

The Contrabandist; OR One Life's Secret.

A TRUE
STORY
OF
THE
SOUTH
OF
FRANCE

CHAPTER XIX.—(Continued.)

They left the broken vehicle, the prostrate horses that struggled and kicked in vain attempts to escape from the harness and rise, and in the darkness and the storm pursued with all possible haste the road to the chateau. There was no shelter near. The light from Rose was as nothing in the strong arms of the marquis. Rapidly he bore her along, leaving the folds of his cloak well wrapped about her.

"We are almost at the village," said Francis Egerton, as he supported his companion with a lover's tenderness that met now with no repulse.

"For Helen Montauban know nothing of it. She was saying to herself, 'Is Rose dead? Has she escaped me? Am I to be spared my work at last?' She listened for a step—a groan—from the list of that inanimate figure that was borne before her. No sound came. The horses, already, strange fever of joy mingled with the shivering excitement, the awe, the horror, which Helen Montauban had felt. She never believed the rain that poured over her in sheeted torrents; the wild wind whirled in her ears now they were unsheltered. She only longed for light—light, to behold that childish countenance—to know the truth.

But so near were they to the farm house now that no delay was made; the first one was entered, and Rose placed upon a couch, while the farmer's wife crowded about, with earnest kindness and sympathy, to render assistance. But at the sight of that pale, quiet face, those closed eyelids and colorless lips, they were silent, and some whispered among themselves, "She is dead!"

"Helen Montauban had gathered that M. Merz had but a slight hope of Rose's recovery. It must be. No turning back, or flinching, or hesitating, for that desperate nature now. That hope must never become a stronger one! It was hers to see to it. Pouring out the water for which she suffered, prayed, ever and anon, her hand involuntarily clutched the tiny vessel concealed in her bosom. Yet—no! A little delay; the disease might terminate fatally in a few days, and spare her the work for which she was prepared. But in case it were not so, this—It was a poison, subtle and sure as death itself. Few were there who knew of such; few—almost no tests, could detect its presence. To Helen Montauban had been given knowledge of this poison in bygone years, and she had guarded that knowledge like gold. The secret, so long preserved, was likely to become useful to her now.

It was midnight. All over the chateau, there was deep and heartfelt rejoicing; but it was subdued in its manifestations, for the life that had so lately been pronounced safe was only slowly and faintly fluttering up from the edge of the grave; and every voice spoke in whispers, every footstep was muffled. All day she had slept, and the exhaustion produced by her violent and protracted delirium was so great that that slumber had hardly seemed like the rest of a living form. For scarce the faintest breath could be perceived, or the slightest motion of that feeble beating heart. Yet had the physician filled the breasts of those about him with a too delicious hope that hung for the moment upon her awakening.

Then had the evil desire of Helen Montauban grown to an intensity that was fearful. Watching, with her haggard face and gleaming eyes, beside that couch, she had fixed her serpent gaze upon the slumbering form who lay there, looking with cruel and terrible eagerness for the sign of death to set itself upon that young sufferer's brow. Yet it came not, and her eagerness grew almost into madness. The one way remained. She would make that sleep a lasting one.

But there was another watcher there. The aged physician had taken up his post also by the couch. He, too, was waiting; but it was for the angel of life—not that of death; and he stirred not from that place. Not a morsel of food had passed his lips that day. Since dawn he had been there. And Helen Montauban, in her fierce desperation at her own inability to accomplish the work so long meditated upon, was almost insane. Still he watched; and never for an instant did his vigilance relax. And the hours passed on; and Rose awoke—safe!

CHAPTER XX.

It was nearly morning when the entrance to the chateau to request an interview with the marquis. He told him that Hugh Lamotte was at the village inn and dying. The marquis, astonished and affected at this sudden announcement, in the midst of his joy for the safety of Rose, prepared immediately to visit him; and the physician, M. Merz, satisfied that the most favorable change had taken place in his patient's case, left her in the care of Mademoiselle Montauban and the countess and accompanied the marquis.

In a few moments the party arrived at the village. Maurice met them with an anxious countenance.

"How is he—Is there any change?" asked the cure, anxiously.

