she notes the look upon Tom's face.

That worthy is secretly hoping Meta will have sense enough to understand that he is playing a part. He knows what peculiar vagaries influence a woman, and dreads lest between these two he falls—the one who loves him, and the other who is the object of his earnest affection.

So they drop into a more natural conversation, each one endeavoring to appear at ease. It is a peculiar situation, and Tom hardly knows how to

get out of it without arousing anew the suspicions of this wonderful woman, who may yet take a notion to seek Count Marborg, and whisper something in that worthy's ear.

They beg him to remain to luncheon, and he has hard work excusing himself. However much tempted to remain and drink in pleasure in the presence of Meta, he realizes the danger while Linda's eyes are upon him.

When the latter's back is turned he gives Meta a peculiar look, and presses a finger on his lips, which act signifies silence, discretion, and is delighted to see her nod and smile, as though she still has confidence in him.

Then Captain Tom takes his leave. He flatters himself that by his ingenuity he has turned what threatened to be a calamity into something of a success, and unless a sudden fiasco overwhelms him, his plans may yet work out his own and Meta's salvation.

One thing he has not mentioned to Linda. That is the presence of the tall Uhlan captain in Berlin. If she does not already know of Johann Strauss being near there may be a surprise in store for her some day or hour.

Here are congregated a number of discordant elements; what magician's wand will bring order out of chaos?

If ever Captain Tom has had to think earnestly in all his life he does now.

Much lies at stake, and the enemy is on the alert. How can he steal Meta away from the doom that awaits her in Berlin, and avoid the eyes of hate? Linda, alone, he might manage; but if that somber-

looking count takes a hand in the game he will cause trouble, for that is his mission in life.

It must be his fate to run across this man, for, having dismissed all thoughts of him from his mind, Tom is just about to enter his vehicle when some one lays a finger on his shoulder.

He turns his head. Behold! the thin, dark face of the count is within a foot of his own. Marborg bows politely.

"Your pardon, mynherr. The gentleman with whom I spoke this morning, I believe? I never forget a face, and I rather fancied yours."

Captain Tom is gravely courteous.

"How can I serve you, sir?" he asks.

"A singular thing to ask, but the notion struck me. I am a little lame, and if you are going in the direction of the Brandenburg gate I would esteem it a favor if you invited me to ride."

"With the greatest of pleasure, Count Marborg. I beg you to be seated."

"Ah! you know me. It is well. I do not sail under false colors in Berlin. Thanks, monsieur; I accept your kind invitation—I enter your vehicle."

He suits the action to the word. Tom speaks to the driver, and follows suit. Although a dozen thoughts are rioting through his mind his face betrays not the least uneasiness, for he has his feelings under admirable control.

A strange, nay, a startling situation is this, to be riding down Unter den Linden by the side of the man known and feared by all conspirators throughout the German realms, who wields a powerful influence with the government, and whose enmity is something to be feared.

Some men in Tom's position would have be-

trayed themselves through their fear, but he does nothing of the sort. Indeed, the man has never been more at his ease. Danger serves to put him on his guard, and not alarm him.

They soon pass the building where Linda has her *etage*. Tom looks up, to see the white face of the fair Alsatian. She is horrified to see Captain Tom riding along the public avenue side by side with that terrible man. The American takes off his hat and bows. She must think him a reckless man, indeed, or else deeper than she has ever suspected.

He knows full well the presence of Count Marborg is no accident. Why has the other sought this means of renewing their acquaintance? Does he expect to trip him up in conversation, and will the knowledge that his identity is known to Tom make a difference?

He speaks of various things, and Tom is naturally drawn into conversation, though constantly on his guard.

"You have traveled much, monsieur?" says the count, presently. He is looking beyond the horse's head, as though gazing into vacancy.

"All over the world. I have met all classes of men, and have seen strange sights."

"You have been in Paris?"

Tom replies, without hesitation:

"Oh! yes, indeed."

"Poor Paris! I fear our heavy guns will reduce it to ruins, unless those miserable dolts understand their situation and surrender."

"It would be a pity—people all over the world have a love for the French capital. What would Europe be without Paris?"

The count does not share his enthusiasm, but

waves his hand around—evidently Berlin bounds the world of his vision.

"You see here a great city, monsieur. I am certain that either Berlin or Vienna could take the place of poor Paris if she disappeared from the face of the earth. We are not venomous, however, monsieur, and it is not the wish of Germans that Paris be destroyed. You may again see the Champs Elysees some day—who knows?"

His tone is peculiar. Tom is forcibly reminded of a cat playing with a mouse. This man is an old hand at such a game, and doubtless many a poor mouse in times gone by has found itself a prisoner in his trap. Nothing delights him better than spreading his net for the feet of an unwary offender.

Monsieur Tom knows this as well as any one; if he has not been blessed or cursed with the count's acquaintance he has heard much of Bismarck's Watch-Dog, who guards Berlin while the flower of the Prussian Army is over the border in France. Captain Tom talks on, as though he has nothing to fear.

"Perhaps some time, my dear count, we may chat over a bottle of choice vintage, and exchange views and histories. I fancy that although your life has been a stirring one I could tell you some strange things that have occurred to me."

"Recently?" slyly asks the other.

"Within the last ten years, since I entered the army under Sheridan," continues Tom, apparently not heeding this little thrust.

"Ah! that is where you won your spurs; your claim to being a captain comes from your services in that bloody war."

"He knows me!"

That is the thought which instantly flies through the American's brain. It means much to him, for Count Marborg may have means of communicating with the army about Paris, and from that source he can learn what will put the American's head in peril.

"You are right, count; I was made a captain after the battle of Cedar Creek, and personally complimented by General Sheridan on the field."

"You know the general—personally?"

"Yes, indeed, and have no warmer friend."

"It is a pity."

"Eh! what's that, count?" pretending to be surprised, though he knows the muttered phrase is but the hammering of the first nail into his own coffin.

"Excuse me, monsieur. I was thinking of something else. You see that tall, soldierly man on the promenade—once he had the confidence and honor of his king. Now he is sunk so low as to plot against that good king's life. But we will have him—he cannot escape—no one leaves Berlin when the eye of Marborg has fallen on him, and there is an empty cell awaiting General Kramer."

How deeply significant the words. Captain Tom knows what horrors they signify. If Germany has no Siberia and the knout for her political prisoners, she dooms them to a fate as terrible as that which befell the wretched victims of the Bastile.

"But you have said nothing to my invitation to drink a bottle with me, and exchange stories," persists the American.

The Watch-Dog of Berlin turns, and for the first time looks his companion squarely in the face.

"My dear captain, I am indeed at your service

whenever the time comes. Just now business is brisk with me, and I could not take pleasure in idling an hour away even in such good company. In our country fidelity to public duty is entailed—the risk of neglect is more than dismissal, sometimes even death. I respect you much—I know of no foreigner in Berlin who causes me as much thought. I shall be exceedingly pleased to meet you some other time. Kindly allow me to alight here, my dear captain."

The American speaks to the driver, who brings his vehicle into the gutter that disfigures this noble avenue. He would give something to ask this strange man what he means by such an expression, "I know of no foreigner in Berlin who causes me so much thought."

Does he mean anxiety or worry, or is this but a crude manner of expressing himself?

The vehicle stops.

Count Marborg steps out upon the ground with an agility that shows no traces of lameness. It is doubly evident to the American that he has made an excuse to ride with him—perhaps to gain some information. Tom grimly smiles as he reflects that the boot has been on the other leg, if he knows anything about Hardee's tactics.

"I shall take an interest in you, Captain Tom, since our acquaintance. Perhaps we may be of service to one another. Who knows? Strange things happen in these war times—very strange things. We do not understand all that we do see. I have the honor to bid you good-day, mynherr."

He is ceremonious, whether satirical or not, and Tom fancies he sees a sneer upon that thin upper lip; but he does not betray himself, takes the

count's cold hand in his, presses it, and gives the order to his Jehu to drive on.

It is in front of Spargnapani's, the best known of the refreshment and reading-rooms on the grand avenue, that the count stands and looks after the hackney drosky in which our adventurer, Captain Tom, drives away.

"Yes, my dear friend, my good friend, we shall one day compare notes, but I fear it will not be over a bottle of wine. When that broken telegraph wire is mended I may hear what was lost at its breaking. Until then you are safe—the Watch-Dog of Berlin never allows his prey to escape," and turning he steps into the cafe.

CHAPTER XXV.

CARL'S STORY.

Captain Tom is done with his vehicle for the present. He has much to meditate upon. This singular ride with the recognized head of the German police force arouses peculiar ideas in his mind, and he is thus employed in working out various schemes while walking to the door of Carl's humble home.

He had not cared to bring the hackney drosky to the house. Somehow the idea comes into his brain that even the driver may be one of Marborg's spies. He suspects nearly every person of such occupation. It must be as bad as Russia during these war times.

Arrived at what he is pleased to call home for the present, he learns that Carl is out. This is unfortunate, because he desires to ask his friend a number of questions.

It is some time before Carl makes his appearance,

and the American notes a strange look in his face—he catches a fugitive glance from the other's eyes, and realizes that Carl is worried.

What has happened?

Can Carl have been a witness to his ride with the Count Marborg along Unter den Linden?

It is possible, and suspicions may have been aroused. Who could think otherwise? As a general thing the lamb does not play with the lion—the millennium has not yet arrived.

Tom makes a clean breast of it, and tells everything that has happened. His friend listens soberly, and when the narrative has reached its conclusion he suddenly wheels around and grasps the American's hand.

"My friend, I knew of your ride before you spoke a word," he says, earnestly.

"Ah! you saw me—you were surprised!"

"No, but another belonging to our order did, and the circumstance was reported at our general headquarters. All suspicious things are. Marborg little dreams how closely his own movements are watched," returns Carl.

"Have I satisfied you, then?"

"In every respect. I am both pleased and sorry."

"Explain your words, Carl."

"Pleased to know that you are true, and filled with regrets because that man has undoubtedly marked you for his own."

Captain Tom hears, and understands exactly what this means, but he greets it with a shrug of the shoulders. He has seen Marborgs before now, in cities and in the depths of the wilderness, yes, and defeated their attempts upon his life, too.

"You think, then, he means to down me—that he

has in some way received news of my work inside the walls of Paris?" he says, quietly.

"I have no doubt of it—he hears daily from the scene of operations around Paris, though I believe there is just now some trouble with the wire—a storm broke it, and they have been unable to reach the place in order to mend it."

"Then let us hope it will remain broken. Now, Carl, will you give me ten minutes?"

"Twenty if you wish, Mynherr Tom."

"You know all the facts in the case. Advise me what to do."

The situation is so peculiar, and Tom has of late passed through so many adventures, that it is not strange he should seek assistance. Besides, Carl knows the ins and outs of Berlin far better than himself, and is used to deceiving Bismarck's Watch-Dog.

Nor is his German friend insensible to the gravity of his case. A false move may wreck all of his plans. Like most of his race, he is cautious and slow, but seldom makes a mistake.

"As I understand the matter, mynherr, you desire to take the fraulein away?" he asks.

"That is it."

"Has she consented to go?"

To this pointed question Captain Tom is not able to give a decisive answer. He scratches the tip of his nose, pulls at his mustache fiercely, and then gives a short laugh.

