FOR LOVE OF A BEDOUIN MAID

This ebook is for the use of anyone anywhere in the United States and most other parts of the world at no cost and with almost no restrictions whatsoever. You may copy it, give it away or re-use it under the terms of the Project Gutenberg License included with this ebook or online at https://www.gutenberg.org/license. If you are not located in the United States, you'll have to check the laws of the country where you are located before using this ebook.

Title: For Love of a Bedouin Maid

Author: Le Voleur

Release Date: November 16, 2014 [eBook #47372]

Language: English

*** START OF THIS PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK FOR LOVE OF A BEDOUIN MAID ***

Produced by Al Haines.

FOR LOVE OF A BEDOUIN MAID

BY LE VOLEUR,

AUTHOR OF "BY ORDER OF THE BROTHERHOOD" AND
"A DEVIL IN ANGEL'S FORM."

CHICAGO AND NEW YORK:
RAND, McNALLY & COMPANY,
PUBLISHERS.

Copyright, 1897, by Rand, McNally & Co.

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION
1ST EPOCH—GENERAL BUONAPARTE
EPOCH II—THE CONSUL BUONAPARTE
EPOCH III—THE EMPEROR NAPOLEON
EPOCH IV—CAPTIVE, BUT EMPEROR STILL

INTRODUCTION.

"That will do; place the cigars upon the table and then you can go."

The speaker was Lord Throgmorten, a man of about thirty-six years of age, rather stout, with reddish hair and whiskers and cold, steel-gray eyes. He had just returned from a yachting cruise, upon which he had started upon his succession to the title about eighteen months before.

The scene was his lordship's chambers in the Albany, and the time the night of the 22nd of July, 1893.

Besides the speaker and the well-trained servant, who, in obedience to the order just given, occupied himself in fetching the silver cigar box from its accus-

tomed place upon the sideboard, lighting the wax taper which stood by its side and placing them in front of his master, there were present two other persons. The man on his host's right near the fireplace, wearing spectacles and with the careworn look upon his features, was Mr. Percival Phelps, who had been his lordship's guest upon their recent cruise. He was a genial, dapper little man with inordinate vanity, and a slight stammer, when excited; with no income to speak of, save his stipend as a permanent clerk in the —— Office, a position that, his host said, "suited him down to the ground."

The man facing him, and looking towards the window, though younger than either of the other two, was already coming into prominent notice and making a fair income as sub-editor of that popular paper "The Telescope."

When the servant had left the room, the young man proceeded to address his host in measured tones.

"Since I received your letter, I have been on tenter hooks to hear the story of this wonderful discovery. You wrote me only a bare line from Southampton on the 12th to say that you had had a pleasant trip, during which you had chanced on a most extraordinary find; and that you particularly wanted me to dine with you to-night and hear about it. Well, now the man's gone, you can fire off your intelligence. What is it: coins, fossils, bones, or buried treasure?" And the editor, refilling his glass with port, which he knew by experience was particularly good, settled himself in his chair in a less constrained attitude, and prepared to listen to his host's narration.

Lord Throgmorten's reply was to rise from the table and with Mr. Phelps' aid, to bring from the further end of the room a box—covered with a cloth—whose weight, judging from the efforts required to lift it, was considerable.

"There," said his lordship, reseating himself, "that is the discovery, and that," pointing to Mr. Phelps who, like his host, panting from his exertions, had resumed his seat, "is the discoverer."

"The s-s-story first. Tell the story," said that gentleman, stammering in his excitement, while Lord Throgmorten prepared to remove the cover. The latter acceded to the suggestion, and began as follows, addressing his remarks to the editor, while Phelps sat by, giving confirmatory nods by way of emphasis, when occasion seemed to call for it.

"You are aware that, last February twelvemonth, Phelps and myself started for Australia in my steam yacht the Osprey, for the purpose of visiting my property out there. With our voyage out my story has nothing to do; it was only when we had turned our nose homewards and on the 17th June that our adventure began. On that night we were sailing—not steaming, mind, because there was a fair wind and we wished to save our coal.

"This was the position of affairs at midnight when Phelps and I retired to

our cabins. At five a.m. I was roused from my sleep by a commotion on deck and the cry of 'Land Ahead,' followed by the order 'Hard a port.' I dashed on deck, on my way jostling against Phelps, who, like myself, had been awakened by the disturbance. On reaching it, we saw, rising out of the mist on our port beam, the rocky coast of an island; we made for the side and gazed over. To our horror, it seemed that we were almost grazing the rocks of a reef over which the sea was breaking. Slowly, ah! how slowly it seemed to us—all anxiously watching the line of surf which marked the treacherous rocks beneath—we passed them. A few minutes later we were hove to in deep water, the danger past; though, to this moment, it is a marvel to me how we escaped the rocks. I hailed Captain Soames, who was on the bridge, and asked him to lay down our position as well as his dead reckoning would permit, and, so soon as he had done so, to join me in the saloon with the chart.

"Then Phelps and I went below, where, presently, the skipper came to us. He unrolled the chart and placed his finger on a small cross, which we were able to distinguish by the light of the lamp. 'That, gentlemen,' he said, 'is our exact position marked upon a chart corrected to the most recent survey, and bought new, as your honors are doubtless aware, for the purposes of this trip. I beg your honors to notice that, by that chart, we ought to be in deep water hundreds of miles from any land. I trust, therefore, that you will exonerate me from blame for having so nearly run the ship aground.'

"Both Phelps and I assured him that we felt that our recent danger arose from no fault in navigation, but was an accident which no one could possibly have foreseen.

"Still the fact stared us in the face. The chart marked deep water, and yet we had, as nearly as possible, been wrecked upon an island that, according to the hydrographers, had no existence. When the truth dawned upon us, at first we both sat speechless, the skipper alone standing and looking from one to the other of us, as puzzled as ourselves. For fully half a minute we stared at one another, the unspoken question simmering in our brain, 'Whence comes this island?' the lamplight shining upon our faces, and the dawning sunlight playing through the open port hole and making ever shifting shadow patterns upon the cabin floor.

"Even now I can see myself with my eyes fixed upon the skipper's finger, which still rested upon the chart, and observing every stain and wrinkle upon it, though my brain was busy with the island.

"Phelps was the first to break the silence. 'Volcanic,' he exclaimed, and shut up.

"'Impossible,' I said, his voice rousing me from my reverie. 'There has been no eruption for ever so long of sufficient magnitude to cast up such an island.'

"Captain Soames's contribution to the discussion was the most practical of

the three. 'Beg pardon, gentlemen, for interrupting your conversation, but would it not be better to go on shore and see for yourselves? Mr. Phelps here is a man of science, and they tell me he can say a powerful deal about what rock and stones are made of, by just looking at them.'

"I jumped to my feet exclaiming, 'The very thing. We will go on shore the moment they have got a boat ready. Stay,' I resumed, when the skipper, who had saluted, was about to leave, 'when you have made all ship-shape on deck, overhaul her below to see whether we have sustained any damage, so that, if necessary, we may make all speed to the nearest port to refit.'

"While the boat was being made ready, we had our breakfast; and, when we went on deck, the sun was shining brightly and a stiffish breeze was blowing, and the mist, which had before almost enshrouded the island, was gone, so that the latter could now be plainly seen. So far as one could judge from the deck, the island, seen through a telescope, was about a mile broad by three miles long, and, except for an excrescence in the center, entirely flat. Just abreast of the yacht, was a little inlet that seemed to offer a suitable landing place. We had taken our places in the boat and were about to shove off when the skipper called out to us to ask us to make our stay as short as possible, for that, should a heavy gale get up, he feared the anchor would not hold and we might be driven ashore. We, therefore, promised to make what haste we could, then shoved off, and began to pull towards the inlet. Before us was this barren rock, not a sign of life upon it, not even a bird; behind us the yacht rolling lazily upon an unending expanse of water. Short as was the distance between the ship and the shore, the journey was unutterably tedious owing to the terrific heat. But, in due course, we stepped ashore.

"Naturally the first thing we did was to make our way to the foot of the small hillock in about the center of the island. Here was a small group of rocks and on these we decided to rest ourselves; and very soon, overcome by our walk and the heat of the sun, I closed my eyes and went off to sleep. How long my sleep lasted, I cannot say, but I was roused by the sound of Phelps's voice.

"When I opened my eyes, I saw him hammering away at a small piece of rock as vigorously as if his whole life depended on it. I got up and walked towards him. 'What on earth are you hammering at now?' I asked.

"'Look,' he said, 'I started to break a piece of this rock off as a souvenir of our adventure, and this is what I found.'

"At first sight, it appeared to be a rock about two feet square and nine inches deep, buried partially in the soil; but, on examining it more closely, I found the cause of his excitement. The piece that he had broken off disclosed an iron corner.

"'There is something underneath,' said Phelps; 'the rock is only a deposit upon it.'

"An examination of the exposed portion proved the correctness of his remark.

"'I am going to get that out, whatever it is, if I work till dark,' he continued.

"At first I laughed at his enthusiasm, but it ended in my helping him. Armed with a fragment of rock as heavy as a blacksmith's sledge-hammer, I poised it above my head and, bidding Phelps stand away in case he should be struck by any fragments, I brought it down with all my might, upon the top of the rock. My improvised hammer split into bits with the force of the blow, but it cracked the rocky deposit sufficiently to enable us with a little trouble to remove it in pieces; and this is what was underneath."

Lord Throgmorten interrupted his narration to rise from his seat and withdraw the cover from the top of the box which stood upon the table in front of him. It was made of some dark wood, probably oak, heavily bound with iron at the corners and edges, the ironwork being of an ornamental character, but now almost covered with marine incrustation.

After examining the box from the outside, the editor asked his lordship to resume his narrative.

Lord Throgmorten went on. "Having got thus far in our exhumation of the box, the question was what next to do. Our first thought was to break the box to pieces and carry its contents to the boat, but here a doubt of what the box might hold prevented us. Phelps surmised that it was treasure.

"Our utmost efforts to move it proving useless we went back to the boat and told them to row to the yacht and get from the ship's carpenter tools for the purpose. In about half an hour they returned, bringing the carpenter with them. With his assistance, the box was raised from its rocky bed and conveyed to the yacht and placed in my cabin. On our return, the skipper told us that, so far as could be ascertained, we had sustained no damage; further, that his observation at noon had shown him that he had only an error of four miles to correct in the position he had marked upon the chart. This was satisfactory; so, there being nothing to detain us, we told him to get under weigh at once, and went down to luncheon. When we returned to the deck, the island appeared a mere speck, and, shortly after, the breeze being much in our favor, that too vanished below the horizon.

"Later in the afternoon, we opened the box, and in it we found these papers." Suiting his action to his words, Lord Throgmorten lifted the lid of the box and drew therefrom some manuscript, and handed it to the editor. That gentleman took the papers; then, putting his eyeglass to his right eye, looked inquiringly at his host and said, "Pray why do you hand these to me?"

"During our voyage home," replied Lord Throgmorten, "Phelps and myself amused ourselves with examining the papers. We found in them a story so inter-

esting that we thought it ought to be placed before the world. This we ask you to do."

"Before I can give you a reply, I must of course, take the MS. home and examine it."

To this both the gentlemen agreed; and, shortly afterwards, they separated.

What followed is best told in the two accompanying letters, which passed between Lord Throgmorten and the editor, in the early part of the present year; by his lordship's kind permission, they are here transcribed.

I.

To Lord Throgmorten, **The Albany**, Piccadilly, W.

Dear Algie,

I am now able to inform you that I have completed the task of compiling a story from the Manuscript which came into your possession in so extraordinary a manner. The events narrated in the MS. are highly interesting, as you remarked when you put the papers into my hands. In forwarding you the result of my labors, I leave you to apportion the merits and demerits between myself and the mysterious person who has vanished into the unknown whence the Manuscript also so marvelously came.

Yours etc. The Editor.

II.

S. Y. Osprey,
off Cape Town.

My dear Editor,

Many thanks for your letter and the accompanying parcel of MS. which came to hand by the mail quite safely last week. Both Phelps and myself render you our hearty thanks for the way in which you have performed your task, and trust that we shall be in England in time to witness the result. I shall, therefore, omit all news till we meet—except this. It will interest you to know that, on our voyage out here, we went out of our course, that we might revisit the unknown island from which we obtained the box with the MS. To our surprise, not a trace

of it was to be discovered, though a reference to last year's log-book and a careful noting of our position told us that one day, at about 9:30 a.m., we passed within a quarter of a mile of where it had stood. Not a vestige of land could be seen, though a sharp look-out was kept throughout the search. When and how the island vanished is but a matter of conjecture; it is certain that it no longer exists, and, probably, has returned to the depths whence it came. Again renewing my thanks,

Believe me, **Sincerely yours**, Throgmorten.

GENERAL BUONAPARTE.

FOR LOVE OF A BEDOUIN MAID

1ST EPOCH.

GENERAL BUONAPARTE.

CHAPTER I.

The march of civilization has been so rapid that most people know something of the City of Paris.

It is not, however, with the modern city that this story will deal; not with the gay, ever moving throng of boulevardiers that crowd its thoroughfares at night under the glare of electric light, the welcome product of this ever inventive and luxurious nineteenth century; but with Paris at the close of the eighteenth century; Paris before the era of Baron Hausemann, ill-lighted, ill-paved and, at this moment, noiseless and, for the most part, asleep. For it was the night of

December 6th, 1797. The rain was falling fast, dripping almost in sheets from the roofs of the houses that overhung the narrow, tortuous streets, now deep in mud. At long intervals, where they had not been extinguished by the wind, a few oil lamps were suspended from chains, the fitful light they gave serving only to render visible the gloom.

An unpleasant night to be abroad; so thought two foot passengers who were standing under one of the afore mentioned lamps opposite to the Palais de Luxembourg, at that time the residence of the Directors of the French Republic.

"Pest on it, the night grows worse and worse," said the shorter of the two, drawing his long cloak more closely round him and pulling his slouch hat further over his eyes, to prevent the driving rain, that the wind hurled along, from dashing into his face.

"It does indeed, Vipont," replied the taller and older man; "only the importance of our errand would have made me stir forth to-night. Half past ten, as I live," looking at his watch. "Come, let us be moving; see, someone is approaching the Palace gate."

A lantern flickered at the moment in the court-yard of the Palace, its light gradually growing brighter.

"The Officer of the Guard, most likely, going his rounds," remarked Vipont, following his companion, who, without heeding the remark, was already splashing across the space that intervened between them and the light.

Just when they arrived at the Palace gate, the officer reached the street.

Then one of the sentries at the gate pushed the new-comers aside, saying, the while he presented his bayonet at their chests, "Pass on, good folk, you cannot enter here. Pass on, whoever you may be."

Seeing that they paid no heed to his injunction, the man was about to enforce it, when the officer came up and asked their business.

"To see Mons. Barras, the President of the Directory," was the reply.

The officer, a tall, good-looking young man with coal-black hair and eyes, laughed somewhat contemptuously. "It is impossible," he said. "You cannot be admitted at this hour. Come to the Levee to-morrow."

The tall man, who appeared to be the leader, Vipont not yet having uttered a word, spoke again, and his voice was loud and masterful. "I enter where I please, Sir. If you were not a stranger in Paris, you would know that I am the Minister of Police."

At this announcement, the young man fell back a step; for, in those days, to offend the Minister of Police was a dangerous proceeding, he being, next to the chief of the State, the most powerful personage.

"Pardon, Sir," he said, "I am, as you rightly remarked, a stranger in Paris, being an officer under General Buonaparte, at present commanding the army in

Italy. My name is St. Just."

Matters being thus explained to the satisfaction of both parties, St. Just, first instructing a sergeant to take his place for the remainder of the round, conducted the Police Minister and his companion across the courtyard. As they approached the palace, sounds of hammering, proceeding from the ground floor apartments on their left, fell on their ears. Both the newcomers paused and looked inquiringly at their guide, for shadows kept flitting to and fro across the curtained windows.

Noticing their surprise, St. Just replied to their unspoken question: "The noise comes from the Chamber of Audience, which carpenters are fitting up for the public reception of General Buonaparte on his return to Paris, which, they say, may be expected daily."

No reply was given by St. Just's companions, nor, indeed, was there opportunity, for, by this time, they had passed through the central doorway and into the entrance hall. Here all was bustle, but subdued, out of respect for the occupants of the palace—the directors. Threading his way through the throng of soldiers and workmen, and closely followed by his companions, the officer mounted a staircase; then, traversing a corridor, he opened a door, that gave admittance to the antechamber of the President's apartments. St. Just crossed the room, and, parting the arras, knocked at a door, on the further side of which voices could be heard in conversation.

Taking advantage of St. Just's absence, the Minister of police cast his eye round the apartment. It was long and narrow, apparently having been partitioned off from the room beyond. It was sparsely furnished in the style of the late Louis Seize, the most noticeable object being a large table in the center, on which were spread the remains of supper laid for one, as was evident by the solitary chair, which the late occupant had pushed back on leaving the table. At the further end, the table service had been removed to make room for a large map of the seat of war (Italy), Buonaparte's route being faintly traced upon it in pencil. By the hearth, in which burned a small fire of logs, whose tongues of flame threw dancing rays upon the floor, stood a small round table, on which were an oil lamp and a book. Vipont picked up the latter and, reading the title, Cæsar's Commentaries, chuckled softly. "This is indeed the age of education, when officers read Latin in their leisure moments," he said sneeringly.

The Minister, who had drawn aside the curtains of one of the windows, received this observation in silence, occupying himself in gazing into the courtyard below.

At this moment St. Just returned and announced, "Mons. le President will receive the Minister of Police."

Vipont and his companion passed into the inner room, and St. Just closed the door behind them. Then, taking up the book which had called forth the Police

agent's contemptuous comment, he soon became absorbed in it.

CHAPTER II.

When they entered the apartments of the Directors of the Republic, the first thing that met the eyes of the Police Agents was a table laid, like that in the adjoining room, for supper. Those who had partaken of it were three in number. He who sat at the top of the table, facing the door, was Barras, the President of the Directory; the others were Co-Directors. He on the right with his back to the window curtains was Reubel, the man facing him La Reveillère. Now these three men had met together to discuss measures for propping up the power of the Directory, which, from various causes, one being the growing popularity of General Buonaparte, was on the wane. They feared what actually did happen later, though as yet few people had a suspicion of it; that General Buonaparte, in the plenitude of his power and popularity, might seek to oust them.

On the entry of the untimely visitors, Barras half rose from his chair, and, turning, addressed the Police Minister. "Sotin, you have brought news of importance?" Then he paused and glanced curiously at Vipont, who, abashed at the magnificence of his surroundings and the princely air and toilet of the speaker, shifted, uneasily, on his feet.

"Gentlemen," replied Sotin, "the President is right; nothing but the importance of my news would have brought me here at such an hour; I have it on the authority of my agent from Rastadt, on whom I can implicitly rely, and whom I here present to you," here he pointed to Vipont, "that it is the intention of General Buonaparte to quit Rastadt on November 15th and to arrive in Paris to-morrow night."

"Impossible," burst from the three directors in a breath, and rising to their feet, they crowded round Vipont and showered incessant questions on him, all speaking at one time.

So engrossed were they in questioning the agent, who, disconcerted at the novelty of his position, could only stammer his replies; that they failed to notice that the door was ajar, and that, without, hidden by the arras, was an unseen listener. St. Just, for he it was, had been attracted by the voices of the speakers. In their excitement and forgetful of the thinness of the wall that separated them from the antechamber, they had exclaimed, "Buonaparte in Paris to-morrow?

Impossible!"

Anxious to hear more, St. Just had moved cautiously to the door, which, being imperfectly latched, had yielded at his touch. He had sprung back frightened, but, finding himself undiscovered, had crept forward again and now stood there listening.

"You say," continued Barras, who was the first to recover some measure of composure, "that Buonaparte is to leave Rastadt on the 15th November? How did you learn this?" addressing Vipont.

"By questioning indirectly the servants of the General," was Vipont's reply.

"If it is true," resumed Barras, turning to Sotin, "by what gate do you expect the general to arrive?"

"By the Porte St. Antoine," was the confident reply.

There was a dead silence for a moment; then Barras spoke again, and this time his voice was hoarse, as with emotion.

"It must be prevented; General Buonaparte must not enter Paris."

Again there was a moment's silence, followed by a sort of click. In his agitation at hearing these words, the unseen listener (St. Just) had touched the handle of his sword. Instantly he moved back noiselessly and stood within the window curtains out of sight. Those in the inner chamber started at the sound and, half drawing their swords, turned their eyes towards the door, with guilty fear.

Sotin was the first to speak. "See, the door in unlatched; perhaps the officer...." Then, seizing the door, he flung it open and peered forth. The lamp dimly burning left the outer room in gloom, but he crossed the floor and, going to the doorway opening on the corridor, looked up and down the passage. Nothing met his gaze, and all was silent, save for the distant murmuring of voices in the hall below. He drew back into the antechamber; then proceeded to one of the windows, the curtains of which he pulled aside. The light of the moon, for the night had cleared, streamed into the room, but no one was to be seen.

"Bah! it was my fancy," he muttered; then, shaking his head as though still doubtful of what had caused the noise, he returned to the inner room. "The wind, I suppose," he said, at the same time closing the door.

Once more St. Just breathed freely. "If he had moved this curtain," was his thought, "France might have lost her General."

Again he moved forward and placed his ear against the partition. The act was futile. Cautioned by their recent fright, the directors lowered their voices, so that only scraps of the conversation reached St. Just:—

"A band of men .... Kill post boys .... witnesses dangerous .... Above all .... Buonaparte .... Highwaymen ... common thing .... who's to know? ... Sad .... great loss ... Public funeral .... Minister of police .... Hand bills .... No success ....

Make certain...."

At this point their further words became inaudible. Then the sound of a carriage entering the courtyard caught his ears, and he moved rapidly, but noiselessly, to the window, and looked out. Below him was a post chaise drawn by four horses. He stood for a moment wondering. Who on earth could have arrived at this unseasonable hour: Carnot, the Director? Augereau, his general?

The next instant he had left the window and passed through the doorway and downstairs. At the foot of the staircase the soldiers in the hall had been drawn up in line. Two or three servants, with torches in their hands, were standing on the steps, while a soldier was opening the carriage door. The postillions were covered with mud, the horses also, and reeking and steaming with sweat; and the whole appearance of the carriage showed it to have traveled far and fast. A slight, short man, with pale face and long, auburn hair, and with eyes, that, without appearing to do so, took in the whole scene at a glance, alighted from the carriage. His dress was plain and simple; white breeches thrust into top boots, and a long, dark blue coat with a high collar. Round his waist was a tricolored sash and, suspended from a belt beneath it, was a sword. He wore a cocked hat which, after he had returned the salute of the soldiers, he removed.

The moment the light from the torches fell upon his features, all was bustle and excitement.

"Vive le General!" was the cry, "Vive le Petit Corporal!"

At these signs of recognition, a smile of pleasure flitted across the usually cold, impassive features; the next moment it died away, and, in a harsh, stern voice, he addressed St. Just who, with the others, had saluted him; "Officer of the Guard, conduct me to the President of the Directors."

At these words everybody present drew himself up into the stiffest of military attitudes; the soldiers presented arms, and, preceded by servants with torches, and escorted by St. Just, the newcomer entered the Palace.

Meanwhile, his arrival had been noted in the room above. Reubel from his seat by the window had, like St. Just, heard the approaching carriage. Nervously he peered from the window, which was sufficiently near the entrance of the palace for him to see the features of the person who had alighted. As one spell-bound, he gazed speechlessly upon the scene below. His companions, wondering at his silence, approached and joined him at the window. Even Sotin, at the sight of the figure, which he recognized at once, seemed perturbed; but only for an instant. Even while Buonaparte, escorted by St. Just, was disappearing through the doorway, he had made up his mind how to act. He turned to the others, and said rapidly:

"Mons. Vipont and myself will hide behind the curtain. Mons. Reubel had better remain seated where he is. When the visitor is preparing to depart, if

President Barras will detain him in the hall, Mons. Vipont and I will dismiss the General's carriage, thus obliging him to walk home—which he will never reach. He will die on his way, as surely as if he were outside, instead of inside Paris."

"How?" asked Vipont.

"Cochon!" replied Sotin, "are there not footpads in the streets, and do they not commit murders nightly? Besides, shall we not be two to one? Hush, he is here."

Forthwith the two police agents glided behind the curtain. Hardly had they done so, when the door of the room beyond was opened, and footsteps were heard crossing the antechamber.

Dangerous as the movement was, Sotin's head was thrust out from the curtain long enough for him to whisper, "Messieurs, appear to be supping."

Even while he spoke, the door was opened, and St. Just entered and announced—

"General Buonaparte."

To all appearance, the General had broken in upon a friendly supper party. Barras, at the head of the table, was on his feet, a glass in his hand, as though about to toast the company. Reubel had pushed his chair far back, as if to give his legs more room, for he had crossed one knee over the other; La Reveillère, was peeling an orange and apparently awaiting Barras' toast, for a decanter, from which he had but that instant filled his glass, stood at his right hand.

"Gentlemen," exclaimed Barras, at the moment the General was announced, "I give you the conqueror of Italy!"

Then, when Buonaparte advanced into the room, Barras sprang forward to welcome him, his movement loosening his hold on the glass, which fell from his hand and smashed to pieces on the floor.

Reubel, either accidentally, or, perhaps, purposely, let fall the napkin from across his knees and stooped for it, so that he was prevented from rising simultaneously with his fellow directors to greet the General. As for La Reveillère, for one instant the thought crossed his mind to kill both the General and St. Just then and there—they were five to two—but it was as quickly put away; for, looking up, he encountered St. Just's gaze, sternly fixed upon him. Additionally, without, through the half open door, he saw the gleam of bayonets and instantly surmised the truth. Without his knowing or suspecting it, Buonaparte was guarded by two files of soldiers, who waited without in the antechamber, stern and motionless. Men who had fought under Buonaparte in Italy, and were in consequence devoted to him. They were, in fact, some of those whom Buonaparte had despatched under Augereau to guard the Directors in the recent revolt of the eighteenth Fructidor. Men, therefore (of whom St. Just was one), whom he knew that he could trust.

For his part, Buonaparte advanced not a step, but stood just inside the door of the apartment. Barras, on the contrary, rushed forward and effusively embraced him, shaking him by the hand and saying, "Welcome, General! welcome to France! You bring us glad tidings of glory upon glory!"

At this point St. Just left the room.

Buonaparte replied but coldly to Barras' fulsome greeting; then, merely nodding to the other two directors, he took a chair, seating himself with his back to the door, his face half turned away.

Barras and La Reveillère pressed him to sup. "Eat, General, eat; you must be hungry; you have journeyed far. Eat first, and let us have your news afterwards."

Buonaparte, thus invited, drew the nearest dish to him, and, as was his habit, began to eat rapidly, and, regardless of conventionality, passing from a conserve of prunes to meat, then back to a different kind of sweet, eating much in the aggregate and yet little of each dish, and hardly allowing one mouthful to be swallowed before taking the next. In fact, to put it shortly, he ate like a dog. Then, pouring himself out a tumblerful of wine, he swallowed it at a draught. Finally, he pushed the things from him and began to speak.

"Messieurs, the army has been again successful; the treaty of Campo Formio has been signed; liberty has been given to the people of nineteen different departments; French troops garrison Mentz, and the interests of France are secured by the congress of Rastadt." He paused for a moment; then resumed, in an heroic sort of manner, "Why should I declaim the glories of France? Why tell of the deeds her soldiers have achieved for her? Will they not proclaim themselves? Do not nineteen States speak for them? There," he concluded, throwing down a thick mass of papers roughly tied with scarlet tape, "There are the records."

There was a momentary silence; then the president, Barras, spoke. "I pray you, General, keep these papers in your possession till a few days shall have passed; for it is our intention to give you a fairer welcome than your present one, and to receive in a public and a more befitting manner, the man whom France desires to honor."

This he said for a double reason. Imprimis, should General Buonaparte's body be found in the gray light of the corning dawn, it could easily be arranged that to rifle his pockets should be the supposed object of the murder, and that the directors should in reality possess the papers about which a great outcry for their loss should be made. In the second place, should the plan fail, Buonaparte would be unlikely to suspect the members of the Directory of complicity in the attack on him, when they had but just expressed their satisfaction with him and had proposed to reward him for his services.

Buonaparte's reply to Barras' flattering remarks was merely to bow. Then he proceeded to discuss with them the attitude of England and the projected in-

vasion of that country, and other matters affecting the welfare of France; matters, however, in no way concerning the actors in the present narrative.