"None, monsieur," answered the man. "He raves still; but he talks of some guilty deed to be atoned for—some secret to be confessed. I can make nothing satisfactory, though, out of what he says, he wanders so."

The three accepted to the chamber above, where lay the dying man. The marquis started as he beheld him, stretched out upon the couch, with his wild, unshorn and uncombed countenance, and coarse, rough garments, which he had not suffered to be removed, presenting a spectacle so wretched. The kind-hearted old man could scarcely refrain from shedding tears as he gazed upon the wreck of that once proud form.

"Is this indeed Hugh Lamotte?" he exclaimed, advancing towards the couch.

"Who calls Hugh Lamotte?" shouted the sick man, sternly; "who calls him Hugh Lamotte? Who calls him Hugh Lamotte? And who are you? fixing his wild, gleaming eyes upon the countenance of the marquis. "Ah, Armande Montauban, I know you—I know you!" he uttered, fiercely, trying to spring upright, yet falling, from very weakness. "Don't come near me, or I shall murder you! Where is Guillette?—where is she? You have hidden her from me! You have wedded her; and she was mine—mine!" You stole her from me! I will have your blood!"

He sank back, exhausted, with white lips.

"Look—look, monsieur!" uttered the cure, springing to the side of the marquis—"look, M. Merz, the marquis is fainting!"

And even as he spoke, the heavy fall of his forehead attracted the physician's attention. Contraction and alarm were visible in his features.

"Let us carry him out into another room—quick!" he said, coolly.

Together they bore him to an adjoining apartment, and there commenced the application of restoratives. But some moments elapsed ere he betrayed signs of returning consciousness. Then he revived slowly, and for some time gazed fixedly upon the face of M. Merz. Thus a long moment elapsed he said:

"Gustave, I have seen my brother," he uttered.

"Your brother?" echoed M. Merz, in astonishment.

"It is true! It is Henri who lies there—my brother Henri. Let me go to him!"

"My dear friend, be calm, I command you," urged the physician, gently.

"I am calm; but I must go instantly. If he should die—ah, save him, I entreat you!"

Weak and trembling as he was, he made them assist him to re-enter the other apartment. They advanced towards the couch; there was a different sight there now. From the height of delicate Hugh Lamotte's body sinking into a stupor. His eyes were almost closed. Only faint, unintelligible murmurs broke from his lips at times. He did not see their approach. The cure and M. Merz cast glances at each other. The marquis comprehended them.

"You think he is dying, then?" he asked.

"Ah, save him, Gustave! We were enemies once and I let him live, that we may once more embrace one another!"

"Be calm, my dear friend," entreated the physician again, "and listen to the truth. No power on earth can save him now; he is sinking fast. But maintain your energies; he may revive before death, with the possession of his full reason."

"Ah, Henri!" murmured the marquis, with indescribable emotion—"my brother that I should recognize you thus, after all these years! See—see, Gustave!" and he lifted the matted hair from the temples of the unconscious man—"I knew the mark. Our father told me he would bear it to the grave—that scar."

"How," said M. Merz, in a low voice, "can this be your brother?—this man, who, for twelve years, has not within half a league of you, and who has only been known as a peasant?"

"Ah, I recognize him, but too well!" answered the marquis, sadly; "it is he! I know him now through the disguise that has served him so long. And did you not hear his words? He said I am Guillette from him. Alas! it is but too true, though I was innocent of wrong. Henri—my brother—speak to me! say that we are friends once more!"

Eagerly he leaned over the couch, with his eyes fixed upon the sick man's face, but he was not recognized. There was no intelligence in that dying glance.

Hugh—no! rather, awakened from the dull stupor. But it was only the sudden and bitter taste of the expiring flames of life. He lay, for an instant, glancing about the apartment; then looking upwards, he encountered the regards of the good cure, who stood by the couch in silence.

"Monsieur le cure, I recognize you," he said, "I am dying—is it so?"

"It is true," answered the good man, mournfully. "But there is yet time for confession and repentance."

"Confession—repentance! You know, then, that I have a confession to make—to repent of?"

"It is a work which every dying man has to do, my friend."

The marquis advanced towards the couch.

"Henri, my brother!" he uttered, in sorrowful tones.

