

The Contrabandist; OR One Life's Secret!

A
TRUE
STORY
OF
THE
SOUTH
OF
FRANCE

CHAPTER XV.

It was night. Helen Montauban had entered her apartment, and securing the door, gave way to the passionate feelings born of a dire suspicion, which had been rankling in her breast for hours. The interview between her father and Rose in the morning, the hint at a confession, the thousand slight yet convincing tokens of feeling witnessed that afternoon and evening in her close yet silent and stealthy watch over actions and words, something peculiar in the manner of the marquis, and the occasional gay yet mysterious jests of the Count de Clairville—all combined to awaken within her the bitterest and most tormenting distrust and suspicion.

"I will know—I will know!" she said to herself. A little while she waited, till she was able to assume a manner of perfect composure, and then, lifting an alabaster lamp from the toilet, she crossed the gallery and entered the apartment opposite.

Rose had dismissed her maid and was brushing out her hair, whose rich folds, falling around her light shape, almost concealed it with their shining veil. She turned from the mirror as Mademoiselle Montauban entered, and a lovely smile brightened over her sweet face.

"Ah, I am so glad you have come, Helen!" she said, running to her and throwing those fair, snowy arms about her in an innocent, loving and happy embrace.

And Helen Montauban, bending her beautiful head, calmly and with seeming kindness and affection, kissed Rose on her forehead. The girl shuddered.

"How cold you are, Helen! Are you ill? Your lips are like ice!"

"No, I am not ill, dear child, and I think it must be because you are so warm, so excited, so happy, that you imagine me to be cold. I have come to sit with you a little while before I retire."

"You were kind to come. I wanted to see you; I was waiting for you." She sat down by the side of Mademoiselle Montauban and put her arms about her again.

"Well, you wished to see me—is that all?" asked Helen, attempting something like playfulness in her manner.

"I wished to—tell you something, and now I have not the courage." Rose hid her face on her companion's breast again. "Helen, it was about—Louis."

Those sweet eyes were hidden; it was well; they could not see the stony fierceness of that wild, white face above, that grew wilder and whiter as the girlish, timid confession was made.

Helen Montauban, crushing with calm and terrible force the thousand mad emotions in her breast, that struggled to have way, compelled herself to utter, softly:

"Go on, Rose; I am interested—I am listening; go on!"

And Rose told her all—from beginning to end, with her fair head lying on that stormy heart, whose gathering fires fed with a fearful sustenance. Helen Montauban listened. She heard all this—every word, every syllable of this confession, and each word, each syllable, struck her with a deadly blow. The deliberate stab of the midnight murderer tells with no deeper power. Yet she listened, and stirred not; she spoke sometimes, made some remark or comment, and then listened again. There was a kind of savage agony within, that dwelt upon that simple love story in its every detail, and comprehended it with sharp and greedy eagerness; but at the close, all memory of those details departed. All that was left of that story, gathered into three words—three single words, that Rose, with bashful joy, whispered as she finished: "He loves me—Louis loves me!"

And Helen Montauban said to herself, "He loves another; he does not love me!"

The words were branded into her heart; they were written there in characters of fire; they were ineffaceable.

"You are not going yet? do not go yet, dear Helen!" murmured Rose. "Stay with me a little longer."

Her soft eyes, raised so tenderly, so pleadingly, to that face, shone with a divine beauty. The gold-tinted tresses, flowing about her graceful head, were like the glory that surrounds the brow of a saint. Thus seemed this young girl, as she stood before the dark, stately Helen, whose proud face was calm and quiet, whose splendid eyes shot forth no shaft of the smothered fire within.

But Helen Montauban uttered some gentle words and turned away. She bade Rose a pleasant good night before she went out, and then, taking her by the hand, bent down once more and kissed her. With that kiss she swore hatred—undying, eternal; revenge, speedy and sure, to the one who had robbed her of his love. And Rose sought her pillow to dream such dreams as youth and joy may bring, even while hate and revenge, with sleepless eyes, watched over her.

Helen Montauban secured herself in the privacy and stillness of her chamber, and putting her lamp on her own dressing table, threw herself upon the couch, not to sleep. The spirit of rest fled from those eyes, that gloomed upon vacancy. There was no peace for that heart, beating with hard, fierce, heavy throbs beneath its silken vesture. Still those words burned upon it their scorching characters—"he loves another!"