Their business concluded, Buonaparte rose to his feet and, bowing coldly to the three directors, made his way towards the door. But, before he had reached it, Barras officiously sprang forward, saying, "Permit me, General, to accompany you to your carriage."

To this Buonaparte replied laconically, and almost rudely, "If you wish," and, opening the door, passed into the antechamber.

Motionless as statues, for two long hours the soldiers had stood, and now when the General—for it was to him more than to Barras that the honor was paid—passed between their lines, they presented arms. The scene was an impressive one, for every fifth soldier was holding aloft a torch, and, as the General moved down the room, the torch-bearers followed. Barras, who was almost as crafty as Satan himself, made St. Just, who was close to the top of the staircase, precede them, and engaged Buonaparte in conversation about his wife—whom Barras had met in former days—with the view of distracting his attention from those behind them, for he knew that his brother directors would follow with Sotin and Vipont, whom, of course, Buonaparte had not seen. They walked arm in arm, each with a director, Sotin with Reubel and Vipont with La Reveillère, their cloaks well wrapped around them. Meantime they discussed in subdued tones, so as not to reach Buonaparte's ears, incidents of the Italian campaign just told them by the General; their object being to make those present believe that they had accompanied Buonaparte. Thus, hoping to be mistaken for aides-de-camp, Sotin and Vipont crossed the ante-chamber and descended the staircase behind the others. At the foot of it, Barras persuaded the General to see for himself the alterations that were being made to prepare the Chamber of Audience for his reception. This gave Sotin and Vipont the opportunity of mingling with the crowd and subsequently gaining the doorway, whence they made their way to the General's carriage.

Meanwhile, St. Just had, by Barras' orders, accompanied General Buonaparte himself to the Hall of Audience. Here all was bustle and apparent confusion; carpenters armed with tools were rushing from one place to another. In one corner might be seen a group supporting a trophy of flags, whose battered appearance showed that they had recently arrived from the seat of war; they were now being placed at the back of a dais for the Directors, that other groups of men were erecting and decorating at the far end of the room. In other corners temporary seats were being fitted up for the accommodation of the Members of the Council of Five Hundred and for delegates from various public bodies, ambassadors, etc.

Barras dragged Buonaparte hither and thither by the arm, talking incessantly; St. Just, who, in his capacity of officer of the guard, stood in the doorway,

followed the two figures with his eyes and meditated on the course he ought to pursue about the conversation he had overheard between Barras and his fellow-conspirators. Obviously, he ought to see the General privately before he left the Palace, and warn him that his life was in danger. He knew, by having been at the entrance of the palace on the general's arrival, that Buonaparte was alone, and he suspected that, if a chance were given, the police agents would carry out the instructions of Barras. Unfortunately, he could not get near Buonaparte, who was never for a moment left alone.

Then St. Just reflected that he could warn Buonaparte's postillions; but here again he was frustrated, as will appear forthwith.

The General, having finished the inspection, returned in company with Barms to the doorway, and thence, preceded by St. Just, he made his way to the entrance hall of the palace. Lounging by the fireplace were La Reveillère and Reubel, to all appearance engaged in an animated conversation; but St. Just quickly noted that Vipont and Sotin had disappeared.

Suddenly, without deigning to notice any one, Buonaparte strode to the entrance door and called for his carriage. But there was no sound of wheels in answer to his shouts; plainly the carriage was not there.

To explain its absence, it will be necessary to follow the movements of Sotin and Vipont. The moment Barras and Buonaparte turned aside to the Audience chamber, they, wrapped in their cloaks, passed rapidly and quietly through the doorway of the palace and made their way towards Buonaparte's post-chaise, which had been drawn into an angle of the building, with the postillions curled up inside and sleeping soundly, tired out by the distance they had traversed.

Sotin cautiously advanced and peeped into the vehicle; then, satisfied as to the personality of its occupants, threw open the door, at the same time loudly and authoritatively calling to Vipont, "Show a light, sergeant."

Vipont, taking his cue, advanced with one of the carriage lamps and, throwing the light into the carriage in such a manner that it shone upon the sleepers' faces, while those of himself and his companion were left in shadow, shook the nearest by his arm. The young postillion started up and rubbed his eyes sleepily.

"Awake," said Vipont, "Mons. le Capitaine de la Garde de Mons. le President du directoire would speak with you."

"Dépêchez-vous, Sergent; Mons. le General waits," added Sotin behind him.

Soon the boy became thoroughly awake, and, in turn roused his companion.

In a gruff voice Sotin then told them they might go whither they would, for that Mons. Buonaparte was detained; but they were to return to the palace at noon the next day for their hire and attendant expenses.

The postillions grumbled slightly at having been kept waiting two hours

for nothing; but their discontent was considerably mollified by the "pourboire" Sotin gave them.

They went to the heads of their horses and turned them and the carriage round; then mounted, and were preparing to start, when Sotin told them to wait. Advancing to the door, he flung it open and, followed by Vipont, who had rapidly comprehended the manoeuvre, got in, telling the postillions to drive to the gate and, if challenged, to say, "General Buonaparte's carriage." Once outside, they were to turn to the right and drive out of sight of the palace; then to stop.

Acting on their orders, and assuming that they emanated from the General, who did not wish it to be known that he was still at the Luxembourg, they passed through the gates without challenge, the carriage being recognized as Buonaparte's. Arrived at a corner of the street about four hundred yards away, they drew up, when Sotin and Vipont alighted. Then the carriage drove on, the two police agents remaining where they were, till it had vanished out of sight. Then, crossing the road, they retraced their steps to the lamp near which they were introduced to the reader; continuing their way, they arrived at a doorway of a house at right angles to the palace gates. There they ensconced themselves and watched and waited.

Meanwhile General Buonaparte was standing on the steps of the palace, surrounded by the Directors, all fulsomely apologizing and tendering suggestions. Barras at once offered to have his own carriage made ready, but the General declined it.

"Say no more, gentlemen," he said, "there is a stand for public vehicles close by, and the short walk will do me good. I am stiff from sitting so long."

At this point, St. Just, fearing for Buonaparte's safety, said in a loud whisper to Barras, "Will it be wise for General Buonaparte to walk the streets of Paris unattended? There are many abroad at this hour who would do evil." And he fixed his eyes searchingly on the Director's face.

Barras bore the scrutiny well, but, if looks could kill, St. Just would have died that instant.

Unfortunately for St. Just, Buonaparte, overhearing what was said, took the sentence to imply that St. Just thought he, Buonaparte, was afraid of walking alone at such an hour. So he turned to Barras with the words, "Mons. le Directeur would do well to teach his soldiers silence in the presence of their superiors."

Completely reassured, Barras addressed St. Just with the order, "get to your duties; we have no further use for you."

With that, the party moved to the gate, through which they passed, leaving St. Just standing in the courtyard. For a moment or so he remained undecided; then turned on his heel and went back rapidly towards the door of the palace. Passing through the hall and taking care that those who were still loitering there,

should note his presence, he turned down a passage to the left. Opening a door on the right of this, he entered a guard room, and, by the faint light which shone into it, he selected a pair of pistols and a long cloak, which he flung round him; then retraced his steps to the hall and thence to the doorway, through which he passed. Wheeling round to the right of the building, he unlocked a door in the wall, and was about to step forth into the street, when he heard voices and footsteps near him. Immediately he recognized the voice of Reubel, though the moaning of the wind prevented him from catching all that was said. "Gone.... the other two.... on the opposite side.... will catch him at the turn of the road in the...."

St. Just waited for no more, but wrenched the door open, and dashed down the road at the top of his speed. Luckily for him, but unluckily for the two men lying in wait, the rain had ceased and the wind had cleared the clouds, so that the moon now shone brightly overhead, illuminating the street; for all that, once or twice he stumbled and nearly fell, so badly were the roads repaired.

On and on he ran, but still saw no signs of those he sought. At last he came to a large square, and here he paused for breath, and to consider his next step. It was evident he had missed the two police agents whom he believed to be following General Buonaparte. Then doubts began to assail him. Was he following the right road? that most likely to be taken by the General to gain his own house, which was situated, as St. Just knew, in the Rue Chantereine (afterwards Rue de la Victoire). For a moment he stood thinking and panting; then, anxious to lose no time, he was about to retrace his steps, when he heard a faint sound, like the cry of some one in distress, proceeding from a narrow court on his left. Impulsively, half hoping, half fearing it might proceed from those he sought, he dashed into the court, fear for Buonaparte, and excitement making his breath come short and fast.

This was what had happened. Vipont or Sotin, one of the two, creeping behind Buonaparte, had flung his cloak over the General's head and dragged him by his superior strength away from the street and partly up the court. His companion was, at the time, a few yards behind, and the General's frantic struggles to release himself from the strange bondage had necessitated the exercise of all his assailant's force to retain him in his grasp and force him out of the main street. No attempt had yet been made to kill him. But, at the moment when St. Just ran up, the man was shortening his sword to plunge it into Buonaparte's back; St. Just raised his arm; the crack of a pistol shot rang out upon the night; and the would-be assassin staggered forward and dropped upon the footpath, with a bullet in him. But so nearly had he achieved his purpose, that his sword, when he fell, made a long gash in Buonaparte's cloak.

The other, who had been coming up to help, seeing his comrade fall, and,

with that, the failure of their plot, did not hesitate a moment, but made a rush for the narrow court, knocking down St. Just, who attempted to bar his passage; and, plunging into the darkness, disappeared.

When St. Just came to himself, which he did quickly, though the breath had been knocked out of him, he found Buonaparte bending over him and binding with a scarf a slight wound in his head.

"It is nothing, sir," he said, staggering to his feet, and feeling somewhat giddy. Buonaparte had asked him whether he was seriously hurt. "One gets harder knocks on the battlefield and marches; on—"

"You are a soldier, I see," interrupted the General, "and surely we have met before. Is it not so?"

"We have, General," was the prompt reply, and St. Just straightened himself and saluted. "I was with you through most of the Italian campaign. In General Augereau's division. I accompanied the corps home, when you ordered him to Paris. Lieutenant St. Just, at your service, General."

"You have seen service then, young man," was Buonaparte's sharp answer. Then, looking searchingly in the other's face. "Did I not see you at the Luxembourg; but now?"

"You did, sir, as officer for the day of the Guard of the Directors."

"And how comes it that you were so opportunely present when I was in such peril?"

"From certain words I accidentally overheard, I feared there were designs against your life, and I followed you. It was I who escorted you to the Directors on your arrival. When I heard you say that you would walk alone, I tried to warn you; you may recollect it, Sir, and that I was dismissed to my duties by the President of the Directors."

"I remember. I remember also that the President's words were prompted by my own. Lieutenant St. Just, I owe you an apology; more, my life. You shall not find me ungenerous or ungrateful."

"To have saved the life of the most illustrious soldier of France, General, is its own reward."

Buonaparte loved flattery, though he affected to despise it. "Your reward shall not stop at that," he laughed, "Walk with me now; we can talk of this attack upon me, on our way. One moment, though," and he kicked Vipont's unconscious body carelessly with his foot. "What are we to do with this carrion?"

"I will care for him; Voilà!" And so saying, St. Just dragged Vipont to the nearest doorway and, covering him with his cloak, left him. The body of a wounded—even of a murdered man—was at that time a common sight in the early morning in the streets of Paris.

St. Just leaning on Buonaparte's arm, they quitted the narrow passage and

made their way back to the main thoroughfare. Here they were lucky enough to find a passing coach. This Buonaparte hailed. Then he told St. Just to get in and accompany him to his house in the Rue Chantereine.

During the drive, St. Just placed the General in the possession of affairs (so far as he knew them) at the Directoire. Buonaparte listened intently to every word that fell from St. Just's lips, and, though the faintness of the light prevented St. Just from seeing much more than the outline of his companion's figure, he knew from the tone of the other's replies that every word he uttered was being carefully weighed. He had hardly finished his relation, before the carriage drew up at Buonaparte's house. A few moments later, St. Just found himself following his host into a room in which sat Buonaparte's wife. Josephine sprang to her feet with a cry of joy. "My husband!" she exclaimed, throwing her arms around his neck. "I was beginning to think you were never coming. Bourrienne was here quite early in the evening and told me you would come to me immediately." Both Buonaparte and his wife were so taken up with one another that, for some moments, St. Just remained unnoticed. But presently Buonaparte remembered him and introduced him to his wife, to whom he made St. Just tell his story of the night's adventures.

When the young officer had finished, there was a momentary silence, during which Josephine and St. Just were thinking as was natural, one of the other, "how handsome he (she) is."

Josephine was the first to break the silence. Turning to St. Just with a smile, she said: "Sir, I thank you for your bravery and adroitness in delivering my husband from his peril. In return, if you have anything at heart that we can forward, I am sure I express both his sentiments and my own when I say that we will do so."

"Madame," St. Just replied, "I am content in that I have been the humble means of saving your husband's life; of preserving a husband for you, but also her greatest General for France. Permit me to say in answer to your kindness that all I ask is, to be near the General in his campaigns now and always, in order that, while my life lasts, I may devote it to him."

Buonaparte rose to his feet and, crossing to St. Just, held out his hand. "Sir," he said, "you have earned from me to-night, not only my gratitude, but also my esteem, which I do not lightly confer, or, when conferred, withdraw. You have spoken like a soldier, and your sentiments do you honor. Your request to accompany me in the next campaign is granted."

Then Madame Buonaparte advanced to him.

"Mons. St. Just," she said, in her gracious manner, "to offer money to a soldier were an insult; for bravery and a sense of duty are beyond all price. But you may, at least, accept this little gift, as a memento of this night, and also as

my witness to my husband's promise; for," she continued laughingly, tapping Buonaparte on the shoulder, "men, when they rise to power, are apt to forget those not so fortunate."

With that, she handed to St. Just a golden chain formed of a hand holding a heart suspended to it by a chain.

Bowing deeply, St. Just kissed the hand that held it out to him, as though she were already an Empress, instead of but a General's wife.

The action, theatrical as it was, delighted her.

Then Buonaparte interposed. "Mons. St. Just," he said, "in return for what you have done for me, I promise to do you three services, even to the sparing of your life, should you do aught to forfeit it; the promise to begin from now, and to remain in force till the end of my life."

St. Just bowed and thanked the General. Then he rose to go. Buonaparte pressed him to remain for that night, at least, in his house, urging as one reason St. Just's wound. At this the young soldier laughed. He had made light of this wound, removed the bandage before arriving at the house—so soon in fact as the bleeding had ceased.

"No, I must return to——my duties," he replied; "though, if the Minister of Police recognizes me, it will be a case of an underground cell in the Temple and then—" he paused.

"What?" asked Buonaparte smiling.

"Death," replied St. Just. "It was partly the thought of that, that made me ask you to let me be with you on your next campaign."

"But," said Buonaparte, "that may not be for months."

"No, no, sir," rejoined St. Just, "scarcely that, since you are about to inspect the forces for the invasion of England, in accordance with the plans of the Directoire."

"I had not thought of that," said Buonaparte. "In any case be assured of my protection; I will watch over you."

"And yourself, General. See that you do that, for Barras will not be gratified at his failure."

"I will take care of myself; but my time of danger is not yet. To-day is the 6th, is it not?"

"The 7th, sir," replied St. Just, glancing at a clock whose hand pointed to the hour of three. "We did not leave the Luxembourg till after midnight."

"True," said Buonaparte, smiling; "and the Directoire are to receive me publicly on the 10th, is it not?"

"That is so," said St. Just.

"Bien, I myself will tell Barras of the adventure that befell me; and I will watch the effect of my intelligence upon him. Till then, adieu." St. Just shook

hands, first with Josephine, then with the General and, bowing, left them.

A quarter to four sounded when he reached his bedroom in the Luxembourg, tired out and suffering considerably from his wound.

CHAPTER III.

Towards the end of April in the following year, a trooper rode into the courtyard of the palace. St. Just was standing at the main entrance. The man advanced to meet him and saluted.

"Lieutenant St. Just?" he said inquiringly.

"I am he," replied St. Just.

"I am instructed to deliver this, Lieutenant."

At the same time, he handed a packet to St. Just. Then, once more saluting, the man wheeled his charger round and trotted off.

With trembling hands and his mind strongly agitated, St. Just opened the despatch. His most ardent hopes were fulfilled. The document contained his formal discharge from his present duties and his appointment as aide-de-camp on General Buonaparte's staff. He was instructed to wait on the General at headquarters for orders at three o'clock that afternoon.

To say that St. Just was overjoyed, would scarcely do justice to his feelings; he was mad with delight, and could scarce contain himself. By way of relief to his emotions, he indulged in a loud hurrah and threw his cap up into the air, for all the world as though he were only a common soldier. Then, recollecting where he was, and the extraordinary figure he must be cutting before his men, he replaced his cap on his head, straightened himself and made his way, as steadily as his exuberance would allow, into the palace, to hand over his command to the sub-lieutenant, preparatory to taking his departure.

With a soldier's regard for punctuality, at the stroke of three he presented himself at General Buonaparte's quarters, and was almost immediately admitted to his presence. The General was standing with his back to St. Just in front of a temporary table supported on trestles, and bending over a large scale map of Egypt and the surrounding country. Other maps and documents were spread about. He had a pair of compasses in his hand, and with it he was taking off the distances between the various places he had marked out as his route. At St. Just's entrance he turned round.

"Ah! Lieutenant," he exclaimed. "You are glad then to go with me to Egypt?"

"So glad, General, and so grateful, that I scarce know how to express my thanks. I—"

"Do not try then," interrupted Buonaparte abruptly; "nor are any due. Your appointment on my staff has not been made from personal motives, but solely in the interests of France, who has need of those of her sons who are distinguished for bravery and promptitude of action. From the circumstances of our introduction, I believe you to possess both. Further, I have made inquiries of General Augereau concerning you, and his report is eminently favorable. Your appointment, therefore, is the consequence of your own merit. But, if you still think any thanks are due to me, let them be expressed by deeds; by obedience, fidelity, courage, coolness and promptness in emergency; in a word, by unswerving devotion to France—and to me."

He shot a piercing glance at St. Just, as though to emphasize his words; a glance so keen and stern that the young officer felt that he trembled under it. But he replied, "General, you shall have no cause to regret your confidence in me. To my country I have dedicated myself body and soul. She possesses my unshared allegiance. I have no father or mother, no brothers or sisters. France stands for all these to me. To make her respected—aye feared—among the nations; to add to her glory, so far as my humble efforts can avail, is my sole ambition. If she demand my life, it shall be willingly laid down."

"Your sentiments do you honor, sir," said Buonaparte. "See that you live up to them. Now go, and make your preparations for departure. Present yourself here at daybreak on the third day from this—the 3rd of May—when we shall march out of Paris. Your horses will be provided for you. Till then, farewell." The General waved his hand towards him in token of dismissal, and St. Just saluted and took his leave.

When the young officer left General Buonaparte, he strode onward with a rapid, springy step, treading on air, as the saying is. At last, he thought, he had his opportunity; his fortune was secured. He was resolute to earn distinction in the career he had adopted; and, with the sanguine exuberance of youth and strength, he already saw himself mounting with nimble steps the successive rungs of the military ladder—Captain, Major, Colonel, Brigadier, General of Division; until he had attained the summit and found himself in command of an army, smiting the enemies of France—perhaps even rivalling the great Captain under whom he was about to serve. Such was the mental vision that gradually unfolded itself to his excited gaze. At this moment he had the most unbounded enthusiasm for the successful general whose marvelous achievements were the theme of Europe; the most absolute devotion to him. Later events will show how far these sentiments were destined to be lasting; for the present they were paramount.

St. Just had few preparations to make; having no near relatives, and being heart whole, there were no painful leavetakings; only a farewell dinner to his friends and intimate brother officers, the payment of a few bills, the purchase of sundry necessary articles, and he was ready.

At daybreak, on the 3rd of May he reported himself at General Buonaparte's headquarters, and, a few hours later, Buonaparte began the march that the great General hoped and believed would result in the adding of the land of the Pharaohs to the possessions of France. The advance guard had already preceded the main body.

The movement of troops through their own country—except when that country is in the partial occupation of the enemy—is seldom fruitful of adventure, and, in the present instance, it was wholly uneventful. St. Just had the opportunity, to a limited degree, of improving his knowledge of Buonaparte, also of becoming acquainted with some of his entourage. To his annoyance, however, almost immediately on their quitting Paris, a feeling of weakness and lassitude began to overtake him, despite his most strenuous efforts to shake it off. Day by day it grew upon him, until, by the time the army had reached Toulon, which they made on the 8th of May, he felt so prostrated as to be almost unfit for duty.

But he fought hard against his weakness; for all that, it was only by the exercise of unflinching determination to conceal how ill he felt, that he was not left behind invalided. He managed to hold up until the 19th of May, when, with Buonaparte, he embarked on board the Admiral's ship, L'Orient. Then, he broke down altogether, and was carried below. The army surgeons pronounced him to be suffering from low fever, and feared the worst. The efforts he had made to hide the real state of his health had aggravated his condition, so that his vitality was at the lowest ebb.

For more than a fortnight he lay oscillating between life and death; then a change for the better set in, and, from that moment, he began rapidly to improve, so that, at the end of another fortnight, he was able to set foot on the quarter deck, and breathe the pure, fresh air of the Mediterranean. Oh! in the relief, after inhaling the stifling atmosphere below deck, to drink in deep draughts of the ozone laden breezes that swept over the broad expanse of water! His spirits revived, and, once more, he felt that he had it in him to emulate his chief.

Wafted by favorable breezes, the gallant fleet sped on its way, until, on the morning of the first of July, the Admiral's ship sighted, in the far distance, the domes and minarets of Alexandria.

So the fleet was headed for the land. After beating along the coast for several hours in the teeth of a rising gale, in search of a suitable landing place, Marabou was selected, and at one o'clock in the morning of the second of July the disembarkation was begun. The spot was three leagues to the west of Alexandria.

The landing was accomplished with great difficulty, caused, not only by the roughness of the sea, but also by the attacks of the Bedouin Arabs, great swarthy fellows, who appeared in swarms. They showed marvelous horsemanship, circling round the French and making repeated dashes upon the right flank, and picking off many stragglers.

At three in the morning the march upon Alexandria began. The divisions of Bon, Kleber, and Morand heading the advance.

At the moment when the order to march was given, Buonaparte, who was mounted on a white horse—one of the six given him in Italy—turned to Kleber, and, pointing upwards to the sky, where a few stars still lingered before the advent of the dawn, as though loth to have their brightness veiled, said, "See yonder stars scintillate in token of our coming success; foretelling glory out of the clouds of trouble."

"Yet," rejoined Kleber, "they must pale before the glory of the rising sun." And he pointed Eastward to where a faint light showed the approaching dawn.

When Buonaparte appeared, the whole army set up a tremendous shout; cheer after cheer went up and, amidst them, the march began that all hoped and believed would result in the conquest of Egypt, but which to thousands of the sons of France meant but their grave.

After some hours marching under a dropping fire of musketry from the Arabs hovering around, and under a blazing sun, they arrived within gunshot of Alexandria. There was only a show of opposition to the French advance, for what took place was more of a skirmish before the gates than a battle. A few shots were fired, and then the Arabs fled into the city, followed by the French, some scaling the walls, and others making their way through gaps where the walls had been broken down, and through the gates.

Soon after their entrance, Buonaparte, who was attended by St. Just and accompanied by an escort of guides, had a near escape of being killed. The party was going along a narrow street, that but just allowed two persons to ride abreast; it was bounded at the end by a tall house. Those within were watching the approach of Buonaparte and his escort, apparently with friendly interest, when, all of a sudden, the party being about a hundred yards from the house, a musket shot was fired from one of the windows, and a bullet carried away the plume of Buonaparte's hat.

Instantly St. Just, followed by a sergeant of the Guides, enraged at the murderous attempt, galloped to the house, threw himself from his horse, scaled a staircase and rushed forward.

Two shots were fired at him by a woman who tried to bar his progress, one passing over his left shoulder and lodging in the arm of the guide behind him. Smarting with the wound, before St. Just could interpose, he cut her down. The

other shot went through the metal ornament of St. Just's sabre-tache, and, striking on a button of his tunic, made him think for a moment that he was wounded. The shock made him stagger, and gave others of the Guides, who had followed, the opportunity of rushing past. Their blood was up and they were intent on revenging themselves for the shots fired on their officer and their comrade, and were in no mood to grant quarter. So that, when St. Just came up to them, he had the greatest difficulty in saving the life of a young Arab, who had been knocked down with the butt of a musket and was on the point of being sabered.

At some risk, St. Just interposed his own person, at the same time striking up the sword raised to slay the young man, who was then taken prisoner and bound.

Meantime the other persons in the house, recognizing the futility of attempting a stand, took to their heels with speed, and succeeded in making their escape from the back of the building.

So soon as, after a thorough search, St. Just had satisfied himself that the house was empty, he returned to General Buonaparte with their prisoner.

Buonaparte questioned the young fellow through an interpreter. At first he maintained a sullen silence, but, after a time, when he was reminded that his life had been spared, and was assured that the French had come solely to deliver the people from the tyranny of their rulers, and would reward and protect those who chose to give them information, his reserve and fear began to melt away and he became communicative.

He maintained that it was not he who had fired the shot at General Buonaparte nor, indeed, any shot. It appeared that the house belonged to one Islam Bey, the leader of a corps of Mamelukes. Gaining confidence, the lad went on to warn General Buonaparte against Islam Bey, saying that this Sheik had sworn by the beard of the Prophet to take his life before six months had passed.

In the end, the General not only gave the lad his liberty, but appointed him to be his body servant, and afterwards, took him to Paris. The young fellow became a great favorite with everybody. His name was Ali.

Buonaparte stayed six days in Alexandria, issuing conciliatory edicts to the people and holding many conferences with the chief Sheiks of the city, many of whom had submitted to him. This was on account of the good conduct of the French troops. A few men of the first detachment, doubtless, began to plunder; but, the moment it was discovered such severe punishment was meted out as effectually to check it for the remainder of the French occupation.

On the evening of the third day after the French entry, St. Just received orders to take a detachment of five Guides and a native who knew the track to be traversed, and to start at day-break and make all speed to Damanhour, with despatches for General Dessaix, who was proceeding thither with an advance

guard of nearly five thousand men.

CHAPTER IV.

At early dawn, therefore, on the morning of the fourth day after Buonaparte's arrival in Alexandria, St. Just and his escort saddled and set out. They were accompanied by some Arabs belonging to a friendly tribe, whose chief was in the city and had offered his services to General Buonaparte. The force was small and both men and horses were picked so that they might ride fast and overtake Dessaix, who was already well on his way to Damanhour. At the last moment they were joined by a young subaltern of infantry in charge of a foraging party sent out in requisition of stores. The stores were to be carried by mules and it was the young subaltern's duty to convoy them and their drivers. St. Just found the young officer, whose name, he ascertained, was Garraud, a pleasant companion; and his men, who were infantry, fraternized with St. Just's troopers, the whole party for the first few miles marching along gayly, whistling and singing and chattering, as French soldiers will; but their chief topic of conversation was the shot that had been fired at the General on his entry into Alexandria. Garraud and his men had not yet been in Alexandria; so he asked St. Just for a full account of the affair; and St. Just gave it him.

As the sun rose higher in the heavens, conversation began to flag, both between the two officers and the men; for, although the march had begun in excellent spirits, the heat of the sun, which would shortly be at its zenith, made talking a fatigue, and movement alone sufficiently exhausting.

The Arabs only, mounted on their trusty ships of the desert, as they are wont to call their camels, seemed to be unconscious of the heat, as well as indifferent to two other evils the French severely felt, namely flies and thirst; to say nothing of the sand, which made marching horribly arduous. "Not good, honest ordinary sand," as an old veteran of Italy exclaimed, "but sand that penetrated through one's shoes and clothes, and made walking painful and tedious."

There was silence now for the most part among them all. It had lasted longer than usual, when St. Just, at last, broke it by inquiring in French of their chief guide how far they were to proceed before they halted. The old man turned his grizzly head round and gazed backwards, as though mentally measuring the distance they had already traversed; then up to the sky, as if seeking inspiration

from this source. Finally he said briefly, "A league to the water, then three to the village, where my Masters sleep."

And so they plodded on.

