

# The Contrabandist; OR One Life's Secret!

A  
TRUE  
STORY  
OF  
THE  
SOUTH  
OF  
FRANCE

## CHAPTER V.

A week after his arrival at the chateau, Louis stood, one morning, on the terrace with his fair cousin, Helen Montauban, and evidently prepared for a stroll in search of amusement, judging from the gun and sketch book he carried.

"A way so early, Louis?" asked Mademoiselle Montauban.

"Even so, Helen. I am going to spend an hour in converse with Dame Nature, whom I have so sadly neglected since I came here, that I scarcely dare look her in the face. An hour, and perhaps two; in proportion to the variety of the entertainment which I find."

"Then, if that is the case," returned Helen, in her calm, silver tones—"if that is the case, we shall hardly see you again till night fall. You will find no lack of amusement, as you may declare yourself, if you have not forgotten your former visits hither; though they have been few enough, I confess."

"O, I know there is no neighborhood more beautiful than this in the country," responded Louis. "But as for extending my wanderings to the borders of the night, that would not be quite to my fancy. I shall be back here before noon."

"That is well. And pray, Louis," she added, with impressive earnestness—"pray do not go too deep into the forest. Remember your adventure there not seven days since."

Lightly he touched his lips to her fair hand, and, turning, descended the sloping path that wound irregularly down the height.

A slight blush rose to her beautiful cheek, as her glance followed, for an instant's space, the handsome figure of the young count; and it deepened when he looked back, and seeing her still standing there, waved his hand to her. Hastily she left the spot, and re-entering the chateau, seated herself in the saloon by a window, at her embroidery. Here, putting the drapery aside, she could observe the receding figure of her cousin while pursuing, with slow and thoughtful fingers, her favorite employment, until Louis had disappeared from sight, and there was no outward attraction to break the rose-hued thread of meditation that wove itself in and out among the clustering buds and leaves expanding into life under her magic touch. The marquis was in the library among his books, lost to the exterior world, and wrapt in learned lore. Helen had no companion save her own meditations; but they were sufficient entertainment for one like her.

Louis continued to follow the main road leading from the chateau past the village, and onward to where it reached the forest, branching off into two distinct paths, one of which wound on through the forest, and the other skirted it to the left. His morning's work was before him. Turning his attention to the beauties of the quiet scenery about him, Louis paused now and then along the path, to add some charming sketch to the collection of fine drawings in his book, remembering his cousin's peculiar taste, and selecting such points as he knew would best please her. And wandering slowly still, he came at last within sight of the little dwelling of his pretty friend Rose.

Then Louis thought of the wish which he had expressed to her. The cottage was at a distance yet; he wished to gain a more distinct view of it. Perhaps he should discover Rose herself seated at the door, and his scene already laid out for him. He hastened forward. The turn in the path was soon reached, and the half-hidden cottage was in full sight now; and yes, there sat Rose at the door, working with her needle. He paused a moment to contemplate the scene. This little cottage, or farm house, so rude and plain in exterior, yet discovered to him through that open doorway, where the morning sun shone in so softly, one of the prettiest pictures in the world. Rose was looking so lovely that Louis hastened to commence his sketch. Yet a nearer view was needed; and, silently as possible, he moved forward, so as to trace her features distinctly, and at the same time to avoid disturbing her. Rapidly, and with a grace and vividness of touch that did justice to its present subject, Louis worked. It was the loveliest picture he had attempted that day, and he enjoyed it. Not many minutes was he in completing it, and then he advanced with a quiet step up the pathway to the door.

But Rose Lamonte was as busy with her thoughts as with her needle, and she did not hear the approaching footstep. It was not until the shadow of the young man's form fell across the sill that she was aroused from her reverie. She looked up then, and started with some slight surprise on beholding the count. Immediately recovering herself, however, she welcomed him with a smile and hastened to offer him a seat.

He accepted it, and sat down near her. He had met Rose but twice before; yet it was in such circumstances that the awkwardness and constraint of first acquaintance was in a measure unknown to them, and it was the easiest thing in the world to fall into conversation now. He almost forgot that their acquaintance was of so recent a date, indeed.

"Where is your father, Rose, this morning?" he asked, at first. "I hoped to see him."

"I am sorry he is not here, monsieur," returned the young girl. "But he went to the forest, something more than an hour ago, to gather roots for me, and I do not know how soon he will come back."

I suppose that monsieur le marquis and Mademoiselle Helen are well to-day?"

"Quite well, Rose. You have not been up to the chateau since last week, I think?"

"No. I do not think I have stayed away from there for so many days together in all the years since we came here. It seems a strange thing to inquire after them," said Rose, looking up. "My uncle and Helen were mentioning it yesterday," rejoined Louis. "They intend sending for you to-morrow."

"O, I will not trouble them so far as to do that," responded the young girl. "I do not need any one to come for me now, because I can come alone quite as well. Will you be so good as to tell Mademoiselle Helen that I will come to-morrow?"