"What you know me, then? I have betrayed myself at last—the brother who swore vengeance on the husband of Guillette?" He raised himself, with main strength, upon his arm, and fiercely regarded the marquis.

"Ah, Henri, forgive me!" cried the grief-stricken man.

"Never!" shouted Henri, madly. "I have brought sorrow and darkness to your marriage, and I am satisfied. For the sake of your child, the wrong I have done, I will atone, at this last hour, for the misery I have caused you. You shall be happy once more; but I will not forgive you for the wrong done to me—never—never!" And raising his clenched hand to heaven, he said the declaration with a fearful oath. Then he sank down, exhausted. A shudder ran through every form within that chamber.

"Henri!" cried the marquis, throwing himself on his knees beside the couch, "recall those words, I conjure you! Listen to me. I know not of the wrong I had done you, till it was too late. Guillette deceived me; she never told me that you loved her; that she was betrothed to you! I would have sworn she was innocent. She was a curse to me. Ah, Henri, if you desired revenge, she was the fittest instrument!"

The dying man's eyes were fixed earnestly on his brother's face.

"Say it once more—once more!" he panted, wildly; "I believe that you were innocent—that you knew not of our betrothal—that she deceived you, and was false to me!"

"It is true. Listen, Henri; I swear it!" His face grew pale; the tears streamed from his eyes; his clasped hands, uplifted, trembled.

"Then pardon me, Armande, for the injustice I have done you. I believe that you were innocent—that she deceived you, and was false to me!"

The marquis clasped that wasted hand tenderly within his own. His tears fell upon it.

"Henri, I have nothing to forgive. We have both been unhappy," he uttered.

"Nay—you do not know the misery I have caused you. But I repent. It shall be confessed, Henri, my brother weaker. Where is Rose?" he asked.

"She is at the chateau. She has been ill; but, thanks be to heaven, she is recovering!" answered the marquis, earnestly.

"Is it well. Give her my blessing, if she will receive it from me, when she knows all. I have been a wretch; but she has been an angel in my miserable life. Ah, if the prayers of one so good and pure as she could be offered to heaven for my salvation, surely they would be heard! Ask her to forgive, and pray for me, Armande. He paused, panting for breath, and unable for a moment to continue. There was a terrible and mournful silence in the room. Suddenly he regarded his wasting energies. "I hear me, Armande, my brother, while I have strength left to make atonement. Beneath the heart of the cottage, you will find an iron chest; it contains my confession." He paused again; his strength was rapidly falling. A moment, and he resumed, turning once more his fast-fading eyes to his brother's face. "I will tell you of your lost daughter—of Marguerite!" he gasped.

"Of Marguerite! Speak—speak, Henri!" cried the marquis, in terrible agitation. "Tell me—I divine it—confess, I implore you! He cannot tell it—he is dying! O, for a moment longer!" he said. "Henri, tell me; breathe but one word; what of Marguerite?" He bent down nearer, waiting in awful suspense.

The glazing eyes opened again. The lips moved. "Armande, hear!" were the slow, painfully whispered words. "Rose—I stole her! She is—your child!"

(To be continued.)

How we came to keep Christmas Day

The celebration of Christmas is a commemoration of that night at Bethlehem when the birth of a Child in a stable fore-shadowed the birth of Christianity, and yet the festival itself is one that may be traced back so far beyond that event that it becomes lost in a tangle of history and fable. It is older than Christianity, it is older than civilization, for it is practically an adaptation of the festival of the winter solstice, and the winter solstice has been observed as a season of feasting and revelry from the remote ages of antiquity.



THE BOAR'S HEAD.

from the Norse feast of Jul and the Roman Saturnalia to the joyous Christmas celebration that we know as a slow process of evolution, for each step marked a corresponding change in the conditions that prevailed throughout the world. In the days when men and women stumbled blindly toward the light the doctrine of "peace on earth and good will to men" made slow progress against the ignorance and license of paganism, and it was not until a new civilization had come that the old festival assumed the fresh beauty and the noble significance which have



BRINGING IN THE YULE LOG.