At last, after crawling along in the boiling sun for two hours, they reached one of the stopping places indicated by their guide. There was a small pool of brackish water and there were a number of rocks standing out of the sand nine feet or more, behind which they could shelter themselves from the sun. Here St. Just called a halt. The men dismounted and tethered their horses; then gave them food and water. Afterwards they attended to their own wants and ate and drank. Referring to the water, one of the veterans, with the recollection of the luxuries of sunny Italy before his mind, remarked that one must march through the desert under a burning sun for hours before one would drink from such a hole as that before them; a pool that, in ordinary circumstances, one would not even put one's feet into.

Their inner man refreshed, they rested for a short time, and the Arabs and a few of the French began to smoke. St. Just was among these, for he had picked up this, at that time, uncommon habit from some Gipsies he had come across in Italy.

After an hour's repose, early in the afternoon the little company resumed its march; it was but a repetition of the morning's tramp; more heat, more flies, more sand, with thirst that seemed intensified, rather than appeased, by drinking the tepid, brackish water from the soldiers' water bottles.

By way of contrast, when the sun set, cold cutting winds sprang up that pierced them through.

It was late and quite dark when the party came in sight of the so-called village—a collection of mud-huts—which was to form their resting place for the night.

The advance guard under Dessaix had recently passed through the place, for everywhere there were signs of the presence of the French; but of inhabitants there were none. Worse still, half the huts were dismantled. Many portions of them had been torn away for fire-wood; but one was found after a careful search, large enough to shelter the whole party, with some crowding.

One man was posted as a sentry outside, and relieved every two hours. His duties were not only to give notice of the approach of enemies, but also to keep an eye on the Arab guides, who remained outside and who St. Just felt were not to be trusted.

The night passed without adventure or alarm, and the rest of the men in the hut was unbroken, so that they rose in the early morn in excellent spirits and with bodies refreshed. While the sky was still clothed in its gray mantle, and the sun had scarce given signs of his approach, St. Just and his escort recommenced

their march, leaving the young subaltern, Garraud, and his convoy party to make their further way alone.

On the afternoon of the same day, they overtook General Dessaix at Beda. It was fortunate they had started so early as they did; for, otherwise, they would have been overwhelmed in a terrific sandstorm, which spent itself behind them and which they escaped by only one hour.

On handing in his despatches to Dessaix, St. Just received from him a sorry report of his command. Short as had been their stay in the country, the men were always murmuring; the heat, the sand, the flies, the scarcity and badness of the water had made them so discontented that the General had the utmost difficulty in keeping them in hand. They were mutinous, unruly, continually complaining of their lost luxuries. Even the officers complained. After a few days' rest, St. Just set out to return to Buonaparte, who, with the main body of the army, was to have left Alexandria on the 6th. Being anxious to join them with all speed, St. Just decided to travel all night. After marching for some hours and when darkness was setting in, St. Just, to his alarm, was informed by an Arab scout he had sent ahead, but who now rode back, that a large body of desert horsemen was advancing in their direction somewhat to the right of them. This was most unwelcome news. To wheel round and make an effort to escape, St. Just felt would be useless. Their only chance seemed to be to halt and wait until the enemy were close upon them; then to make a dash for it and try to cut their way through, and thus, aided by the darkness, to get clear away.

With this view, St. Just drew up his men as close together as they could stand. This mode of formation surprised the Arab guides, it being the custom of their countrymen to fight in a crescent-shaped wedge, a mode of formation Buonaparte found a strong one, when cavalry is massed in successive crescents one behind another.

Breathless, silent and motionless, the little troop remained drawn up, their ears on the alert for the first sounds of the approaching horsemen. Soon the tread of horses' hoofs, muffled by the sand, was heard, and the jangling of bridles and accoutrements. Nearer and nearer came the sounds. St. Just had given his men orders to make for the left, so as, so far as possible, to skirt the enemy, rather than meet them face to face; they were not to seek encounters, and only cut down those who barred their way; the main thing they were to keep before them was that they were to gallop for all that they were worth.

On came the Arabs. They had not yet discovered the French. A few seconds passed; then there was a shout, and the desert horsemen put their horses to the gallop and bore down upon the Frenchmen. Instantly St. Just gave the order, and from its scabbard flashed every sword; spurs were dug into the horses' sides, and they went off at the charge, meeting the fringe only of their opponents.

This was St. Just's first experience of a cavalry skirmish, his sole experience of warfare having been gained in an infantry regiment during the Italian campaign. But his horse was an old stager and used to the business; and he communicated his excitement to his rider, who felt himself borne madly onward with the others, without seeing which way he was going. There was a crash of opposing forces, a mêlée of Frenchmen and swarthy Arabs, all slashing, stabbing and hacking at each other, and parrying the blows dealt at them, as well as the dimness of the light permitted; and then St. Just felt his horse pause in its career and begin to stagger; at once he knew it had been badly wounded. In a moment he saw what had happened. An Arab, facing him alongside, so close that St. Just could have touched him, had come at him full tilt with his lance pointed dead at him. But, either by miscalculation of aim, or by an involuntary swerving on the part of one of the horses, the weapon had missed St. Just and buried itself deep in the flank of his charger, the point even protruding through the buttock. Quick as thought, St. Just realized that, if once he were unhorsed in the darkness and in the midst of all this crowd, the life would speedily be trampled out of him. Possessed of great muscular strength, to which his perilous position gave added energy, he raised himself in his stirrups, flashed his sword high in the air, then brought it down with all his force upon the turbaned skull of his opponent. The blade was sharp and trusty and it was wielded by a powerful arm. It struck the Arab's head a little to the left of his crown, and, cutting its way in a slanting direction, came out below the right ear, slicing off more than half the skull. But the force of the blow was not yet spent. Continuing its course, St. Just's sabre entered his adversary's right shoulder and, in a twinkling, had lopped off the arm that held the spear whose point and a good portion of its shaft were still fixed in the French officer's horse. Then, feeling his charger sinking beneath him, St. Just drew his feet from the stirrups and threw himself on the Arab's horse, the collision sending the lifeless body of the rider to the ground. With the man's warm blood gushing over him, he realized something of the horrors of war. But this was no time for sentiment. Settling his feet in the stirrups of the strange horse, at the moment he saw his own poor steed sink to the ground, St. Just seized the reins of his new mount, wheeled him round with the powerful Arab bit, struck his spurs into his sides, and, finding no one immediately opposing him, dashed off at full gallop; whither he knew not, except that he was going west of his proper route.

St. Just traversed a few miles on the same course, and then, satisfied that he was not being pursued, he reined in his recently appropriated horse and dismounted, intending to remain where he was, until day should break. The docile creature seemed to know what was expected of it, and, with very little trouble, St. Just got it to lie down; then, passing his arm through the reins, he laid himself

down beside the animal, which thus helped to keep him warm. The young officer tried his hardest to keep his eyes open; but, spite of his efforts, after a time, he dropped asleep. He was exhausted with the heat and his exertions.

How long he had slept he did not know, but when he awoke, feeling cold and stiff, the day was breaking, for in the East he noticed a faint gleam of light.

At first he was puzzled to account for his whereabouts. But, when thoroughly awakened and in full possession of his senses, the occurrences of the previous night came back to him, and he remembered he had almost miraculously broken away from a horde of Bedouins, after cutting down the rider of the horse he had seized.

But what had become of his escort—French and Arab? Carefully he made the circuit of the horizon with his eye, but not a sign of a human being, friend or foe, was to be seen. Nor, further within the field of his vision, turn which way he would, was a single object, animate or inanimate, visible: not a tree, not a shrub, not a rock, nothing but sand, that appeared to be without bound, north, south, east and west; St. Just and his horse, to all appearance, were the sole occupants of the desert. The stillness and solitude were awful in their oppressiveness and the young officer felt that only action on his own part would make them bearable.

He got his horse to his feet and mounted, setting out in the direction he believed to be that which would lead him to General Buonaparte's line of march. There was not a landmark by which to shape his way; only the first glimmer of light eastward.

He had proceeded in a northerly direction for about two hours, when he espied a solitary horseman in the distance, advancing towards him. Nearer and nearer came the figure, and soon St. Just was able to make out that he was not a native of the desert, next that he wore a French uniform and finally, with a cry of joy, that he was Garraud, the young subaltern from whom, with his convoy party, he had parted at the so-called village where they had rested for the night two days before. At the same moment, Garraud recognized him, and both simultaneously urged their horses forward.

Mutual explanations were at once made.

It appeared that Garraud and his command had left the village a few hours after St. Just, following slowly in his wake. The first misfortune that had assailed them was to be almost buried in the sand-storm that St. Just had managed to escape. Hardly had they got over this, when they had been attacked by the very horde that St. Just and his escort had encountered. They had done their best in the face of tremendous odds, making a temporary rampart of the mules and their loads, firing over their backs and surrendering only when several of them had been killed and many wounded and all their ammunition had been exhausted, so that further resistance would have been useless. In the confusion, somehow,

Garraud had managed to escape.

The spirits of both raised by companionship, they rode on side by side, hoping they were nearing Buonaparte. All day they marched, resting themselves and their horses occasionally, but with no food or water for either. It was just beginning to grow dark, when they descried in the distance the huts in which they had passed the night. When they reached the spot, darkness had closed over it. They could see no one, but the welcome challenge "Qui va là?" fell on their ears. The two men replied "Napoleon" and, at the same moment, a light was shown in their faces.

They found that a regiment of Chasseurs occupied the place and that General Buonaparte was with them. The main body was some few hours behind, and ought to be up before the morning.

Buonaparte's orders were that all couriers were to be conducted to him immediately on their arrival, so St. Just at once dismounted and, escorted by a sergeant's guard, made instantly for the General's tent. Two soldiers, with loaded carbines, stood before the entrance, and within could be seen the figure of Buonaparte writing on an old door, propped upon two blocks of stone to form a table.

At the challenge of the sentries, Buonaparte raised his head and saw the little group standing without. "What is it?" he said in a sharp, shrill voice.

"A courier, Sir," replied the sergeant, saluting.

Buonaparte saw and recognized St. Just, who was standing a little behind the soldier. "Ah, from the advance guard at—"

"Beda, Sir."

"Despatches?"

"Delivered, Sir; but these are the reply;" handing in those Dessaix had given him on his return journey.

Buonaparte opened them, glanced at them, then said, "Did you encounter or see any force on your way here? For, on taking possession of this place, we saw many stragglers about in the far distance, apparently part of a large body of Bedouins."

"I cut my way through a band of the enemy—how many I can't say—last night, losing all my escort. Afterwards I fell in with a French infantry officer, whose party had been previously attacked by the same force."

"How many miles away?"

"Between twenty and thirty, Sir."

"Good." Then, rising, Buonaparte walked up and down his tent for a few minutes, his brows together, thinking deeply and evidently forgetful of St. Just's presence. Finally he turned to his impromptu table and wrote a few lines. These he sealed and addressed to the General in command at Alexandria, then handed

the paper to St. Just. "Deliver this; join me again as soon as possible."

"Alone, Sir?"

"Yes, unless you can find an escort from Alexandria. Stay! When did you leave General Dessaix?"

"On the 8th in the evening, Sir."

"This is the 10th. You halted last at 11 to-day. Have you a good horse?"

"Yes, sir."

"Set off at six in the morning; it is now ten."

"Yes, sir."

"Go then, in the name of France." St. Just bowed and left the tent.

CHAPTER V.

At six o'clock next day St. Just set out, to plough his solitary way across the sandy desert. If it had been dreary on the first occasion, when he had the company of an escort, he found the sandy wastes, now that he was alone, almost unbearable. It was, therefore, with great delight that, after the first few hours of his journey, he encountered the main body of Buonaparte's army crawling like a gigantic snake across his path. But his satisfaction was but momentary, for the sights that met his eyes were heartrending. Horses in a lather of sweat from head to foot and scarce able to stand from fatigue and heat, were being cruelly urged with whip and spur to drag along the heavy guns and ammunition wagons, whose wheels were deeply embedded in the sand and could scarce be got to move. Ever and anon some of the exhausted animals would fall down dead. Then the guns would have to be abandoned, sometimes for hours, until a detachment of infantry had been brought up and transformed into beasts of burden by being yoked to them, when the sluggish march of the artillery would be recommenced.

Often St. Just passed men, who, overcome by fatigue, could no longer walk, and had been left in the wake of the army, to follow afterwards, if they could; if not, to die where they were, of thirst and exhaustion, under the sun's scorching rays.

Many of these poor creatures cried out to him piteously for help; but he was absolutely powerless to relieve them, and, moreover, was the bearer of despatches which he had been charged to deliver with all speed.

Here and there, half buried in the sand, could be seen the putrefying bodies

of both men and animals (horses and mules and here and there a camel) that had died, some of want, some of fatigue, some of illness, and a few of Arab wounds. In some cases only a few whitening bones remained of what a few hours before had been creatures instinct with activity and life; the loathsome vultures having picked off all the flesh.

Towards night he halted and, wrapping his cloak around him, he laid himself on the ground, his head resting on his horse's shoulder, the reins tightly knotted to his wrist, and soon dropped asleep, awakening only with the dawn. The next day he met with a terrible disappointment. On gaining the pool where he had intended to give his horse a drink and to replenish his own water-bottle, he found it dry, the marching army having drained it of every drop. With his tongue almost rattling in his mouth, so parched was it, and his poor horse in the same condition, he was riding on dejectedly, when, happening to cast his eyes around, he noticed a cloud of dust upon his left. The French could scarcely be in that direction; the disturbance must be due to Bedouins. At all hazards he must avoid capture; should his despatches fall into the enemy's hands, the consequences would certainly be serious, and might be fatal. He urged his jaded, thirsty steed to pace its best, and the noble animal responded bravely to his call.

He managed to escape the desert horsemen, but this would have availed him little, had not assistance come, for both man and horse were thoroughly pumped out and could proceed no further. St. Just felt his charger sway beneath him, and, to avoid falling with him, threw himself from the saddle only a moment before the exhausted animal rolled over. Then, just when he had resigned himself with all the philosophy he could command to the consciousness that, in a few hours at most, the carrion desert birds would be stripping the flesh from his bones and from his horse's, he heard a muffled tread, and, shortly afterwards, a troop of French Hussars, who were bringing up the rear guard, came in sight.

Seeing the exhausted condition of both rider and horse, and learning from St. Just that he was the bearer of important despatches from Buonaparte to General Kleber at Alexandria, the officer in command of the troop rendered the young aide-de-camp all the assistance in his power and detailed two of his troopers to accompany him on his journey, and to return with him to Buonaparte's headquarters.

After a few hours' rest and a supply of food and water, the young officer and his horse were sufficiently restored to proceed upon their way, and, on the fifth day after leaving General Buonaparte, he, accompanied by the two hussars, entered Alexandria and delivered his despatches to General Kleber.

Two days after, St. Just, with the two hussars for escort, left Alexandria for the second time, bearing reply despatches from Kleber to Buonaparte, and made his way as rapidly as he could to Damanhour, where he expected to find

the Commander-in-Chief. This place he reached in two days, but only to find that Buonaparte had gone forward towards Cairo. So St. Just had to follow.

It was reported by patrols that Mourad Bey, who had been recently defeated at Chebreissa, had posted skirmishers on the route to Cairo, to harass, even if they could not check, the French advance.

St. Just, therefore, asked for and obtained from the officer in command at Damanhour, an escort of thirty-three men, in addition to the two he already had, the troopers detailed for the purpose being selected from the squadron that had succored him when in such distress on his way to Alexandria.

Thus accompanied, he pushed on as fast as the horses could be made to go; for this carrying of despatches long distances in such a country was becoming irksome to him, and he longed to be fighting battles again, as he had fought when a lieutenant in Italy under Augereau.

Early on the morning of the 21st, St. Just and his troopers came to a village, where, they had been told by the French commandant at the last post, they would find remounts. Here reports reached them that Buonaparte was heavily engaged at Embabe, the next village, hard by those wondrous pyramids which had been built in the past ages of Egypt's glory.

At this news, they hurried forward; and soon could hear the distant sounds of musketry and cannon borne from afar upon the still, clear air. Both men and horses were excited by the noise and, though it was necessary to husband the strength of their fresh mounts, for they might have to take part in the action then proceeding, the men were bent upon joining their comrades with all speed.

Their route lay a little to the left, the Nile being on their right; but, judging from the firing that the French were occupying a portion of the road to Gizeh, St. Just and his men rode to the right, so as to cut off an angle.

It was now noon and the sun's rays were beating down pitilessly upon their heads when they came upon the first signs of the conflict.

They had drawn up their panting horses upon a little knoll to recover their wind, before bearing their riders on to the battle field below; and St. Just, on dismounting, had plenty of leisure to observe the scene. Ordering his hussars and their horses to lie down, that they might be as little conspicuous as possible, St. Just crept forward and, gaining a point of vantage, watched the movements of the combatants. Thick clouds of smoke, through which at frequent intervals could be seen streaks of flame, followed by the report of guns, hovered over the Frenchmen on his left; while, on the right, gleaming in the sunlight, were the tents of the Mameluke camp. Beyond, rose the distant banks of the Nile, and further away the huts of Boulac, a suburb of the city of Cairo. Dotted about the plain were swarms of Arab horsemen, their bright mail sparkling. A body of them were massing into formation in a last attempt to break the French squares.

St. Just had seen enough. It was plain to him that, so soon as the sun should have declined, General Buonaparte, knowing that the horses of the Mamelukes must be tired from their repeated charges, would launch his cavalry against them in the hope of cutting in two the mass of horsemen. Accordingly, he resolved to try to gain the French lines; but, to do so, it would be necessary to cut their way through a body of the enemy who were drawn up between them and their goal. Creeping cautiously back to his men, he gave the order to mount. Then, having drawn them up four deep in a square, he put himself at their head, and led them round the further side of the knoll; then bade them charge the Mamelukes. When within forty yards of the opposing squadron, the hussars fired their pistols, then, like a torrent, dashed upon their enemy. Now, though the charge was a courageous act, it was also a very foolish one, for their foes were quite a hundred strong, and considering that the hussars' pistols had been fired at the gallop, certainly not more than twenty out of the possible thirty-six shots could have killed a man apiece, and probably not half that number. For thirty-six men to attack nearly, if not quite, a hundred, was a reckless act; but St. Just's blood was up, and so they charged. He hardly knew what followed, except that there was a general mêlée and clashing of weapons; then, somehow, he found himself on the ground. His next impression was that he was being pulled to his feet, and that a French voice was saying in his ear, "Diable! Monsieur, that was a fine charge; but I thought none of you would have come out of it."

St. Just, whose head was still confused, stumbled up, and found himself in the midst of a squadron of the Guards, and that the person who had addressed him was the young lieutenant in whose company he had ridden on his first journey across the desert.

"Ah, Garraud, my friend, we are quits now; I pulled you through last time; your men have done the same for me on this occasion."

"It's superb!" The exclamation was drawn from both by the magnificently reckless way their enemies were charging. Men were falling in heaps around them. One man at their feet had just had his stomach ripped up with a curved sword, and lay shrieking in his agony, while his intestines gushed out upon the ground. A stallion, badly hurt, was biting and tearing the wounded men around him; while, across his body, five of the barbarians were fighting tooth and nail within arm's length of the square. Here again could be seen men hurling themselves and their horses upon the French bayonets, dying agonizing deaths only too gladly, if, for one instant, they could find themselves within the square.

Meanwhile St. Just had not been idle. A man was advancing from amidst the host of warriors, apparently bearing a charmed life. He was mounted upon a splendid gray stallion, whose beauty aroused the envy, as much as the superb horsemanship and courageous bearing of the rider excited the admiration of St.

Just. The youthful warrior, having failed to break the square, retired for a few yards, then coming on with a yell, he leaped it and landed in the center. But he paid for his rashness with his life. Almost before the horse's feet had touched the ground, St. Just had fired. The next instant, he had mounted the Arab's horse, and shouting "Au revoir! I am off to Buonaparte," in imitation of the late owners tactics, he leaped out of the square.

A roar of despair and rage went up from the opposing Arabs, but almost instantly it was drowned by a ringing cheer from the French. St. Just landed upon a group of horsemen who were being charged, at the same instant, by Dessaix and his cavalry.

"El J: The fiend!" the Bedouins cried, at his sudden appearance in their midst, smiting right and left, his horse almost as excited as himself.

Utterly demoralized, their superstition, for the moment, getting the better of them, they could make no stand against the French, who rode them down like sheep. Though falling by hundreds, the French cavalry accomplished their mission and separated the two bodies of Mamelukes, thus relieving the hard pressed guns.

And so the fight went on; frenzied now, on the Mamelukes' part, for they were fighting in despair. Another hour and they were flying, leaving Buonaparte master of the way to Cairo.

Meanwhile St. Just had ridden past the rear of the French army and was making for the center, where he found Buonaparte sitting motionless on his horse, watching the battle. St. Just—both he and his horse begrimed with dust—presented himself before the General, a little pale with fatigue, and with a slight sword cut on his cheek, his head bare, and his saber-tache riddled with bullets. But his eyes were sparkling with success when he handed to Buonaparte his despatches. "From General Kleber, Sir, from Alexandria."

Buonaparte continued to fix his eyes upon the battle and made no attempt to open the papers, holding them in one hand, while, with the other, he placed a telescope to his eye. No one spoke, all intently watching the man who, it was beginning to dawn on them, was no ordinary general.

At last he spoke. Turning to an aide near him, he shut up his field glass with a snap. "Tell the right wing to charge." Then, addressing himself to the others, "Gentlemen, the battle is ended; we can march upon Cairo to-morrow. You, Sir," addressing St. Just, "I thank in the name of France and of the Army."

And, even while he spoke, the sun hid itself below the horizon, and the pall of coming night settled upon the field of blood and the disheartened enemy now in full retreat.

CHAPTER VI.

Throughout the night of the 21st of July, the darkness was intermittently illumined by the flashes of musketry which from time to time resounded from the direction of the village of Gizeh, whither Mourad Bey had retreated with the remainder of his Mamelukes—about two thousand—leaving his infantry to their fate in the intrenched camp on the bank of the Nile. St. Just passed the night under the shadow of the sphinx, having, like many others, no proper place of rest—for the army was without tents—and too tired to think of anything but sleep.

Early on the following morning he received the order to mount and proceed at the head of a squadron of Guides, about fifty strong, to help the detachment which was pressing on towards Gizeh, and, if possible, afterwards to advance to Cairo. Accordingly, mounted on the gray stallion which had stood him in such stead on the previous day, he placed himself at the head of his squadron and set out at a smart trot for Gizeh. The infantry, who were attacking the place, and to whose aid he had been sent, had found great difficulty in advancing, for the road to Gizeh had been one of the hottest points in the battle of the previous day. At last, however, the outskirts of the village had been reached, and here it was that St. Just and his Guides came up with them. Mourad Bey made repeated dashes, hoping to lead to victory the dispirited remnants of his followers; but it was not to be; St. Just and his Guides hurled themselves through the sea of fire—the blazing houses—that separated them from the enemy's ranks. Despite the clouds of pungent smoke and the myriads of sparks that fell upon them, they forced their way, supported by the infantry who had taken fresh heart at their arrival, with such vigor that, after a short but sharp encounter, they put the Mamelukes to rout. That night General Buonaparte slept at Gizeh in the Bey's country house.

St. Just and his troopers, now reduced to thirty, followed in the Bey's track to the Nile bank, but were prevented from crossing the river by the destruction of the bridge of boats that had led to the Mameluke fleet. Thus checked in his advance, he rested his men in a hut hard by the river side, while he considered what course he should pursue.

Before he had come to a decision, he noticed a good deal of activity on board the vessels in the river, and that, from some of them, smoke was beginning to ascend. Instantly he understood what was going on. They were firing them, to prevent their falling into the hands of the French.

Now St. Just concluded that, if the Egyptians thought the vessels worth the burning, there must be valuable cargo on board, and that they were worth the

saving. Forthwith he resolved to do his best with that intent.

Leaving half his men and all the horses, posted at the hut, he marched on foot with the remainder to the river. Several boats were moored along the bank, and one of these they seized, and in it they rowed down the river towards the burning dahabeahs, St. Just's intention being to cut some of them adrift, in the hope of afterwards capturing them.

But he had reckoned without his host, for the vessels had been too successfully set alight. There was a strong wind blowing, and the flames and smoke were such that he could not get near enough to cast the vessels from their moorings. Again and again he and his brave men renewed the attempt, but only to be as often driven back by the scorching heat. But, worse even than the flames, the enemy, who had marked them while they were some distance from the vessels, poured in a deadly fire of musketry. One by one his men kept dropping, and St. Just soon saw that it was no longer a question of capturing the enemy's ships, but of saving their own lives.

Meanwhile the ships burned furiously, producing such a light that the French troops at Gizeh could see dimly amid the crimson gleams the distant minarets and gilded cupolas of Cairo.

St. Just gave orders to row back to their starting point, close to which he had posted the remainder of his troop.

But soon he found that their retreat in that direction was cut off; for, while he and his men had been busy trying to cut adrift the burning, as well as the yet unlighted, dahabeahs, swarms of Arabs had put off in boats and had collected in their rear.

To turn the boat's head round and row towards Cairo seemed the only thing to be done, and even the risk of this was terrible, their safety depending upon General Buonaparte's having captured the city. His fifteen men were now reduced to eight, seven having fallen beneath the Mamelukes' fusillade. St. Just sat in the stern of the boat steering, pondering meanwhile on the peril of their situation and their chances of escape. He knew that some of the French troops were already moving on Cairo; and, from scraps of conversation picked up round the camp fires on the previous night, he entertained little doubt that Buonaparte would enter the city, either by storming it, or otherwise, at dawn on the following day.

Now if he, St. Just, could get into Cairo, with his men, unseen, and quietly take possession of some house, they would probably be able to maintain themselves secure in it till General Buonaparte's arrival. And this was what he set himself to do. But how to do it was the difficulty. The light from the conflagration on the river was so great that, were they to attempt to land in their French uniforms, they would be instantly discovered by the lawless and turbulent hordes

scattered up and down the river banks, plundering and fighting and murdering in all directions, and would be quickly set upon, overcome and killed.

Their position was desperate, and desperate remedies were required; and the plan St. Just evolved was desperate, and depended also on chance for its accomplishment. Having explained it to his men, he ordered them to lie up under the shadow of some vessels moored in mid-stream and as yet untouched by the fire, just keeping the boat from drifting, and to wait for the chance of capturing a passing boat with Arabs on board, his intention being to massacre the crew for the sake of their clothes, which his own men would then put on; then they were to watch their opportunity to get ashore in the confusion that everywhere prevailed.

There is an old proverb to the effect that all things come to those who wait, if they but wait long enough; and so it was in this case. The men were sitting listlessly, tired of their inactivity, when a sudden cry brought them back to attention. Bearing down upon them was a large boat manned by about a dozen Arabs. A shaft of light cast from some burning wreckage floating by upon the encrimsoned waters in their direction, had betrayed to the approaching boat that in one of their own craft were some of the hated invaders. It was their fierce cry that awakened St. Just and his crew to a conviction of their danger. Ping! Ping! went the bullets from the Arab matchlocks, and at the same moment St. Just shouted, "Only two men row; the rest lie in the boat and fire at the Arab rowers. Take careful aim and don't throw away a shot. Your lives depend upon it."

The men obeyed at once. Crack, crack. Two of the Frenchmen had fired, and two of the Arabs threw up their arms and fell in a huddled heap at the bottom of their dhow. Almost immediately a wild volley was fired by the Arabs, and one of the Frenchmen, whose head had been exposed to the light, toppled over the side of the boat into the Nile, a bullet in his brain; giving his comrades a brief view of his face, ere he sank beneath the waters in the ruddy light.

St. Just's measures were prompt and decisive, and his voice rang out like a clarion on the night. "A volley, all of you; then pick up your oars and row for them as hard as you can go."

The order was as promptly obeyed. The seven shots flew straight and, before the Arabs could recover from the confusion they had occasioned, the French picked up their oars, crashed into them and boarded them. A few moments later, there drifted down the Nile an empty boat; while, pulling for the distant domes, which marked the city of Cairo, were eight men dressed as Arabs and speaking French.

CHAPTER VII.

The flames from the burning vessels on the river wrapped the city of Cairo in a lurid glow, and above it hovered a cloud of smoke, but which the breeze that heralds the approach of dawn, was gradually, though almost imperceptibly dispersing. The air was rent with cries and groans and yells. The thoroughfares were thronged with the panic-stricken citizens. Some, laden with goods, were fleeing with their families into the desert towards Philiae; others, their clothes torn and blood-stained, their muskets still in their hands, their dress proclaiming them to be soldiers who, routed in that day's fight, had fled for refuge to the city, were occupying themselves with pillaging the houses of the merchants.

