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Monsieur Beaucaire

By Booth Tarkington

An Interesting Serial Story, a Portion of Which will be Published in the Review Until Completed.

(Continued from last week)

"Mademoiselle, I have the honor to ask you: if you had known this Beaucaire was honest, though of peasant birth, would you?"—Involuntarily, controlled as her icy presence was, she shuddered. There was a moment of silence.

"Mr. Molyneux," said Lady Mary, "in spite of your discourtesy in allowing a servant to address me, I offer you a last chance to leave this room undisturbed. Will you give me your arm?"

"Pardon me, madam," said Mr. Molyneux.



"IF YOU HAD KNOWN THIS BEAUCAIRE WAS HONEST, THOUGH OF PEASANT BIRTH, WOULD YOU?"

Beucaire dropped into a chair with his head bent low and his arm outstretched on the table. His eyes filled slowly in spite of himself, and two tears rolled down the young man's cheeks.

"An' live men are jus'—names!" said M. Beaucaire.

CHAPTER VI.

IN the outer room Winterset, unable to find Lady Mary and supposing her to have joined Lady Rellerton, disposed of his negus, then approached the two visitors to pay his respects to the young prince, whom he discovered to be a stripling of seventeen, arrogant looking, but pretty as a girl. Standing beside the Marquis de Mirepoix, a man of quiet bearing, he was surrounded by a group of the great, among whom Mr. Nash naturally counted himself. The beau was felicitating himself that the foreigners had not arrived a week earlier, in which case he and Bath would have been detected in a piece of gross ignorance concerning the French nobility—making much of de Mirepoix's ex-barber.

"'Tis a lucky thing that fellow was got out of the way," he ejaculated under cover.

"Thank me for it," rejoined Winterset.

An attendant begged Mr. Nash's notice. The head bailiff sent word that Beaucaire had long since entered the building by a side door. It was supposed Mr. Nash had known of it, and the Frenchman was not arrested, as Mr. Molyneux was in his company and said he would be answerable for him. Consternation was so plain on the beau's trained face that the duke leaned toward him anxiously.

"The villain's in, and Molyneux hath gone mad!"

Mr. Bantison, who had been fiercely elbowing his way toward them, joined heads with them. "You may well say he is in," he exclaimed, "and if you want to know where, why, in yonder card room. I saw him through the half open door."

"What's to be done?" asked the beau.

"Send the bailiffs!"

"Fie, fie! A file of bailiffs! The scandal!"

"Then listen to me," said the duke. "I'll select half a dozen gentlemen, explain the matter and we'll put him in the center of us and take him out to the bailiffs. 'Twill appear nothing. Do you remain here and keep the attention of Beaujolais and de Mirepoix. Come, Bantison, fetch Townbrake and Harry Rakell yonder. I'll bring the others."

Three minutes later his grace of Winterset flung wide the card room door and, after his friends had entered, closed it.

"Ah!" remarked M. Beaucaire quietly. "Six more large men."

The duke, seeing Lady Mary, started, but the angry signs of her interview had not left her face and reassured him. He offered his hand to conduct her to the door. "May I have the honor?"

"If this is to be known, 'twill be better if I leave after. I should be observed if I went now."

"As you will, madam," he answered, not displeased. "And now, you impudent villain," he began, turning to M. Beaucaire, but to fall back, astounded. "O'd's blood, the dog hath murdered and robbed some royal prince!" He forgot Lady Mary's presence in his excitement. "Lay hands on him!" he shouted. "Tear those orders from him!"

Molyneux threw himself between. "One word!" he cried. "One word before you offer an outrage you will repent all your lives!"

"Or let M. de Winterset come alone!" laughed M. Beaucaire.

"Do you expect me to fight a cutthroat barber, and with bare hands?"

"I think one does not expect monsieur to fight anybody. Would I fight you, you think! That was why I had my servants that evening we play. I would gladly fight almost any one in the world, but I did not wish to soil my hand with a—"

"Stuff his lying mouth with his orders!" shouted the duke. But Molyneux still held the gentlemen back. "One moment," he cried.