"Bless my soul, Carl, old man, I really find myself unable to say yes positively. You remember I told you of my meeting Meta, but before our conversation had reached a definite conclusion it was interrupted by the coming of Linda, thanks to the kind-

ness of Marborg in sending her that note of warning."

"Yes, I see. Then it strikes me that your first business would be to get an interview with the lady, and make sure she is willing to go."

"You are right, my friend. It shall be done."

"Perhaps I may be able to help you," says Carl, in a low but thrilling voice.

"You will place me under heavy obligations, Carl. My whole heart is wrapped up in this affair. If you had ever loved——"

At the words Carl's hand closes on his arm with the grip of a vise, Carl's face is turned upon him with an awful expression of white pain, and Carl's voice, strained almost beyond recognition, speaks to him:

"Mynherr Tom, we have known each other for a long time, but one secret I have kept from you. Words from you have unlocked my heart. I will open it to you, my friend."

"Not if it gives you pain, Carl."

"It will do me good to speak of it—to renew my vows against the iron rulers who are bound to eat into the life of Germany, and against whom I have sworn eternal hatred. Yes, I loved with all my heart and soul; I am not as young as you believe me, although a student still, as I shall always be; but when I was some years younger I met my fate. I need not enter into particulars save to tell you that our meeting was strange and portentous—that I was enabled to save the life of my Gretchen by the exercise of the abilities nature had endowed me with, my strong arms. I have wondered many times why Heaven brought us thus together, only to make our parting doubly bitter, but each time I concluded

that some good would yet be attained; at any rate it has made a life patriot out of Carl Reuter, who will fight for German liberty while he has life."

He is partly overcome by the recollections that burst upon him. Tom takes advantage of the opportunity to say:

"You lost your Gretchen, then?"

"Yes, they killed her. Her father belonged to the society of which I am a life member. It was particularly offensive to Bismarck, just before the opening of the war with France, and he gave orders to have it suppressed.

"They go about things here in a different manner from your country. If a house is under suspicion a file of soldiers, or the police, suddenly surround it; there is a demand for surrender, and any resistance is met by a volley.

"This happened at the home of Gretchen. Some hot-head among the conspirators, believing they were already doomed to prison for life, fired at Marborg, hoping to at least rid Berlin of one man who had many foes and few friends.

"He missed his man, and the next moment a storm of bullets swept among them. Several were killed, and among others they laid my Gretchen low."

His voice trembles, despite his wonderful self-control, and Tom can see his hands clenched in mute agony. Though he live to be sixty, this man will never be able to talk of this dread tragedy of his past without deep emotion.

"Yes, I heard the news, and rushed to the house—she died in my arms—my darling! As I looked into her face all my loyalty to the king vanished, and I determined that so long as I lived I would engage in the cause which she believed was right.

"That was how I came to be a Socialist—that is why I am now secretly plotting to free Germany from the bonds that enslave her."

Captain Tom may not have much faith in the ultimate success of the conspirators' plans, but he cannot doubt their sincerity if they are all of Carl's caliber. He has seen these things before in the republics of Central and South America, where Captain Tom made a name for himself as a brave soldier of fortune, always on the side of the weak and oppressed.

"Have you any idea where you will see the young lady again?" Carl asks, after a short interval of silence.

Tom shakes his head.

"I suppose I might watch Linda's *etage* as I did before; but what does that avail? She may not go out, and a spy will warn her of any movement I may make. There is only one way."

"Relate it, mynherr."

"A letter will do the business. I can explain all, and should Meta answer, it will serve to make arrangements."

He glances around the room as though looking for pen and paper, so Carl opens a desk and leaving him to his task drops into a chair. Ten minutes pass, during which time Captain Tom has been writing at a furious rate. Then he turns around, and finds Carl sitting there as motionless as though made of stone.

"Asleep, Carl?"

"I am thinking," comes the reply, and there is a deep significance in the words.

"I have finished my letter. Will you care to hear what I have written?" asks Tom.

"With pleasure."

So the soldier reads, and Carl nods his appreciation all through. When the end is finally reached he says, quietly:

"That is to the point, Mynherr Tom, but it would be so much better if you could say this and more to mademoiselle."

"Of course; but an interview will be hard to gain after what has happened. Linda suspects me, and hates Meta."

"I said a little while ago that I had an idea the time was near at hand when you could receive assistance from me. Now I know it."

"Good!" ejaculates the American, who realizes that his lucky star has not yet deserted him.

"Listen, and I will explain. This night there will be a ball given at the Coliseum—not the kind usually held there, but a special affair in which I am interested, because the society giving it is the Sons of Liberty under another name.

"I have received word that the fair Linda will be present. I believe she will bring Meta, for, according to my idea, it is her plan to get the girl mynherr loves connected with our society, and when this is done the blow can fall.

"Even if she leaves her at home it will suit our purpose just as well, for while you hasten to Unter den Linden I will find a means of holding Linda where she is."

Tom seizes his companion's hand and squeezes it with the greatest enthusiasm.

"See what it is to have a friend! I am under deep obligations, Carl. Let us, then, talk about these other particulars. The time is short."

"We have the afternoon before us, comrade. Tak-

ing a wagon we can drive out to the cottage of Franz and secure the balloon, which the man I told you of will take charge of. Are you sure the gas used here will serve your purpose?"

"In every way. The only trouble will be to get enough of it. Even if secured in sufficient volume it will take hours to inflate the balloon."

"Make your mind easy. My friend is a machinist by trade. He will use the tunnel from his house and tap the gas main. Thus you can receive a full supply, and count on having the balloon inflated at a certain time."

"Ah, you plan well, my friend, and this man—you say he was once an aeronaut himself?"

"Yes, he has made many voyages through the clouds in his air-ship. This is well, for several reasons. In the first place, he will know how to manipulate the balloon when filling it. Then again should any inquisitive persons see the monster air-ship near his house they would not think it strange, for this same thing has been witnessed there many times."

Tom recognizes this fact himself, and is more than ever inclined to believe that good fortune is on his side.

"I am ready to start when you are, Carl," he says, with considerable enthusiasm.

"Wait until we have dinner, my friend. There is no particular hurry. We shall get there all in good time. Have patience," replies the German.

So it is arranged.

Tom subdues his impatience, and becomes his old cool self. He has a feeling that this coming night will witness a change in his fortunes, or at least mark a crisis in his life. Never has he felt so keenly

the lack of a power to lift the vail of the future. He would give much to be able to see ahead—but a wise Providence screens the future from mortals' eyes; we can only keep up a brave heart and push on, hoping for the best, yet believing that what is to be must be.

Captain Tom is no fatalist, nor does he believe in the teachings of Mahomet—he never yet has sat still and allowed fate to strike him a blow, but if disaster overtakes him it finds a man struggling with every muscle and nerve and tissue of his body, endeavoring to back up his convictions with all his might.

Mickey has passed the morning by a walk. He has not yet shown up, and Tom feels a little alarm, knowing the Irishman's capacity for mischief. His hot head might easily get his foot into a mess in this German capital, and being unable to speak the language of the natives he would be in quite a serious dilemma.

Dinner is ready.

Still no Mickey, and even Carl is a trifle anxious concerning the other's fate. He announces that ere they start out upon their ride he will, by means of the secret telegraph, inform many members of the order concerning Mickey, so that if any of them has a chance to befriend the Irishman they will accept the opportunity.

So the dinner is discussed.

CHAPTER XXVI.

MICKEY SHOWS UP AT LAST.

"It is time we started," remarks Carl, as they rise from the table.

"But the vehicle——"

"Awaits us down the street. I ordered it before we sat down to eat," the student replies.

"You are a wizard, old chap."

"Oh, no; but I have facilities here such as the world will some time be blessed with. I can stand in a little room and talk with Herr Richter, a member of the Reichstag, whose house is more than a mile away. Invention is my business, you know, Mynherr Tom. I believe electricity is yet bound to revolutionize the world, and the discoveries of the last century will be utterly insignificant beside what is yet to come."

They walk out. The air is heavy and cold. Upon the hard ground a few flakes of snow fall. Captain Tom notes one thing with satisfaction.

"The air is from the north-west. It will carry me out of Germany if all goes well," he remarks.

It is evident that his mind is set upon a certain line of work, and Captain Tom's application is such that he will go through with it.

Walking along Grun strasse they come to a covered vehicle with two horses attached.

Captain Tom marks it as their property, and is not at all surprised when his companion steps up and speaks to the driver.

"Mount, friend," he says to Tom.

A comfortable seat, and a pair of good horses, what better might be asked? They arrive at the city gate, and are allowed to pass out, for Berlin is not in a state of siege, and vigilance is relaxed. The citizens are gathered in knots; no news has been received all day, and they are anxious to hear from the seat of war. Thus Berlin seems like a gigantic bee-hive at swarming time. Has Paris fallen, or

has a provincial army arrived in time to raise the wonderful siege?

These are pertinent questions, and those who ask them have good reasons for anxiety, since they have sent their sons, their brothers, and husbands to the war.

Our friends have heard of the broken wire, but do not realize how closely this is allied to the fortunes of Captain Tom.

The soldier recognizes his surroundings, and his mind goes back to the adventures of the previous night. Yes, there is the house of Franz—poor, simple Franz, who had been hoodwinked by the sky-travelers, and forced to give them a royal supper, thanks to the good looks and diplomacy of the American.

Stopping in front of the humble cottage, the two men spring from the wagon. Franz and his spouse both come to the door, the former trembling at sight of the government secret service officer, as he deems Tom. From the buxom wife the soldier receives a bright smile of welcome.

"Pardon, madam," he says at once, for business will not allow any more delay than is necessary just at present, "but we had private information that certain things stolen from the government stores have been secreted in one of your straw stacks. Of course we know you and your good man here have no knowledge of their presence, but I told my friend here, the assistant of Count Marborg, that before we searched the stacks it would be as well for us to let you know."

"Mynherr, search every stack. All—all are at your disposal. We are loyal subjects of the king, and we would not shelter or feed any one who has

raised an arm against his majesty for a thousand, ay, ten thousand thalers. I pray you search, gentlemen."

During the delivery of this patriotic address by the spouse of Franz, the "head of the house," it is worth while to note the look to be seen upon the faces of the men for whom the remarks were intended. Carl has a sneer upon his lips, for he hates the government this woman loves. Captain Tom is smiling, for he remembers that she has fed him with the greatest of pleasure, and if Wilhelm and his court have a more bitter enemy than this man has proven to them they are to be pitied.

"One thing," he cautions, ere leaving the door, "no matter whether we find anything suspicious or not you must keep this visit a secret. Count Marborg will hold you personally responsible."

Franz has turned white at the first mention of that dreaded name. There is no danger that anything will pass his lips. The woman is quite another person, but he trusts she may keep a close tongue for twenty hours.

So the covered vehicle is driven close to the straw stack into which Tom and Mickey managed to hide the collapsed balloon.

It is there, and does not appear to have been in the least disturbed. Joyfully they load it in the wagon. A number of persons, filled with curiosity, start to come around. Carl demands their immediate departure. His appearance, coupled with the mention of the count's name, together with the sight of a silver medal disclosed by opening his coat, is enough to alarm the rough peasants belonging to this section, and they retreat at once to their several homes. The region seems to be taken up

with market gardens, where under glass the people produce all manner of early green stuff for the Berlin markets.

As a general thing the women, in their odd dress and wooden shoes, can be seen attending to the crops, while few men are in sight, the majority having probably gone to the city with their loads.