In marked contrast to the general glare and din, one little narrow side street near the citadel remained wrapped in gloom and silence. Running parallel to the river, as it did, the houses on its river side shut out the light of the conflagration and only a faint reflection was visible overhead.

Hugging the walls of the houses on one side of this court—for it scarce merited the name of street, so narrow was it—St. Just and his followers, enveloped in "haic" and "burnous," crept stealthily and silently along. No one was about, nor was a light to be seen in any of the houses.

So far their venture had been successful; aided by the semi-darkness and the confusion that was prevailing in the busier parts of the city, where the crowd had drawn together, St. Just had managed to run his boat ashore on an unfrequented spot and to land unnoticed. Then separating, the better to escape observation, but still keeping close enough together for mutual help, should they be attacked, they had made their way towards the citadel and had joined a mob that was pouring into its gates. At that point, however, St. Just had turned aside to investigate the little street which seemed deserted.

He and his men had almost reached the top, when, suddenly, a piercing shriek rang out upon the stillness of the night. It came from a house St. Just was passing. He halted instantly; then, in the shrill and fearsome tones of a woman, came some words in Arabic. Now, during the few weeks the young officer had been in Egypt he had, in his journeyings with despatches, contrived to pick up a few words of Arabic; and the knowledge thus acquired now stood him in good stead. Thus he could translate the woman's cry, "Let me go; Yusuf, let me go!"

What Frenchman could listen unmoved to such a call for help? Certainly not St. Just. In a whisper, he told the man next to him to close up and pass the same order on from each man to the one behind him. Then he cast his eyes up and down the house; it was a tall stone building and white-washed, and was

windowless, save that high up from the ground were a few square holes protected by bars of iron. A strong iron-studded door, set deep in a stone archway, formed the entrance to this house.

Earnestly as St. Just desired to go to the rescue of the shrieking woman, the door was too strong to be forced, except after continued and strenuous efforts, and there was no other possible entrance from the front. He was debating whether to try to make his way round to the back of the house, in the hope of there finding a means of getting in, when, all at once, the heavy door swung open, and a swarthy Arab came out, bearing on his shoulders a woman, who was either dead or senseless, for she made no movement. With the opening of the door, the light from within fell upon St. Just and those behind him, disclosing to the man's astonished eyes that they were not Arabs, but Frenchmen. St. Just made a forward movement; the Arab hesitated for a moment, then dropped his burden and turned and fled into the house again.

St. Just's action was speedy. Fate seemed to be playing into his hands. Here was a house that might serve them for a refuge and that, to all appearance, could be defended for some hours, at any rate, by the small body of men he had at his disposal. At once he decided to take possession of it. Turning to the two nearest men, he said, "Pick up the woman, and take her inside." Then to the others, "Follow me, then close the door and make it fast."

His orders were promptly carried out. Then the party—two of them bearing the still unconscious woman—traversed the length of a narrow passage lighted by a small brass lamp that hung from the ceiling. At the end of this they found themselves in an open court, in the center of which a marble fountain was playing, the water falling into the basin with the sound of gentle rain, and moistening the air with its tumid spray.

At the further side of the courtyard was a colonnade, and above it were the latticed windows of the women's apartments, now open. But no dusky beauties peeped from them, nor was there any sign or sound of life; the whole place was silent as the grave.

Leaving one man as a sentry in the corridor, and despatching four to make a thorough search of the premises, St. Just told the two who were carrying the woman, to lay her down on a marble seat under the colonnade. This done, he set himself to restore her, if so be that she still lived. There were signs that she had struggled with her abductor, for, half way across the courtyard, they found a richly embroidered shawl and a jeweled dagger. A short examination showed St. Just that the woman breathed, and he could find no marks of injury about her. He sprinkled water on her face and fanned her and rubbed her hands; but, despite all his efforts to revive her, she remained insensible.

St. Just was still thus occupied, when the four men he had sent on a tour of

inspection through the house, returned, each carrying a lighted lantern, to report that they had found not a soul about the place, though, from the appearance of the rooms, it was plain that the inmates had but recently vacated them.

While receiving his men's report, St. Just had temporarily stayed his efforts to revive the fainting woman, and had faced the troopers. Now he looked to her again. The men had turned their lanterns on her; her headgear had fallen to the ground, disclosing to the young officer's astonished gaze a face of such rare beauty as he had not even dreamed of. She was quite young and, for an Eastern woman, singularly fair; she had hair of a golden brown and dark blue eyes, and a mouth about which now lurked as sweet a smile as ever brightened woman's face.

For the light shining in her eyes had completed her awakening, and, at the moment when St. Just became conscious of her surpassing loveliness, she was gazing in bewilderment upon the group around her. In a few seconds, she recognized them as the invaders of her country, and, at the same time, remembered what had led to her unconsciousness.

Then, to the astonishment of her hearers, she thus addressed them, speaking in excellent French and a clear, musical voice.

"Messieurs, the fortune of war has thrown into your hands a woman who has some claim to call herself a French woman. My mother was captured by a slaver when traveling from France at the time of the death of Louis Quinze, whose soul may God preserve. All my life have I spoken your tongue, and, because of the French blood in me, I have cursed the slavery in which, in this country, we women are held.

"I thank you for your timely help. You have saved me from a fate worse than death.

"And now I will order the slaves to bring you some refreshment."

And, rising with difficulty, though not without grace and dignity, despite her stiffness and the novelty of her position, she made as though to walk to the colonnade.

"Mademoiselle!"

She stopped and faced the speaker, fixing her eyes intently upon his face. St. Just bowed low before her. She might have been an Empress; but his respect was a tribute only to her beauty.

"Mademoiselle," he repeated, "I regret to inform you that I have just learned that, save yourself and us, there is no one in the house."

"Is that indeed so?" she answered, bowing on her part. "Then I pray you order your men to forage for themselves. If you care to accompany me, I will show you where the stores are."

He turned to the men and said, "Hunt about, lads, and eat what you can;

for, if that black rascal returns with any more of his friends, we shall have to stand a siege and fight for our skins, and" (after a pause) "the lady's."

With this the men dispersed, some in search of food and others to perform allotted duties.

An hour later, St. Just, who had busied himself in the interval in putting the house into a fair condition of defence, ascended, with beating heart, a staircase, at the top of which was a doorway screened by heavy blue curtains, that formed a glaring contrast to the bright red stair carpets. Bold soldier as he was, it was with a timid air that he pushed aside the curtains and found himself where, till now, no man, save the master of the house, had been permitted to set foot; in the women's apartments. It was a long, narrow room, but so gracefully and skillfully decorated that its narrowness was not at first apparent. The air was heavy with some Eastern perfume, that caused the feeling of oppression, for the lattices overlooking the courtyard that had been closed over night had not yet been opened, despite the fact that the sun was beginning to show its power.

St. Just looked round the room for signs of the girl he had rescued not two hours before; his eyes did not roam far before they lighted on her; she was reclining upon a pile of cushions, on a divan, one arm under her head, the other, bare to the shoulder and exquisitely molded, lying on her side, but bent slightly forward, so that her fingers just touched the floor. She was sleeping, her whole pose betokening the abandon of fatigue. Noiselessly St. Just moved to her side, and gazed enraptured on the vision of loveliness beneath him. Through the gauzy drapery, he could see her swelling bosom rise and fall in gentle undulations; he noted the faint flush, induced by sleep, upon her cheek, the ruddy lips slightly parted in a smile and showing just a hint of the gleaming teeth within, the delicately chiselled nose, the broad smooth brow, the exquisite oval of her face; and, at the sight of all her charms, he felt his manhood stir within him.

Then, as sleepers generally do when one is near to them, she became conscious that she was not alone, and the dark blue orbs unclosed. She started, and a look of fear came over her at finding herself in the presence of a man; but, the next instant, she recognized him and, remembering what had passed, she smiled.

St. Just, too, smiled, and at the same time registered a mental vow to save her from the usual fate of young and handsome women in a captured city.

Then she sat up and laughingly addressed him in French, as heretofore. "Fancy your finding me asleep like this. I feel quite ashamed. And with my face uncovered. And do you know, Sir, that no man but my father ever sets foot in the apartments. They are sacred to the women."

"I fear, Madame," replied St. Just, "that, in a state of warfare, nothing is sacred to a Frenchman. But I came here to help you; and this must be my excuse. Soon my countrymen will be in possession of the city, and you will need

protection. But I will see to it that no harm shall come to you."

"I am sure of that," she answered, beaming on him with admiration. He was the handsomest man she had ever seen. "But come and breakfast with me," she went on, and she motioned to him to seat himself beside her on the divan.

St. Just needed no second invitation, but quickly did as he was bidden. Then he noticed that, on a small table close at hand, there was laid out a dainty refreshment in the shape of coffee and Arab cakes and fruit.

"Are you a conjurer?" he asked in surprise, when she had filled a cup and passed it to him. He did not understand how the repast had been prepared, all the servants having fled.

She laughed a merry laugh. "I made the coffee myself a short time ago," she said, "and then I must have dropped asleep. The fruit and biscuits were already in the room."

"But you had no stove," St. Just objected.

"There is a brazier in the corner. See? And the saucepan was put ready for this morning by the slave last night, who was not able to forget the habits of a lifetime even when overcome by terror. Though, till my father returned from Gizeh late last night and told us how the battle had gone, we had no cause for fear."

"But how comes it that I find you here alone?"

"My father returned only for more slaves, and left immediately, when he had collected them. He promised to come back for me, or send Yusuf. Yusuf came indeed—he was the man you saw carrying me—but I would that he had stayed away, for he frightened and insulted me. He said that all law and order were at an end; that the French would soon be here, and that he loved me and was determined that I should be his; by force, if needs be. With that he advanced and would have embraced me. I screamed and fled from him; but he soon caught me and was carrying me away, when I fainted. I know no more; you know what followed."

"I do indeed," said St. Just gravely. "God be thanked that I came up when I did. I shudder to think what otherwise might have been your fate."

"It would have been death," she said; "for I never could have survived the ignominy of having been embraced by Yusuf. I should have slain myself at the first opportunity. Thus you have saved my life, my brave deliverer."

She turned her lovely eyes on him—eyes which beamed forth not only gratitude, but the dawn of love.

"You overwhelm me, when you talk like that," replied St. Just. "Any of my countrymen would have acted as I did. But tell me. You said but now, that your mother was a French woman; may I know her name?"

"Certainly; it was de Moncourt."

"What, of Moncourt in Brittany?"

"Yes."

"Indeed! then I have little doubt I have the honor to greet a cousin. I am a St. Just, also of Brittany."

"Truly? How delightful!"

"By what name did your mother call you?"

"Alas! it is an Arab one; I am called Halima."

Hardly had the words escaped her lips, when the sound of two shots following rapidly upon each other reached their ears. Both started to their feet.

"Yusuf!" she cried in terror.

And he, "Oh for arms and ammunition. We have but our pistols and a few rounds."

"Do you want guns?" asked Halima. "It so, there are matchlocks in the house; and gunpowder, too. Come with me and I will show you where they are."

St. Just shouted to one of his men; and Halima led them up a passage, halting at the end of it, before what seemed merely a wall panel. But she touched a knob that formed a portion of the Arabesque that decorated it; and, at the same time, pushed the panel. It opened on hinges, like an ordinary door, disclosing a room in which were arms of all sorts, the whole more or less old fashioned, and useless against disciplined troops, but that might be efficacious against a Cairo mob. At any rate, the matchlocks would make a noise, and firing blank cartridges often answers with a crowd. So St. Just and his trooper picked up a dozen of the firearms and as much ammunition as they could carry, the young girl helping them; then they rejoined the other men, who were gathered in the courtyard at the foot of the staircase that led to the women's apartments.

Quickly the matchlocks were distributed and loaded. But, before St. Just had decided how to post his men, a loud hammering at the entrance and the trampling of many feet and the sound of voices were heard. One louder than the rest shouted out in Arabic, "Open, open, ye dogs of Christians."

Then Halima trembled and panted in faltering tones, "It is Yusuf. Oh! save me from him. Kill me rather than let me fall into his hands."

And St. Just answered. "Trust me, Yusuf shall not have you, while I live. Keep close behind me." Then he called out to his men, "All follow me up the staircase!" and he led the way with Halima. Then he posted four men at the top of the staircase, two in front who were to lie down, and two behind, to stand up or kneel as occasion served. The staircase was not broad enough to allow more than two persons to ascend abreast; there was a fair prospect, therefore, that the four men could defend it.

These men placed, St. Just, with Halima and his three remaining troopers, betook themselves to a room with windows or embrasures that commanded the

courtyard approach to the foot of the staircase. At these embrasures they took their stand, and awaited, stern and indomitable, the imminent attack.

Meanwhile the din without increased; the shouts and yells and menaces against the hated foreigners grew louder; the blows thundered upon the iron-studded door faster and harder. No door could long withstand such violence, and every moment St. Just felt that it must give way. At last, with a loud crash, it fell, and the crowd of Arabs came pouring into the courtyard.

"Aim low and fire," came the order from St. Just. He fired himself, and the three troopers did the same. Two men in the crowd dropped, and, with a howl of rage, the rest dashed across the yard and made for the staircase. When the first of them came in sight, the four men at the top fired, and several of the attacking party fell.

"Load and fire as fast as you can," said St. Just to the men in the room; "and show as little as possible of your bodies."

Before the beginning of the fight the French troopers had thrown aside their Arab draperies, finding they impeded their movements; so that, if ever their assailants had had any doubt about their nationality, it was now removed.

Both the men on the stairs and those in the room were now using their guns with fatal effect upon the densely packed crowd below, and many a bullet found its billet. But the besieged were not having it wholly their own way, for, though the attacking party recoiled time after time before the deadly fire at close quarters, they continually again pressed forward. They, also, were not without firearms, which they were using to some purpose, for every now and then a bullet crashed into the room and buried itself either in the wall, or in some article of furniture. Presently one of St. Just's men gave a cry and dropped, badly wounded. But there was no time to attend to him. All that happened was that Halima stepped forward and took his weapon and his place, loading and firing like the others.

Meanwhile the men at the head of the staircase were faring badly. Already two of them had been rendered hors de combat; and St. Just, rushing out of the room to learn how matters were progressing, arrived just in time to see a third man fall with a thud at his feet, stone dead.

There was a loud yell, then a rush up the staircase, and, the next moment, St. Just and the trooper at his side found themselves hacking and hewing and stabbing at the sea of swarthy faces in front of them. But they made no impression on the crowd, spite of those who kept falling beneath their blows. On and on the rabble came, pressed forwards by them who were behind. Then St. Just shouted out for those who were in the room to come to his help; but his words were lost in the din of the yelling Arabs. Fighting and retiring inch by inch, he, and the brave fellow at his side gradually regained the room in which were Halima and the others. The place was filled with smoke and sulphurous fumes, and

almost stifling, and the many bullets that had entered it had made havoc of the furniture and woodwork.

The moment St. Just regained the room, his eyes sought Halima. She was standing at the window firing at the surging mass below. Calling to the two men with her to take his place and hold back the crowd so long as they were able, he ran swiftly to the girl. Each looked in the other's face, and both knew that their efforts to drive back the crowd were vain. Unless there was some way of escape, their doom was sealed. From the look of stern resolve she wore, and the way she clutched the dagger in her hand, St. Just knew that she would keep her word, and that, in securing her, the victors would capture but a corpse.

Meanwhile the three men at the door were fighting hard; but what could three men do, opposed by forty? With aching arms and parched mouths, and panting breasts, they slashed and stabbed, and parried, retiring step by step, the savage Arabs ever pressing forward, and by sheer weight forcing the three men back upon St. Just, who now once more joined in the fray.

A moment more, and the soldier on his right fell to the ground with a spear point through his heart. Instantly St. Just brought down his sword upon the spearman's head, and the Arab joined the Frenchman he had slain.

Enraged at seeing their comrade fall, and thirsting for revenge, St. Just's two last men hurled themselves upon the mob, and, for a moment, made it waver.

Then, feeling that their final moment had arrived, St. Just placed himself before the girl, prepared for the last deadly rush that would end the life of both. But, for all that he knew that resistance would avail them nothing, that their case was hopeless, so strongly implanted in the human heart is the love of life, that he did not stand passively awaiting death, but savagely fought on, desperation urging him to superhuman efforts in one last supreme struggle for life.

Then, just when he had received a spear thrust through the left arm and all seemed lost, suddenly, with the swiftness of a flash of lightning, despair gave way to hope. A measured tramp was heard along the narrow street; then the inspiring sound of a French bugle call. Help was at hand, if he could but hold out a few moments longer! The knowledge lent him strength and inspired him to fresh efforts. Once more he threw himself upon his foes. But his ardor this time was scarcely needed, for the Arabs also had heard the sounds, and knew what they portended. Their enemy would soon be upon them. They wavered, then fell back before his whirling sword; the next moment they had turned and were rushing pell mell out of the room and down the staircase, tumbling over each other in their hurry.

But, warned by the approaching march of men, instead of making for the main entrance, on reaching the foot of the staircase, they wheeled right and left and made their escape by doors and windows at the back.

During this stampede, the Arab girl had not been idle. She, too, had heard the marching and the bugle, and knew that, if she could but gain the French, her life and honor were secure. She saw that the courtyard was deserted—for all the Arabs, who were not in the room, were crowded on or about the staircase—also that the main entrance to the house was clear.

In a moment her resolve was taken, and, while St. Just was still brandishing his sword to keep his foes at bay, she made her way carefully through the window, and lowered herself on to a protruding gargoyle, about four feet below and somewhat to the side of it. Steadying herself for a moment, she stooped, or, rather, squatted down, until she touched the gargoyle. From this point to the top of the colonnade was scarcely ten feet. Clinging firmly to the gargoyle, she let her body down, until it swung at full length from her hold. Then she dropped. The fall shook her somewhat, but, almost immediately, she recovered herself and ran along the colonnade, until she gained a water pipe. To slide down this and reach the ground in safety was but a second's work. Then, like a young antelope, she sped across the courtyard, and over the large studded door, which had been torn from its hinges and lay athwart her path: and out into the narrow street.

Onward she rushed with the cry, "A moi! à moi! mes enfants! Au secours; pour la France!" Nor did she pause until she found herself panting and breathless in the arms of a French officer. But, withdrawing herself immediately, she hurriedly explained St. Just's great peril.

At this, scarcely waiting for orders, the soldiers rushed past her through the house and across the courtyard. There they found St. Just covered with blood and black with powder, but, save for the spear thrust through his arm, and sundry bruises, not much the worse for what he had undergone. But he was panting for breath, and resting on his sword, and could not speak. With a cheer, the soldiers ran to him, and, two of them supporting him, one on each side, they got him down the staircase, then carried him across the quadrangle, and set him down before the officer in command of the detachment, which General Buonaparte had that moment joined.

To account for the arrival of his fellow soldiers, so opportunely for St. Just, it needs but to be stated that Buonaparte had made his attack at dawn upon the city, as he had intended. The sheiks had made but a poor defence of the Citadel and had quickly agreed to its surrender. The troops were on their way to take possession of it, when the Arab girl ran out and told what was occurring in the house.

So soon as he had breath enough, St. Just gave his account of all that had occurred from the time of his pursuit of Mourad Bey. Buonaparte's dark eyes flashed unpleasantly, at times, but he spoke no word until the young officer had concluded his report; then he turned to a man at his side, over whose head the

knife of the assassin was already hovering, and in a few weeks would fatally descend; and said something in an undertone. General Kleber, for it was he, replied inaudibly to those about them, and shook his head.

Then Buonaparte addressed St. Just and, pinching his ear, he said, "Be careful, be careful. France is watching you, and has need of you."

The words seemed cold and formal—almost stern; but coming from this little man with the piercing eyes, to the young officer, they sounded like unmerited praise.

Continuing, Buonaparte turned to a captain and said,

"Guard the house and look well to the lady also." The next instant he rode away, followed by all, but a captain's guard, to receive the homage due to a conqueror.

Then St. Just fell fainting to the ground and was carried into the house in which he had so bravely fought, and where he was to lie upon a bed of sickness and be tended by a beautiful woman who was already more than half in love with him.

CHAPTER VIII.

For three weeks St. Just lay in bed in the house of Halima's father, for the greater part of the time unconscious; for—what with his wound and bruises, the excitement he had undergone and the great heat—on the day after the attack on the house, he fell into a raging fever. Once General Buonaparte came to see him, but the young officer did not know him.

During all this time Halima helped to nurse him, and, so true is it that we acquire affection for the objects of our care, each day she felt herself more drawn towards him.

At last his mind came back to him, and he began to gain strength fast; so much so, that he realized, with great dejection, that, in a few days, he would have to return to his duties, and bid farewell to the Arab girl who had wound herself about his heart. Now, in the game of love there is often much finesse and subterfuge. He would have given anything, to know Halima's sentiments towards himself, but it so happened, that in proportion as St. Just gained consciousness and strength, so did she withdraw herself from his society, until at last she would spend but a few minutes of each day in his company, and then only

in the presence of another person. Had he known how assiduously she had attended him during his term of insensibility, his mind would have been at rest, for the knowledge would have given him the information he desired, and he would have declared the love that was consuming him. As it was, fearing to offend her by his precipitancy, he said nothing, when he left her, except to thank her for the shelter and attention she had given him.

Halima blushed and hung her head, and, though longing for him to take her in his arms, with her Eastern bringing up, was too shy to give him an inkling of her feelings; and so they parted, each outwardly calm, but with a devouring flame within.

His duties, when he returned to them, he found irksome, for thought of her, though they were really light—nothing beyond an hour's drill daily with his regiment.

In this way two months passed, but more stirring times were coming; this was the calm that heralded the storm. The conquered citizens of Cairo, though, to all appearance, acquiescing with cheerfulness and content in the new order of things, were in reality planning a revolt, and the knowledge of it was brought to St. Just's ears in this way.

At five o'clock in the morning of the 21st of October, his servant aroused him to say that a messenger from the "Lady Halima" wished to see him. St. Just dressed with all speed, and Halima's messenger was introduced. He was the bearer of a letter from her to say that she was assured on authority, on which she could implicitly rely, that the citizens had for some time been quietly arming themselves, and that they were at that very moment silently massing themselves throughout the city, and would, at a certain signal, rise simultaneously in the different quarters, and massacre the French.

This news was as startling as it was alarming, and St. Just instantly had the reveille sounded and ordered his squadron to horse; then hurried towards the citadel. But, meantime, the insurrection had begun, and General Buonaparte, at the first alarm, had also galloped thither, attended by three Guides. But he was ahead of the young officer, so that when, a few minutes later, the latter came on the scene, he found Buonaparte surrounded by a mob of Arabs, his escort killed, his horse shot under him, and himself in imminent peril of his life.

Just in the nick of time St. Just and his troop dashed forward, and by the impetuosity of their onslaught, broke through the crowd, forced them back, and soon cleared a space around their General. But the Arabs were only checked, not broken, and, seeing the small number of their assailants, they prepared to renew the attack; and, had their courage but equalled their numerical advantage, they must have annihilated the Frenchmen.

From the French point of view, discretion was the better part of valor, and

St. Just saw the means of putting that better part into execution; for it so happened that, once more, he was close to the Lady Halima's abode. To suggest to Buonaparte that they should take refuge there, to mount the General on one of his trooper's horses, and to gallop at full speed through the gateway of the house was the work but of a few seconds. Before the astonished Arabs had divined their object, the whole squadron had passed through, and the entrance to the courtyard had been barred.

St. Just's heart beat high at the thought that, for the second time, it seemed likely he would have to defend the house of his lady love; but, on this occasion, with the added responsibility for the safety of his Commander's person.

To set against this, however, were the circumstances that they were in sufficient numbers (fifty) to hold the place, with the protection of the walls afforded, for a considerable time, and were well-armed; not, as on the previous occasion, with obsolete and rusty weapons.

But, fortunately, the valor and endurance of the party were not put to the test; for the arrangements for defence had scarcely been completed, when the march of infantry was heard approaching at the double. A French regiment was passing the end of the narrow street on its way to the citadel, news having been received that most of the rioters were assembled there.

At the sound of their footsteps, some of St. Just's troopers leaned out of the windows and shouted for help. At once the men were halted, then wheeled round and up the street. The effect was magical! with shouts and cries of terror, the crowd of Arabs assembled before the Lady Halima's house, without making the slightest show of fight, took to their heels and ran helter-skelter up the street and out at the end, some of the French soldiers chasing them to that point. Then the door of the house was opened, and one of the troopers informed the commanding officer the meaning of their presence there, and that General Buonaparte was with them. At this unlooked for news, the officer said he would see the General and take his orders.

Now, though when the attack was made on him, Buonaparte was on his way to the citadel, at the sight of the Lady Halima he—always an admirer of the other sex—was so captivated by her beauty, that he gladly accepted her invitation to remain for breakfast. So, when the Colonel of the infantry regiment was introduced to him, instead of taking advantage of his escort to continue his journey to the citadel, he contented himself with giving the officer certain orders, among which was that he was to keep open communications between the house in which they were, and the citadel; and to let him know if his presence should be urgently required. Failing any such message, he, Buonaparte, would be at the citadel in two hours time.

Then he dismissed the Colonel and he and St. Just sat down to breakfast

with the Lady Halima in the women's apartment. It brought to St. Just the remembrance of that first repast he had taken with her in that very room, nearly three months before, and in somewhat similar circumstances. Now, as then, there were sounds of firing in the distance, and the tramp of feet and the rattle of arms awoke the echoes of the court-yard below. But in the room itself how different was the state of things. She had been his sole companion on that memorable morning, and he had been the object of her assiduous courtesy; now, in the presence of this all-conquering young General, he was a sort of "quantité négligeable." As before, the sun-light fell with full effect upon her lovely face, now filled with animation, her eyes sparkling with delight, the while she gayly chatted with the "man of destiny" who was seated upon the divan facing her. Buonaparte, for once, had cast off the iron mask of coldness and impenetrability he usually wore, and was basking in the sunshine of her smiles. For the time the cares of his position had been thrust aside, and, as he himself expressed it, he was amusing himself while Cairo was in revolt, like Nero fiddling while Rome was burning.

His chatter was not, however, altogether frivolous; occasionally he would be serious. For instance, speaking of the city and his plans he said, "I must confess that to-day's disturbance has surprised me. And I had thought the future would be so easy. Alas! which one of us knows the future?"

The girl, who had been listening intently, here interrupted with a laugh. "You would know your future? That is told easily enough. Remember I have been brought up in the East and have been taught to forecast events by people who have forgotten more than you of the West have ever heard of. I could convince you."

So saying, she clapped her hands and, before Buonaparte could object, if indeed he had wished to do so, had said something to her slave in Arabic, that resulted in the removal of the breakfast table and the production of a large earthenware bowl filled apparently with water, for she invited both men to taste it. One thing they noticed, and it was this; that, though the bowl was shallow and the sunlight shone around on the table on which it stood, it did not seem to shine upon the water, which looked black as ink.

Presently from a flask, she took from a corner cabinet the girl let fall a drop of liquid into the bowl; then, bending over, she gazed into it in silence, and both her companions did the same. Now, whether the act of fixing their eyes intently on the bowl, in a measure hypnotized them, so that their brains became enslaved by her suggestions, it is not for the present chronicler to say; but, in a few seconds, pictures seemed to form themselves on the surface of the inky looking liquid in the bowl. At first the images presented appeared blurred and misty; but, gradually, they took definite shapes. In the first picture Buonaparte was seated on a throne and on his head was a golden crown, and Josephine his wife was by his

side, she also crowned. Gradually the figures faded and disappeared. Next St. Just saw himself on a prison floor chained to the wall and with the visage of a madman. In the next tableau there were many figures dressed in generals' uniforms, and Buonaparte in their midst. It was night and they were seated round a camp fire; from the expression on the faces of all, very serious matters were engaging their attention; and scattered around were dead and wounded men and horses and broken weapons and accoutrements. This scene also passed away. In that which followed Buonaparte and St. Just were driving in a sleigh, and in front of them was a woman beckoning to them. Her face was unknown to both; upon her head was the crown that Buonaparte's wife had worn in the first picture; and, wherever she pointed was desolation, the desolation that comes to a country over which an invading army has passed; and across the picture was written "France." The next tableau was a battle field. On a mound, surrounded by generals, but slightly in advance of them, and mounted on a white horse, was Buonaparte, but looking older and stouter. A short distance from him, soldiers were massed about a large farmhouse, which they were attacking, and which was being defended by other soldiers within. The scene changed; troops were flying in all directions—the French—the figure of Buonaparte among them. Yet one more scene; a lonely rock-bound islet in a boundless sea. The moon and stars overhead showed that it was night. On a narrow bed in a plainly furnished room lay Buonaparte; and at the door there stood a soldier in a uniform that was not that of France. 'Twas plain his duty was to guard a captive! This vision, like those which had preceded it, vanished, and the liquid mirror in the bowl revealed no further pictures.