She had sworn revenge. The dream of her whole life had been broken now. It was as if a single thread of shining silver had run its glittering line through

her life-woof, and those slender fingers, so lately pressed upon her own, had ruthlessly snapped it asunder. Rose might be innocent of intention to wrong her—nay, she knew her to be so. And yet she hated her—hated the beautiful face, the sweet voice, that had won him to love them. She shuddered as she seemed to feel once again the pressure of that young head upon her bosom. It oppressed—suffocated her; she could not breathe. The very air of the room was stifling. She flung open a casement with trembling hands and leaned far out to drink the cool and dewy air of the dark midnight.

This was all she thought of—that vengeance must be had. How it was to work, or when, was unknown. Its very shape was yet undefined; but some shape or other it must take soon. At present a vague idea only floated before her. It was sweet, in her bitterness of soul, to contemplate it. She would lay her plan carefully. It should be matured to the rarest perfection, before the period for action came, that there might be no failure. She said to herself, "I will never see Rose Lamonte the bride of Louis!"

It was known among the guests at the chateau the next morning that Rose and Louis were betrothed, and something was whispered, too, concerning the romance attached to the affair. The good Countess de Clairville had kissed and congratulated the young girl to her heart's content. Everywhere there were smiles; everywhere there were happy hearts; everywhere there were happy hearts, save in one bosom.

The young count had taken his cousin Helen out upon the terrace; he had told her he wished to talk with her alone, and she knew well that which she was to hear. To Helen, Louis had been wont to give his confidence; it was pleasant to do so; and now, that he had so much to confide, he turned to her still.

Helen Montauban listened quietly to all, and with an interest scarcely feigned. Was it not the story of a ruined hope as well as of a rival's happiness? Every word struck deep and keenly; she felt them but too well; yet she hid her agony and listened and sympathized and congratulated till she wondered at her own self-command. And Louis, in the honest sincerity of his own heart, fully trusted in and gratefully credited those false, deceitful, gently uttered assurances. Helen Montauban had force of will sufficient to make her an admirable actress.

Lord Egerton was much more gay and light-hearted than he had seemed for some time past. For always, despite himself, uneasy and jealous because of what, with jaundiced sight, had seemed to him to be the preference of Louis for Helen, he had now experienced a sudden and most welcome sense of freedom from apprehension that he was relieved of his former fears. True, Mademoiselle Montauban treated him with no more favor than formerly; but he did not cease to hope.

CHAPTER XVI.

There was a talk of the approaching wedding day. The impatience of Louis had urged its being fixed at an early period. He asserted that a delay of three months would be quite sufficient. His gay and vivacious yet earnest arguments were half accepted. The marquis was inclined to favor them, though it was evaded with a sore struggle. It was not until now that he had realized the full depth of his affection for Rose. She had become very dear to him. Her gentleness and innocence and goodness of heart, her childlike loveliness, and more than all, her likeness to one beloved in by-gone years, endeared her to the heart of this second father. He shrunk from speaking of the parting, though he could not deny to Louis the boon so earnestly sought.

It could be seen, by a close observer, that now, while this discussion was going on, and one and another laying plans touching the event, Rose herself said little, merely giving assent to the various propositions laid before her, and seeming to take but a passive part in the general action. There was, too, at times, a certain gravity, which might as well have been called actual sadness, in her demeanor, and which could not well be accounted for. Gradually it became so evident that it occasioned the deepest uneasiness in the breast of Louis. He endeavored to draw from her the cause of it. She seemed disinclined to acquaint him with the origin of this unusual mood.

"You are ill, dear Rose?" he asked, with a lover's solicitude.

"I am not ill, Louis; indeed, you alarm yourself unnecessarily."

"Then you are unhappy?"

"I am not exactly unhappy, either."

One month of the three had passed away.

"There are but two months now, Rose," said the happy young man.

And Rose, even as she received the kiss her lover gave so fondly, turned away to sigh. He observed it with increased uneasiness.

"My dear uncle," he said to the marquis, "what can ail Rose? I am sure she is not quite happy, though she refuses to admit it."

The marquis did not observe the downcast mood of the young girl for the first time now. He had watched it since its commencement, and meditated seriously and with deep concern on the subject. At length one day he sent for her to come to him in the library.