The balloon is on the wagon at last, and with a few parting words to the wife of Franz they move on. No trouble is experienced in entering the city gates. Carl has invested some change in green stuff, with which he has about covered the balloon. At any rate they have the pass-word, and under ordinary circumstances this is enough to admit of a passage either way.

Tom thinks of Mickey, and keeps his eyes on the alert, as though hoping to see the Irishman on the streets, but no such luck is his.

Carl's driver has his orders. He is a quiet man, and has not once spoken since the two entered the wagon in the Grun strasse. Afterward Tom does not think this so singular, for he discovers that the man is a mute.

They enter another section of the city, known as the New Stadt. Here the houses are less confusing, and some vacant places are seen.

At a small house they stop, and Carl knocks upon the door, bringing out a stout Teuton with a face as round as a dollar. Without many words they proceed to carry the collapsed balloon through a gate into the vacant lot. Captain Tom and the driver bear a hand also, for it is cumbersome.

Then the vehicle is dismissed, and Tom is introduced to the professor, whose eyes twinkle as he hears how the reckless American has come all the

way from Paris to Berlin by balloon. Any one who can accomplish such a feat has the sympathy and good-will of this old aeronaut.

The professor declares he would never have given aerial navigation up only his increasing weight would be apt to hinder such voyages. He hopes to soon reduce his flesh, and then carry out the scheme of his life—a flight to the North Pole by balloon.

An hour passes. The professor has spent the time in chatting, but all the while he examines and measures the silk of the balloon. When he at length finishes his task he smiles.

"There are only one or two small places where the bag needs mending. It may not take me more than ten minutes. Then all will be ready. As soon as darkness comes I will make my attachments, and begin to fill the bag. This night it will be ready to carry you out of Berlin."

This is the news Tom wants, and he can hardly refrain from throwing his hat up into the air when he hears what the professor says.

"Name an hour—a surety, professor. I shall rely implicitly on your promise," he says.

Again the other figures; he knows how many cubic feet of gas he can secure an hour, and Tom gives him the dimensions of the balloon, which he has secured from a book while *en route*, a *vade mecum* of the professor who met his death in the streets of Paris through the agency of a shell.

Thus he has not a very hard task. Presently he looks up with a bland smile.

"I have it, mynherr. Barring accidents, mind you, I will have the balloon ready by midnight."

"A thousand thanks, professor. What will the damages be this time?"

"I hope there will be no damage, mynherr. I am one careful man, exceedingly so."

"Excuse me, professor—I forgot I was not speaking to a Yankee from across the water. What I meant was, what will it cost? your charges?"

The stout professor glances into Carl's face, and receives a signal that satisfies him.

"There is nothing to pay."

"Come, come; I am not used to being treated in this way. I am well able to pay, professor," cries the American, rather hotly.

"There are no charges, mynheer. The gas costs nothing, for it is taken from the city pipes—I have permission to do this while engaged in experiments. As for my labor—pah!—do you not understand, we who belong to each other cannot be as strangers."

Tom comprehends. He is looked upon in the light of being a member of the Sons of Liberty. Well, what does it matter, when on this very night it is his plan to rise to heights unknown, and leave Berlin.

He expresses a desire to assist the old man in the work before him, and as evening is not very far distant the professor allows it. First they all enter his house, where Tom's soul is fired by the display of mechanical curiosities.

Next they go below the house and enter a peculiar tunnel. A light is needed here, but the professor needs no lamp. All he does is to press upon a button in the wall, and an electric light flashes up ahead.

"Aha!" mutters Captain Tom, "here we have a genius ahead of his fellows. It was a great day when the aeronaut discovered that he would have to give up his aerial flights, and occupy his time

with inventions. There may be other surprises in store for me. I will keep my eyes open."

In the tunnel the professor secures a long coil of rubber tubing or hose. It has undoubtedly been used for the same purpose before, as there is a rank odor of gas about it. One end is secured to a pipe that has a stop cock in it, and this in turn is connected with the gas main exposed at the end of the tunnel.

These things please Captain Tom. It seems as though something comes up to fill every gap, and he assists the stout professor with the greatest of zeal.

Thus the patches are put on in the two spots where little rents occurred, and just at dusk the gas is turned into the tube.

The shape begins to rise up from the vacant lot, looking like a huge gray cloth under which the wind has found its way. Tom surveys it with the deepest interest, and rests his hand upon the basket almost reverently. Why not? Has it not saved him from being shut up inside the walls of Paris while the girl he loves is being carried away by one who hates her? Does not his sole hope of leaving Berlin hang upon this network of silk cloth and twine, this strange ship of the clouds that floats along at the mercy of heaven's winds?

All looks hopeful, and yet Captain Tom knows enough of Count Marborg by reputation and personal reading to feel sure that he is a hard man to outwit, and that the person who gets the better of the Watch-Dog dares not sleep.

They part from the professor, who gives a solemn assurance, based upon his practical knowledge, that, barring accident, the balloon will be tugging at her

ropes ready to soar aloft when the hour of midnight arrives. Tom inwardly prays that the always possible accident will not happen in this case, for it may mean life and death to him.

Again an uneasy feeling comes over him, which he cannot explain. He is not sick, and their plans seem to promise at least a fair amount of success. Then why worry? He cannot tell, but the spirit is on him, and he allows the heavy feeling to envelop his mind.

Side by side with Carl he starts for home.

When on the way a man dressed in a blue blouse and having a Tyrolese hat upon his head, staggers into him. Drunken men are so rare in Berlin that Tom is surprised and indignant. He feels like following the man, who goes staggering on, and having him attended to. Carl has received the brunt of the fellow's lurch—it was he who wrestled with the rascal for a minute, and finally forced him on down the street.

"Come," said that worthy, tapping his arm, "let us go on. Pay no heed to that man."

Captain Tom tumbles to the game—he realizes that the drunken fellow is really one of Carl's co-conspirators, and that he has adopted this method of communicating some intelligence of importance.

"What is it, Carl?" he asks, quietly.

"Ah, your eyes are keen, my friend. You jump at conclusions as a dog does at a bone."

Tom laughs at the comparison, and yet realizes its power.

"My inference is correct—you have learned something from that man," he persists.

"That is true. He gave me a few lines that are of the utmost importance. They call for my immediate

attention. Would you think it odd if I allowed you to go home alone, Mynherr Tom?"

"Not at all, Carl. If this is important business, let no thought of my poor self worry you. I know the streets of Berlin like a book, and I will have little trouble in reaching your house. When do you expect to join me there? how long shall it be ere we start for the Coliseum?"

"Call it one hour," replies Carl, thoughtfully, and his companion knows that if it is in his power he will turn up at the expiration of the limit he has set.

Thus they separate, these two who have sworn to stand together and baffle a woman's scheming. She has all the power of Count Marborg on her side, and it behooves these comrades to exert themselves to the utmost if they would succeed.

Captain Tom saunters on.

There are many strange scenes upon the streets of the German capital even in winter, and the flickering gas-lights show him oddities in dress and manner among the people, which at another time must have aroused the strain of artist blood in him—for this man of various accomplishments has dozens of small paintings that represent strange scenes in his adventurous life, the product of his own brush.

Now he gives them but a casual glance, for his mind is taken up with something else. Thus he moves along. The region is not unfamiliar to him, though he has not tramped it for some years. He knows where to strike Unter den Linden, and after that it is easy to find Grun strasse, with the little house that Carl owns.

As he walks along the American notes signs of excitement around him. He is reminded of scenes

so recently witnessed in Paris. What can be the matter? Has important news been received?

Something causes him to hurry forward, as though he would discover this for himself. As he reaches the crowd he hears a voice and it sends a thrill through him—it is the voice of Mickey, and means trouble in the camp.

Mickey has turned up at last.

CHAPTER XXVII.

A MUG OF MULLED PORTER.

Mickey, though something of a humorist in his way, is a natural born fighter. He has developed this trait more and more since Captain Tom knew him first. Perhaps the spirit is in the air and influences him. When men are mowing each other down, when chassepots and needle-guns blare through the livelong day and night, when fierce charges are met and repulsed, while the shouts of half-crazed combatants swell over the field of battle, who has ever heard of an Irishman retaining his senses. It is beyond reason to expect it.

When Tom hears that well-known voice he understands instantly that Mickey is in a mess of some sort. Obeying his first impulse he pushes forward to see what it means.

The street is well lighted. In Berlin they believe that every additional light scares a thief away, and hence do not spare the illumination.

He pushes on. Others are rushing in the same direction, as though eager for some sensation. Crowds are much the same the world over, from Constantinople to New York—unsympathetic, easily

swayed, and merciless. As a general thing they are made up of cowardly elements, too; at least that has been the experience of the soldier of fortune, and looking back in his checkered career he can remember adventures more or less exciting, with mobs in the cities of Mexico, of Buenos Ayres, Singapore, Alexandria, and in Moscow, which ought to make him something of a judge.

Mickey keeps up his shouting. Captain Tom remembers that the last time he saw the doughty Irishman in an affair of this kind it was done with the express purpose of securing a paper that he knew his antagonist held. Can it be that Mickey is up to anything of the same sort now? or has he been dragged into an ordinary street brawl?

One flash of fear passes through the brain of the soldier; it is to the effect that Mickey may have imbibed too freely. He has never known the Irishman to do this, but it is a failing of his race, and apt to come home to him at any time.

Now he pushes through the crowd, and reaches the scene of action. Yes, there is Mickey as big as day; nor is he alone. A large figure, clad in the regimental dress of the Uhlan, is beside him.

What under the sun is going on?

Has the Uhlan captured him? Indeed it looks as though the boot were on the other leg, for it is Mickey that tries to make the big fellow come on. By threats and wild entreaties he endeavors to start him up; the man leaning against the house simply stares at him vacantly.

Then Mickey changes his tune—he threatens to desert his companion. At this the huge hand of the Uhlan soldier comes down with terrific force upon his shoulder, and clutches him in a grip of iron. Of

course Mickey tries to get away no longer, but resumes his cajoleries and loud talk, while the other listens absently.

Captain Tom sees and understands. Mickey is evidently under arrest, though whether from suspicion or because of something recently done, can only be guessed.

He would make his escape, and in some way has succeeded in fuddling the soldier's brain, but only to a certain extent. The Uhlan knows he ought to hold his prisoner, and has sense enough left to grasp him when he seems about to slip away.

This is annoying to Captain Tom, but as yet he does not know that Mickey is to blame. It is unfortunate, because he has so many other things to look after. If the Irishman finds himself inside of a German dungeon there can be no such thing as a rescue; he will have to stand the consequences.

One thing is strange, and it gives Tom hope of a speedy ending to the scene. As yet not a soldier has been attracted to the spot, though they are liable to come running up at any time.

Although Germany is overrun with soldiers, they are no especial pets with the rabble, and even now a dozen men laugh and jeer at the Uhlan, whom they believe to be drunk, cheering on the Irishman, and begging him in German to pitch into the soldier.

Although Mickey cannot understand the words, he catches the tone, and that is enough to fire his blood. Captain Tom sweeps one glance up and down the street. He fancies he can see a file of soldiers turning a corner above. They will be down upon them in quick order. Whatever is done must be accomplished speedily.

The Uhlan's great hand still clutches the shoulder

of the Irishman. Will he never release him? There is but one way to accomplish the result.

"Mickey!"