St. Just raised his head from the bowl and encountered the troubled gaze of Buonaparte; while, seated hard by on a divan, was the girl. There was silence for a space. It was Halima who broke it.

"Have you seen enough, Sir?" she said, turning to the General. "Or would you see more?"

Buonaparte's answer was to overturn the table; the bowl fell and was smashed into a thousand pieces on the floor. Then a sudden light leapt into those awful eyes, and he broke forth into a torrent of reproach. "Why did you bring me here?" he asked angrily, turning to St. Just. "Am I to be insulted, fooled by such mummeries as these? As for you, girl, did I but know your father, I would send you to him dead." And he hissed out the last words, his face white with passion.

And St. Just, who loved the girl and was rightly counted brave, and would have struck to the earth any other man who had so spoken, was so dominated by the glance of this little man, whom physically he could easily have crushed the life out of; that he sat unmoved and tongue-tied.

Not so the girl; with face aflame and flashing eyes, she sprang to her feet and faced the conqueror; then thus she spoke, "My father the Sheik Ibrahim of

the tribe of Auim (faithful) has with him many warriors who would avenge my death by killing you."

Buonaparte made no reply to her, but addressed himself to the young officer. "Captain," he said, "Assemble your troop and attend me to the Citadel. We have dallied here too long." Then, turning to the Lady Halima, "I thank you, madame, for your hospitality and the timely shelter of your house. Adieu. I doubt not we shall meet again." He bowed to her and strode quickly from the room. She made no answer, but merely inclined her head. But to St. Just, who followed Buonaparte, she nodded smilingly, and, just when he was passing through the doorway, the words were wafted to him, "You will come to see me soon, my Captain."

On their way to the Citadel and the moment they were out of hearing, Buonaparte made reference to the Arab girl's remark. "You heard what she said about her father," he said, "and the men under his command. He will be useful to me; he must be gained somehow. I shall send you to him." Then he relapsed into silence, and no further word was uttered till they reached the Citadel.

Here they found all quiet; the incipient insurrection had been quelled before it had attained dangerous dimensions.

The news of the attempt on Buonaparte's life had reached the French, and, when he made his appearance, loud huzzahs were raised, and many of his officers pressed forward to congratulate him on his escape. Among these were Kleber, and Buonaparte's secretary, Bourrienne. Him the General hailed.

"Ah! Bourrienne!" he cried; "the very man I want. Get writing materials, and pen me what I shall dictate."

The letter presently dictated was addressed to the Sheik Ibrahim, Halima's father, urging him to join forces with the French and, while pointing out the hopelessness of opposition, and the certainty of the eventual victory of the invaders, promising him great rewards for his assistance.

The letter was dictated in the hearing of St. Just, for Buonaparte wished him to know its contents. When it was finished, he turned to the young man and handed it to him with the words, "You will take a squadron of men and go to this Ibrahim with this letter, and use your best endeavors to induce him to adopt my views. I have heard of this man; he is a powerful chief. I think you will either fall in with him, or gain news of him in the neighborhood of the third cataract, near Abu Klea. But his daughter can inform you."

"How soon do I start, General?" asked St. Just, in a tone that was none of the liveliest. He had had his fill of desert rides, and looked forward to the coming expedition with anything but pleasure.

"To-morrow at day-break," was the General's reply. "Meanwhile your time is at your own disposal." Then, turning to Kleber, who was standing by, "General,

give Captain St. Just a squadron of Arabs you can trust, and an interpreter for service in the desert, in case this sheik should not know French."

"I will see to it, Sir," was Kleber's answer. "The men shall be in readiness at day-break."

Then, with a nod, Buonaparte dismissed St. Just.

Much as he disliked the prospect of the mission that had been confided to him, there was a temporary solace in the excuse it gave him for once more calling on Halima; and not more than two hours after he and General Buonaparte had left her, she was astonished to receive the announcement of his return.

She advanced smilingly to meet him, but with a look of inquiry on her face. "I am delighted to see you again so soon, Captain St. Just, but I am not so vain as to attribute your call to my attractions, or even to your courtesy. Besides, I see trouble in your face. Are you the bearer of bad news?"

Then St. Just told her of his coming journey, and how loath he was to leave Cairo, where she was, and to face the hardships of the desert, of which he had already had so painful an experience.

When she learned his destination, she told him she would write a letter to her father, if he would bear it to him; and, there and then, she sat down and wrote it, inscribing it with her father's name and present resting-place, so far as she believed. Handing it to the young Frenchman, she said, "I have told my father all that you have done for me, and I have prayed him to protect you and put you on your way. Also I have told him of Yusuf's treachery towards a daughter of the house of "Auim." She drew herself up proudly when she mentioned her tribe's name. "He will punish Yusuf either with banishment for ever from the tribe, or with death."

St. Just took the letter from her, but his hand trembled with excitement, and he could scarce find words in which to thank her, for stress of the passion that was surging like a torrent in his breast. He tried to stem it, but it would not be confined, and at last broke forth.

"Oh, Halima!" he cried. "It is not the perils of the desert that alarm me; what cuts me to the heart is that I must leave you; for I love you, I love you; I feel that I cannot live without you. Until I saw you, my heart yearned only for military glory—to rise in my profession; but now—now I would forfeit every prospect, all else that I hold dear, if I might win your love. Tell me, lady, is there no cord in your heart that vibrates in unison with my own? Surely such love as mine cannot be all in vain. Oh, if you could only know its strength, you would pity me with such pity that, close behind it, would follow its half-sister, Love. Speak, Halima, and end my torture."

He stood back to feed his eyes upon her beauty, his breast panting and heaving in his excitement.

And she? Gradually her creamy complexion took on a warmer hue, until her face and neck were colored like the rose; the long, dark lashes veiled her limpid eyes; she raised her hand; then, to the young officer's wonder and consternation, with a little cry of joy, she ran to him and threw herself on her knees before him. "My love! my lord! my master!" she murmured rapturously. Then she seized his hand and covered it with kisses.

But to have a woman kiss his hand was more than he could bear. A feeling of shame came over him; it seemed so utter a reversal of what was fitting. The blood rushed to his face.

"Not there," he cried. "But here, close to my heart, my Halima." He raised her from the ground and folded her in his arms, she hiding her face upon his shoulder.

The hours that followed for the lovers seemed to travel with the speed of light, for they were given up wholly to loving dalliance and endearing phrases, that never seemed to weary the performers; and it was not till night was well advanced, that St. Just tore himself from the arms of the Arab girl, whom he had pledged himself to make his own, on his return, and who on her part had sworn fidelity to him.

CHAPTER IX.

The sun had all but vanished below the horizon; in its departure lighting up the almost cloudless heavens with masses and streaks and rays of every hue from blood red to golden yellow—Nature's glorious tints, to be seen in their fullest beauty only in the East. But the beauty of this particular sunset no one witnessed; for taking a trio of palm trees set in a little patch of vegetation, as the point of vision, an observer placed there would have looked in vain, North, South, East and West for the slightest sign of life. In every direction for leagues upon leagues, as far as the eye could travel was the boundless desert. Not a single object broke the dead level of the sand. The solitude was supreme, the silence awful. Presently, when the sun was on the point of sinking out of sight, a little breath of wind from the direction of the waning light sprang up, sending a shiver through the palm plumes aloft, and rustling the herbage at their base; the deadly stillness was at an end.

Then, if the imaginary watcher by the palm trees had looked North, he

would have noticed a little cloud upon the level plain; next a blurred mass of something. Gradually he would have seen this something expand and develop, until, finally, it took form in the shape of a troop of horsemen. On they came, a company of from thirty to forty, shaping their course for the little oasis about the palm trees, the eagerly sought mark of a resting place for the tired traveler and his beast, where the former hopes he will obtain both food and water.

Ten minutes later, they had reached their goal. Both men and horses were covered with dust and sweat, and were dropping with fatigue; and it was plain that they had traveled far and fast. Then, at the word of command, each man dismounted and began to water his horse, before attending to his own requirements. The man who gave the order, the reader has met before. He was St. Just; he was on the mission to the sheik with which General Buonaparte had entrusted him, and he expected in a few days to accomplish it.

He vaulted from his saddle; then, having unstrapped his cloak, he patted the neck of the grey stallion lovingly, for the good horse had carried him many a weary mile right gallantly. Then he glanced, with a laugh, at his dusty uniform. It was frayed and torn and soiled; yet he wore it with a glow of pride; for was it not the visible sign of his fellowship with that brave army which had proved itself invincible, and was still adding to the glory and the possessions of his country?

Be sure that he first attended to his gallant charger's wants. Then he went round among his men to see that they had looked properly to theirs. This duty performed, he sat down to eat his lonely supper; for lonely he was, his only companions being his Arab escort, with whom, though they were friendly, he had naught in common.

When he had finished his scanty meal, he seated himself at the foot of one of the palms, set light to his pipe, and gave himself up to thought. It was now six weeks since he had started on this mission. He cursed the luck that had deprived him of the presence of his lady love and, at the same time, of gaining glory in the field of battle under Buonaparte. Was he never to have the same chance as had his brothers in arms of winning renown? He wondered what they were doing at that moment, and what was Halima; was she thinking of him?

Though it was irksome and fatiguing, he had not found desert life altogether uneventful; the various difficulties and dangers he had encountered on his journey had prevented that; for instance, on one occasion, owing to the lowness of the Nile, the boat, in which he and some of his men were crossing, had been stranded for hours upon a shoal, and they had been in imminent danger of being drowned. Another time, they had drifted on the rocks at one of the great cataracts, a boat had been dashed to pieces and ten of his followers drowned. Then they had marched for days, without getting to any place where they could purchase remounts; so that, at last, their horses had become so utterly exhausted

that they had had to rest for several days to recruit, before proceeding. Besides this, repeated dashes had been made upon them by marauding Arabs they had fallen in with by the way. Thus his original fifty men had been reduced by one mishap and another to thirty-five; and the sullen indifference of these, and his fears of treachery on their part, sorely tried his temper and filled him with anxiety. Further, he was beginning to feel much solicitude about the outcome of his mission; for he was now nearing his journey's end, and expected to make his destination in a day or two.

Altogether he was in no happy frame of mind on that November night, while he sat silent in that desolate waste, with his eyes fixed on the glowing embers of the fire, listening drowsily to the movements of the tethered animals and the monotonous tramp of the sentry on the sand hill just above him. Presently he shivered and drew his cloak more closely round him. Then, gradually, his head sank and soon, with the remainder of the camp, he slept.

* * * * *

The hours wore on. Meanwhile the solitary watcher paced up and down upon his beat, scanning the Eastern sky intently for the first signs of coming day. In his eagerness, he halted for several minutes, and fixed his eyes upon the quarter in which the sun would rise. In his preoccupation, he failed to notice what the camels stretched below him did, that a body of horsemen about a hundred and fifty strong were approaching from the West. The sand muffled the sound of their horses' hoofs. But one old camel heard it; like the veritable desert warrior he was, he raised his head and snorted loudly. At this, the musing sentinel turned round. Too late he saw their danger; the horde was sweeping down, in a rapidly converging semicircle, upon the sleeping camp. It was his last sight on earth; a shot rang out upon the air, and he fell upon his face, struck dead. The next moment, with a resounding yell, the hostile Arabs dashed upon the sleepers.

The shot that slew the sentry roused St. Just; he sprang to his feet and rushed to his horse. Two or three others did the same and, mounting, galloped off into the darkness, a hailstorm of bullets in their wake. One of these grazed the gray stallion and made him restless, so that he would not stand for St. Just to mount him. While he was still striving to effect his purpose, the enemy came pouring into the camp on every side, ruthlessly slaying St. Just's half-awakened escort. One of the assailants, seeing by the moonlight St. Just's white face, uttered a cry of joy and threw over his head a noose, then drew him backwards suddenly and sent him to the ground, with a crash that momentarily stunned him. When he came to himself, which he quickly did, he found that he was being searched from head to foot; the noose was tightly bound about his chest, confin-

ing his arms behind his back, thus rendering him wholly incapable of resistance. Watch, money, knife, sword, pistol—and, worst of all, his despatches were being passed from hand to hand amidst cries and yells from the crowd around him. One thing only escaped their notice, and that was his darling's locket.

Presently a tall man with a coal black beard came up and spoke to him in French. "Are you not he that rode the gray horse at the battle of Embabe?"

"I am," replied St. Just, expecting that, there and then, an end would be put to his existence.

"I was sure of it," muttered his interlocutor; then turned to his followers and said something in Arabic that St. Just failed to catch, but it stirred them greatly, for instantly arose a hoarse murmur of anger and disappointment. The man who seemed to be their leader, quieted them by raising his hand, as would a huntsman to his hounds, saying, at the same time, "I will it." Then returned again to St. Just, who, having regained his composure, thus addressed him.

"Kill me, if you will; but I pray you forward my despatches to him to whom they are addressed. One of them is a letter from a daughter to her father. Have pity upon his gray hairs, if you have none for me."

"That is for the Chief to say," retorted the bearded man. "March!" he wound up.

In obedience to the order, St. Just set out. Oh, the torture that followed when, at the will of his savage captors, he was compelled by the stress of the rope, though he was on foot, to keep up with his mounted escort, and all the while his chest so confined by his bonds that he could not breath freely. When he lagged, he was urged on and dragged forward with the rope. And, meanwhile, he had the mortification of seeing his own gray horse bestridden by the bearded warrior.

At last, after ten hours of this misery, they came in sight of the Nile, on whose bank, under the shadow of overhanging rocks, was pitched what was evidently the temporary encampment of the tribe.

The squadron halted and were immediately surrounded by a crowd of women and children and barking dogs, who indiscriminately greeted the returning warriors. Looking about him from the spot where he lay guarded by four men, who regarded him with no friendly eye, St. Just noted that most of the tents had been struck and that, before his arrival, active preparations had been made for a move; also that the main body were eagerly questioning his captors, who, in reply, vociferated loudly and pointed at him with lively gesticulations. Such was the babel of sounds around him, that he could make nothing of their conversation, and, indeed, was in no condition to try, worn out, as he was, in mind and body. He lay in the shadow of a camel, where he had thrown himself upon his arrival, and, at last, he fell asleep.

When he awoke, it was dusk, and, while he yet struggled between sleeping and waking, his guards came to him and dragged him to his feet; then drove him unceremoniously towards the pile of rocks. Here, in their shadow, squatting in dignified silence around a fire in front of a large tent, were from ten to twenty aged men—apparently the counsellors of the camp. St. Just was placed in the center, near the fire, whose strong light was shed upon his features, immediately facing the opening of the tent, where he could just make out the form of some one seated. At this juncture, a little breeze sprang up, fanning the fire into greater brightness; so that St. Just could now discern the features of those about him. Seated within three feet of him upon a square carpet, was one of the oldest men he had ever seen. His beard was white as snow, and so long that it swept the ground in front of him. It was impossible to guess his age, for, save for his eyes, which sparkled brightly, he looked like a living corpse.

So soon as St. Just was placed before him, the old man spoke: "Let him be unbound, but guarded."

Immediately some one behind him cut the rope, and St. Just knew that he was free. After gazing at him for a moment, the old man called, "Ben Idherim!"

Out of the throng there strode the man who had been leader of the band that had captured St. Just, and, forthwith, he told how he had swooped down upon the camp; accompanying his recital with expressive gestures. St. Just looked on unmoved while, one by one, to lend vraisemblance to the tale, the articles that had been found on him were handed round the circle of impassive listeners. Finally Idherim produced the despatches and was about to hand them also round, when St. Just broke silence.

"Sirs, as I said to him who has just spoken, kill me if you will, but send on my despatches."

The old chief, who, since the sentence recorded of him, had not spoken, and seemed to have sunk into a stupor, merely nodding his head occasionally when some point in his lieutenant's speech gained his approval, now looked up and fixed his eyes upon St. Just, who stood there pale, travel-stained and weary, but fearless and almost defiant. "Why so; what would you?" he inquired.

"Sir, one is my general's letter to a chief to whom I was journeying, when stopped, and the other is from the chief's daughter telling of her safety. Again I say, I ask not for my life. Do with me what you will. All I pray is that both letters may be sent on; the one, that my General may know me to be faithful; the other, that a father may have tidings of his daughter."

The old man's reply was short and sharp. "Give me the letters." They were handed to him, and then, to the surprise of the young Frenchman, he broke the seals and began to read them.

At this moment, a man came out of the darkness and sat down by the chief's

side; plainly he was on intimate terms with him. At first, St. Just regarded him idly, out of mere curiosity; then, as though in a dream, the present scene was blotted out, and he saw himself again in Cairo, and in front of him was a house, and from that house came forth a man bearing a woman on his shoulder. Quick as lightning did this scene flash across him, and as quickly did it pass, and he was once more in the present. Forgetting his position as a captive, and with the cry of "Yusuf!" on his lips, he sprang forward and made a rush at the new comer.

Instantly the latter started to his feet. In a moment he had recognized the speaker, and, drawing a pistol, he fired point blank at the French officer. The bullet whizzed past his head and flattened itself against the rock behind him.

At a word from the chief, four men sprang up and seized the would-be assassin and bore him out of sight. This done, the old man thus addressed his counsellors. "Yusuf, because he is my nephew, have I spared; but for that, he would have died; first, because he deserted my daughter the lady Halima, when the invaders came; secondly, because he has outraged justice by firing upon a prisoner undergoing trial. For this I have decreed that Yusuf be banished from our tribe for ever."

A murmur of approbation went round the circle. The chief continuing, addressed St. Just, "As to you, know that I am him you seek; and this is my answer to your General's letter. For myself and on behalf of my tribe, I refuse to accede to his request. No bribes or promises shall make me turn my arms against my country. Yet, because he has spared my daughter, will I stand aloof; I will take no part against him. You can tell him this, if you live to see him. But the chances are against you, for you, a messenger of peace, have fired upon my tribe."

The venerable gentleman forgot to state that his people began the firing; possibly, in the one-sided view he took, he overlooked it. "For this," he went on, "justice demands that there shall be shot for shot; accordingly, you will take your stand on the top of yonder rock, and ten of the youngest of the camp children of those able to bear arms, shall fire a shot each at you. If you survive, then shall you go free. As I have said, so let it be."

He ceased speaking, whereupon the circle broke up, and all took up a position in front of the tent.

Now, the distance from the rock to the tent was but forty yards, and the rock itself, on the top of which St. Just soon found himself, tied so that he could not move, was about twenty feet high by only two feet broad. And here he stood, looking down upon the scene upon which the silvery moonbeams fell, waiting for the death he felt was close upon him. Outwardly he was calm, for he had faced death too often to display fear of it; but a tumult raged within his breast. It was hard to die so young, and, for an instant, such anguish took possession of him that, but that his tongue clave to the roof of his mouth, he would have

pleaded for mercy; but, the next moment, the word 'Courage' was whispered in his ear, and the voice that whispered it was Halima's. Doubtless this was the result of imagination acting on an overwrought mind, but it steadied him, and his failing heart revived.

The next instant, there was a flash, followed by the ping of a bullet, and the report of a gun echoing among the rocks. A voice below counted "One," in Arabic; then there was a pause. The bullet had missed. The second, aimed better, grazed his ear. The third passed through the fleshy part of his shoulder and buried itself in the stake behind him. The fourth and fifth shots hit the rock at his feet; and the sixth passed through the rope that bound him, almost severing it. The seventh, eighth and ninth flew wide. After that, there was a long pause.

Presently the Frenchman heard a howl of exultation, and a tall, graceful youth took his place in front of the living target, resting his weapon on the ground, with the air of a practiced marksman. From where he stood, St. Just could see the youngster's black eyes twinkling with joy, while he glanced along the barrel; for was he not the best shot of the tribe, and his aim deadly? A second's pause, then, carefully pressing the trigger, the marksman fired.

St. Just felt as though a hot iron had seared his side, and he knew that he was hit. Unconsciously, he bounded into the air with the shock; thereby bursting the already half severed rope. Then, falling over and over, he landed, not on the ground, but on a projecting corner where he was held suspended by his tunic.

When he recovered consciousness, he found himself lying in a tent, and by him was the Sheik, holding in his hand the locket of Halima, the case deeply dented with a bullet mark.

"But for this, you would have died," exclaimed the Sheik. "Further had I read the whole of my daughter's letter, Yusuf would have taken your place. Now, rest yourself, assured that you have the friendship of one who is strong to help alike in hate and love."

On the morrow St. Just lay unconscious in a raging fever.

CHAPTER X.

But what of the Lady Halima, who had not seen her lover, or had any tidings of him for six weary weeks?

At the very moment when St. Just was undergoing his fearful ordeal on the

rock, she was wandering restlessly, feverishly, about her own apartments, her thoughts wholly occupied with him. Indeed, ever since they had been parted, she had thought of little else. But, whereas, generally, her reflections, though she felt saddened by his absence, were tinged with pleasure at the thought of his handsome face and form, his bravery, his return to her with credit to himself for the successful performance of his mission; to-night they were full of gloom. She had a presentiment, she strove in vain to dissipate, that her beloved was in the direst peril. She was endowed with a more than ordinary share of that faculty which places us en rapport with those with whom we have a strong affinity; so that, even when separated by thousands of miles from those we love, we feel, rather than know, that misfortune is overtaking them.

And so it was that Halima; convinced of her lover's danger and her helplessness to avert it, she paced up and down the room wringing her hands, the tears trickling down her cheeks, and continually crying, "Oh! Henri, Henri, what is it that is happening to you, my love? My heart tells me that you are in dreadful peril; and I—I am powerless. Oh! why did you leave me?"

At the thought that she would never see him more, Halima became so overcome that she burst into a flood of weeping and sank upon a divan, burying her fair face in its cushions. And thus, somewhat later, she was found by Buonaparte, who, since his aide-de-camp's departure had been a not infrequent visitor. Unheard by her, he entered the room, wrapped in an ample cloak, and silently approached her side; then, with arms folded, stood looking down upon her.

Feeling intuitively that she was not alone, Halima raised her tear-stained face, and her eyes fell on the General. She gave a little start, then feebly tried to smile. Buonaparte dropped his cloak and seated himself upon the cushions by her side.

"What ails you, fairest one?" he asked. "Why this grief? I would come to see you oftener, but my leisure hours are few, so that I cannot visit you so often as I would. Come, pretty one, dry those tears, and tell me what it is that troubles you."

Now Halima, having known Buonaparte for hard on two months, had learned something of his disposition; and she feared to tell him that she loved St. Just. So, bringing her feelings under some control, she answered, "Alas, Sir, I wept, because the memory came back to me that I had annoyed you, when, wishing to amuse, I pretended to forecast your future. But indeed, General, I was not serious; and, surely, you did not so take me."

If she thought that by this speech she had cleverly put him off the scent of her real sentiments, she mistook her man. He tapped the floor impatiently with his foot and answered fretfully, "Tut, tut, that is all past and gone. It cannot be that which troubles you. Is it not rather the absence of the handsome Captain?

By my soul, I am greatly in his debt for introducing me to so fair a flower." And he looked ardently at Halima.

Now, when a victorious General, and, moreover, a youthful one, lays himself out to captivate a woman, she feels flattered by his notice, and he rarely fails. The present instance was no exception to the rule, for a smile broke out on the fair lady's face, and she gave him a glance that told even more than words.

"But fret not for him," Buonaparte went on; "he is not worth your tears; forecast his future, as you profess you can, and you will see that it is so. Even I am seer enough to tell, without the aid of magic bowls, what he is doing. I know what my young officers are, and he is no exception. Doubtless he is at this moment flirting with some dusky beauty on the banks of the Nile, while his men are resting for the night."

Then he leaned back in his seat to see how she would take his reflections on her lover's want of constancy; at the same time he was furtively casting his eyes in his cold, calculating way, upon her charms; though, apparently examining his hands, of whose delicate whiteness he was inordinately vain.

But the way that she received his words astonished him. Indignant at his sneering accents, stung by the suggestion that any other woman could take her place in St. Just's affections, her jealousy aflame at the thought that perhaps there was some truth in it, and anxious to defend the absent one, she threw prudence to the winds, and gave her feelings play.

Springing from the divan, she turned and faced the General, her eyes flashing with the scorn and anger he had enkindled.

"If all men were as you suppose," she cried, "then should I pity women. But it is not so. To seek to make me jealous by hinting that the man I love—yes, I love him, and I glory in it—and shall love so long as I draw breath, has forgotten me and is dallying with another woman, is unworthy of the conqueror of Egypt. You have dared me to peer into the future, to learn my lover's doings and his fate. I fearlessly accept your challenge. Doubtless I shall find that many dangers will beset him, for, in these perilous times, it can scarce be otherwise; but, be that as it may, of this I am well assured, that, whatever the future has in store for him, in the end, he will be more fortunate than yourself, who, though you will rise to the highest point of human greatness, will not retain it—not even the freedom of the humblest subaltern in your army. Your insatiable ambition will prove your fall. Now you know my feelings towards Henri St. Just. I had meant to keep my secret. But what I feel for him can be of no consequence to you; and I am sure you will not let it prejudice him. But if I thought that you would harm him, I would this instant bid you begone, and would look upon your face no more. And, had I ever feared you on his account, this city weeks ago would have no longer held us, for you would have been no more, and I should have fled with my lover to

the desert. But now to read his fate."

And she turned from him and began to make her preparations for diving into the unseen.

Now, although what she had said had sunk deep into his breast and rankled there, Buonaparte did net suffer his resentment and his wounded pride to show upon the surface. But he stored it up against her, adding it to the grievance of her previous forecast of his future. He meant to make this woman his, and his anger made him all the more determined; but the fruit was not yet ripe for plucking, albeit it was maturing fast. Clever actor as he was, there were few better able to disguise their feelings. He broke into a little laugh and then replied:—

"I crave your pardon, gentle lady;" he laughed to himself at the irony of the epithet; "in that unconsciously I have angered you. I little thought that my soldier's badinage would have let loose so impetuous a torrent of wrath from the lips of so beauteous a creature. Happy St. Just to have such a champion. But one thing I have to urge in my excuse; I knew not that he was so favored, for you had never let fall a word to that intent. Forgive me then, fair Halima; I will not so offend again." Then, after a short pause, during which he watched her movements, he resumed, "well, is the magic bowl in order? I would see how far the outcome of your incantations will give the lie to my jesting prophecy."

The preparations had given the girl the time and opportunity for regaining her self-control and recognizing the folly of making an enemy of Buonaparte. She laughed gayly; then placed the crystal bowl upon a table near the divan and, as on the former occasion, dropped some of the mysterious fluid into it.

"Now it is ready," she said.

Eagerly both craned their necks forward over the bowl and gazed intently into the clear black fluid.

At first, nothing was to be seen; then, gradually, in the depths of the fluid could be discerned the outline of a rock, which, by degrees, became more and more distinct. Then it was seen that on the summit of it was a figure made fast to a stake. Next an Arab came in sight, and he leveled a matchlock at the captive man, who was standing with head bent low upon his breast. There was a puff of smoke; the human target bounded up in the air, then fell headlong from the rock and into space, disclosing in his fall the features of St. Just!

At this, Halima removed her gaze and uttered a piercing shriek; the spell was broken, the picture vanished; nothing but the smoke-black surface of the liquid in the bowl remained.

Then, "Mon Dieu!" she cried, "it cannot be; it must be false;" and, with that, fell fainting at the feet of Buonaparte.

For the moment, he also was staggered by the vision; but his bewilderment did not last long. He broke into an unpleasant laugh, and turned his gaze on the

unconscious girl. "True, or not, it is as marvelous as it is unaccountable. As for St. Just, I am persuaded he is dead. I am sorry, for he was a good officer, and he saved my life. I wish I had not sent him on this mission."

For a few seconds, he felt a touch of genuine regret, not unmixed with remorse, and the feeling showed itself in his usually impassive face.

Then, a glance at the unconscious girl turned his thoughts into a fresh channel. Bah! regrets were vain and childish; St. Just was gone; 'twas a pity; but the girl remained and no one now stood between her and him.