"My dear child," he said, "I must know

the reason and the nature of this gloom which continually rests upon your spirits. It is, as you must be aware, a matter of some anxiety to me. You do not deny that, if not precisely unhappy, there is yet some wish to be granted—some desire to be fulfilled, which could restore to you your usual serenity?"

"I will not deny it, monsieur," she returned, quietly and sadly.

"And you will not tell me what it is—this wish? Dear Rose, this reserve pains me extremely. I am sure you would not wish to cause me a moment's disquiet, and yet you unconsciously give me the utmost apprehension. You confide neither in Helen nor Louis; then I entreat you to be, at least, frank with me. Is it anything which I can do to gratify you, my child?"

"Indeed, I scarcely think so," answered Rose; "I do not think any one here could bring me what I wish. It is—"

"Rose, I think I know what you wish. I have thought of it more than once—of the very subject, doubtless, upon which you are secretly dwelling at this moment. You have not seen your father in a long time. You are about to take a most important step, and you wish to see him, to tell him of all this. Is it not so?"

The tears quietly escaped from the young girl's downcast eyes.

"It is true, monsieur. I wished to see him. I could not forget him in my happiness—my poor father!"

"And it was very natural, dear Rose, that you should not. Neither did I forget him; but I hardly knew where he could be found."

"I knew that, monsieur," she rejoined, "and it was partly on that account that I have been silent all this while."

And the good marquis could easily comprehend the restraint that had also been instrumental in preventing her from giving utterance to the wish she had so long and sorrowfully cherished. Much as she loved them all, she had shrunk from reminding them, in their seeming forgetfulness, that while her future was occupying them continually, that her father, poor and homeless and forgotten, might be glad to clasp his only child once more in his arms and breathe a father's blessing over her.

They had not quite forgotten it, however; and now that her desire was made known, the marquis and Louis were equally anxious to seek for him. Though nothing absolute was known concerning his whereabouts, there was some reason for believing that he had gone to Lyons, and a faint hope of finding him there. Accordingly, the matter was taken into consideration.

It was about this time that the Count and Countess de Clairville, with Lord Egerton, had arranged to continue their route to Paris, and as they had been endeavoring to persuade their host and his family to accompany them and spend the time with them there until their return, before the union of Rose and Louis, it was decided to adopt the proposed plan and remain some days at Lyons on the way, in order, if possible, to hear something concerning Hugh Lamonte.

This course having been fixed upon, preparations were immediately commenced for the journey. The Countess de Clairville could not suppress her joy at this arrangement. Rose began to recover the gentle vivacity and animation natural to her; and Louis, charmed at observing the change, was the happiest of men.

And how was it with Helen Montauban? It was well known that she was pleased with this arrangement. She had expressed her satisfaction more than once in alluding to it, and took an active part in the preparations making for the occasion. But there was no one in all that party—not even Rose Lamonte herself, seeking tidings of her father—who took so deep an interest in the thoughts of this journey. For Helen Montauban had a purpose—the bare skeleton of a plan as yet—over which she had been brooding in secrecy and silence through many a day past. Her desire, her thirst for revenge, was fierce and unquenchable. Long had she been meditating upon the mode of its fulfillment; but her hands had been in a measure bound; the necessary facilities for action were difficult to be attained. Now, however, means of forwarding her wretched scheme were at hand; the approaching journey opened to her ways and means that she only too eagerly snatched at. With calm and unimpassioned deliberation which but assured a more terrible consummation of her hateful design, she meditated upon the new assistance afforded her now; she looked forward to the method to be adopted, and carefully made her calculations—carefully and coolly. She had no fear—no hesitation. Hers were strong passions—strong and fiery, and deep and deadly as well. Love and hate had equal violence when roused in her breast; the love was forgotten now; the hate was uppermost; it was meat and drink to her; it had turned her heart to steel. Compassion, tenderness, pity—all were banished. The fiends themselves could plot no more mercilessly than this woman, when vengeance had once become her object.

A smoldering fire lay in those proud, dark eyes, as she left the old chateau on the morning of the departure for Lyons. She leaned forward from the carriage window as they wound slowly along the road leading northward, and looked upon the dark pile that rose against the blue, serene air of the declining autumn.

"See," said Louis, gaily, "Helen is taking a sentimental farewell of home."