"I will do so certainly," answered Louis. "But where, then, is that troublesome cousin of yours? Has he gone away?"

"Yes, monsieur. I hope we shall never see him again," she said, with a slight shudder of aversion. "My father spoke very sharply to him, and sent him to a place a great way from here. I do not know what place it was; my father did not tell me. But he says Gasparde shall never come back until he learns to be less insolent."

"What a relief that is, Rose—is it not?" said Louis, with a smile. "But this subject is not a pleasant one—is it? Suppose I try to banish from your memory, for the present, the image of this wicked man, and we will talk of something rather pleasanter. Tell me who and what this is, my little friend."

He had opened his portfolio and now, as he spoke, passed to her the sketch which he had taken fifteen minutes previously.

She looked at it, and a bright smile shone in her hazel eyes.

"Monsieur," she said, "it is my own little home. How faithfully you have sketched it! There is the mignonette on the sill; and my pretty cat, asleep by the box, in the sunshine; and one edge of the book-case, which you can see within, and which hangs close beside the window. You must, then, have drawn this before I saw you—before I heard you coming just now."

"Yes—exactly; before you saw me. But there is something, Rose, which you seem to consider of less consequence than your cat and the mignonette, since you do not mention it. I wonder if you have observed it. Who is it that sits by the door sewing? My cousin Helen?"

"No, monsieur; it is not your cousin. You did not mean it for Mademoiselle Montauban. It is, I think, Rose Lamonte."

"You are right. It is Rose Lamonte. Well, Rose, I took this without your knowledge, therefore, I suppose I should ask your permission to retain it. But I do not anticipate a refusal. I do not know that I shall heed it, if one is given."

"In that case, monsieur," returned the young girl, smiling at his frankness—"in that case, it would be useless either to give or withhold permission. It is yours, however, by right, monsieur."

"Then I will keep it. And now, since the morning is nearly gone, I think I can stay no longer. I should like to see your father, Rose; but since he does not come, I must wait until another time."

"I am sure he would like to see you," said Rose. "And now I think of it; he bade me thank you, in his name, if I should meet you again, for your interference in my behalf the other day."

"I was glad that I happened to be near, to chastise the scoundrel," responded Louis; "and I shall be well satisfied if the lesson proved to be one of lasting service."

And bidding the young girl adieu, he turned from the spot to retrace his homeward way.

"How pretty she is, how innocent, how childlike, how charming!" said Louis, mentally. "One cannot but be attracted towards her." He walked on, meditating as he went.

"And so that ruffian, Gasparde, is gone," he said, again. "Good! It will be worse for him if he comes into the neighborhood, and attempts to molest her again. Poor little Rose—little forest blossom!"

Suddenly he heard a merry voice whistling some light air, at a distance. It aroused him from his reverie. Looking up, he beheld a man approaching him, who was then, perhaps, fifty yards from him. This man, as soon as Louis lifted his head, suddenly broke off the lively air with which he had been amusing himself, and seemed to regard our hero earnestly. Then as suddenly he recommenced whistling, fixed his glance in turn upon the earth, and, with head slightly bent, advanced.

"Who can it be?" thought the count. "He seems to recognize me. And it strikes me that he is endeavoring to conceal his features."

And such, truly, appeared to be the case. Yet it was no one whom Louis remembered to have seen before. This man was dressed in the garb usual to the peasants of the country, in stature of about medium rank, and proportionate size. His features were partially concealed, as he held his head down. But Louis, as he came nearer, was more curious to behold them than he would have been if the man had not endeavored, with such evident studiousness, to pass unnoticed.

As they approached closer to each other, the young count caught a glimpse of those features. He started, with an involuntary exclamation, and stopping short, laid his hand on the man's arm.

"My friend," he said, "you will oblige me by pausing a moment. I desire to speak with you."

What if it should be a mistake after all? But no! The man stopped at this quiet, yet peremptory summons, ceased whistling, and taking off his large hat, looked Louis in the face, saying, respectfully:

"I see it is useless, monsieur le comte. You are determined to know me."

"Your own fault—your own fault," laughed the count, with an air of good humor. For, in this person, he recognized the one who had appeared to him in the forest on the night of that memorable attack, to warn and arm him against the approaching danger of the way. The face, well marked by the assistance of the lightning then, had been carefully remembered since.

"But how is it that you know me so well, monsieur?" asked the man. "I scarcely imagined that you would."

"You must be sensible, my good friend," returned the count, "that neither the place, persons nor occasion were those liable to be easily forgotten. A man seldom meets such a dozen times in the course of his life. Did I not tell you that I should remember you?"

"Just so, monsieur. Still—" "But I do not often forget faces, especially those met with in times of danger. Yours I kept for the remembrance of past deeds, and the score of a future reckoning. But you speak as though you had wished me to forget it."

"I was not over-desirous that you should remember it," answered the man. "And why not? You are not sorry for helping me, I trust?"