He turned his attention to her, and, by dint of fanning her and sprinkling her with water, in a short time he was rewarded by seeing her languidly unclose her eyes in returning consciousness. He now raised her from the ground, and placed her on the divan. At first her eyes wandered vaguely round the room, as though in search of something that she missed. As yet, memory had not returned; but the blessing of forgetfulness was not granted her for long; soon she knew all that had occurred, and with the knowledge, she burst into a flood of tears.

Buonaparte made no attempt to restrain her sobs; he knew her weeping would be the sooner over, if unchecked until it had spent its force. He sat beside her, watching her in silence. Gradually the heaving became slower and more regular in its movements; the sobs less frequent; the tears, instead of streaming down her cheeks, now came only in odd drops, and presently, with a long-drawn sigh, they ceased.

Then Buonaparte gazed tenderly into the liquid depths of the glistening eyes, and took one of her little hands in his. Forgotten was his own charming wife in distant Paris, in the fascination of the little Arab beauty, and, bending over her, he murmured in the thrilling tone he well knew how to use as often as occasion served, "Dear heart, let me console you. To regret is weak, is useless; it will not bring him back. You may think me hard and cruel; but be advised by me, when I tell you that the easiest way to solace one's self for a lover's loss is to install another in his place. Come then to me, and I will teach you so to love, that you will say that all your previous experiences were but a parody of the passion."

He spoke with such ardor that she could not but be moved. Still, she shook her head petulantly, but she did not withdraw her hand, and her glance showed no displeasure. And so, for a short time, they sat in silence, Buonaparte still holding her hand, and fearing to break the spell by speaking.

His patience was rewarded, for, presently, she spoke in a voice that trembled slightly, but still was clear and sweet, and her eyes were turned on him, in such wise that he felt himself bewitched and consumed try his desire.

"If I could have absolute faith in what my eyes have seen this night," she said, "I would consider your proposal, which, in your position, is most flattering; for I know that you will rise—aye faster than has risen any other man before.

And those who join themselves with you will rise with you. See," she continued, getting up and walking to the open window. She flung open the lattice and, pointing to one of the many stars with which the sky was studded, "Right over your head you behold yon star. It is the star that rules your destiny. Each one of us in coming into this world has his particular star that brightens with his rise, with his fall, and dies with him. But the majority of persons are so commonplace and unimportant that their stars are so small as to be invisible. It is only the great ones of the earth whose stars can be observed. My mother told me that it is the same in her country—France—that, when a star is seen falling from the sky, some soul is quitting its earthly tenement.

"Mark well your star and watch its varying brilliancy, and, when you see that lessening, be warned and pause in your career; if not, be well assured that, for all your many victories—and those you have already won are as nothing to those in store for you—the time will come when you will suffer a defeat so crushing that it will put the finishing stroke to your career."

She ceased, and, at first, Buonaparte made no reply, but stood gazing at the star she had pointed out, now twinkling dimly before the approaching dawn. Not that he paid any heed to her "prophetic vaporings," as, mentally, he termed them. He was thinking over her statement that, if assured of her lover's death, she might entertain his (Buonaparte's) proposal; and conning how he might convince her that St. Just was dead; for he had conceived a burning passion for this woman.

Then he turned from the window and thus addressed her. "Fair Halima, I thank you for your warning, and it shows you take an interest in me. I may, therefore, hope that in time your spark of interest may kindle into the flame of love. With you always at my side to scan the heavens for me and give me warning, failure would be impossible. Come to me, then, and share the greatness that is in store for me. Why remain faithful to what is but a tender memory; why deny your youth and beauty the pleasures that are their due. You have proved to your own satisfaction that St. Just is dead, and——"

"Sir," she interrupted him, "I am but a beginner in my art; and the Fates sometimes play us false. A woman is influenced more by instinct than by reason. Now, my instinct, or my heart—call it which you will—tells me that to-night my vision has been distorted, that my eyes have seen that which was not true. If I had absolute proof that St. Just is dead I—I might——" She ceased, not knowing how to complete her sentence; her thoughts had out-run her powers of speech. She cast down her eyes and the blood rushed to her face in her confusion.

And the man noticed it and was quick to take advantage of her implication. "You might learn to love me," he exclaimed; and there was a note of triumph in his tone.

Halima marked it and hastened to reply, "Nay, Sir, you do violence to my

thoughts, and make my word out-run them. I said not aught of love."

Buonaparte eyed her keenly. "For the present," he said, "I will be satisfied with your unspoken thought. But you talked of proof of your lover's death. Alas! I fear it will be only too easy to obtain. I doubt not that, before a month is out, I shall bring you such evidence as it will be impossible to disbelieve."

"But how will you convince me? Nothing short of the evidence of eye-witnesses will do it."

"You forget that St. Just had an escort of fifty tried and faithful Arabs. If one or more of these should testify to his death, would you then believe?"

And she, strong in her belief that St. Just would die, ere he would suffer himself to be taken captive—in which case the vision must have been false—assented. She knew her lover would strain every nerve to execute his trust; to deliver not only his General's but also her own letter; both his honor and his love were at stake. So, in the hope that the month's delay would bring a favorable turn in Fortune's Wheel, she parted from her new admirer.

CHAPTER XI.

Buonaparte was not the man to let the grass grow under his feet; whether the object of his pursuit was a hostile army or a woman. So, the next morning, he started enquiries for news of St. Just amongst the chiefs now under his sway. Failing to gain information in that quarter, he sent his Mameluke, Roustan, with a search party in a boat up the Nile, to learn whether any of the headmen of the villages on its bank had seen or heard anything of the young French Officer, or any of his party of fifty Arabs.

Day followed day with no result, until a month had slipped by since Buonaparte's parting with the Arab girl. The General was seated one afternoon under a tree in the garden of his house at Cairo musing on various matters and, among them, on Halima, when word was brought to him that Roustan was without, desiring to have speech with him.

Buonaparte ordered the messenger to admit him instantly. When the Mameluke entered, he bent his knee deferentially to his master, then stood in a position of attention, waiting to be addressed.

"Well, Roustan, what news?" asked Buonaparte sharply.

"Sir," replied the faithful slave, "I have performed the commission you en-

trusted to me, and have obtained certain information concerning Captain St. Just."

"In one word," interrupted Buonaparte, "is he alive or dead?"

"He is dead, General; of that I have obtained indisputable proof."

A scarcely audible sigh escaped the General; but this was the only sign of relief he gave. His face remained impassive as usual, nor did he make the slightest movement.

"Proceed with the particulars," he said.

Roustan went on to relate that he had traced St. Just and his party to a certain oasis in the desert, distant about five weeks' journey from Cairo, and that there the trail had broken off. Not to abandon the search, he had remained in the neighborhood for a few days, prosecuting inquiries among the tribe that dwelt about there. He had been on the point of giving up his quest as useless, and returning to Cairo the next day, when he was aroused from sleep by the return of some of the tribe, in company with four strangers. Three of these had formed part of St. Just's escort, and the fourth was a prisoner, a renegade of the tribe of Auim, of the name of Yusuf. Him the three others were desirous of bringing on to Cairo, where, of course, they would have to report themselves to their commander.

Roustan then went on as follows:

"I brought the four men on with me and they are now guarded in the citadel, where they will remain until your pleasure concerning them shall be known."

"You have done well, Roustan," was the General's comment, when the slave ceased speaking; "I shall not forget to reward your services. Bring me that little table."

There was a light writing table near at hand in the garden, and Roustan wheeled it up to his master. Buonaparte seized a sheet of writing paper, wrote a few lines on it rapidly, folded it up and addressed it to the Lady Halima. It was to the effect that he had much to tell her at eleven o'clock that night. He handed the letter to Roustan, charging him to deliver it at once, and, having done so, to proceed to the citadel with orders that the fourth man, Yusuf, was to be kept apart from the others, and that all were to be strictly watched and allowed to have no communication with any one outside.

"Inform the Governor," Buonaparte concluded, "that I shall visit them at nine o'clock this evening, when you are to be ready to accompany me."

Then, once more commending him for his sagacity, Buonaparte waved his hand to signify that the interview was at an end.

* * * * *

The deep tones of the bell that notified the hours was resounding through the citadel at nine o'clock that evening, echoing along the silent passages in the great courtyard, when Buonaparte, attended by his body servant, passed through the arched entrance way.

Standing within the gate, a few yards from the sentry, was a figure that, like Buonaparte, was closely muffled in a cloak. The figure approached the newcomers and saluted.

"No formalities, General, if you please," said Buonaparte. "I prefer my visit here to be unknown. Lead me to the prisoners."

"Will you follow me, Sir?" said the person thus addressed. Then, taking a lighted lantern from underneath his cloak, he led the way across the courtyard towards a low block of buildings, which he entered. Traversing a short, dark passage, they turned to the right, and were immediately challenged by a soldier, whose "Qui va là?" was answered by their guide who, after giving him the countersign, ordered him to stand aside from a heavy wooden door before which he stood on guard. Then the guide placed the lantern on the ground, while he unlocked the door that gave entrance to a small square chamber. In a corner of this room the Arabs were huddled up together asleep. Round their wrists ran the light steel chains, the ends of which were attached to staples in the wall. Buonaparte took the lantern from their guide and, walking up to the three sleeping figures, regarded them much as a keeper would the wild beasts in his charge. The flashing of the lantern, dim as was its light, awoke the sleepers, who yawned and stretched themselves. Then they rose to a sitting posture and glared with sullen indifference and in silence at their visitors.

Buonaparte gazed at them for a moment or two; then, turning to Roustan, said, "Go to guard house and call a dozen men. Bring them hither and bid them conduct these men to the house of the Lady Halima. I will interrogate them in her presence."

Roustan salaamed and left the chamber.

"Come, General," Buonaparte went on, "we will go and see the other prisoner."

Then he passed out, with his companion.

After walking a few paces, they came to a door, and this having been unlocked, they found themselves in a smaller cell than that in which the three Arabs were confined. Here, however, there was but one occupant. Yusuf, for he it was, was, unlike the other captives, unbound, and was pacing his cell with restless step.

At the entrance of Buonaparte and his companion, he scowled at them; then broke into a torrent of angry words, that both his hearers found difficult to follow.

When he ceased speaking, Buonaparte addressed him.

"You are of the tribe of Auim?" No reply. "Speak and I will free you, if you tell me what I want to know."

"I accept," came the sullen answer; "you do not look like a man who lies. Say on."

Buonaparte put several questions, which Yusuf answered; then he went on to relate what the reader already knows; how that he had seen St. Just shot at and fall headlong from the rock.

"Ha, ha!" he ended with a fiendish chuckle, "He is dead, sure enough. I knew he would die when they shot at him." Here he stopped.

"How?" asked Buonaparte, who, during the recital, had stood leaning with his back against the door and idly kicking one foot against the lintel.

"Because I have his amulet. That once lost, his fate was certain. See, here it is."

And the exulting ruffian held before Buonaparte's astonished eyes the identical trinket Josephine had given to St. Just in Paris on the night of their meeting at the Palais de Luxembourg.

Buonaparte snatched it from him suddenly.

With a howl of rage, Yusuf dashed forward to regain it—only to meet the point of a sword, which, gleaming at his breast, had been instantaneously drawn by the General's companion.

Buonaparte put the jewel in his pocket and, as if abstracted, and taking no further notice of the captive, walked from the cell. A moment later, his companion, having locked the door, rejoined him.

Presently they reached the outer gate way, and Buonaparte, mounting his horse, which a soldier held, galloped off into the darkness, leaving his companion standing under the archway, lost in thought.

* * * * *

The Lady Halima was pacing her room in a lever of impatience. She had received Buonaparte's letter, and the hour of his promised visit had arrived. In the courtyard below, surrounded by their guards, stood the three hapless captives. The moon's silver light fell upon them shivering in their scanty clothing of haic and burnous—a great contrast to the French soldiers in their uniforms, and three-cornered hats—the two groups fair samples of the East and of the West.

Presently there was a slight movement among the French soldiers, and their listless attitude was changed for one of expectation; at the same time a faint sound, like that of muffled blows, could be heard in the distance, though it scarce penetrated the thick, high walls. But, low as it was, it reached the Lady Halima's

ears, and it made her heart beat high and brought the color to her face. The sound came nearer, and now could plainly be recognized as the sharp trot of a horse. No wonder she was in a fever of excitement, for she knew that Buonaparte was approaching, and all that his visit meant for her. What had the Fates in store for her? Was she to learn that her lover still lived, and, having performed his mission in the desert, would soon return to her; or that he was dead and that she must fulfill her promise and permit Buonaparte to take his place? True, she had not promised to install him as her lover, in so many words; but she had given him to understand that it would be so, and she considered that she was in honor bound to give herself to him, should he demand it; she knew she had meant this all the time, should she receive unimpeachable evidence that St. Just no longer lived. But she would not allow herself to think of the possibility of his death. Ill he might be; seriously ill of fever; even grievously wounded; but dead? No. Fate could not be so cruel.

But, should the worst have happened, she would have gone to Buonaparte's arms without the least repugnance or sense of shame. Despite the French strain in her, her upbringing had been an Eastern one; she was a Mahometan and familiar with the usuages of the harem, and to the light esteem in which Eastern women were held; so that she saw nothing degrading, if she could not have the man she loved, in becoming the paramour of some one else. In the case of Buonaparte, another factor helped to influence her decision, and that was Ambition. As already shown, she was superstitious and believed in a mysterious connection between humanity and the stars; and, according to her reading of the heavens, Buonaparte was destined to rise to the highest flights of power; were she with him, she would rise with him.

To sum up, Love was easily first with her; she would sacrifice everything for that. If St. Just lived, nothing should stand between her and him. But, if he was dead, then she would bury Love, and install Ambition in its place. Union with Buonaparte, at any rate, would serve her immediate purpose—to flee from Egypt and take up her abode in France.

She moved to the latticed window and looked out; presently she saw Buonaparte ride into the courtyard, unattended, and dismount. Her agitation grew almost more than she could bear, Love and Ambition being in the balance; the most momentous question of her life was on the eve of settlement.

The room was almost in darkness, for only a small oil lamp, that hung above the divan, gave a feeble light; so that, before she saw Buonaparte, he was upon her. While she was still standing at the window, he entered softly, and unannounced. Stealing up to her, he wound his arm about her waist and kissed her.

She struggled with him, and he let her go. She started back, and then stood

facing him with flashing eyes and heightened color, her bosom heaving with indignation.

"How dare you, Sir?" she cried. "So it is thus you think to gain a woman's favor? I have heard much of the deference paid by your countrymen to women; is this a sample of it? Oh, would that my lover were here to avenge for me this insult!"

Buonaparte answered with a laugh, "Your lover? Ah! he is here; but not the one you mean."

And he tapped his breast with his hand.

Halima made a step forward.

"My lover!" she cried eagerly. "What mean you? Do you bring me intelligence of his return? If that is the reason of your coming, I could find it in my heart to pardon you. Speak; Oh! keep me not in suspense, but speak."

She panted in her agitation, while she hung in mingled hope and fear upon his answer.

It came in harsh and strident tones. He was angered at the depth of her feeling for St. Just, and it made him pitiless and heedless of the pain his words would cause.

"Never in this world will you see St. Just again," he said. "He lies buried in the desert, slain by your father's orders."

At this dreadful news, so suddenly and cruelly imparted, his hearer swayed as though she would have fallen; but, with an effort, she so far controlled herself as to stagger to a divan, on which she dropped.

"It is not true, it cannot be true," she cried; "you are deceiving me for your own ends. Why should my father slay him? No, I believe you not."

Buonaparte took no notice of her words. He merely stepped to the open window and called out, "Roustan, bring up the prisoners."

The Arab girl sprang to her feet and advanced to him. "Prisoners?" she asked wonderingly. "Who are they? Why are they here?"

"You say you disbelieve me. They bring you proof of what I have just told you."

Even while he spoke the tramp of men could be heard outside, and, in another moment, Roustan entered with the three Arab soldiers and their guards.

Buonaparte cross-examined them in Halima's presence, and she herself put such questions to them as she chose. They told her of the capture of St. Just by members of her father's tribe and all that had followed, to his final fall from the rock. They were so evidently the witnesses of truth that Halima could not fail to be convinced that St. Just was dead.

She waved her hand to them as a signal that they were to go, and Buonaparte dismissed them.

Then the tears, that her excitement had kept back, poured forth. The girl staggered to the divan and, burying her head in its cushions, wept long and passionately.

As on a similar occasion, Buonaparte sought not to check her tears, but sat near, waiting patiently till her grief should spend itself. Meanwhile he fingered mechanically St. Just's charm, which he had taken from Yusuf, and meant to give to Halima.

At last the force of her weeping died away, and she raised her tear-stained face to his, a look of piteous entreaty on it.

At a loss for words of consolation, Buonaparte handed her the jewel.

"It was St. Just's," he said. "Now you have a right to it."

She reached out her hand and took it. At the same time, Buonaparte seated himself upon the divan and drew her to him. Then he kissed her, while he whispered tenderly in her ear, "I love you, Halima, I love you. My Queen, my heart's desire, tell me you love me too."

But she had St. Just's death too freshly in her mind. She shook her head sadly. "No, no," she murmured; "not to-night. Perhaps, to-morrow I will tell you."

Now Buonaparte, always imperious, could and would brook no resistance. For reply, he crushed her to himself. Violent was his embrace and masterful his manner. And, she, in her inmost heart already yielding, made but a faint resistance. And, at that moment, the light above the divan flickered out and darkness fell upon the scene.

CHAPTER XII.

To return to St. Just who, when last seen, was lying unconscious in the tent of the Arab Sheik; the fever that had robbed him of his senses soon spent its force, and, with a lowering of his temperature, he returned to consciousness. Accustomed to the hardships of a campaign in the field, and with some experience of wounds, and by no means impatient or given to complaining, he could not but chafe at his slow progress towards recovery. He seemed to gain no strength. No doubt this was due in great measure to his want of European comforts, medical attendance, and the diet suitable to an invalid.

When, at last, he was able to get about again, which, was not till December had ended and a new year had dawned, he found, somewhat to his surprise, that

the sheik, if harsh, was just in all his dealings. One night he and the sheik were sitting over the camp fire under the shadow of the very rock which had been the scene of St. Just's narrow escape from death, when the sheik spoke concerning that adventure.

"If I had wished to kill you, I could easily have done so. You must not suppose that my men are, as a rule, the bad marksmen they proved themselves on that occasion. If you had been killed, I had avenged the affront your General had put upon me, and, indirectly, upon the tribe, by trying to bribe me to become his ally. If you survived the shots, you could carry my answer, and, possibly, save the life of one of my own tribe, whom your General might slay for being the bearer of unpalatable news. That you would be hit fatally I expected; and how Mahmoud, who, though but eighteen, is a good marksman, came to miss, I know not, though he only failed by chance.

"Chance, did I say? Nay, my son," and here the old man laid his hand softly upon his listener's shoulder; "It was fate. Allah has willed that you should live for greater things. Therefore give praise to him."

Towards the end of January the whole camp, including St. Just, who was mounted on a camel and closely guarded, made a move, traveling northwards towards Cairo. After journeying for about a month, a halt was made at a group of stone tombs, said to be—in common with so many burial places in Egypt whose records are lost—the tombs of Kings.

During their stay at this oasis of the tombs, St. Just began to pick up health and strength. Here, too, he improved his acquaintance with the old sheik, and the more he learned of him the better he liked him. Strange to say, too, the boy Mahmoud, he who had fired the last shot at him on the rock, began to make friendly advances towards him, and expressed a wish to wait on him. At first St. Just was suspicious of his motives, and watched him carefully. But, in the end, he satisfied himself that the lad had really become attached to him; so, with the Sheik's permission, he accepted his services, and, as the result, found that he could have engaged no truer or more faithful servant.

The monotony of St. Just's life at this time made him dwell with tenderness and regret on the memory of the busy time he had passed at Cairo, and, in particular, of the beautiful half-bred Arab girl with whom he had been so much thrown.

He knew that his love for her was no transient passion, but the abiding affection of a life-time; absence, in his case, so far from inducing forgetfulness, had made the heart grow fonder. With her, his life would be rose-colored, like the desert sand around him when the sun's rays were poured upon it; without her, like the same desert at night before the moonbeams had illumined it, cold and gray and gloomy.

Inwardly chafing at the enforced helplessness that kept him from his love, and wondering whether they were ever again to meet, he was much surprised and no less delighted when the sheik one day told him that, in the middle of March, he was to set out for Cairo with his, the sheik's, reply to Buonaparte's letter; and, further, that he would be furnished with an escort of twenty men for his protection. It now wanted about three weeks to the time.

One day, when it wanted but four to the time when he was to set out, he was aroused from his slumbers, while dawn yet struggled with the darkness, by the sheik himself, who bade him get up quickly and dress quickly.

"Before the camp wakes to life we must be on our way," he told St. Just; but whither they were bound he gave no intimation.

Through the sleeping camp they made their way and, shaping their course north by east, they rode out into the great silent desert, being joined by a small escort, on reaching the outskirts of the camp. For many miles the sheik and St. Just rode on side by side without exchanging a word.

At last the old man spoke, taking advantage of an opportunity, when those who accompanied them had fallen behind, possibly in obedience to his orders.

"Doubtless, my son," began the sheik, "you have wondered why I, your enemy, have kept you by my side so long, when you were able to return to him from whom you came two months ago. It was for this; I wished to satisfy myself that your character is what it has been represented to me. You know that I am a man of power and that, daily, messengers come from other chiefs to me for my advice and help. From enquiries of these men I have learned much of you from the moment you set foot in Alexandria."

After pausing to note the effect of his harangue, the sheik went on, "Scarce an action or a word of yours—uttered even in your sleep—has escaped me. If from the moment of your ordeal on the rock, until to-day, you have failed to please me, then would your stay in camp have been cut short. But, not only have you pleased me, but I have grown to regard you as a son."

After some hours traveling, they halted on the margin of a broad sheet of water fringed around with grass and low shrubs, with here and there a date palm. In the middle of this pool rose a cone-shaped rock graven with hieroglyphics. Selecting a place that was sheltered from the sun's heat by a pile of rocks, the whole party dismounted, the escort, who numbered a dozen, and were all, save St. Just's own lad Mahmoud, elderly men, casting themselves down upon the grass to rest.

After giving some directions to the leader of the party and asking St. Just to await his return, the Sheik remounted and set out alone, and soon was lost to sight, putting up in his progress thousands of birds that had made this their haunt and lived here undisturbed from the moment they had left the egg. Now

they rose in flocks, just in advance of the Sheik, swirling above him and uttering cries of mingled wonder and alarm.

After an interval the old warrior came galloping back, with as firm a seat upon his fiery steed as if he were but a youth of twenty, instead of being fully four score years.

The old man called out something St. Just could not catch, and, instantly, two of the men sprang up and drew their swords. He, too, rose to his feet, but was pulled back by Mahmoud, whose voice said in his ear:

"Fear not, they go but to cut wood."

Meanwhile the old Sheik dismounted, and the rest busied themselves in spreading a meal under the shadow of the rock.

Presently the two woodsmen returned bearing a large bundle of lengths of fibrous wood. These were distributed among the party, each piece being about two feet long, and two inches thick. In addition to the bundle of sticks, one of the two men carried a pole two inches in diameter and about ten feet long.

This he handed to the old Sheik, who, mounting his horse, once more rode away, leaving St. Just and his followers standing under the rocks.

While St. Just was absently gazing across the lake and wondering what was going on, he saw the old Sheik on the bank stop and plant his pole in the water close to the bank, and in a line with the pillar. Then to his amazement, he saw the pillar topple and fall with a terrific splash into the lake, whose waters instantly closed over it, the only signs that it had ever stood there being the bubbles that rose to the surface as the mass of stone sank deeper and deeper towards the bottom.

Then the old Sheik returned and, drawing St. Just apart, took from his garment the miniature of the fair Halima which had but lately hung around St. Just's neck and had received the bullet aimed at him and thus saved his life.

"My son," he said, "I take it that the wish of your heart is to possess the woman whose picture I now hold. On the faith of this, I am about to tell you many things. But, before you hear them, you must swear by that which you rate above all other things that you will obey and be faithful to the commands that I shall give you."

And St. Just, because of his great love for Halima, blindly swore to do that which the Sheik should bid him.

Then the old man went on.

"Twelve hundred and fifty years after the coming of the Messiah to Jerusalem, one of my forefathers ruled in Egypt. Now the visitation of Christ gave rise to the prophecy that when a white man, a soldier, should come to us, Egypt would again be free. Now I, who am the last of the true princes of the land, believe you to be the man foretold, and it is for the furthering of my plans

that I have brought you here. On the spot on which we stand, buried far beneath us, lies a city that was formerly one of the chief cities of the gods. Here their worship lingered for many years after the introduction of Christianity; then it vanished. In those troublous days my ancestor buried in the lake, which aforetime stretched even to the Nile, a vast treasure, marking the spot with the stone pillar upon which he had engraved his title—that pillar that was here but now. Now, the times in which he lived were so fraught with danger, that he entrusted the secret to but one person, with injunctions that it should be passed on at the death of one of the two who knew it, and so on for generations. Thus it came to me. The only other person who knew it died lately, so I tell it you. You will wonder at my destroying the pillar that marked the treasure's spot, but it had to be. Else it might have guided some marauder.

"Owing to some cause I am unable to explain and, it follows, unable to remove, the lake is falling foot by foot, and, in a few weeks, it will have dried up and become a portion of the desert, and the rocking pillar will soon be buried fathoms deep in sand. But enough of this for the present."

By this time the sun was getting low in the heavens, and the hour for the afternoon meal had come. When this was over, the old Sheik gave orders for the men to resume the staves, that had been distributed as torches, and to follow him.

Then, accompanied by St. Just, they plunged in single file into the jungle of foliage that grew around the rock, and was so tangled and interlaced that progress was very difficult, and no one who did not know of the path they followed could have found it. In about an hour, at the cost of numerous tears and scratches, they emerged on a small clearing, in which was a mound of sand, with a slab of stone before it. Two of the strongest men were ordered to roll away this stone; and, this done, an opening about two feet square was seen.

Then, at a few words from the Sheik, each man went down upon his hands and knees, and, one by one, they crawled through the hole and in utter darkness began to traverse a passage that led from it.

They had proceeded but a few yards, when, all at once, the man immediately in front of St. Just called out in Arabic "Take care." In a moment, the young Frenchman felt himself gliding down a slope. He clutched at the bare earth with his hands, one of which held his unlighted torch, and managed, with an occasional slip and scratch and scramble and bump, so far to check his progress that, when he presently dropped two or three feet on to level ground, he was not much hurt.

When he looked about him, he saw that those of the party who were in advance of him were occupied in lighting their torches. He lighted his from one of theirs. One after another the remainder of the party scrambled down; when all the torches had been lighted, St. Just found that they were in a square hall,

hewn out of the solid rock, the sides of which were sculptured in the Assyrian and Egyptian style.

It was but a passing glance that he could give, for, so soon as the whole party was assembled and the torches had been lighted, the word was given to move forward. They traversed the rocky road for upwards of two miles, now leaping over fallen boulders, now climbing great blocks of masonry, till, at last, they halted before a wondrous sight.

For the last quarter of a mile—so far as St. Just could judge, they had been going down an easy incline, and their course had been free from obstacles. Another thing he noticed and could not account for was that, as they neared their present halting place, the way in front of them became gradually lighter until finally their torches were no longer needed. By the time they had come to a stand-still, the source of this light was no longer a mystery. Opposite to them at a distance that was difficult to calculate in their present environment, but quite near enough for them to feel its heat, was a vast crater, that was belching out flames and steam and streams of boiling lava. The whole of the space between this volcano and St. Just and his companions was occupied by a city in ruins, that lay in a basin about three hundred feet below the watchers, who were standing on a platform to which the passage they had just traversed led. The light from the crater and the molten lava that was being spouted from it and was streaming down upon the subterranean city, enabled them to distinguish what remained of the buildings; but was not sufficiently diffused to show the sides or roof of the enormous cavern in which they were, so that it was impossible to estimate its size.

Transfixed with astonishment, St. Just watched the stream of melted lava vomited forth from the glowing chasm and rush along in a fiery channel, crackling and hissing and bubbling into a sort of caldron, whence it spread out into a sheet and poured down upon the deserted city, sending up a noisome vapor that no living creature could breathe for long. The whole scene was enough to strike terror into the boldest heart, and St. Just, courageous as he was, felt his own quake and his legs beneath him tremble.