"Nay, cousin, I was thinking of our return," answered she.

"Then why be thinking already," said the marquis, "of our return? Indeed, I am half inclined, Helen, to believe that you really regret leaving the chateau."

"Monsieur," returned Mademoiselle Montauban, "this journey is, of all things in the world, one of those which I most desire."

She leaned back in the carriage and said no more. Gradually they entered upon the road skirting the forest, and then the chateau and its neighborhood was lost to view.

(To be continued.)

HAPPENINGS HERE IN OREGON

STATE WILL LOSE HEAVILY.

If Rejection of Claim to Swamp Land Is Affirmed.

Salem—The rejection of the claim of the state of Oregon to 55,000 acres of the swamp land in Klamath marsh will, if affirmed by the secretary of the interior, cut a big slice off the sum the state hoped to realize from the sale of this land. The state's claim was for 100,000 acres, and of this all but about 7,000 acres had been declared by the surveyor-general to be swamp land. The state's claim was based upon the swamp land grant of 1860. The Klamath Indian reservation was created in 1864 and the allotments to the Indians were made within the last ten years. The 55,000 acres probably comprises the best of the swamp lands and if the title of the Indians should be finally confirmed, the remaining 38,000 acres which the state would receive, would be rendered practically worthless.

Whether an appeal will be taken to the secretary of the interior has not been determined. General W. H. Odell was attorney for the state in the presentation of the state's claim to this land. He does not know the grounds upon which the decision of the assistant commissioner of the general land office was based, but is very firmly of the opinion that the state's right to the land is superior to that of the Indians. The value of the swamp lands on Klamath marsh has been estimated all the way from \$100,000 to \$1,000,000.

Begins Work on the Ditch.

Echo—The Butter creek irrigation company has begun active work on the construction of an irrigation ditch to be 20 miles long, beginning a short distance below Echo. Harry Rogers, an extensive cattle man and wheat grower who resides on Butter creek, was elected president of the company and will take personal charge of the work. The company has large tents for the housing of employees and teams. There are nearly 50 teams at work with nearly twice as many men. Water will make this land very valuable.

Logging Camps Close Down.

Astoria—The Pelton-Armstrong company closed down its logging camps on the Elokomin river, near Cathlamet, for the season. Benson has shut down nearly all his camps, but has one at Bunker Hill still in operation. Besides that one the only camps on the north shore of the Columbia river that are running are those of the Skamokawa logging company and the Saldren camp, on Grays river.

Re-Elected State Veterinary Surgeon.

Salem—Dr. William McLean, of Portland, has been re-elected state veterinary surgeon for a period of two years from July 1903. The power to fill this position rests with the Domestic Animal commission, composed of the governor, secretary of state and president of the state board of agriculture. The salary is \$1,500 per year and necessary expenses.

Snow Discourages Stockmen.

Heppner—The first general snowfall of the season in Morrow county occurred last Saturday, and the ground is covered to a depth of from one inch on the low lands to 30 inches on the foothills and mountains. The unusually early appearance of snow on frozen ground causes rather a depressed feeling among stockmen.

Reduction of Wages.

Eugene—The employes of the Booth-Kelly company have been notified of a new schedule of wages which will go into effect December 1. The schedule makes a reduction of 25 cents per day on all men receiving \$2 or less, and 50 cents per day on all receiving more than \$2 per day.

Baked Bananas.

Tear a narrow strip of peeling from one side of each banana. Lay the bananas, open side up, in a baking pan, cover closely and bake for half an hour, or until very tender, but not so tender as to break when handled. Peel and send to table and serve as a vegetable, or with hot cream sauce as a dessert.

Potato Soufflee (Chafing-Dish). Mix a pint of mashed potatoes with half a cup of thick cream and the whites of two eggs, beaten stiff. Put two tablespoonfuls of butter in the chafing dish, and when very hot put in the potatoes in large tablespoonfuls. When brown on one side, turn, brown the other, and serve immediately.

NECESSARY MONEY PUT UP.

Financial Troubles of Oregon Electric Company Are Over.

Baker City—The Oregon electric company, which has been in financial trouble, will resume operations at once. The Eastern capitalists who are back of the enterprise have put up the necessary cash to discharge all the debts and dismiss the attachments suits which have been filed by creditors. The money for this purpose has been received by Olmstead & Stayer, the corporation attorneys.