Ah, the Irishman recognizes the voice above the tumult; he crests his head as though listening for orders. Captain Tom understands.

"Tap him on the neck—a powerful blow. That will cause him to let go. Then join me. Quick! some of his companions are sweeping down the strasse."

It is enough for Mickey, who has only needed a master-mind to direct him out of the muddle. He turns toward the dazed Uhlan, whose grasp is still upon his arm.

"L'ave go, ye spalpeen! Take a gentleman for a Socialist, will yees? Look out, now!" and he accompanies the words with a sudden dash of the arm that carries a clenched fist before it.

The blow strikes fairly upon the neck of the soldier, and is delivered with telling force. To look at him one would hardly believe Mickey capable of such knock-down arguments. Mr. Uhlan goes to sleep practically, and the officious hand drops from Mickey's shoulder. He is free to depart, and the sooner he does it the better, judging from the clanking sound up the street that announces the coming of soldiers.

"This way, Mickey!" calls a voice, as soon as the knock-out argument has been concluded.

Evidently the Irishman cannot be in the same befuddled condition that has characterized the presence of the Uhlan, for he advances toward Tom with great jumps. The soldier is glad to see this, for it means that Mickey has a chance to escape. If under the influence of liquor his peril is great.

Together they run down the street. The crowd grasps the situation, and remains to confuse the coming soldiers, who are now close at hand. In this way they show their sympathy for the man who has called out the magic word, "Socialist."

Tom keeps his wits about him. He knows that they cannot run beyond the corner, for there the street is filled with people and vehicles, and they will at once attract the attention of soldiers or police. There is a way open to elude arrest, and he seizes it.

Arriving at the corner he steps around, and uses his eyes to advantage. Fortune is kind. Close by a hackney drosky stands, drawn up near the pavement, its driver evidently awaiting a fare.

"Empty?" demands the American.

The driver nods quickly and eagerly.

"Enter!" this to Mickey, who, hearing the boisterous shouts up the street which they have just quitted, loses not a second in obeying.

Captain Tom waits only long enough to give the driver his directions, and tell him there is need of haste, when the vehicle moves away, and is speedily lost in the procession.

Three minutes later a file of soldiers issues from the side street in some confusion. The officer in command looks up and down the avenue. He can see no signs of the two who answer the description given of the aggressors. Several more soldiers come out bearing the senseless body of the Uhlan whom Mickey downed.

Questions are put in a voluminous way to some loungers near by, and thus it is learned that the two foreigners have entered a vehicle and gone away. The owner of the drosky is known, and he can be questioned when he comes back.

Meanwhile our two friends are making good time back to the New Stadt, from which section of Berlin Tom had just come when stopped by the noisy crowd ahead. It is his intention to leave Mickey with the professor, so as to keep him out of mischief and know where to find him when the expected crisis arrives. On the way he questions Mickey, and hears the story. As he expected, the Irishman is not so much to blame for getting into trouble.

When Mickey entered the city gates and found a soldier staring hard at him, a man he had met before, he declared that it did not matter much anyway—that their mission to Berlin would be accomplished before this slow-witted German could remember where and under what circumstances they two had come in contact.

Here he made a mistake. The soldier, in looking back over his career, remembered an encounter with Mickey, and was ready to take his solemn oath that at that time the Irishman was in the French Army, fighting under Louis Napoleon.

This made it a serious business, for the man could only be in Berlin as a spy.

Word went out late in the afternoon to arrest a man answering Mickey's description, and every soldier was on the lookout for him.

Then Mickey explained why he had not returned to Carl's house at noon. Wandering along the bank of the Spree he met an old friend whom he had not seen for years.

An Irishman is nothing if not convivial, and when he meets a fellow exile from the Green Isle it must be something of great importance that can tear them apart. So, unconscious of the fact that five hundred German soldiers were on the lookout for

a man answering Mickey's description, Mickey and his friend spent the afternoon on board a little boat, now laid up for the winter, but the property of his compatriot.

They probably exchanged histories, at any rate the darkness came before Mickey dreamed of such a thing, and he awakened to the fact that he had forgotten Captain Tom. Perhaps the other would be very angry at his long delay. At any rate he would endeavor to make up for lost time.

He hurried along. The city was familiar enough for him to avoid mistakes. While making his way to the main avenue, Unter den Linden, he was suddenly accosted by a tall soldier, who coolly linked his arm with that of the Irishman.

Mickey understood at once that this meant danger, but he affected to be jovial, laughed, and entered into a distracted sort of conversation with his companion. As he knew very little German, and the other had but a smattering of French, they made but poor headway in this business, though it seemed to please Mickey immensely. He roared with laughter, while the Uhlan grew red as he thought how neatly he was drawing his prey into the net.

As yet there had been no indication of an arrest, although the soldier led his companion as he willed. Mickey was thinking very seriously, even while appearing so very jovial.

Could he shake off this leech clad in a military coat, and with such powerful muscles? It would be fatal to him should he be taken before a military tribunal and tried. He had no passport, and could give no account of himself unless he told the whole story, which would betray Tom.

Mickey realized the gravity of his situation, and

being quick-witted, jumped upon a plan. How fortunate that Captain Tom gave him those powders. He said one of them was an ordinary dose, and would speedily cause a man to lose his senses. All very good, but how was he to get one of the powders down the soldier's gullet?

His hard thinking was of no avail until by chance they reached the light that streamed from one of the refreshment rooms which abound in Berlin.

Mickey immediately had an idea, and with him this meant much. He was seized with a fit of coughing, during which he managed to get one of the powder papers in his hand. When he partially recovered his breath he signified that he must enter the refreshment room to wash his throat with some mulled porter.

At the mention of the word the soldier smacked his lips—how could he help it? He must accompany Mickey into the place. What did it matter since he had not yet made an arrest, or, in military parlance, placed the other under guard?

So he entered with Mickey, who ordered two mugs of porter, some condiments, and a red-hot poker. The Uhlan made no protest, but his lips seemed to water at the prospect. Army discipline was not so strict as it would be later; when a war is in progress good soldiers are too scarce to be shut up in guard-houses for petty offenses.

The porter came, also the poker, which had been brought almost to a white heat. Turning his back to Mickey, the soldier heard the clicking of the mugs, then came a hissing sound as the poker was alternately thrust into each mug, and after that arose a heavenly odor.

He could stand it no longer—a martyr he never

was, and turning he accepted the mug which the smiling Mickey handed to him. What harm in drinking with this jolly fellow? The arrest could be made afterward.

No officer was near to see him. He drank, he gulped down the mulled porter, he drained the mug, and quickly set it down, wiping his mouth with the back of his hand.

Mickey went at it more deliberately. There was a deep method in this, since he desired to have the drug work before moving on.

Thus he sipped his drink, explaining that in this way he could get the full benefit of it. The soldier waited; at times he seemed anxious to go, and then showed an apathy that proved the charm of the potent powder.

Mickey was anxious to remain here until the fellow sank into a chair and slept, but the soldier roused himself to a sense of his duty, and forced the Irishman out upon the street.

Arm in arm they walked along, and Mickey, finding that the single powder was not powerful enough to wholly dispose of the big Uhlan, sought to part company with him.

Although dizzy and hardly able to stand, the soldier realized that it was his duty to retain his prisoner. Every time Mickey attempted to leave, although the Uhlan had listened to his tirade with a foolish grin, he dropped his hand upon the other's shoulder in a half helpless condition.

Mickey became excited, a crowd collected, and the scene came about upon which we have gazed, and which ended with the Irishman following the directions given by Captain Tom.

The American breathes a silent thanksgiving for

that wonderful luck which seems to hover over drunken men and Irishmen. He believes an ordinary mortal would have met his fate.

They debark near the home of the professor, and Tom bids the driver, whom he pays well, wait for him. The balloon is growing in shape hourly, and must be ready at the time mentioned. Tom introduces Mickey to the professor, and leaves him there. He has now reason to believe his plans may work well, since the one element most likely to bring about a *contretemps* is housed.

The drosky awaits him, and jumping in he gives his order to the driver:

"Back to Unter den Linden!"

CHAPTER XXVIII.

"THIS NIGHT GERMANY IS FREE."

Tom reflects as he rides. He studies his driver, who seems to be a discreet sort of a fellow. He may have great need of a vehicle on this night—why not engage this man for the entire night?

There are other good reasons for keeping the drosky. The man was probably at his stand when Captain Tom engaged him, and he will go back there if turned loose. It is easily possible that some one may be waiting there to question him—a soldier armed with authority. Tom makes up his mind that this man shall not go to his stand again for hours.

He leans forward and asks his price for the whole night, and then puts double what the fellow has asked into his itching palm.

It is well the bargain has been struck, for as they

draw near Unter den Linden a couple of soldiers command the driver to halt.

One comes to the door of the vehicle and looks in.

"What is the matter?" demands Tom, stiffly.

"Pardon, mynherr. Orders have been given to examine every drosky. An Irishman, suspected of being a spy, is in the city, and when last seen went away in such a vehicle."

"I trust you will catch him. Tell your commanding officer that Sir Clinton de Vere wishes him every success. To the British Embassy, driver."

The soldier salutes and falls back, believing he has been talking with an English nobleman. Captain Tom moves on. A few minutes later he again speaks out.

"Driver, I have changed my mind. To the Grun strasse this time," he says, in German.

The driver nods his head. Perhaps he thinks it queer, but it is none of his business. He has been paid enough for two nights. He drives on among the many vehicles, passing along under the trees for which this avenue is noted.

Grun strasse is reached at last, and Tom enters Carl's abode. He consults his time-piece. Carl has said an hour, and it is almost up. The American throws himself into a chair and waits as patiently as he can the coming of this true friend.

The moments slowly pass. After a time a door closes—Carl has returned. Captain Tom hastily rises to greet his friend, who immediately enters.

"A carriage at the door! what does this mean, friend Tom?" is the first question fired at him.

In answer the American gives a rapid sketch of the adventure that has befallen him since he parted from Carl, after seeing the professor.

"Have I done well?" he asks, in conclusion.

There is hardly any need to put the question, since Carl's face has already shown the satisfaction that is in his soul. He presses the hand of the other.

"It is one great pleasure to call such a man like Mynherr Tom, my friend," he says, solemnly.

That is the nearest approach to a compliment the American has ever heard pass the lips of the stoical Teuton. He feels flattered.

"Our plans, now, Carl," he says.

"All was well at the professor's?" asks the other.

"When I left, yes. The balloon grows in size, and I have faith to believe the professor will keep his word, having all ready at midnight."

"We must eat something."

Tom would protest, but realizes that it is a wise thing to do, with what he has before him. So the words die on his lips, and sitting down with Carl he does justice to the spread.

He notices a light upon Carl's face, and supposes that it comes from the pleasure the other takes in defeating the plans of the authorities. It has not yet dawned upon the mind of Captain Tom that Carl may be engaged in a business of his own, and that the ball at the Coliseum has a deeper motive than appears upon the surface.

Berlin may awaken this night to the dread fact that all her enemies are not in France; that under her own walls lie those determined to throttle the government of Wilhelm.

Great events are on the tapis, if given a chance to materialize; let the head of the secret police slumber until dawn, and his life may pay the penalty of his rashness.

When they have finished the meal Carl secures a basket, and proceeds to load it with food.

"You suffered before; you must not again, since there will be a lady with you," he says, putting in several bottles of wine.