Presently the old Sheik touched him and called his attention to an obelisk that was reared on the platform on which they stood.

It was covered with inscriptions, almost undecipherable through age. But the old Sheik interpreted them to St. Just as follows:

"In the sixth year of the founding of this city (this would mean about 2600 B.C.) was this built for the river and for the traders thereon; wherein is it possible to shelter our ships. And in this same year was the road from the City to the Ancient tomb by the Nile Bank finished in a manner worthy of those who built this city. This monument has been erected as a memorial of the same."

"There," said the Sheik, "this was their greatness, now listen to their end."

He pointed to an inscription of six lines cut roughly upon the wall of the rocky platform on which they were, and read:

"Woe is come upon us, Woe. The plague is on us—the black plague. Our trade is at an end; our King has fled; our women and children lie dead in the streets; for the gods have forsaken us. The mountain is on fire and the river has receded, and in its place have I walked dry shod. I have placed the King's treasures in a safe place, and I go to tell him that the Captain of his guard, Hathi, is faithful."

Lower down was written:

"Alas, I am too late, I die, I die. The treasure is in the temple."

Thus abruptly ended these records of man in his magnificence and in his woe.

"Where is the temple?" inquired St. Just.

"There," said the Sheik, pointing to a passage on their right. "We go to it now."

The Sheik led the way, and, after traversing the passage, they entered a vast, ruined marble hall.

"The treasure is here?" asked St. Just.

"Nay," replied the Sheik, "for this is but the outer court."

"Is the fire always issuing from that crater?" inquired St. Just when they had retraced their steps to their companions. "And will it take long to destroy what remains of the city?"

"Years, at the rate it goes on now; for it is not always burning actively; sometimes for long periods it only smoulders. But, possibly, only hours, should there be a great increase in the outpour of the lava."

"And, if the lake above fell in on top?" suggested St. Just laughing.

"Seconds; there would be such an explosion as the world has never yet seen."

Their torches, which they had extinguished when they had been no longer needed, were now relighted, and they made their way back as rapidly as possible, musing in silence on all that they had seen.

The dawn of another day was breaking when they emerged on the spot from which they had started on the subterranean journey; and at once they started for the camp.

Three days later, St. Just left for Cairo, resolved first to marry Halima, and then, to gain possession of the treasure and return to France at the first opportunity. He had made some rough plans of the place, unknown to the Sheik, and these he took with him when he set out for Cairo.

CHAPTER XIII.

It was on the fifth of March that St. Just started on his return journey to Cairo, accompanied by an escort of twenty of the old Sheik's followers and the lad Mahmoud, to whom, on account of his alertness and fidelity, he had become much attached. He was the bearer of a letter written in Arabic, from the Sheik to Buonaparte, its purport being that the wily Ibrahim, while declining to give any active assistance to the French Commander-in-chief, agreed, on the other hand, not forcibly to oppose him.

The Sheik also gave him letters of introduction to other sheiks in and on the way to Cairo, commending him to their protection and urging them to do all they could to forward him on his way.

In order to avoid the hardships of the desert, it had been decided that, so far as was possible, St. Just's route should be by the river; boats to make the journey in stages, it was believed, could be obtained from the various sheiks on the way. With this view, the party took no horses, but set out mounted on camels. The gray stallion, that St. Just had captured from the Arabs when he had slain its rider, and that had served him so faithfully during his wanderings in the desert, he presented as a parting gift to Halima's father. It was the only thing in his possession, and was but a slight return for all the old sheik had done for him from the time he had made a target of him for his followers. And Ibrahim had done much; had nursed him back to life, supplied him with money for his homeward journey, furnished him with letters of commendation to powerful sheiks he would fall in with by the way, given him a guard for his protection, accorded him his friendship, and, to crown all, was desirous of receiving him as his son-in-law.

And St. Just rightly appreciated the old man's kindness; he thanked him again and again at parting, and promised to return with Halima at the earliest possible moment. And the Sheik himself, with all his Arab undemonstrativeness, seemed much affected while he wrung the young man's hand, when the moment for the cavalcade to start had come.

"Farewell, my son," he said; "may Allah have you in his keeping, and bring you back here safe and sound, and, with you, the light of my old eyes, my daughter. I charge you watch over her and protect her from all danger. Keep your tryst with me, and I will keep faith with you and will give my child to you, and you shall be my son indeed. For I am old, and 'tis time she had some one to protect her, other than myself. And now, speed you all you can. Once more, farewell."

"Trust me," was St. Just's sole reply; then the party started.

Two days' traveling by easy stages brought them to the river bank at a

point that marked the eastern boundary of the district occupied by Ibrahim's tribe. Here they were furnished with a boat sufficiently capacious to contain them all, as well as the men who were to take her back.

It was weary work this traveling down the Nile, for, though St. Just was in the company of others, he was practically alone; he could understand but little of the dialect of those who were about him, and what interested them, in no way appealed to him. Besides, they seemed to regard him with a certain degree of distrust, that, in some of them, amounted to dislike, which they took small pains to hide. This was only natural, for the uniform St. Just wore was a constant reminder that he was of the nationality of the invaders of their country. They endeavored to thwart and mislead him in every way, and, had it not been for information that Mahmoud gave him privately, his progress would have been slower even than it was. Arrangements could be made for boats or rafts, only for stated distances; and at the end of each of such stages there was renewed bargaining and haggling with a fresh set of people, St. Just's own followers doing their best privately with the proprietors to persuade them not to take them on. They were desirous of returning to the encampment of the tribe, and hoped, by raising so many difficulties to their progress, to wear out St. Just's persistence and cause him to forego his purpose. It was a pity they did not know all that was in his mind; for, had they done so, they would have realized the hopelessness of achieving what they had in view, and would have done all they could to advance, instead of to retard, him. Where he fell in with sheiks located on the margin of the river, to whom Ibrahim had given him letters, bargaining for boats was easy; but it so happened that most of the dwellers by the river were strangers.

Thus, from one cause and another, their progress was very slow. Then, something occurred that completely stopped it for a time; St. Just fell ill. He took a severe cold which he was unable to shake off. He struggled manfully with his increasing weakness, but in vain; ague set in, and he felt that he was in for a serious illness. He called the faithful Mahmoud and inquired of him whether any of the sheiks to whom he had letters were within reasonable distance. Fortunately for him, there was one encamped but a few miles away. So St. Just decided to land at once and make for this sheik's quarters. When he reached them, he had but time to deliver his credentials, when he fell down in a fainting fit. He was thoroughly exhausted.

For weeks he knew nothing. All the time, the trusty Mahmoud tended him assiduously, and, but for him, St. Just would never have recovered. The Sheik, too, who had a great respect for the more powerful Ibrahim, did all he could for him. At last, so weak that he could not raise his head, the young officer awoke to consciousness. Soon he began to pick up strength, and, a month afterwards, he felt himself sufficiently recovered to proceed. So he once more embarked upon

the river and the weary round was recommenced; and, on the 9th of August, St. Just made his final landing on the river bank at a point near a village distant only a few hours' journey from Cairo, and within the sphere of French authority.

Here he dismissed the men who had formed his escort, retaining only the youth Mahmoud, with whom he made his way to a hut close by, where dwelt a man who had some camels. It was at this hut that the young officer caught a glimpse of himself for the first time for many months; for, hanging up against the wall, was a piece of looking-glass about four inches square, an article, it seemed, on which the owner set much store.

St. Just started with surprise at the unfamiliar visage in the mirror. He saw a thin, lined, haggard face, with a complexion almost as dark as an Arab's, set in framework of long, black, disheveled hair and unkempt beard, his mouth completely hidden by a strong deep fringe of moustache. His military headgear he had never seen since the moment of his fall from the rock after he had been shot at by Mahmoud; and he now wore a "haic," a sort of turban. Altogether he looked a thorough Asiatic, and to one who had known him only as the smart young officer of the Guides, he would have been unrecognizable. He still wore what remained of his uniform, but it was stained and worn and torn, with scarcely a morsel of gold lace left on it. Moreover, it hung loosely on him, for his thin face was the index of his whole frame, which was emaciated to a degree. He was horrified at his appearance, but he spent no time in vain regrets at the woeful spectacle he presented. With a short, hard laugh, indicative of a sort of amused disgust, he strode out of the hut to join the owner of the camels, whom he found chatting with Mahmoud.

After much chaffering, in which, on St. Just's side, Mahmoud bore the major part and displayed considerable acuteness, a bargain was struck.

They set out upon their journey shortly before noon, and proceeded slowly on their way, making no halt until just before dusk, when they dismounted for their evening meal. Not much time, however, was allowed for this, for, now that St. Just was nearing the goal he had been aiming at for months, his eagerness to reach it made him hurry on his men. But darkness came on so rapidly that they were compelled to postpone further progress till the following day.

At the dawn of day they resumed their march, and in about two hours St. Just's eyes were gladdened by the sight of a detachment of French infantry mounted on camels en route for Suez. Soon after this he entered Cairo.

CHAPTER XIV.

General Buonaparte had just returned to Cairo after an absence of several months with the army, whose operations he had been directing in the field. From the moment of his arrival, he had been busy interviewing not only generals and other army officials, but all sorts and conditions of men in that part of the world—contractors, concessionaires, traders, slavers, interpreters, sheiks, the guardians of order in the City, breeders of horses, dealers in camels—in fact all who hoped to make money out of the French.

The last person he had seen was Yusuf, the man, it will be remembered, who, being the nephew of the sheik Ibrahim, attempted to abduct his uncle's daughter, the lovely Halima. He had been kept in confinement during the whole five months of Buonaparte's absence. In fact the General had forgotten him, and it was only on his return, when reminded that Yusuf was still in prison, that he remembered his existence. Then he at once ordered the man's release.

Given his liberty, Yusuf sought an interview with General Buonaparte for the purpose of asking to be enrolled in a band of Bedouins who acted as spies and scouts for the French Army,—at the same time that they did a little slave dealing on their own account; of course, under the rose—and his request was granted.

Scarcely had the Arab left his presence, when an officer came to inform the General that a strange looking man, who said he was the bearer of important despatches, desired an interview.

"Who is he? Where is he from?" was Buonaparte's sharp enquiry.

"He declines to give his name, Sir," was the reply. "He speaks French like a Frenchman and wears a ragged French uniform and a turban; but he looks like an Arab and says he is from the desert."

"Admit him," said Buonaparte shortly.

The officer withdrew and, in another minute, returned, followed by St. Just. The latter drew himself up, saluted and then removed his "haic" (his head-covering.)

Buonaparte made a movement with his hand for the officer to retire. Then he bent his gaze on the uncouth figure before him, scrutinizing him closely to see whether his features were familiar to him. Failing to recognize him, he said sharply.

"Your name, Sir? You have despatches. Where do you come from?" He drummed impatiently with his fingers on the table. With all his imperturbability, the answer he received surprised him.

"Henri St. Just, Captain in the regiment of Guides."

"What!" exclaimed Buonaparte. "St. Just? It was reported that you were dead by those who said they saw you shot."

He got up from his seat, and, coming up to the young officer, examined his features closely. The result satisfied him of St. Just's identity.

"You are indeed St. Just. Now, sit down and tell me all about it."

He resumed his seat, and St. Just also sat down, and, after detailing the circumstances with which the reader is acquainted, went on to say, "After my recovery and release, I started, with an escort furnished by the Sheik Ibrahim, from a place whose name I do not know, except that the people call it the Tombs of the Kings, with an answer from Ibrahim to your letter. It is for this reason, General, that I have ventured to present myself before you in this most unseemly garb and unkempt condition, for which I crave your pardon."

"It is granted; you have done quite right. Where is the letter?"

St. Just rose and handed it to him.

Buonaparte had just concluded reading it, when an aide-de-camp entered and, saluting, said, "A courier from Admiral Gantheaume, Sir."

"Admit him," was the answer.

In obedience, the aide-de-camp ushered in a young officer, in whom St. Just recognized his quondam acquaintance Garraud, now a smart looking Captain in St. Just's old troop.

Garraud advanced and, at Buonaparte's bidding, laid his despatches upon the table; then retiring, he took up his stand by St. Just and gazed intently at him. There was something about him that seemed familiar to him. All at once, the past came back to him, and, with a smile of pleasure, and, quite forgetful of his General's presence, he seized St. Just by the arm and exclaimed boisterously:

"Why, St. Just, my dear fellow, it's you I declare. How on earth did you get here, and in this strange garb, too? It was given out that you were dead."

"Silence, if you please, Sir," exclaimed Buonaparte. "Your congratulations may be deferred to a more fitting time. At present you will attend to me, important duties require your attention. The Englishman Smith (Sir Sidney), is he still on the coast?"

The color had mounted to Garraud's face at the reproof he had received, and he stammered in making his reply, "He—he is, Sir."

"How soon can you reach Alexandria, leaving at once?" Buonaparte went on.

"In three days, Sir, traveling night and day."

Then Buonaparte bent over the table and began to write rapidly. Meanwhile, neither of the others spoke, contenting themselves with exchanging meaning smiles and glances.

The document completed, Buonaparte folded and sealed it; then handed it

to Garraud.

"Leave instantly," he said, "and make all speed."

Bowing to the General and giving St. Just a silent handshake, Garraud left the room, and soon they heard the clatter of his horse's hoofs outside.

When they were once more alone, Buonaparte began to question St. Just about his adventures since their last meeting. St. Just's answers appeared to please him, for he rose from his seat and shook his hand; then he pinched his ear, a way he had of showing friendliness, and addressed him.

"You have shown yourself worthy of your country, St. Just; you have done well, and I shall give you further opportunities for the exercise of your courage and fidelity. Meanwhile——" he broke off and strode to the door and flung it open. Then he called out, "Tremeau."

A young officer presented himself and saluted. "Take Major St. Just to your quarters and give him the means of making himself recognizable as a French officer. And you, St. Just, keep within the barracks till I give you leave to quit them. It is likely I shall want you. And you, too, Tremeau, I shall have work for you."

A glow of satisfaction had lighted up St. Just's face at hearing Buonaparte address him as Major, and, he with the other officer, was on the point of leaving the room, when the General resumed, "Stay."

He drew a paper to him and scrawled something rapidly upon it. Then, handing what he had written to St. Just, he went on, "Here is your commission as Major, with a letter to your Colonel to reinstate you in your old regiment; also an order to General Dupuy to furnish you with new uniforms and a horse, or the means of procuring them."

St. Just, his heart beating with gratitude and, almost, worship for his General, whom at that moment he regarded as a hero for whom he would willingly have laid down his life, bent over Buonaparte's hand and kissed it in his enthusiasm.

The evident spontaneity of the act and its devotion pleased the General and even touched his heart.

"Go along, you silly boy," he said, with a smile; "this is not a drawing-room, but a soldier's quarters. You should reserve such acts of homage for your mistress. Now, go; I shall not lose sight of your interests." And he gave him a friendly push towards his companion, who stood waiting statue-like by the door.

The door closed upon them, and Buonaparte was alone. In a moment a change came over his countenance; the smile vanished and, with knitted brow, and hands clasped behind his back, he stood in the center of the apartment, motionless, deep in thought.

"They must not meet yet," he muttered presently; "not until I have seen her

and learned what she will tell him."

St. Just's return had brought Halima to his mind. For months he had seen nothing of her, nor had he communicated with her. In fact he had discarded her, as a child throws aside a toy of which he has grown tired. At the same time, although he considered himself in no way accountable to St. Just for his relations with her, he did not care that the former lovers should meet without preparation. He knew that Halima was in Cairo, for he had given orders that she was to be watched, though unknown to her, and not allowed to leave—a selfish precaution he had taken, in case he should care to renew his intercourse with her.

However, for the moment, there were weightier matters to engage his thoughts. He turned again to some papers he had received from Paris, his consideration of which had been interrupted by the despatches from Admiral Gantheaume.

After studying them for some time attentively, he spoke aloud. "Things seem going badly in Paris. Those directors are not to be trusted. Spite of all I have done for France, they are my enemies. They think to keep me in the background, to brush me aside. Ha! we shall see. They have reason to fear me. They shall know the stuff of which I am made. But Junot was right; I must go back to France at once."

He gathered up the documents, locked them up in a drawer; then strode quickly from the room.

CHAPTER XV.

After what General Buonaparte had said and his orders that they were not to leave their quarters, St. Just and Tremeau naturally expected that, on the following day, or, at least, on that succeeding it, they would be entrusted with some mission, or be appointed to some position of importance.

But day succeeded day and they had no communication from the General, and now a week had elapsed and still they were confined to the barracks and not permitted to go about the city; and all, as it seemed, on the mere chance that Buonaparte might require the services of one or both of them. The young men found this period of confinement and inactivity particularly irksome and their former admiration and almost worship of their General were gradually changing to indignation and a conviction that, for some reason, they were being fooled by

him.

St. Just had utilized the interval in procuring new uniforms and outfit; and he had been furnished with a charger, in conformity with Buonaparte's orders. Further, he had called in the assistance of the regimental barber, so that now he once more resembled the trim young officer of a twelvemonth earlier, the only difference being that he looked a little older, and a good deal thinner, as well as darker.

After the many months of hardship in the desert, he would have welcomed barrack life and his regimental duties as a delightful change, were it not for his uncertainty about Halima and his longing to be with her.

But, at ten o'clock one morning, an end was put to his suspense, for he and his companion were summoned to the General's presence. They found him listening attentively to a report an aide-de-camp was giving him. This aide-de-camp was Garraud, and he had come from Admiral Gantheaume, with the information that Sir Sidney Smith had left the coast, and, it was believed, for Cyprus.

It was this news that had caused Buonaparte to send for Tremeau and St. Just.

When they came in, without any preface he began, "In half an hour you will start in company, with despatches for Admiral Gantheaume. They are to prepare him for my coming. You will proceed with the utmost speed, for I shall set out but one hour after you. Make your preparations immediately and return here within the half hour, when my despatches will be ready."

The two young officers saluted and withdrew without a word. In less than the half hour they were back, their horses saddled at the door and everything ready for their ride. Five minutes later, they were on their way from Cairo, St. Just filled with distress and discontent, that kept increasing with every mile he put between the object of his passion and himself. It was clear that a fortnight must elapse before their meeting could take place; he prayed it might be no longer, but his General might, of course, take it into his head to send him on another mission.

St. Just and Tremeau met with no mishaps or adventures of any sort by the way, for this part of the country was in the hands of the French, whose line of communications extended from Cairo to the coast. They rode their best, but, for all that, did not reach the Admiral until four days afterwards, and only four hours in advance of Buonaparte.

Up to this moment, as has been seen, Buonaparte had contrived to keep St. Just and Halima apart, and even to conceal from her the fact that he was alive, and, further, was in Cairo. But for an accident, moreover, St. Just would have accompanied his General to France, when he, probably, would soon have forgotten his lady-love, in which case the incidents which follow would never

have occurred.

But Dame Fortune has her own mode of arranging matters for her puppets, and in the case of Halima and St. Just, achieved her end in the way to be now described.

It so chanced that General Kleber, to whom Buonaparte had written with instructions that he was to meet him at the port, was not on the spot when he arrived. Doubtless Kleber would soon have come, but Buonaparte could brook no delay and, in his impatience, called out:

"Send for him; send for him at once."

On that, forth from the little house at Marabou, in which the General was issuing his last instructions, strode General Junot to find a messenger. Lounging outside the door, awaiting Buonaparte, was St. Just, his tall figure conspicuous amongst those who had formed the General's escort. To him Junot addressed himself.

"Ride, boot and spur, to Alexandria, and inquire at the citadel for General Kleber. When you see him, tell him the General impatiently awaits him here."

The dawn of the 23rd of August—the day whose close was to see Buonaparte set out for France to win new laurels—was breaking, when St. Just rode forth on this new mission.

Junot, having seen him start, returned to Buonaparte, whom he found pacing up and down in eager converse with General Menou.

"What news of Kleber?" asked Buonaparte impatiently, pausing in his walk when Junot entered.

"I have sent a messenger to Alexandria for him, Sir," replied Junot saluting.

"Pray Heaven he may arrive in time," was the reply.

St. Just had ridden with such despatch that it was but ten o'clock in the morning when he entered the gates of Alexandria. Forthwith he made his way to the citadel; only to learn, however, that his errand had been fruitless; General Kleber had left two hours before his arrival, unaware of Buonaparte's presence in the neighborhood.

St. Just handed over his despatches to one of Kleber's aides-de-camp, and then, tired out with the exertion of his rapid ride and prostrated by the heat, he lay down to rest himself before setting out on his return journey. Thinking that he might go to sleep, he left word with the soldier to whom he gave his horse, to arouse him in an hour, unless he, St. Just, first came to him.

Unfortunately, the man was called off to some other duty and forgot him. In consequence, the very thing St. Just had feared took place. He fell off into a profound slumber, from which he did not wake until nine o'clock at night. He had slept for quite ten hours!

Horrified at the discovery, and cursing the soldier in whom he had mis-

placed his trust, he sprang up and sought his horse, intending to start for Marabou at once.

But, no sooner had he set his foot outside, than he heard a rumor that Buonaparte's escort was approaching. And the rumor was justified by the fact; for, just when St. Just, standing by the citadel gate with reins in hand, was on the point of springing into the saddle, there came the sound of hoofs; next a detachment of Guides appeared, and, in their midst, a Turkish groom, whom St. Just knew well by sight, leading Buonaparte's favorite horse. But Buonaparte, to St. Just's surprise, was not with them. The groom recognized the young officer and called out to him in passing, "The General has sailed for France; set out at six to-night."

St. Just was staggered at the news, for he had never dreamed that Buonaparte's departure would be so rapid. What he had just heard was so bewildering to him, that, at first, he scarce knew what to do. It seemed to have upset all his plans. At least, he must think the matter over. So, instead of mounting, he led his horse along on foot, the while he strove to marshal his ideas.

Since his return to Cairo, a struggle had been going on within him between his ambition and his love, the former backed by the influence of his General, the latter by that of Halima. Of late he had nursed a sense of injury against Buonaparte for having, whether intentionally or not, kept him from visiting his mistress. This had tended much to modify his former devotion to the General, and, now that the latter was no longer present to push him forward in his military career, St. Just's interest in that career began to lessen, while his passion for Halima correspondingly increased.

He felt that the present was the turning-point in his existence. His yearning for the lovely Arab girl became almost irresistible. But, if he should yield to the dire temptation that was assailing him, it would be at a price—the highest a man could pay—his honor. Should he now turn his horse's head to Cairo, he would be regarded as a deserter, and a deserter in time of war; if caught, the penalty would be death—and dead with dishonor. Could he run so great a risk for a woman's smiles? Could he even live, a dishonored man, supposing he saved his life? Was Halima worth the sacrifice? Was any woman worth it? In the agonizing contest warring within him, the sweat came out in great drops upon his brow and streamed down his face. He put his hand into his pocket for his handkerchief, and, by accident, withdrew with it the locket containing the miniature of Halima—the locket that had turned aside Mahmoud's bullet and thus saved his life, and that he had preserved in all his wanderings.

He was standing beneath a swinging oil lantern at the time. He opened the locket and gazed upon the lovely features there displayed. That glance decided his future life; for one short moment, ambition and honor in the one scale, and

love and dishonor in the other, trembled in the balance; then slowly the former rose, until it touched the beam, and dishonor had won the day. Alas, for poor weak man!

"The die is cast," he cried; "it is my fate. To Cairo and to her. But, oh! what a price I am paying for my love!"

Then he vaulted into the saddle and galloped off into the darkness.

CHAPTER XVI.

Five days later, making his way through the suburb of Gizeh towards the city of Cairo, might have been seen a tall, well-built man, with shaven face, whom, from his dark complexion and Moorish dress one would have set down as a denizen of the desert, the more so that he was closely followed by two Arabs. The observer, however, who should have come to this conclusion, would have been in error, for the traveler was St. Just, but so changed in appearance, that scarce even his most intimate friend would have recognized him.

After the decision he had come to, this change in his appearance had become imperative for the achievement of his purpose, in consequence of his having come away without having obtained leave of absence from his General. When he learned of Buonaparte's departure, he ought, of course, either to have reported himself to General Kleber, or rejoined his regiment. To all intents and purposes he was, therefore, a deserter. Hence the necessity for his disguise. How he had managed it was in this way.

On the outskirts of Gizeh he had met Mahmoud, whom, in the suddenness of his departure from Cairo with Buonaparte's despatch to Admiral Gantheaume, he had forgotten to inform of his intended mission. In consequence, Mahmoud, when two or three days had elapsed without his seeing or hearing anything of his master—for it will be remembered that Tremeau had accompanied St. Just—came to the conclusion that he had been deserted, so had decided to make his way back to his tribe as best he could. He had fallen in with another member of the tribe, one Abdallah, and the two had joined themselves to a caravan en route for the desert.

On their meeting, mutual recognitions and explanations had taken place, between St. Just and Mahmoud, with the result that a bargain had been effected by which St. Just had sold his horse to one of the dealers in the caravan, and ex-

changed his uniform for an Arab costume. Then he had darkened his complexion, and his disguise had been completed.

Next he had explained to the two Arabs his intentions with regard to Halima; how, by her father's wishes he was going to marry her, get her by some means out of Cairo, and make his way with her to the Sheik Ibrahim. He had asked them to help him, and they had assented, and the three were now proceeding to Cairo on this errand.

Early on the following morning, therefore, St. Just presented himself at Halima's house—having first procured for Mahmoud and Abdallah lodgings in an obscure quarter of the city not far from Halima's—where, in answer to his summons, the door was opened by an Arab of forbidding aspect, who scowlingly inquired his business.

"My master, the merchant Abdallah," St. Just made reply, "bade me bring this parcel to the Lady Halima, and to await here her instructions." And he held out a little packet that contained the miniature of Halima, together with a paper on which was inscribed in Arabic, "News of him to whom you gave this, and of your father, from whom the bearer has a message."

After looking St. Just up and down suspiciously, for the man had noticed that the few words the Frenchman had uttered had lacked the natural ring, the Arab took the packet, and admitted him to the courtyard, where he bade him wait.

Not a soul was there besides himself, yet memory peopled it for him with throngs of living, moving beings. In his mind's eye he could see men in the uniform of his own country, some mounted, some on foot, small in numbers, defending themselves gallantly against a horde of dark-visaged, vindictive Egyptians, mingled with half-clad slaves of even darker hue, all bent on the destruction of the little desperate band. He could see the great general, once the object of his most absolute devotion; now, alas!—he shuddered when he thought of Buonaparte; and turned his mind to pleasanter reflections; he thought of Halima.

There above him—it was the second from the right—was the window from which she had made her escape on that eventful day, the first of their acquaintance. And next to it was the one from which, in the moonlight, she had bidden him a fond farewell, the last time they had met, and flung him a rose, her parting gift. And this was ten months ago. How much had passed since then!

The fountain plashed musically into its marble basin, and St. Just seated himself beside it, and, resting his elbow on his knee, placed his hand beneath his chin, and resigned himself to thought. What an age it seemed since he had seen Halima; how would she receive him when they met? Would her eyes gladden at the sight of him, or would she treat him as a stranger? Oh! no, she could not be so cruel.

His reverie was broken by the re-appearance of "The Scowler," as St. Just had mentally nick-named him.

"My mistress would have speech with you," he said; "follow me."

St. Just arose, his heart beating wildly with mingled excitement and suspense, and, in silence, accompanied the Arab along the colonnade, through the deserted pillared hall, and up the narrow staircase, that had been the scone of the sanguinary contest from which he had emerged with his bare life and Halima's. Then they came to the well-remembered curtains, through which he had so often passed. His guide drew these aside for him to enter; then let them fall back to their place, and retraced his steps.

And there was Halima. At last they had met. She was seated on the divan she had so often shared with him. In his eyes, she was, as she had ever been, beautiful beyond compare; but it cut him to the heart to see the look of care and sadness that now overspread her former laughing features. She was noticeably thinner, too. At the moment of his entrance, her eyes were bent upon the miniature before her. Perhaps, she was regretfully comparing the joyous, rounded face she saw there, with her own altered looks. Silently and motionless he waited for her to raise her eyes. Then she gave a little sob, and a tear stole down her cheek and dropped upon the miniature, blurring the winsome face on which her gaze was bent.

Her lover could contain himself no longer. Forgetful of his changed appearance, and the character that, for the time, he was assuming, he rushed to her side and seized her hand.