"M. de Winterset," said Beaucaire, "of what are you afraid? You calculate well. Beaucaire might have been belief—an impostor that you yourself expose! Never! But I was not goin' reveal that secret. You have not absolve' me of my promise."

"Tell what you like," answered the duke. "Tell all the wild lies you have time for. You have five minutes to make up your mind to go quietly."

"Now you absolve me, then? Ha, ha! Oh, yes! Mademoiselle," he bowed to Lady Mary, "I have the honor to request you leave the room. You shall miss no details if these friends of yours kill me, on the honor of a French gentleman."

"A French what?" laughed Bantison.

"Do you dare keep up the pretense?" cried Lord Townbrake.



"PHILIPPE!" HE CRIED. "MY BROTHER, I HAVE COME TO TAKE YOU BACK WITH ME."

"Know, you villain barber, that your master, the Marquis de Mirepoix, is in the next room."

Molyneux heaved a great sigh of relief. "Shall I?" He turned to M. Beaucaire.

The young man laughed and said, "Tell him come here at once."

"Impudent to the last!" cried Bantison as Molyneux hurried from the room.

"Now you goin' to see M. Beaucaire's master," said Beaucaire to Lady Mary. "'Tis true what I say, the other night. I cross from France in his suit; my passport say as his barber. Then to pass the annul of exile I come to Bath and play for what one will. It kill the time. But when the people hear I have been a servant they come only secretly, and there is one of them—he has absolve' me of a promise not to speak—of him I learn something he cannot wish to be told. I make some trouble to learn this thing. Why I should do this! Well—that is my own rizzon. So I make this man help me in a masque, the unmasking it was, for, as there is no one to know me, I throw off my black wig and become myself—and so I am 'Chateaurien,' Castle Nowhere. Then this man I use, this Winterset, he!"

"I have great need to deny these accusations!" said the duke.

"Nay," said Lady Mary wearily.

"Shall I tell you why I mus' be 'Victor' and 'Beucaire' and 'Chateaurien' and not myself?"

"To escape from the bailiffs for debts for razors and soap," glibed Lord Townbrake.

"No, monsieur. In France I have got a cousin who is a man with a very bad temper at some time, and he will never enjoy his relatives to do what he does not wish."

He was interrupted by a loud commotion from without. The door was flung open, and the young Count of Beaujolais bounded in and threw his arms about the neck of M. Beaucaire.

"Philippe!" he cried. "My brother, I have come to take you back with me."

M. de Mirepoix followed him, bowing as a courtier in deference, but M. Beaucaire took both his hands heartily. Molyneux came after, with Mr. Nash, and closed the door.

"My warmest felicitations," said the marquis. "There is no longer need for your incognito."

"Thou best of masters!" said Beaucaire, touching him fondly on the shoulder. "I know. Your courier came safely. And so I am forgiven! But I forget." He turned to the lady. She had begun to tremble exceedingly. "Faires' of all the English fair," he said, as the gentlemen bowed low to her deep courtesy, "I beg the honor to present to Lady Mary Carlisle, M. le Comte de Beaujolais. M. de Mirepoix has already the honor. Lady Mary has been very kind to me, my friend. You mus' help me make my acknowledgment. Mademoiselle and gentlemen, will you give me that favor to detain you one instant?"

"Henri," he turned to the young Beaujolais, "I wish you had shared my mask—I have been so gay!" The surface of his tone was merry, but there was an undercurrent, weary-sad, to speak of what was the mood, not the manner. He made the effect of addressing every one present, but he looked steadily at Lady Mary. Her eyes were fixed upon him, with a silent and frightened fascination, and she trembled more and more. "I am a great actor, Henri. These gentlemen are yet scarce convince I am not a lackey! And I mus' tell you that I was jus' to be expelled for having been a barber!"

(Continued next week)

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