Captain Tom feels a thrill at his words. Will Meta accompany him? It is death for her to remain; but does she love him, will she trust herself in his care? When they drop into some French village beyond the border will she be willing to become Mrs. Captain Tom?

Much remains to be done, and he is anxious to get to work. Should Linda come alone to the ball at the Coliseum, Tom's plan is to make use of his drosky, drive direct to Linda's *etage* in the house fronting the avenue of limes, and seek an interview with Meta. Surely her worst suspicions must have been aroused by this time, and she would be ready not only to believe what he tells her, but to fly with him by the only avenue of escape from Berlin.

Thus he reflects while he watches Carl fill the basket to the lid. How many chances there are against success! He never knew this fearful anxiety before, no matter what the undertaking has been. Perhaps it is because Captain Tom never loved. This makes a man feel like a different being, and increases his fears.

Carl explains in his leisurely manner. It is no use for them to be at the Coliseum before ten o'clock at the earliest. That will allow of all the time necessary for explanations between Tom and Meta, unless, Carl continues, with a smile, the American desires to woo the gentle Alsatian as Othello did Desdemona, by relating all the adventures and scrapes

into which he has stumbled during ten years of globe-trotting.

They sit down to chat and have a cigar.

"It may be the last we shall ever smoke in company, mynherr. You go upon a perilous mission; you may be captured, shot, or the balloon might burst when above the clouds. Ugh!" with a shrug of his broad shoulders, "we know not when annihilation may come. We do what we believe to be our duty, and leave the rest to Providence."

"You do not mention your own risks, but I know they are many and imminent," says Tom, as he blows successive rings above his head. If this is the last cigar he is destined to smoke he means to fully enjoy it.

"Mynherr, you are correct. I may not see the light of another day. Why is this so? I cannot tell you the particulars of our grand plot, but you may know that this ball at the Coliseum is but a farce—there is back of it a design to strike for liberty. This night Germany is free, unless Providence decides against us. We have our plans fully arranged, and our men are in the camp around Paris and at Versailles, where Wilhelm has taken up his quarters. The broken wire was the signal for action on the succeeding night. When another day dawns Europe will shudder, but all lovers of freedom rejoice. I can say no more, my friend."

He has said enough. Captain Tom shudders as he reflects upon the consequences. He is an American, and believes in ballots rather than bullets in righting political wrongs. At the same time this traveler has seen the world, and knows that royalty-ridden nations like Russia and Germany have no show like his own people.

"They must fight their own battles," is the maxim he has always favored.

He despises these means, nor does he think them necessary in the present case. He has met Wilhelm, the King of Prussia, and believes him to be a kind-hearted German, devoted to his country, which he purposes making the chief nation of Europe.

There are in all countries misguided individuals who are at war with the existing government. Carl and his fellows have some vision of a second United States, where young men are not forced to spend the best years of their lives in the army, and where the people govern. Such a thing can never be in Europe, where rival nations guard the border and glare at one another as though ready to do the throttling act at slight provocation. It must ever be a Utopian dream. Still men have banded together in the past, aiming to produce such an ideal state of affairs, and they will again; lives have been sacrificed to defend the theory, and at this day, this hour, secret meetings are being held in Russia, and plots formed against the Czar. Men die, but the cause still lives, the great love of mankind for liberty.

So far as Captain Tom can see everything is now arranged, and the rest must be left to an all-wise Providence. They have provided for any possible emergency that the wisdom of man can foresee.

He wonders much what this scheme is that the Sons of Liberty have on deck for this night—how can a blow be struck in Berlin when nearly all the leaders of the government are with the army in France? Is this another Guy Fawkes gunpowder plot? Will they go forth from the Coliseum to run riot through the streets of the great city? Ere morn-

ing will the sky be lighted up with the blaze from palace to barracks, and the streets of Berlin be in the hands of an armed and desperate mob?

Captain Tom does not believe so; true, he has no doubt concerning the intentions of the would-be revolutionists, but Germany is slightly different from Salvador or Honduras.

Besides, he remembers something else.

Berlin has her Marborg, the Watch-Dog left behind by Bismarck—the man who never sleeps. Has Marborg been deceived? Can it be possible such a gigantic and terrible conspiracy could be brought to the very hour of execution, and this wonderful man be ignorant of it?

The American knows about Marborg, and he has the greatest respect for the cunning and sagacity of Berlin's guardian. When he looked into the expressionless face he saw a born detective, a man whose chief delight was to coax silly flies into his web, and when tangled up so that they were helpless to suck their blood. Captain Tom is not foolish enough to believe that this wonderful man has remained ignorant as regards what is going on. He has seen in the Indian Ocean a tremendous octopus, with its many long arms stretching out and grasping different objects; a hideous creature, truly; and the death-cry of a poor devil of a sailor who was dragged down when the monster slowly sank, after having several of its arms chopped off by men armed with axes, often rings in his ears on a quiet night.

Strangely enough he compares Count Marborg to an octopus—it seems as though he is such a sea monster reaching out in all directions for victims.

Calmly contemplating the matter Tom is more in-

clined to believe that the count must be aware of all the deep plans formed by the would-be revolutionists. He has many means for gaining information, and Linda is but a single one. Yes, the American would wager ten to one that Marborg knows not only the general plan of these desperate men, but their private acts, their very thoughts, if they have ever been written or expressed above a whisper.

Granting this—what then?

Will the count make his presence known at the Coliseum? It is more than likely, and perhaps a desperate scene may ensue, in which bad blood will be spilled. Those of the revolutionists present will certainly not allow themselves to be taken prisoners without a determined resistance, for they know the fate that awaits them—either death or the silence of a dungeon evermore.

When Carl finally signifies that he is ready to advance, Tom, with such serious thoughts in his mind, tosses away his weed and springs up.

"Let us shake hands, my dear fellow, and each wish the other success. We start upon desperate enterprises, but I think my chances are doubly as good as yours."

It is the traveler who speaks, and Carl Reuter smiles gravely, while through his glasses he surveys the face of his comrade.

"Friend Tom, I know it. I feel that my doom is soon to come upon me. It will be welcome. Since I laid Gretchen beneath the sod on the bank of the Rhine at Dusseldorf I have lived only for the good of my country. I shall proudly die for her. It will be a more glorious fate than that which has overtaken so many of our brave comrades upon the soil of France, sent to war upon fellow-workers because

kings will it. Here, Mynherr Tom, this is your mask—no one is allowed in the Coliseum this night with features uncovered. Now let us go."

He looks around in silence, as though bidding his humble home an eternal farewell, a groan wells from his lips, but is stifled half-way. Then seizing the basket of provisions he passes out.

The vehicle is still at the door. Tom's money has secured the services of the Jehu for that night. They enter, and have the basket stowed away. Then Captain Tom gives his order; this time it is:

"To the Coliseum!"

CHAPTER XXIX.

CAPTAIN TOM UNMASKED.

The Coliseum is lighted up in a brilliant manner in honor of the occasion. As a general thing the lower classes dance in this building, while the lookers-on may be among the most respectable elements of Berlin society. A ball at the Coliseum is something for strangers in the city to gaze upon, even as in Paris they go to see the Jardin Mabille or the Closerie des Lilas.

To-night Berlin is to be treated to a rather new and novel sensation. A society is about to give a ball, and every one present must wear a mask. There will be no fancy costumes, but over all will hang an air of delightful mystery.

The cards are limited in number, and for once the rabble finds itself shut outside the Coliseum. Strains of music float to their ears, and occasionally loud voices or laughter can be heard, but this is all.

When Carl and Captain Tom drive up a large

crowd has gathered outside, filled with curiosity. The American has arranged his programme in his own mind, and he speaks to the Jehu.

"Remain here. Do not leave your vehicle for a minute. I may need you in a hurry ten minutes from now or an hour—I can't say. There is a lady in the case—you understand. If all goes well another fare like the one I gave you."

This is amply sufficient; the driver bows humbly, feeling that he must be serving a Crœsus:

"Your servant, mynherr."

The two men advance to the door, and slip on the half-masks that have been secured. They then enter.

The scene that opens before them is one to at least arouse curiosity. Scores of persons are present. Every one wears a mask. There is no attempt made to render the features hidden or even comical, it being sufficient to keep the face from being seen.

Carl looks around and chuckles. He seems to be well pleased with the attendance.

"You would not dream there were so many discontents in Berlin, eh, friend Tom?" he says, aside.

The American confesses to being surprised. At the same time he experiences a strange feeling of uneasiness. To him it seems as though he can feel the presence of danger.

"How do you know all these are comrades?" he asks, looking down upon the dancers.

Carl does not show any alarm.

"They have the signal and the grip. It is death to any one to betray it," he says, quietly.

Captain Tom makes no reply to this. He does not know which to admire the more, the student's splendid faith in his comrades, or his simplicity.

Really, Tom cannot see what is to hinder Count Marborg himself from being present, provided he has received the grip and signs from Linda.

With this idea in his mind he allows his eyes to wander from one figure to another, speculating as to which of the men in mask he could apply a description of the count.

A dozen fill the bill so far as height and spareness of frame are concerned. Captain Tom remembers a little thing he noticed while in the carriage with Marborg, driving down Unter den Linden. The third finger of his left hand has been shortened—the end joint is gone.

That would be a clew to delight the heart of a detective. Eagerly he accepts the earliest opportunity of examining the left hand of every masked man whose physique resembles that of the Watch-Dog of Berlin.

Several wear white gloves, and baffle him. At length to his satisfaction he discovers one man whose third finger is partly missing. He means to keep an eye on this personage—the chances favor his being the keen-eyed Count Marborg.

"Carl, I have taken a great notion to be introduced to one of yonder men," he says.

"It can be done, mynherr; point him out," returns the student, quietly. He knows Tom has some secret motive in this, although for the life of him he cannot grasp it.

The music crashes, and the dance goes on. There are quite a goodly number of the gentler sex present, which proves, that as among the Nihilists of Russia, this secret liberty bund of Berlin does not consist of men alone. Many of their most active and devoted members are women.

"You see that tall man just about to lift a chair—I would like to meet him—why, you shall soon know," says Tom.

"It shall be as you say. Kindly enter this side room. In three minutes we come," and Carl leaves his friend deeply mystified.

Tom hardly knows why he has done this. What if he does expose Count Marborg, will it prevent any action on his part? It may precipitate a tragedy.

While he ponders Carl enters, accompanied by a tall man in mask. One glance Tom gives his left hand, and notes the missing finger. This is the party he desires to see. Will he dare to remove his mask?

He hears Carl mention a name coupled with his own; then he bares his face, expecting to dare the other to do the same. That hand goes up, the mask drops. Tom gives a gasp, for he looks upon the face of a stranger.

The others are surveying him with wonder and surprise, as though they cannot understand what his actions mean. There is nothing for it but to explain.

"Pardon, my friends; it was a mistake. I will tell you what I feared."

Then he goes on to state what he observed about the left hand of Count Marborg, and how he came to suspect that Herr Richter was that most dreaded individual. At this both of the others make merry.

"It is not the first time I have been taken for the count. Even my face resembles his a little. Once I had quite an experience in Potsdam, at the palace of Sans Souci; but this is not the time or place to be telling stories. We accept the will for the deed,

Mynheer Tom, but there is no danger that Marborg could get in here. We are numbered—an extra man would be noticed," remarks the tall conspirator.