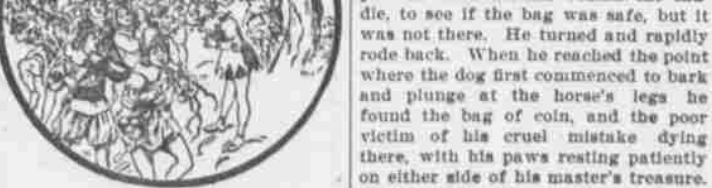
made our Christmas Day, with all its sweet associations, a possibility.

While it may be the popular impression that Christmas is the exact anniversary of the birth of Christ, there are no facts, historical or otherwise, upon which one can logically base such an assumption. In fact, at which all people should pass the day in humbly bemoaning the great national sin which they and their ancestors had committed on that day by the practices that had hitherto prevailed—the eating of hearty meals and the drinking of the drinking of the mistletoe. In 1647 this edict was again pronounced, and then soldiers were sent to the homes of all suspected persons with instructions to search the ovens and larders and to seize all the dainties that might be discovered.

The restoration of King Charles brought about, to a certain extent, the restoration of Christmas; but the Puritans still adhered to their position, and in the Puritan colonies the feast continued to be stigmatized as a "heathen festival." In Massachusetts its observance was forbidden by law, it being ordered that any person found celebrating the day, "either by forbearing of labor, feasting or any way, should pay for every such offense five shillings as a fine to the country," while, under the blue laws of Connecticut, for a man to have a sprig of holly in his house on Christmas day was a crime for which he was punished by a fine of one shilling and confinement in the town stock. In spite of all these efforts to prohibit the celebration of this festival, Christmas finally crept into the country.

Although it was 1681 before the anti-Christmas laws were repealed, the jovial Dutch at New Amsterdam never failed to make the day a cheerful one and it was through their efforts that Kris Kringle found his way across the ocean to the New World.

For centuries the generous Christmas saint had been the most sacred of person-



BRINGING MISTLETOE.

These he tied up in a strong sack, lashed it to the saddle behind him, and started for home.

When they had traveled about half of the homeward journey the dog manifested a great deal of uneasiness, to which he gave expression by nervous barkings and frequent dives at the horse's forelegs. The man was sorely puzzled, and watched the dog for some time to see if he could find an explanation of its strange conduct. His reluctant conclusion was that it had been bitten by a mad dog and was the victim of hydrophobia. And so to save his horse and to put the poor dog out of the misery he supposed it was suffering, he drew a pistol and shot it. Not wishing to see it die, he applied the spurs to his horse and rode rapidly for some distance. The thought came to him, "I would rather have lost the money than to have been forced to kill that good dog."

This reminded of the treasure, he put his hand around behind the saddle, to see if the bag was safe, but it was not there. He turned and rapidly rode back. When he reached the point where the dog first commenced to bark and plunge at the horse's legs he found the bag of coin, and the poor victim of his cruel mistake dying there, with his paws resting patiently on either side of his master's treasure. He had tried so hard to make the master understand, but had failed, and paid his life as the price of his fidelity.—Springfield Republican.

Englishmen are proverbially matter-of-fact, and find it hard to understand our modes of expression.

One of them, in company with an American friend, was pushing and shoving at a gateway of the Reading Terminal recently, thinking that he would be late for his train.

The guard, somewhat angrily, remonstrated with him, saying:

"Just keep your shirt on, there. You'll get through in time."

When he finally got through he turned and glared at the guard. Then turning to his friend, he remarked: "I wonder if that beastly fellow thought I was going to pull my shirt off right here in public?"

Had Boys in the Parsonage.

Mrs. Goodart—There was a little baby born at the parsonage this morning.

Mrs. Fearsome—It's a girl, I hope.

Mrs. Goodart—Yes, but why are you so anxious?

Mrs. Fearsome—Well, you know how ministers' sons turn out as a rule.—Philadelphia Inquirer.

Always a Chance.

Charles—Frankly, I don't think I ever saw the man I would marry.

Kitty—Oh, well, dear, have patience; he may leave in eight, you know.—Boston Transcript.

Only One.

Boarder (sipping disapprovingly)—This is singular soup.

Waiter—Yes, it's oyster.

Bulgaria's Area and Population.

Bulgaria corresponds in area to Oklahoma and in population to Missouri.