"No, monsieur; nor unable or unwilling either, for that matter, to help you again, if you should need help. And, my faith! but I am afraid you will need aid most sorely, if things prosper as they have begun," he added, in a lower and half-musing tone.

"What do you mean?" queried the count, not a little puzzled.

"What do I mean, monsieur? Why, the fact is, it would be hard to tell. How do I know what is to happen?"

"What was that muttering for, then? What is your name? Tell me that. It cannot harm you."

"It is Jacques Leroux, monsieur." "Jacques Leroux!—well, I shall remember now. But come, sit down on this bank by the roadside a moment. I wish to talk with you."

"Very well, monsieur. Only I warn you, you must not ask too many questions. It is enough that I was inclined to help you that night. You must not inquire too closely into the why and wherefore of the secrecy."

"Let me ask what I please, Jacques. You are not forced to answer, if you do not like. In the first place, then, how did you come to know all about the affair in which I was engaged?"

"That, monsieur, is one of the questions which I must decline to answer."

"Why did you conceive so great an interest in me—a stranger?"

"That I cannot tell, unless it was because I liked your appearance."

"You had seen me before, then?"

"I had seen you before, monsieur."

"Where—when?"

"It would do you no good to know."

"You are cool, Jacques. I see I shall gain no satisfaction from you. But, at least, let me know to what part of the country you belong, and whether I shall ever see you after this."

"I am not conscious of belonging anywhere in particular, monsieur, though one may be apt to see me most generally in this direction. I dare say we shall meet very often, if you remain at the chateau up there."

"You spoke of my needing assistance at a future day. Do you think it probable that I shall?"

"I do not say. One may very often need help, you know; especially when one has enemies. The old fable of the lion and the mouse is as useful to-day as ever it was."

"Where are my enemies? Who are they?"

"You know best, monsieur, whether you have gained the ill-will of any one."

"You mean—but no! What should you know concerning that? You—"

"I mean, monsieur, to speak in so many plain words, that ugly cousin of pretty Rose Lamonte—Gasparde. I should hardly dare to utter his name aloud, but I know that he is not within earshot by a long way."

"You do know, then, that he is my enemy?"



Rheumatism.—For rheumatic pains in the hands and wrists try rubbing the joints well every night at bedtime with paraffin. This will greatly relieve the sufferer.

Bronchitis Mixture.—Three ounces of linseed, four ounces of sugar candy, two lemons cut in thin slices, two pints of cold water, six cloves. Put all into an enameled saucepan. After it boils let it simmer an hour, then strain and add two wineglassfuls of whisky. Dose: Two tablespoonfuls every four hours.

Chilblains.—These may often be prevented by rubbing the feet and hands with camphorated spirit, mixed with a little vinegar, or a little spirit rubbed on every night is sometimes sufficient to prevent their appearance. If they are bad, however, great relief may be obtained by applying a mixture composed of one ounce of spirits of wine and ten drops of tincture of arnica. Turpentine, too, is very good, and, although the skin will peel off, this simple remedy is often as effectual as the more costly mixtures.

The Hot Sand Bag.—Get some clean, fine sand and dry it thoroughly in a kettle on the stove; make a bag about eight inches square of flannel, fill it with the dry sand, sew the opening carefully together, and cover the bag with cotton or linen cloth. This will prevent the sand from sifting out, and also enable you to heat the bag quickly by placing it in the oven or on the top of the stove. After once using this, you will never again attempt to warm the feet or hands of a sick person with a bottle or a brick. The sand holds the heat for a long time, and the bag can be tucked up to the back without hurting the invalid.—Health Culture.

## SHE IS OVER 100 AND HAD A VISION.

To have lived more than 100 years and to have watched the rise of the nation is the history of Mrs. Abbey Louis Beaumont, who is spending the remainder of her days in the Home for the Aged in Des Moines.

Mrs. Beaumont, even at her advanced age, is an interesting character. She has announced the discovery of a composition to be used as a substitute for fuel, claiming that God had revealed the secret in a dream.

Sag Harbor, N. Y., is the birthplace of this centenarian. She first saw the light of day early in 1803. Her father, Howard Latham, was an old sea captain. Incidents of the war of 1812 are almost as fresh in her mind as are the details of the late Spanish-American war to the average. She refers to the period as "King George's crazy fit which lasted seven years."

Mrs. Beaumont has a distinct recollection of meeting and shaking hands with General Lafayette and his son, George Washington Lafayette, during their tour of the United States. Her older daughter is 77 years of age.

## In the Same Boat.

Feeling that it was his duty to re-monstrate with one of his clergy for attending a fox hunt, the bishop had an interview with him.

"Well, your lordship," the offender replied, "I really do not see that there is any more harm in hunting than going to a ball."

"I presume," answered his lordship, "that you refer to my name having been down among those who were present at Mrs. De Vaux's ball, but I assure you I was never once in the same room as the dancers throughout the whole evening."

"That, my lord, is exactly my position. During the hunt I was never in the same field as the hounds." The bishop collapsed, and silence reigned.

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