"But myself?"

"Ah! you are known to every member—we have heard of you, and Carl is your surety. His life depends upon your loyalty."

Tom realizes now what risks his friend has taken in his behalf. He sighs to think what the inevitable fate of brave Carl must be.

So they pass out once more among the others. Tom begins to eagerly scan each female in sight. Will he be able to distinguish Meta? Is she present?

Ah! he has discovered Linda—he can make no mistake about that elegant figure, fit to be an artist's model. She dances as though there was not the shadow of death hanging over this gay assemblage.

Encouraged by this success, he looks even more earnestly for Meta. There are three whom he hits upon as possibilities, and watching them he finally decides. His eyes follow the figure of the young girl with tenderness. How shall he go about the task of telling her what threatens, and be able to win her consent to fly with him? Now that he is nearer the execution of his scheme he sees difficulties that look as huge as mountains before him—when surveyed from a distance they have appeared small and insignificant.

No one can help him, for he will have to go about the game himself. All depends upon his success in convincing Meta of the danger.

While he stands there watching he sees some one glide up to Linda, who immediately rushes over to the door. A slender, girlish figure has entered and

stands there as if uncertain what to do. Tom sees her put out a hand and grope around until she touches the wall, against which she is now leaning.

It flies through his brain that she must be blind.

Where has he known a blind girl? It comes before him—the scene in the streets of Paris, the mob of Amazons, the accusing Francois, his defense of the girl, and her thrilling cry, "Look at me; I am blind!"

Yes, it is Myra!

He knows she has been put beyond the forts of Paris, and, no doubt, has found a friend to accompany her to Berlin. Her heart is in the cause—she is not double-faced like Linda. Though ready to help the German cause in the field she yet belongs to this liberty bund, and is ready to give her life, if need be, to help it on.

Tom sees the chance he seeks. The girl he believes to be Meta is alone. He crosses over and addresses her.

"The honor of a dance, fraulein?"

He of course makes this request in German, but something about his voice or accent startles the girl. She seems to be endeavoring to look back of his mask.

"Captain Tom!"

The name falls from her lips like a zephyr, but his eager ears catch it. Never has music sounded so sweet to him.

"You are Meta?" he says, quickly.

"It is hard to believe such a thing. How come you at this place, Monsieur Tom?"

"Only to see you!" he breathes.

"You know not what risks you take!"

"I know more than you dream of, Meta. We must

separate from these dancers. Ten minutes, even five, will suffice to tell the story—to warn you of danger."

She sighs.

"You think not of yourself, rash man."

"Pardon; I am thinking of both. You will grant me the interview?"

"With pleasure; how can you doubt it?" and she places her hand on his arm, to again thrill him with her touch.

Tom remembers the side room beyond the hanging curtains, where Carl took him to meet Herr Richter; a better place cannot be found for their interview. He is deeply in earnest, knowing that his whole future, besides that of the fair young girl, depends upon what the occurrences of the next hour or so may bring forth.

They pass beyond the draperies. The small apartment is lighted by one gas-jet.

Captain Tom removes his mask.

"To assure me there is no mistake would you mind raising your mask for a moment, Meta!"

With charming *naivete* she allows him to have a glimpse of her face. The bold lover can hardly refrain from pressing a kiss upon the pouting lips; but he recognizes the fact that this is no time for love passages. He must tell her of his passion, but not as other men do; his wooing will indeed be so connected with business as to make it one of the strangest on record. Listen how this man of nerve goes about it.

"Mademoiselle—Meta—you have been in terrible danger. It still hovers over you. Linda pretends to be your friend, but in secret she is your deadly enemy. You ask why is this so? I will tell you

plainly. In the first place your heart is with France; it was much owing to you that the plans of Von Moltke came to naught when he hoped to take Paris by a *coup de main.* But there is another reason why she hates you—I am not a fool, neither a conceited coxcomb. The fair Linda has conceived for me an unfortunate attachment which I cannot return. She hates you because I adore you."

The girl trembles.

"Oh, Monsieur Tom?" she murmurs, but does not shrink when he raises her little hand to his lips and kisses it.

"It is true, *ma belle.* I love you with all my heart and soul. If you return that affection you will consent to be my wife.

"Your wife? That would be happiness—Tom," comes almost in a whisper.

"Thank Heaven for such a sensible little woman," says the traveler, earnestly, "no foolish whims, no false modesty, but her own true self. She is not afraid to let me see she loves me. Listen, my own. I will tell you what danger lies about us."

Then this practical man goes on to relate what he knows and what he suspects. She hangs on his every word. He belongs to her now, and the worship which she has in the past been compelled to indulge in from a distance can now be shown without shame.

Every word she believes. What Tom says is holy writ. Tom is her hero, her lover—he will some day occupy a dearer relation to Meta—that of husband.

When he has fully explained his plans she is confused; a rosy blush steals over her exposed neck; Tom devours it with his eyes.

"What you say about leaving Berlin I agree to; I

myself have suspected Linda; little things have warned me to beware, though I did not think she would betray to death one whom she professes to love. Yes, I will go with you and your brave friend in the balloon; I will trust my life in your company far above the earth—we will fly to our dear France, and leave this country of the vandals behind. But to be married at the first French town we enter, oh, Monsieur Tom, it is impossible."

"Why impossible?" he demands, with a lover's authority.

"My trousseau—my gowns——"

"Hang the gowns! a plague on the trousseau! it is your own sweet self I want. There is no other way out of it, my darling. Make up your mind, and promise me," he says, holding her hands, and glancing round to make sure they are alone.

"I suppose—I—must—submit," she whispers, in the shelter of his arms; and Tom—well, Tom takes what he has longed to take, and which is the perquisite of an accepted lover.

CHAPTER XXX.

"ALL IS NOW STAKED ON A WOMAN'S WHIM."

Although he has proven such a bold wooer Captain Tom does not lose his senses. He loves this girl with all his heart and soul, but his practical reason tells him this is no time for indulging in the sweet but foolish dream of sentiment; at the proper occasion he will prove himself everything that a girl's heart can desire in this line, but now the danger surrounding them is too great. He must save Meta now that he has won her.

Their absence may have been noticed—Linda has sharp eyes, and on this occasion she will not allow herself to sleep.

"We must go in," says the American; "I will watch until the opportunity is favorable, and then give you the signal. When you see me raise my handkerchief, join me or reach the door. The way will be clear, and once outside the carriage awaits us."

She hears, and dwells upon his words with the enthusiasm of love. Once more Tom gravely kisses the girl, who has promised to be his wife when they reach France. Then he allows her to leave him. A minute later he, too, passes beyond the curtains, and once more looks over the scene in the dancing hall.

While the mad music sounds sweetest melodies, busy brains in the Coliseum are plotting and scheming, and each awaits the coming of a certain hour when the signal shall be given.

Captain Tom looks for Linda, to find her dancing with a giant in mask. Where has he seen that splendidly proportioned form? If it did not seem ridiculous, Tom would say this must be the brave Uhlan captain, Johann Strauss. Is it possible? He shows his love for Linda in the manner he fiercely presses her to him. Tom ponders. If this be Johann Strauss, how comes it that he is found here—he an honored officer who bravely risked his life for his country before Paris? Has he, too, joined the secret liberty bund because Linda belongs to it?

This question Captain Tom decides in the negative. Then how explain Johann's presence, if the tall and broad shouldered man is he? It can only be done upon the supposition that there are those

present who do not belong here—that Marborg has utilized the masked ball at the Coliseum to entrap his foes. Tom shudders to contemplate the result when that trap springs shut. He trembles for the safety of the man he calls friend. Can he warn Carl? What would it avail? If there is any truth in his suspicions, the worst has already come. No one will be allowed to leave the building.

This thought brings home his own troubles. Suppose he and Meta attempt to go out—they may be halted and captured by the secret police with which the Coliseum will be surrounded, if Marborg means to bag his game. How can he avoid this catastrophe?

If ever Captain Tom badgers his brain to get at an idea he does now. All the while he uses his eyes to advantage.

Carl has not intrusted him with the whole plot, but he knows enough to surmise the rest. Unless he is mistaken, it is the intention of these desperate conspirators to issue forth at a certain hour, perhaps midnight, and perform the work which has become a sacred duty, for which they are ready to sacrifice their lives if fate so decrees, for as Carl has said, "This night Germany is free."

He can imagine the extent of the great plot. At this very hour, perhaps, assassin hands are at the throats of those in the field—Wilhelm, Frederick, Bismarck, and Von Moltke. Tom shakes himself. Can he really be awake, and such a dreadful thing going on? Why should he not have warned those in danger of death? Is it too late now? He remembers what he has heard about the broken wire. This causes him to groan again and mutter, "Useless—useless."

Then he makes up his mind, like a sensible man, that all this is none of his business, and if he is wise he will pay attention to the private matter which concerns his own fortunes and those of the girl he loves.

His one hope is to get out of this rat-trap before the door closes and all inside are doomed. What worries him is the very strong possibility that the door has already closed, and egress cut off forever.

His solemn meditations are interrupted even before he has more than half decided upon his plan of action. Standing beside a pillar, away from the mad dancers, Captain Tom all of a sudden feels a tap on the arm as though a lady's fan has touched him.

He looks around. There is a delicate aroma of violets in the air, which reminds him that this has always been Linda's favorite perfume.

"Good-evening, Monsieur Tom!" breathes a voice.

"Mademoiselle Linda!" he ejaculates.

She puts a warning finger on her lips, which the half mask allows.

"I am amazed—shocked! I did not dream of such a thing as this. What do you here, Monsieur Tom?"

Her voice betrays the fact that she is agitated. Until one minute since this woman has not dreamed that the man she loves is present. Now she awakens to the horror of the situation—that in dragging down the conspirators against the government she will probably doom him to the same fate that they share.

The American's mind is on the alert. He seizes an idea as quick as a flash. Talk of a drowning man clutching a straw; Captain Tom's manner just at present would indicate that he was sinking in a

thousand feet of water, being dragged down, in fact.

And what is this sudden idea that flashes through his mind?

This wonderful woman has power to save Meta and himself—she is able to influence the Count Marborg, if he is present. Will she do this? Certainly not if he betray the truth; Meta is her rival, and sooner than see her fly with Tom she would see them both struck down at her feet.

Captain Tom realizes this fact—there is a danger line over which he must not go. To breathe Meta's name even will ruin all. Thank Heaven she does not dream that they have been together—that is evident.

All is fair in love and war. This beautiful woman's passion for him has ere now been the loadstone that came near dragging him down to death—what is to hinder him making it the ladder with which he shall climb out of this sea of despond?

He decides that the exigency is so great that he cannot wait upon trifles. Two lives, his own and Meta's, depend upon his success.

At such a time as this the human mind is capable of flashing over such an amount of ground that what would take pages to describe is really but the work of a few seconds.

He sees the lone chance and clings to it with the desperation of despair. She held the winning hand when they came together in Paris, and now Tom's turn has come.

"I am here to see the sights—what else? I have been a great admirer of anything that is odd—*bizarre*, you call it. Surely, this calls for admiration; some day I shall paint the scene, and you shall see it."

He speaks calmly, just as though it is an Italian sunset which he has reference to. She observes him eagerly.

"Strange, incomprehensible man, are you not aware of the fact that in coming here you have put your life in peril?" she asks, coldly, for the situation worries her.