HUMOR OF THE WEEK

STORIES TOLD BY FUNNY MEN OF THE PRESS.

Odd, Curious and Laughable Phases of Human Nature Graphically Portrayed by Eminent Word Artists of Our Own Day—A Budget of Fun.

La Mont—We have some fast automobiles out our way. They go so fast you can't see anything but a streak of maroon.

La Moyné—That's nothing. Some of them go so fast out our way that you can't see them at all—just smell gasoline.

Deal Given away.

"You used to put up some pretty good turkey sandwiches," said the fastidious guest. "I want the same kind of turkey you had last year."

"Dis is de same kind, sah," replied the waiter; "it's been in storage ebech since last year."

His Objection.

Ernie—I hear old Strongwood was sternly opposed to his daughter eloping in an automobile.

Ida—Yes, automobiles are so uncertain he was afraid it would break down and he wouldn't get her off his hands after all.

Ida—I was reading about the polar explorers. The book says they never had anything but frozen cream.

May—Gracious! It must have been delicious to have ice cream three times a day.

Should Be Cautious.

Daughter—Edwin says he wants a wife with good lungs. It shows how considerate he is of her health.

Mother—I wouldn't be too sure. He might want her to blow the kitchen fire in the morning.

Typical American.

"Yes, his painting attracts a great many people."

"Great artist, eh?"

"No, just a home painter. He puts out a sign, 'Fresh Paint,' and every one touches it to see if it's dry."

Time to Protest.

"Look here," telephoned the irate man, "I didn't tell you to send me any school supplies."

"School supplies?" echoed the amazed coal dealer.

"Yes, you sent me up a load of slate."

Usual Thing.

Brown—So you bought that suburban property, eh? Did you investigate the title to see if it was all right?

Green—Yes, and after living there two weeks I have come to the conclusion that the title is the only thing about the place that isn't defective.

Not a Joke.

Giles—Take two letters from "money" and one is left.

Miles—Is that a joke?

"Yes, verily."

"Well, I know of a fellow who took money from two letters."

"That's a good joke."

"Not it; he got twelve months."

Difference in Method But—

Traveler (in Europe)—What are those two beautiful girls?

Steamer Captain—One is a Circassian whose parents are going to sell her to a Turk; the other is an American whose parents are going to give her to a nobleman.

Liked Church But—

Sweet Girl—Do you enjoy taking me to church?

Lover—Not so much as riding with you in a street car.

Sweet Girl—Goodness! Why? Lover—The sexton never yells "Sit closer, please."

There Were Others.

"I seen you kissin' Mamie," said her little brother.

"Well, here," said the dear girl's accepted lover, "if I give you a dime can I trust you to say nothing about it?"

"Sure! I never peached on any of the other fellows when they gave me money."—Philadelphia Ledger.

Gossip Proof.

Mrs. Crawford—Have they much money?

Mrs. Crabshaw—Why, they're so rich that, if they preferred, they could afford to stay in town all summer.—Smart Set.

Question of Cash.

"I hear you have been suffering with a very romantic love affair."

"Yes, but I've recovered."

"How much?"—Cincinnati Commercial-Tribune.

Anticipation vs. Experience.

Old Gentleman—Do you think, sir, that you are able to support my daughter without continually hovering on the verge of bankruptcy?

Suitor—Oh, yes, sir; I am sure I can.

Old Gentleman—Well, that's more than I can do. Take her and be happy.

The Secret of Harmony.

Young Mrs. Mend, whose experience of married life had been brief and happy, had just engaged two servants, a man and his wife, for work at her summer place.

"I am so glad you are married!" she said to the man, with whom she had made terms. "I hope you are very, very happy, and that you and your wife never have any difference of opinion."

"Faith, ma'am, I couldn't say that," replied the new servant, "for we have a good many; but O! don't let Bridget know of this, an' so we do be getting along well."

Business.

Mr. Nuritch—You take orders for pictures here?

Art Dealer—Yes.

Mr. Nuritch—Well, I want you to send a man up to measure my parlor walls for about \$10,000 worth of hand-painted pictures in good frames.—Philadelphia Press.

Suggestive.

Knicker—Was it an up-to-date wedding?

Knicker—Yes, indeed; they threw breakfast food instead of rice.