This company was organized by A. B. Frame, of Portland, who secured valuable water rights on Eagle creek. Considerable work was done last summer, but early in the fall there was trouble over financial matters, and Frame resigned as general manager. Since then creditors have attached the lumber, flumes and other property and all work ceased. Several hundred thousand feet of lumber had been delivered along the line of the flume and work on the power house was under way when the work ceased.

H. H. Andrews, one of the officers of the company, who represents the Eastern capitalists, is expected in a few days, when operations will be resumed.

Articles of Incorporation.

Salem—Articles of incorporation have been filed in the office of Secretary of State Dunbar as follows:

Oregon Traction company, Portland, \$1,000,000. The object of this corporation is to acquire rights of way and construct a railway from Portland to Hillsboro and Forest Grove.

Hotel Monopole, Incorporated, Jordan Valley, \$15,000.

Western Oregon Conference association of seventh day adventists, Salem, Or., \$10,000.

Brewer Drug company, Stayton, \$10,000.

Land Sells at \$120 per Acre.

Milton—The high value at which irrigated land of this district is held is shown by a deal just closed. Alfred B. Duff and John Hunter have sold to A. Fuller a 10 acre garden, located six miles north of here, for \$1,200. Mr. Fuller gets full use of the irrigation ditch which runs by the property, but only under the agreement that Mr. Fuller does his part in maintaining the ditch. Whenever a deal is made in this district it is practically the water which is sold, as the land is worthless without a proper supply of water.

Preparing Its Annual Report.

Salem—The state board of agriculture is in Salem, preparing its annual report to be submitted at the annual meeting which will be held December 15.

PORTLAND MARKETS.

Wheat—Walla Walla, 73c; bluestem, 78c; valley, 77@78c.

Barley—Feed, \$19 per bushel; brewing, \$20@20.50; rolled, \$21.

Flour—Valley, \$3.75@3.85 per barrel; hard wheat straights, \$3.90@4.10; clears, \$3.55@3.75; hard wheat patents, \$4.20@4.50; graham, \$3.75; whole wheat, \$4; rye wheat, \$4.75@5.

Oats—No. 1 white, \$1.07½; gray, \$1.05 per cental.

Millstuffs—Bran, \$19 per ton; middlings, \$23; shorts, \$20; chop, \$18; linseed, dairy food, \$19.

Hay—Timothy, \$16 per ton; clover, \$13; grain, \$12; cheat, \$12.

Vegetables—Turnips, 65c per sack; carrots, 75c; beets, 90; parsnips, 50@75c; cabbage, 1@1¼c; tomatoes, 50@60c per box; cauliflower, 75c@\$1 per dozen; beans, 4@5c; celery, 35@65c; pumpkins, 1c per pound; onions, Yellow Danvers, 75c@\$1 per sack.

Honey—\$3@3.25 per case.

Potatoes—Oregon, choice and fancy, 60@75c per sack; common, 50c; sweet potatoes, sacks, 2c; boxes, 2¼c.

Fruits—Apples, 75c@82c per box; crabapples, \$1.25 per box; pears, \$1@1.50; cranberries, \$9@10.50 per barrel.

Butter—Fancy creamery, 30@32½c per pound; dairy, 20@22½c; store, 15@15½c.

Cheese—Full cream, twins, 15@15½c; Young America, 16@16½c; Tillamook, 14@14½c; Eastern cheese, 15c.

Poultry—Chickens, mixed, 9c per pound; spring, 10c; hens, 10c; turkeys, live, 18c per pound; dressed, 20@22½c; ducks, \$6@7 per dozen; geese, 7@8c per pound.

Eggs—Oregon ranch, 32½@35c; Eastern, 26@27½c.

Tallow—Prime, per pound, 4@5c; No. 2 and grease, 2½@3c.

Hops—1903 crop, 12@21c per pound, according to quality.

Wool—Valley, 17@18c; Eastern Oregon, 12@15c; mohair, 35@37½c.

Beef—Dressed, 5@6½c per pound.

Veal—Dressed, small, 8@8½c; large, 6@7c per pound.

Mutton—Dressed, 4@5½c; lambs, 6c per pound.

Pork—Dressed, 6½@7c per pound.