He makes a gesture of contempt.

"Danger and Captain Tom have supped together many a time. We are old friends. I heard you would be here—hence I came."

"You deceive me—I do not believe," she cries, and yet her very actions declare otherwise.

How we hug delusions to our heart when we want to see things that way.

"Pardon, mademoiselle, what else would bring me here but a strong attraction? I know the risk I run. These are conspirators against the government; they plot what is called treason——"

"Not all," she murmurs.

"You are right. Some are here in the place of those kept away. For instance Johann Strauss."

"You know him?" startled.

"I should say so. Nor is he alone. Others are present. I could even give a good guess that one of yonder men in mask is the deadly foe of your order, Count Marborg."

"Heavens! you confuse me!"

"There is no need of surprise. You knew all these things before. You have great influence with the count. At your entreaty he would spare me."

She starts and shakes her head.

"When the hour comes all who are here must share the same fate. I know not how to save you. Even he could not spare you then."

"What's the matter with my flitting now?"

"Eh? I do not understand, monsieur."

He must strike while the iron is hot.

"Why shouldn't I get away before that fatal hour comes around? I have nothing to do with this business here. Let those who do look after it, not I."

"Ah! monsieur is brave, and ready to meet difficulties; but it is impossible, simply impossible," and she wrings her hands in despair.

"Hark, mademoiselle. I have no desire to die. Let us look this matter in the face."

"With pleasure."

"You are in high feather with the chief of the secret service; he commands in this affair. All you have to do is to seek him out and secure the paper that will save me. With such a passport I can go through the lines."

She seems puzzled.

"But perhaps I cannot find the man you ask for."

"He is here—you know it."

This is put at a venture, but when she does not deny the fact he knows he has made a ten-strike. Yes, the count is on hand.

"Well, what next, Monsieur Tom?" she asks, in a quiet and subdued voice.

The game is becoming deeper all the while.

"What is to hinder your getting me a pass that will allow of my departure?"

She turns upon him eagerly.

"Can it be done?"

"Certainly. Your professional instincts ought to tell you so. The count is here, and will deny you nothing in the line of reason."

"To-morrow it will be too late," she muses.

"Monsieur Tom, you must leave this place."

"Exactly. Will you do what I have asked?"

"I pledge you my word; the paper shall be in your hand in ten minutes. You shall owe your life to Linda Dubois. Perhaps you will think more kindly of her."

"I shall adore her," he exclaims, for all is now staked on a woman's whim—that most uncertain of all things earthly.

"*Mon Dieu!* if I could believe it. Remain here, Monsieur Tom. Ten miuntes, I said; let us rather say eight. Then I will come again, and give you the paper that takes you safely out of this fated house."

She turns to move off.

Captain Tom has no idea of allowing it yet, since his work is but half done.

"Mademoiselle, listen," he says, gently but firmly taking her arm.

She does not break away; her heart has gone out to this man, and Linda Dubois would deem it happiness should his hand detain her forever; she so proud and cold with other men, melts at the sound of his voice.

"You do not change your mind, and decline to leave here; you have given me your word; I refuse to return it. Tell me, you are not so mad, so reckless as that?"

"You forget that I have a friend here."

She starts.

"It would be acting the part of a coward for me to desert that friend."

Linda shakes her head.

"You would ask for a double pass; it is beyond my power; it is too much."

"Very well. I shall remain and share his fate.

No one will ever say that Captain Tom deserted one who trusted him."

"No, no, monsieur, say not so. You are innocent; why should you suffer?"

"No more innocent than this other. If you can save one you can save both, adorable Linda," he says, as coolly as though bargaining for a horse instead of human lives.

She bites her finger nails—deeply she is thinking. This man must be saved, for now she has hopes that he may love her. Once Meta is gone from his horizon, he must be attracted by her beauty and her love for him.

Thus spurred on to desperate thought, she speedily sees light ahead.

"You say, Monsieur Tom, this friend is no deeper in this plot than you—that he has not taken that dreadful oath," with a shudder at the sudden conviction which comes to her of her own duplicity.

"Not even as guilty as myself—I swear it. We are both here through curiosity and the designs of others. If Count Marborg," whispering the hated name in her ear, "gives you a pass for two, he will lose none of those whom he sets his trap to insnare. You believe me?"

"Yes, I do believe you. He can do it; he shall do it. Why not? It is only one more, and there will be plenty left; plenty to glut his vengeance and make him secure in the favor of the king. Monsieur Tom, I will do my best to save you. It is at great risk. You do not know another woman who would dare this much for your sake."

Whatever Tom believes, he does not care to dispute this fact with her, since upon her faith in his growing affection toward herself rests the founda-

tion of his success. He can be pardoned under these circumstances, therefore, if he acts a part and draws the vail further across her vision.

"Not one, fair Linda, not one. Soldier of fortune that I am, I shall deserve death if I ever forget such kindness, such charity. We have been foes in war, but honorable foes. Now, when peace settles upon the land, our respect may draw us nearer to one another. Lovely Linda, I kiss your hand; I am your slave."

She is completely won; a glamour comes over her eyes, thrown by Cupid's hand. Almost intoxicated with joy she turns away.

"I will see him; I will demand the paper; he cannot refuse me. Then you must fly, Captain Tom, when I secure the pass."

"For myself and a friend," says the soldier, distinctly, yet calmly, as though he would impress the exact words on her mind.

CHAPTER XXXI.

SIXTY-TWO MINUTES LEFT.

Again he is alone, for Linda has gone to seek the chief of the secret police. Captain Tom knows upon what a slender thread he builds his fortunes, but it is wonderful with what tenacity he holds on to this support. It is his way, for the man has always declared there was something of the bull-dog in his composition.

Near him the music crashes and the dance of death goes on. He watches as in a dream. Can this be Berlin, and are these living figures moving before him? Then his suspicion, it seems, was correct, and Count Marborg is present at the affair.

What consternation would come upon the student and his fellow-conspirators could they suddenly realize the truth—that this hated tiger is among them. It would warn them that already their fate is sealed, since without doubt the Coliseum is surrounded by the military.

Poor Carl.

Is there no way to save him? The American has never yet been known to desert a friend when their fortunes were united. What can he do? Would it be right for him to remain and share Carl's fate?

He decides against this, but it is the thought of Meta that weighs in the balance more than anything else; he is horrified at the bare idea of the sweet girl who has promised to become his wife being caught in this trap of the Watch-Dog, and immured for life in some dismal German fortress.

No matter about himself, he must save her. This does not prevent him from warning Carl. These men are political plotters, which of course he is not, and hence he does not think it at all necessary that he should share their fate.

He glances around, wondering if he can distinguish Carl in the midst of the throng. At this very moment some one touches him.

"Mynherr Tom!" breathes a voice.

The traveler is thrilled—it is Carl.

"I was looking for you," he cries, as he seizes the hand of his student friend.

"And I for you, my poor fellow. I warned you against coming here. Now it is too late," says Carl, in an exceedingly mournful voice.

"What! you know? It was to impart this secret that I was seeking you!" exclaims Tom.

"Yes, I have learned that the worst has come.

That woman fiend has betrayed us. Marborg and his detestable minions are here—Heaven alone knows in what numbers, since I dare not trust myself to speak to more than one or two. Besides, the soldiers surround the house, four deep. They cannot be seen from the windows, but I have learned they are there."

Tom squeezes the hand of this brave, philosophical friend, who will never again see the bright world after this night.

"What will you do, comrade?" he asks, with deep solicitude.

Carl makes an expressive movement of his shoulders; it signifies hopelessness.

'"What can we do, Mynherr Tom. Whichever way we turn we are in the trap. Already perhaps half of our number are prisoners—his men are here in their stead. It matters little whether we rush out or remain, our fate is sealed. Thank Heaven, I am armed. At the last moment I may have a chance to rid Berlin of that man. If I can do that, then let my fate come upon me. I shall feel that Heaven frowns upon what we believed a sacred duty."

How sad his tone; it seems as though his brave spirit were already being wafted across the border of the dark river.

"One thing touches my heart. It is that you must share our doom, you who have had no part in our plotting. Would to Heaven it were otherwise, my brave friend."

"Carl, if I were to tell you that I have found a gleam of hope—a chance to save Meta, and leave this place with her, what would you say? Would it seem as though I deserted you in your hour of need? That has never been said of Captain Tom."

"No, no. If you have the chance, go by all means. Lose no time, but depart. It is none of your business—you don't belong to the liberty qund. Go, my friend, and if through the kindness of Heaven you live to return to your happy land beyond the sea, do not forget Carl Reuter, who fell in the mad effort to bring liberty to the Fatherland."

Captain Tom thinks to tell him what his hope is—indeed, he has even opened his lips with that purpose in view, when he sees Linda hastening across the dancing floor, and heading for the spot where his late interview with her took place.

So with one last squeeze of the hand he leaves Carl, and makes for the rendezvous.

Linda is already there, looking around her in evident anxiety. She welcomes him, but Tom is immediately pierced by the conviction that there is disappointment in her manner. Can she have failed? The thought seems to freeze the very blood in his veins.

"I missed you; I feared you had gone to try and escape yourself. *Mon Dieu!* it would mean death to you."

"Have you—succeeded?"

He controls his voice in a remarkable manner, considering what he has at stake.

"I fear—badly, monsieur," she replies.

Again that cold hand seems to grasp his heart and crush it. Then she has failed. Well, it only means that he must remain and meet his fate like a man. He stifles a groan; it is not of himself he is thinking, but of the fair girl he loves; he shivers at her doom, she so young, so charming.

Then he notices something; Linda is nervously

fingering a piece of paper. When his eye falls upon this he has a sudden revival of hope.

"Did he refuse you, mademoiselle—was he so ungallant to a lady?" he says.

"Not exactly that, but he limited the time; I begged and entreated him to extend it, but he was of stone. How I hate that cold monster," she pants.

Ah! the blood surges through his veins again. Limited the time! What cares Captain Tom for that, since all he wants is to get outside the walls of the detestable Coliseum, and have, say, half an hour left.

"Let me see the paper; perhaps I can figure out some hope from it," he says, quietly.

She releases it to him without a murmur, and watches while he devours it with his eyes.

In German he reads:

"This document will pass the bearer and one friend from the Coliseum, and anywhere inside the walls of Berlin. Not good after midnight.

"(Signed) MARBORG."

Captain Tom deliberately takes out his watch and notes the time. It is exactly two minutes of eleven.

The count's pass is good for sixty-two minutes. He has won! That is double the time he needs, but he will not spoil the whole affair by any undue haste.

"You do not seem greatly troubled," says Linda, who has watched to see how he takes it.

"This is as good as I expected," he replies.

"But do you not see, monsieur, he says 'inside the walls of Berlin.' You cannot escape. It is only delaying your fate. You save yourself from death as a conspirator to meet the same doom as a spy, for just as surely as you are inside the walls of Berlin

when the sun rises to-morrow, Count Marborg will have you."

"Perhaps," returns Tom, coolly.

His indifference arouses Linda.

"Aha! you have conceived a plan!—that wonderful mind which defeated all my schemes in Paris—what is it you think of now?"

"I see a gleam of hope, fair Linda—at least it seems promising to me."

"Share it!" she exclaims, "do you not see that I am as anxious as yourself? Speak and tell me, my dear Tom."

The American has conceived an idea by means of which he believes Linda can at least have all her suspicions lulled. It is important that she should be kept his friend. True, he has Marborg's pass, which is bound to be honored, but if a jealous woman follow at his heels his escape will be foiled.

Before replying he puts the precious paper into his vest-pocket, and glances around to see whether any one is near.

"Mademoiselle, you care for my life—I know it. Listen to me. If, when you return alone to your *etage* this night, you should find Captain Tom crouching by the door, would you give him shelter and hide him until some means came up whereby he could leave Berlin?"

This time it is not Eve that tempts. Linda quivers in every muscle of her lithe form; she is evidently assured that Captain Tom, after all, will belong to her.

"I agree, on one condition," she whispers.

"Name it."

The mask hides her blushes mercifully, else perhaps she would not dare to speak.

"That if I conceal you from your foes, when you go from Berlin, I accompany you—as—your—wife, Captain Tom."

He instantly puts out his hand and clasps that of the fair Alsatian.

"It is a bargain, Linda, and not such a terrible doom for a man, either. At any rate, I have no complaint to make," he says, glibly.

"I shall look for you."

"Yes, adorable one"—Tom has been among the Turks and learned their ways.

"And if I do not see you I shall gently call out 'Captain Tom—*mon cher.*' "

"And rest assured that if I am within a mile of that place, I shall rush to you as the needle does to the magnet. But, lovely Linda, the hour grows late. I must find my friend and leave this place."

He wishes to break away, since this scene is not at all to his liking.

"Friend? I forgot; you will not bring your friend to my *etage?*" she exclaims.

"Heaven forbid!" says Tom, and Linda never suspects what he really means by this.

She is reassured by his manner, and reaches out her hand in saying good-by. Tom, with the gallantry of a Frenchman, kisses it.

Then they part—to meet no more, the adventurous soldier of fortune hopes.

His next move is rather difficult. It is to wait until Lidna is out of sight, and then attract the attention of Meta. She will come to him on signal; when he raises the handkerchief his love will be at his side, but Linda's jealous eyes must not look upon the sight.

This reminds him; he wonders whether Meta

could have seen the recent interview. As she was to watch him pretty closely in order to catch his signal, the chances are much that way. What will she think of his actions? He knows her trust is as strong as her love. Surely she will realize that——

Captain Tom's reflections are interrupted, for once again he is tapped on the shoulder, and turning sees a tall masked man whose hands are covered with white cotton gloves.

"Monsieur, a few words with you. Kindly step into this side room."

That voice—it belongs to no one but Count Marborg.

Captain Tom grits his teeth. What new complication arises now, and when nearly one-third of his hour of grace has flown?

CHAPTER XXXII.

OUT OF THE TRAP.

With as unruffled a manner as only a man of his peculiar composition can present, Captain Tom follows the terrible Watch-Dog of Berlin beyond the curtains. The same apartment which witnessed his happiness not more than half an hour before, may now be the scene of his undoing.

He finds the other awaiting him.

Anxious to know the worst, Tom recklessly plunges headlong into the affair.

"You are Count Marborg?" he says.

"*Mon Dieu!* he knows me, this wonderful man, this soldier of fortune," sneers the other.

"Yes. Why do you ask me in here?"

"Listen. I will tell you, my friend. You gave me

a ride to-day; I shall return the favor to-morrow, but you may not fancy my equipage."

Under these words is that same detestable sneer. Tom feels as though an icy breeze from Siberia has swept down upon him, but he meets this tracker of men with a front as bold as his own. He will need every bit of nerve he owns ere the game is won.

The other continues in his slow way, each word rendered significant by the emphasis he puts upon it.

"When last we met, Captain Tom, the wire between Paris and Berlin was broken. That wire has now been repaired."

"Ah! and how does that concern me?"

"Well, I have been making a few inquiries of our leaders around Paris. Here is a dispatch I received just before coming here."

He places a piece of paper in the hands of the American, who coolly reads aloud:

"If you capture Captain Tom, have him shot at sunrise as a spy. He has played the devil with our work around Paris.

"(Signed.) VON MOLTKE, Field Marshal."

"That sounds rather rough," remarks Tom, whose thoughts are rapidly chasing each other. He wonders if this man has enough honor about him to keep his word, once given.

"It is—on you, mynherr. If you escape the doom of these conspirators, it is to meet the fate of a spy. Yes, it is hard on you."

"But I came to Berlin on an errand of mercy—to save an innocent life."

The German Watch-Dog grunts.

"Perhaps it does you credit, mynherr, but in so doing you lose your own. We do not ask why you

are here. When you are found in Berlin your fate is sealed."

"Perhaps," mutters Tom.

"What is that?" demands the count.

"I say it is hard lines. But what is your object in seeking me now?" for this puzzles him. He does not know whether it is to gloat over an intended victim or from some other reason that the count has picked him out.

"When the hour of twelve comes there may be a desperate scene here. I did not know but what you might like to go to headquarters with me and deliver yourself up."

"Bah! what good would that do, if I am to die as a spy at daybreak?"

"You will remain and share their fate?"

"Neither one nor the other."

The Watch-Dog surveys him curiously through the two eye-holes in his mask.

"Count Marborg, you have the reputation of being a man of your word."

"Certainly," grins the other, flattered.

"If you were to say to me, 'you may go in peace,' I should not be interfered with."

"Most truly, my noble captain, but I am not saying that just now, am I?"

"You have granted me the privilege of leaving this place."

"I? You dream! Impossible!"

Now comes the crucial test. Captain Tom flashes the paper before his face.

"Do you see that? is not that your signature?"

"That is the truth—I remember now; it was for you Linda pleaded. Ah! my eyes are open."

"I am at liberty to walk out of here?"

"Granted, mynherr."

"To pass your lines of soldiers?"

"Exactly so. But you forget, my friend. That pass is only good within the walls of Berlin."

"Yes."

"It is now just twenty-nine minutes of twelve. At that hour that paper will be no longer good. You could hardly reach the gates by that time. Even if you did, you could not pass. Ah! my brave captain, you are caged!"

"I will take my chances if ever I reach the gates," mutters Tom, half-aloud.

"Do not deceive yourself, mynherr. To-morrow every house in Berlin will be searched—even the *etage* of Mademoiselle Linda not excepted, nor the boat of your friend on the Spree. I have heard, too, of that Irish firebrand—he will share your fate. It is a pity—you are a bold man. My superiors cannot conceive how you came this long distance undetected."

"Your emissaries should watch the trains more carefully," mutters Tom, seeking to direct suspicion away from the truth.

Time presses.

Captain Tom is wild to be off, for he realizes that even now he may meet delay and be stopped upon the streets of Berlin by the patrol; the limit of his pass may be reached ere he arrives at his destination.

"Pardon me, count, but I must leave you. If I am captured you will understand that Captain Tom has faced death before, and he will not murmur now. Good-night, my dear count; we may meet again."

He presses the cold hand of Marborg, and passes out among the dancers.

The count nods his head and chuckles.

"One brave man, that Captain Tom, but what matters it? Others equally as brave have played and lost with Marborg in the game. They set up the pins, I knock them down. It is difficult to outwit the Watch-Dog of Berlin. I will now shut the door of the trap."

He parts the curtains, catches the eye of a man, and makes a signal. In a moment the other is at his side. It is Johann Strauss.

"Captain, you know the telegraph office, three doors down the street?" says the count.

"Certainly," replies the Uhlan officer.

"Proceed there at once, my dear captain, and send a message signed with my name to the guard of every city gate: 'Allow no one to pass out until further orders?' "

"It is done, count," and with a military salute the soldier withdraws.

Meanwhile, what of Tom? As soon as he mingles with the dancers his eye hunts for the form of his love. Minutes, precious minutes, are passing. At last he sees her, and springs to her side.

"Come, it is time," he says.

She gives a low cry of pleasure, and eagerly puts her hand within his arm. Her life is in his hands now, and she trusts him.

For one thing Captain Tom is thankful. Linda does not see. She believes he has gone long ago, and probably imagines him crouching near the door of her *etage* awaiting his signal. Not that even Linda could restrain him now, but he does not fancy having a revengeful woman crying after him in the

street, endeavoring to hold him back because she has discovered that the companion of his flight is Meta, her hated rival in love and war.

Now they pass beyond the portals of the Coliseum, and the stars shine above. The breeze is still from the north-west, thank Heaven!

"Halt!"

It is a soldier who stands before them. Captain Tom has his pass ready. The carriage they would make use of is close at hand, the driver in his place, having already seen them.

"Examine this, officer," thrusting the paper into the hands of the other.

There is light enough for him to read, and he glances over the pass.

"It is good until twelve." Then he looks at a huge silver time-piece. "You have just seventeen minutes left, mynherr."

"Hand me the pass, please."

"Who gave you this?"

"Count Marborg himself, within there."

"I suppose it is all right; you can go on." To himself he says: "What does it matter, since it will not take them beyond the gates?"

"Enter, my own," and Captain Tom with his muscular arms lifts Meta into the drosky.

To the driver he whispers:

"The New Stadt—where you took me before, and spare not your horses. Twenty thalers extra, man, if you reach that house before twelve."

They are off, the vehicle dashing madly down the street. Captain Tom's heart is light, for he feels that he has won a hard-fought battle.

If nothing breaks down, they will be safe. He

presses his sweetheart, soon to be his own dear wife, close against his side.

"Courage," he whispers.

"I fear not, my Tom, since I am with you. All will be well," she replies.

What charming confidence. No wonder his heart swells with pride to think she loves him, and believes him invincible. Such faith is enough to spur even an ordinary man on to heroic deeds, and Captain Tom is hardly that.

The mad rush of the vehicle attracts the attention of some soldiers; they order a halt. Once more the pass is examined and commented on. They dare not refuse to honor it, but Tom groans—at least two precious minutes have been lost.

Now they near their destination. Tom has his watch out, and takes advantage of their passing a street-lamp to look at its face.

Five minutes of twelve.

They will be in time, thank Heaven!

The drosky draws up in front of the inventor's house, Tom places all he has promised in the hand of the driver, and then almost drags Meta to the door, carrying the basket on his other arm.

Another vehicle dashes up, and from it springs the tall figure of Captain Strauss.

"I am sent to arrest you; I have followed you from the Coliseum, at his orders, Captain Tom," says the Uhlan giant.

The American holds the pass under his nose.

"Read that, Johann. Mark you, it says until twelve. Your watch, man. Ah! you see, I have still four minutes' grace. Remain here, and when the clock strikes you can arrest me."

With this he slams the door shut in the face of the

astounded Uhlan, whose slow wits can hardly grasp the situation. Two minutes later Captain Tom helps Meta into the basket of the tugging balloon, while Mickey looks after the provender. Then comes a grasp of the hand, a "Heaven bless you, professor," and the signal is given for cutting the ropes.

The bells strike the midnight hour—it is now turned morning. There comes a strange rushing noise to the ears of the Uhlan outside, he sees a great body between himself and the star-studded heavens, and from above floats the voice of Captain Tom:

"*Bon jour*, Johann Strauss, my compliments to Count Marborg."

The balloon shoots up into the air and sails along in the direction of France. Captain Tom and his *compagnons de voyage* fancy they hear a faint tumult in Berlin, but the city is soon left far behind, and they sweep on toward the land of the lily, where it will be the first loving duty of he brave soldier of fortune, the American Crœsus, to make Meta Mrs. Captain Tom.

[THE END.]

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