"Halima! My own," he cried in fervid accents. "My darling! my betrothed! It is I, your Henri. I have come back to you. Oh! let me look in your sweet eyes and there read that you are glad to see me. Speak to me, dear one; surely you are not afraid of me," he added, for she had taken no notice of his glowing tones. Then he kissed the hand he held, almost devouring it.

At last she turned her liquid eyes upon him; but, instead of the joy he had hoped to see in them, there was a look of doubt, of bewilderment, even of fear.

"Who? What?" she stammered. She looked intently at him to assure herself that he was indeed the man he said; then, with a low cry of "Henri!" she withdrew her hand from his and, burying her face in the cushions, burst into a storm of tears.

Pained beyond measure and astonished at the violence of her grief, for she sobbed without restraint, St. Just threw himself on his knees beside her, placed one arm round her waist and, with caresses and loving words, did his best to stem her tears.

"What ails my darling? why these tears?" he asked in gentle accents. "Is it excess of joy at my return, or what? You are unnerved, my Halima. It was

thoughtless of me so suddenly to come upon you. You thought no doubt, with others, that I was dead, that we should never meet again. It was so said, I know, but it was false; I am indeed your Henri. And I have seen your father; have been his guest for months; and he has sent me here to take you to him. Then we are never to be parted more. So, weep no more, my darling, but look into my eyes and say you love me."

With such words and more of the same nature did the young men seek to allay her anguish, whose intensity was beginning to alarm him. Then he gently strove to raise her head from the cushions in which she still kept it buried.

She made but a faint resistance, and turned her tear-stained face on his. He tried to kiss her, but she shrank back from him, with a hunted look upon her face. He had never seen such a look on it before, and it made him tremble; still more so did her words.

"Oh, no! no! you must not. Do not touch me. And go, go away, if you would save both further misery. You cannot guess what shame and suffering your presence causes me. If you would spare me more, I entreat you, leave me."

St. Just, not having an inkling of the truth, supposed that it was his own conduct in having, as she supposed, so long neglected her, that had caused this outburst. Still her face expressed neither injured pride nor anger.

"Tell me, my Halima," he implored in piteous accents, "in what have I offended. Indeed it was not my fault that I came not to you sooner. I have been ill for many months—at death's door twice. I——"

With an effort she choked back her tears, and, turning her lovely head, her hair all disordered and her eyes red with weeping, towards him, she looked at him, oh so sadly in the face; then she said softly:

"I blame you not, Henri; it is I alone who am to blame. And I am your Halima no longer. I am not worthy of you. Forget me, forget that the unhappy woman you knew as Halima ever lived, and, if you can, forgive her. But go, I pray you."

Still mystified, but with an awful suspicion growing in his mind, St. Just replied, "Nay, Halima, I cannot leave you thus. If, as you say, you blame me not, I have a right to an explanation of your strange words—words that have stirred me more than any I have ever heard. After you have told me all that they portend, it will be time for my decision."

"You will not spare me, then," she said, "the shame of my disclosure? Oh! you are cruel, Henri." Then, after a momentary pause and with a sigh of resignation, she went on, "But, perhaps, 'tis better so; for, when you have heard the confession I have to make, you will no longer seek to stay."

Gradually, while she had been speaking, he had withdrawn himself from her side, and now, with a look of expectant horror in his face, he took a seat that

faced her.

"Then listen," she resumed. "Some months after you had gone, they told me you were dead. It was General Buonaparte who first brought the news to me. I had seen him many times since your departure, and he had professed to love me; but, despite all his pressing, I remained true to you. I told him that my heart whispered to me that you still lived, and that nothing but the evidence of eye-witnesses would make me think otherwise. A month later he brought two men of my father's tribe, who said that they had seen you slain, shot by my father's orders. My grief was terrible, but how could I decline such evidence? And you must remember that, all this time, I had received no single word from you. Then——"

"It was impossible for me to send to you," he interjected; "I was stretched upon a bed of sickness, where I lay for months. I had like to have died, but for your father's help."

"I know; I understand all now; Oh! that I had known before. How cruel has been Fate to me."

She paused again, and the frightened look she wore became intensified.

"And then?" asked St. Just sternly.

"And then," she panted in a tone so low that he had to strain his ears to catch her words, "believing that you still lived, I had allowed General Buonaparte to think—in order that I might stave off his importunities—that, were I assured that you were dead, I would assent to his wishes, and become his. My love had died with you, and I resolved to live for ambition, and thought I saw the way through him to its gratification. Then, at the moment when I was almost distraught with grief, he reminded me of my promise, offered me his love as consolation for my loss of you. He promised to take me with him to Paris, a city he knew I longed to see, and drew such glowing pictures of my life there, that he lulled my scruples. Then, taking advantage of my weakness, he—and—and—I—became—his mistress!"

The last word was uttered in a whisper, but it penetrated to her hearer's ear. The blood rushed to her neck and face, with the shame of her confession, and she hung her head, not daring to raise her eyes to his.

St. Just sprang to his feet, and put his hands before his face.

"His mistress!" he exclaimed. "'Twas this I feared. Oh, infamy!" And his voice sounded like a despairing wail. "And he knew that you were mine. Twice I have saved his life, and he robs me of my mistress."

There was silence for a space, she bending forward with her eyes still fixed upon the floor, her expression that of abject hopelessness. He took his hands from before his eyes, and his face was piteous to behold, so changed it was. He spoke again.

"And for this woman I would have freely sacrificed my life. For her I have sacrificed—and uselessly—what is dearer far, my honor as a soldier, my whole career."

And, without a word of farewell to the broken woman, he turned his face from her and passed through the curtains; then scarcely seeing which way he was going, he stumbled down the staircase and, somehow, gained the courtyard, where he staggered to a seat.

All this time, she had not dared to raise her eyes, but she knew that he was gone, for she heard his gradually retreating footsteps on the stairs. When they were no longer audible, she looked up and gazed around the room despairingly. Then, with a piercing cry of "Henri!" she fell forward fainting to the floor.

He heard the cry, but for the time was too full of his own grief to heed it; instead he kept repeating to himself the words that seemed to have stamped themselves upon his brain, "Buonaparte's mistress!" and then these others, "A dishonored soldier, a deserter!"

In his agony, he laid his face within his hands and burst into tears.

The tears of a woman in mortal agony are piteous to behold, but a strong man so affected is a sight over which one would fain draw the veil.

But grief so violent, as was St. Just's, cannot be long continued without one of two things occurring—either the sufferer overcomes it, or it overcomes the sufferer. In this case the latter happened; St. Just fell forward to the ground, unconscious.

Of the two, Halima was the first to awake to consciousness and, with it, to the memory of her love for St. Just and of all she had lost in losing him. Buonaparte she had never loved; his apparent devotion to her had but flattered her woman's pride and love of power; and now, even he had deserted her; for months she had not seen him. She could have survived this, but for St. Just's return; but the sight of him had fanned into a glowing flame the smoldering ashes of her love, that had never quite died out. And now he, too, had left her. Life was no longer possible to her, and she would end it.

Imbued with this resolve, she sprang from her seat and rushed to a table close at hand, on which lay a sharp-pointed, narrow-bladed little dagger, with jeweled haft, a mere toy, it looked, but it had the potentiality of dealing death. Distraught with the agony of a hopeless love, she seized the glittering weapon, and raised her arm, intent on plunging the dagger to the hilt into her palpitating bosom. Then, with a longing to take one last look on the place in which so many heart-stirring incidents had occurred, she moved across the room and threw open the latticed window.

She gazed on the well-remembered scene, noticing each familiar shrub, each well-known object, a pigeon circling overhead in the blue expanse, a tall

pinnacle of the citadel, just visible above the wall. Then her eye fell upon the fountain—what was that lying motionless beside it? A man! In an instant she had recognized the well-loved form; it was St. Just!

She swayed and felt as if about to faint again; then clutched at the window for support.

"Dead!" she moaned; "killed by me. By his side I will breathe out my life; my dying lips shall be pressed to his in one last fond kiss, and I will whisper in his ears—though he will hear me not—that I never loved but him, for all I was so weak as to yield myself to the embraces of another."

Still grasping the dagger, she rushed, like one demented, from the room, down the staircase and into the courtyard. Then, with a low cry, she flew to her lover's side and, throwing herself upon her knees, she wound one arm around his neck and kissed him passionately.

"Oh, my darling," she wailed, "I loved you so—ah, more than you ever guessed—and I have lost you! But though in life I cannot be yours, in death I will not be parted from you. At least, we can lie together in one grave. Sleep on in peace, my loved one, your Halima is coming to you. One last kiss on those dear lips, and then—!"

She pressed her face to his in one long devouring kiss—a kiss that typified her whole being's passion; a kiss in which she seemed to breathe out her very soul.

Then she bared her heaving bosom and raised her arm to strike.

And he? Whether it was that, even in unconsciousness, the impassioned outpouring of her soul struck a responsive chord in his; or that the pressure of her soft arm round his neck and the hot kisses she showered upon his face put warmth into his body and quickened the sluggish action of his heart; or that both these causes combined to bring about what happened; certain it is that, at the moment when the despairing girl was about to end her life, he sighed profoundly and woke up from his swoon; then turned his eyes on her. In a moment he had grasped what she was about to do, had seized her uplifted arm, wrenched the knife from her and flung it into the basin of the fountain.

"Oh! Halima!" he cried. "What were you about to do? A moment more and I should have been too late. Thank God that I came to in time. Ah! my love, what prompted this rash resolve?"

"I thought you dead; that I had killed you, and I could not live without you."

"Live with me, my darling; live for vengeance; for vengeance on your betrayer, as I mean to do."

"It shall be so," she cried fiercely. "To punish him we will devote our lives." Then, the stern expression softening into a look of such adoring love that the last shred of the man's resentment vanished, "Oh, Henri, Henri, my love, my life," she

murmured; then sank sobbing on his breast.

He pillowed her lovely head upon his shoulder and caressed her fondly. For the moment, he forgot that another had possessed her. Then presently, when she had grown somewhat calmer, "Buonaparte has sailed for France," he said "and you are free. Forget the past, as I will strive to do, and find renewed happiness with me. Your father looks to see us man and wife. What say you, sweet?"

She raised her face suffused with tears, but smiling through them, to his, and in the lovelight in her eyes he read her answer.

He pressed her to his breast and kissed her again and again.

"Sweetheart," he said presently, "I have turned my back upon the army; henceforth I live for you alone."

"And revenge," she added sternly.

Then, hand in hand, they went into the house.

CHAPTER XVII.

When the reunited lovers had somewhat calmed down after the exciting scene in which they had been the actors, St. Just handed Halima her father's letter, and showed her those the old man had given for friendly Sheiks in Cairo.

Satisfied, after reading his letter, that her father favored her marriage with St. Just, and the arrangement so entirely coinciding with her most ardent desire, Halima quickly became all smiles, and entered with avidity into his plans for giving it effect, and for making their escape together from Cairo at the earliest practical opportunity, to rejoin the Sheik. Both were aware that Halima was being watched, by Buonaparte's orders, to prevent the very thing they meditated; so the greatest circumspection would be needed. They were in hopes, however, that, now that Buonaparte was no longer in the country, the watch would be less strictly kept, if even it were not wholly discontinued.

And St. Just, on his part, had to be very careful in his movements and always to go about disguised. At the same time, he thought he ran little risk from the military authorities; for it was known to them, that he had been sent on a mission by the General-in-chief and had, for all they knew, either returned with him to France, or remained in Alexandria. As an alternative, his absence might be accounted for, either by his death or capture by hostile Arabs; for, from one or other of these causes, couriers were constantly disappearing. The desert

swarmed with murderous nomads.

Captain Tremeau, who would have been the most likely person to see through his disguise, had accompanied Buonaparte to France, and most people thought that St. Just had done the same. Accordingly, he felt comparatively safe. For all that, he thought it unwise to be seen too frequently at Halima's house; so that his visits there were few and secret. He had taken up his abode with Mahmoud and Abdallah in a retired quarter of the city, where their presence was not likely to excite suspicion.

He lost no time in presenting his letters of introduction to the sheiks, who were all leading Mussulmans and hostile to the French. His introducer, the Sheik Ibrahim, was a man of weight and influence, so that any one he recommended was sure to be favorably received. Consequently, St. Just found these sheiks very friendly and ready to help him all they could. And they proved their goodwill most effectively by supplying him with ample funds for his ride across the desert. Further to gain their confidence, St. Just professed to have renounced the Christian faith, and his desire to become a follower of the Prophet; and, soon afterwards, his so-called conversion was effected, and he talked of "Allah" with the best of them. Additionally, he had been influenced in this course by the discovery that Halima's friends, the sheiks in Cairo, regarded with aversion the thought of her marriage with a Christian, and were doing their utmost to dissuade her from it, at any rate, until she had joined her father. But, now that St. Just had become one of them in faith, all opposition was removed; and, soon afterwards, he and Halima were made man and wife with Islam rites.

Meanwhile, Halima had kept her eyes about to see how far she was being followed in her movements. In the result she felt satisfied that the watch on her was not so close as formerly, and this she told her husband, on his next visit. She said she was confident that she could now get away unnoticed, and urged him to arrange to leave the city at once. Now that she had become his wife, it fretted her to see so little of him; the hours seemed to pass so slowly in his absence, and she lived in a fever of unrest until he returned; she yearned for a renewal of his fond caresses and the ardent expression of his passion. So that she was prepared to run even great risks in order to be with him always; now, however, she thought they would run none.

Accordingly, it was resolved that the attempt to escape from Cairo should be made on the following day. It was now the middle of September, nearly a month since St. Just had fled from Alexandria.

At about four o'clock on the afternoon of the following day the passer-by might have seen three beggars loitering in a street not far from Halima's house. The oldest of the three was a villainous-looking old rascal, whose stomach swelled out enormously, as though he were suffering from dropsy. It may be

at once stated, however, that its abnormal size was due not to a liquid, but a solid cause—hay stuffed in between his body and his clothing. This man was the Arab Abdallah. The two men with him were Mahmoud and St. Just, the former limping along with one leg bent at right angles and supported on a stump; the latter suffering, apparently, from some fearful face disease—paint artistically applied.

Beggars suffering from various diseases are common in the East, where they make a market of their disfigurements, which are profitable in proportion to their loathsomeness. As a matter of course, there are numbers of impostors among the tribe, and these are generally the most importunate in appealing to the charity of the sympathetic portion of the community. In fact, it is in the East, as with us in the West, those who make the greatest noise about their troubles are the least deserving.

Beggars being seen at almost every corner, the presence of these three sunning themselves on the steps of a house in a quiet street excited no suspicion.

"This begging seems to be a fairly profitable calling," said Abdallah, who had just made a successful appeal to a charitable passer-by. "No wonder there are so many halt and maimed about." And he chuckled grimly at the thought of the kindly dupes.

"No doubt it pays well," rejoined St. Just; "though 'tis a despicable life, at best. But come, it is time for us to be moving towards the house. 'Tis close upon the hour of prayer, when the Lady Halima is to join us. Are the camels in readiness, Mahmoud?"

"I have seen to that, Sir," replied the lad; "there will be no delay with them."

"Good," resumed St. Just. "We will be going."

And they moved on slowly, with the slouching gait that seems to go with beggars, towards Halima's street, passing on their way a mosque, from which they could hear the sound of voices raised in prayer.

Then they took up their station near the house and waited. Presently a small door in the wall—not the main entrance—was opened, and a young Arab boy stepped out and looked cautiously around. No one, but the three beggars, was in sight. He locked the door; then flung the key into the kennel, where it buried itself in a heap of garbage.

The boy stopped for a moment and seemed to be listening to the voices of the devotees in the neighboring mosque; then came swiftly towards the three watchers. Then something occurred that made St. Just's heart leap high. The boy drew from his breast something that St. Just instantly recognized as the amulet Madame Buonaparte had given him in Paris, and whose loss he had so much regretted, believing he should never see it again.

Convinced by this act that the youth was a messenger from Halima, St. Just remarked to Mahmoud in his natural voice, to satisfy the newcomer of his

identity, "Mahmoud, this boy is surely a servant of the Lady Halima."

Before Mahmoud could reply, the young Arab had sprung forward with the cry of "Henri! My husband."

"Halima?" exclaimed St. Just, amazed. "No wonder I did not recognize you. What means this strange costume?"

"I thought I should, dressed thus, the better escape notice. But tell me how you like me in this garb? Think you I make a comely boy?"

And she laughed a merry laugh.

"A charming one, indeed," he answered, with a smile; "and 'twas a happy thought of yours. But we must not waste the time in pretty speeches. We will go on in advance, and you follow at a little distance, keeping us well in sight. You are far too pretty and well clad to form one of our ragged party."

And as he said, they did, making their way quickly to the three men's lodgings, which they all entered. Soon three men came out dressed like honest traders, the characters they intended to assume. They were accompanied by an Arab boy—so those who might meet the party would suppose.

Then they made their way down another street and halted at some gates that gave on to a large yard. Through these St. Just passed with Mahmoud, leaving Halima in Abdallah's charge outside. They were not long absent and, when they returned, they brought with them three camels, St. Just handing Abdallah a piece of paper.

"Ben Hadji is a good man," said that worthy. "He has kept faith with us. The Sheik, my master, will reward him. Thanks to him, our passage through the city gate and on to Gizeh should be easy."

Then the camels were got down on their knees and the party mounted—all but Mahmoud, who, in the character of a servant, was to walk behind, until they should reach the further boundary of Gizeh, where a camel would be provided for him.

Then the party started, Halima between Abdallah and St. Just mounted on their camels, and Mahmoud in the rear on foot. In due course, they reached the city gate, where they were challenged by the officer on guard; but the paper they had with them passed them through.

A few hours later, the same party dismounted, were waiting on a little landing stage on the river bank, at the point where the village of Gizeh stands. Moored to the stage was a long, low, boat with broad square sails; such a boat as is in use upon the Nile by the natives even at the present day. In this they were on the point of embarking when they heard shouts; and, looking round they saw an Arab, dusty and travel-stained, running towards them. He made at once for Abdallah, to whom he panted out:—

"Good master, I saw you from the bank. A minute later, and I should have

missed you. I would have speech with you. My business is important. I have traveled far and fast to seek you."

He took him apart and whispered in his ear.

Abdallah's face lengthened at the communication, but, at first, he made no reply. Grasping the man by the arm, lie motioned him to the boat. "Step in," he said. "Our way is thine; we go to the 'Tomb of the Kings.'"

They were soon all settled in the boat, and the sail was set; then, the wind being dead aft, they began to travel rapidly up the river.

Presently Abdallah caught St. Just's eye and, unseen by the others, signed to him to come to him. When the young Frenchman had come up, the other whispered something in his ear. It was the communication he had received from the stranger, and at it St. Just looked grave. But almost immediately, he rejoined Halima, at whose side he sat, silent and preoccupied.

When his silence had become noticeable, Halima looked anxiously in his face and, noting his grave and sad expression, she laid her hand gently on his arm.

"Henri," she said, "something has happened to disturb you. I can see it in your face. If some new trouble has arisen, let me share it with you. I am your wife, and it is my privilege to do so. If I cannot console you in your sorrow, at least, let me bear my part in it. I am no coward, as you know. Tell me, my dear one," she concluded pleadingly.

He took her hand in his. "Alas! my Halima," he said. "I have sad tidings for you, but they concern not your husband, but your father. Your messenger brought news that your father has been stricken down by illness, sick, as it is feared, to death."

She gave a start, and a little cry proceeded from her lips. It was the last thing she had thought of. Her father, though well on in years, had always seemed so hale and strong.

"My father ill, and like to die?" she cried. "Oh! may Allah save him. He is all I have, save you. Oh! tell them to make all speed. I must, I will see him before he dies, if die he must."

The tears gathered in her eyes, and she wept silently.

"My dearest, we could not go faster than we are," he said. "The wind is in our favor and is carrying us forward bravely. Bear up, my Halima, in the hope that Allah will so order it, that you shall see your father again."

She made no reply to this, and he sat on, silent, by her side, still holding her hand in his.

Presently, when her first grief had spent itself, her tears ceased to flow and she dried her eyes. Then she looked up trustfully into St. Just's face and said, "It will be as Allah wills; if I am to lose one protector in my father, I have gained

another in my husband. Strong in the possession of your love, I will not rebel against the decrees of Allah."

"Fear not, my dear one," he replied earnestly. "I will be father, lover, husband all in one to you, henceforth."

And she smiled at him lovingly in reply.

CHAPTER XVIII.

St. Just and his party met with no adventures on their way, and no difficulties beyond such as were inseparable from the river and the desert; but their progress was slow, for there were often delays in getting boats for such stages as were traversed on the river, and these they made as frequent as they could, preferring this mode of journeying to the tracking of the arid desert. But, owing to the bends in the river and also to the cataracts, they were perforce compelled to leave it many times and travel overland.

The last stage was made upon the river, and about six weeks after leaving Cairo—which brought them to the beginning of November—they landed at a small village, which was little more than a group of huts, a few hours' journey from the "Tombs of the Kings," where, as St. Just soon learned, the old Sheik was still encamped.

A messenger was at once despatched to inform the tribe of their arrival, and to announce to the Sheik that, in a few hours, Halima would be with him.

Soon after daybreak on the following morning, they made a move, and, by two o'clock in the afternoon, they reached the out-lying tents of the tribe.

Quite a crowd of people were on the look-out for them, for Halima was beloved by every member of the tribe, and all the party had relatives and friends among them. St. Just, too, was no stranger, and, during his previous stay with them, had gained their confidence and esteem.

When the party came up, therefore, the excitement was tremendous. Men, women and children crowded round them, shouting and gesticulating with delight; Halima, who had spent all her life with them until her father had taken her to Cairo, being the center of attraction. The people rushed forward to kiss the hem of her cloak, to touch her saddle, her stirrup iron—anything that was hers; Halima was touched by the heartiness of her welcome, and her large, dark eyes filled with tears, even while her face beamed with smiles and she bestowed

thanks and greetings on the eager faces upturned to hers.

Even the very dogs—those mangy, yapping curs, without which no Arab encampment is complete—shared in the general enthusiasm, running round and round the new arrivals and barking merrily.

It was almost like a royal progress, for the crowd, which was ever on the increase, pressed on with the party, until they came to a halt in the center of the camp.

But, amidst all this turmoil of congratulation, Halima never, for an instant, forgot her husband. The looks of mingled pride and love she turned on him would have satisfied the most exacting man that, though she was grateful for all these tokens of affection, he had all her heart, that he was ever in her thoughts, and that she was ready to forsake her kith and kin, if needs be, so long as she retained his love. In addressing him, she loved to dwell with iteration on the words "Mon mari." In them she summed up all her love and trust. His was the arm that helped her to dismount—though many others proffered their assistance—and to which she clung when she alighted.

No sooner had they gained their feet, than an old, gray-headed man approached them. In him both St. Just and Halima recognized the doctor of the tribe. Halima at once rushed up to him.

"Oh! Ben Kerriman," she exclaimed, "My father! how is he? He is alive?"

"He is alive, Lady," Ben Kerriman made reply; "but he is very weak, and so worn that you will scarcely know him. Still the fever has now left him, and he suffers only from excessive weakness."

"I will go to him at once," she cried eagerly. "Dear father, I long to see him. Come, Henri."

A path was formed for them through the crowd, and they made their way to a large square tent, which St. Just, at once, recognized as the Sheik's; for, in front of it, he and the old warrior had spent many an hour, while smoking their long chibouques, in friendly chat.

When they reached the entrance, St. Just halted and drew back. He thought that, father and daughter having been parted for so long, both would prefer to have their first interview in private. But Halima, at once divining his unspoken thought, seized him by the arm and dragged him forward.

"Of course you are to come in with me," she said in French. "I have no secrets from you now; you are my husband. Besides it is right that you should be with me when I tell him that we are married. Dear, I want you."

He made no more ado, and they went in together.

In a few seconds, when their eyes had accommodated themselves to the dimness of the light, they saw in the far left hand corner of the tent—which, after the luxury of her surroundings at Cairo, struck Halima as bare and comfortless—a

couch formed of a pile of skins. On this, propped up with cushions, the old Sheik reclined. He was worn almost to a skeleton, his brown, shriveled skin giving him the appearance of a mummy. The only signs of life about him were his eyes, which shone with unnatural brilliancy, but with no vacant glitter; it was plain that, though the body had lost its strength, the brain still maintained its sway. St. Just could scarce refrain from shuddering at the appalling change in the old Sheik's appearance.

By the side of the bed of skins, within reach of the sick man's hand, was a small round table, on which was placed a horn of cooling drink. A charcoal brazier, with smoldering embers, stood in the center of the tent. Crouched in a corner, watching with apparent unconcern the figure on the couch, was a withered old hag, presumably the nurse. At the entrance of the newcomers, she turned her eyes listlessly upon them, but took no further notice of them.

At the sight of her father, Halima uttered a low cry of pain; then she ran up to the bed, threw herself on her knees beside it, and, seizing one of the claw-like hands that rested on it, covered it with kisses.

"My father!" she cried, "Allah be praised that at last I see you. Oh! I have been fearing that I should be too late, for I heard you were so ill. But, now that I have come I will nurse you back to health."

There was a slight movement in the poor, withered hand, and the glittering eyes took on an expression of content; but presently, this changed to one of puzzled questioning.

At once she read aright the inquiry in his eyes. She rose from her knees and beckoned her husband to her side.

"He wants to know how I got here," she said; "tell him, dear; it will please him to know what you have done for me."

Then St. Just came forward and, taking Halima's hand in his, addressed the Sheik.

"I promised that I would bring your daughter, Sir, and I have kept my word."

Before he could say more, Halima intervened, "And he has brought you more than a daughter, father, he has brought you a son; he is my husband, and oh! he is so kind to me." She turned her eyes lovingly upon St. Just.

A look of wonder overspread the old man's face, and he turned his eyes affectionately on his daughter; then they sought St. Just. And now, for the first time he spoke, though in so low a tone that he was scarcely audible.

"I am happy, now that my daughter has come back to me safe and well; and I thank you, my son, for bringing her. The news I have just heard bewildered me; but it is well; you have but anticipated my wishes. And you are happy, child; he is good to you?"

"Oh! so good; nobody could be kinder; I have not a thought ungratified.

Oh! father, I have had more happiness in this last month than in all my previous life. And another thing, before we married, he joined our faith; he is now a true believer."

A faint smile lighted up the old man's face. "Allah is great," he said, "and Mohammed is His prophet. It is enough; I now can go in peace. My children, may your lives be long and happy." Then, to St. Just, "I give you an old man's blessing, my son; in my Halima you have won a treasure; look to it that you cherish her as she deserves, for I can see that you have all her love; she has a gentle heart, be careful that you wound it not; a delicate instrument, whose chords will not endure rough handling, but will respond feelingly to a gentle touch. Accordingly as you deal with her, may Allah deal with you."

He held out a long, lean hand to the young Frenchman, who pressed it gently, then raised it to his lips.

Then he bent his gaze again on Halima, and held out his arms.

"Embrace me, my child," he said.

Halima knelt down beside him and threw her soft, warm arms around his neck, and kissed him fervently; then rested her head upon his breast. "Dear father," she murmured, "it now only needs one thing to make my happiness complete—to see your strength restored. I will nurse you back to health, and Henri will assist me; it is but weakness that you suffer from."

"A weakness, my child, that will only end in death."

Then, seeing the look of sadness in her face, he added, "But not just yet; I feel now, that a few days still remain to me—it may be weeks. The sight of your dear face has acted like a breath of wind upon the spark of life still left in me, and fanned it into a feeble flicker, though it will never rekindle the dying embers of my frame. But I am content; I have had my day, and it has been a long one—longer than that of most men—and now my night has almost come."

"Oh, say not so, my father," urged his daughter. "It is because you are weak and weary that this is in your heart. I cannot bear to hear you talk thus."

He laid one sinewy palm upon her head and stroked it gently.

"We will say no more of it, since it makes you sad," he said. "We will talk of your affairs." He turned to St. Just. "How comes it, my son, that you were able to leave your brothers in arms for the long journey from Cairo to this place?"

St. Just paled at this, and a look of pain came into his face. He could not put away from him the thought of the epithet that would ever be coupled with his name—a deserter, and in time of war—and he knew that he never would, strive how he might; though his life might not be forfeited, the finger of scorn would be always pointed at him by those aware of his disgrace.

Halima, who knew his every mood, noted his expression of distress, and, to spare him the pain of the confession, intervened before he could make answer

to her father's question.

"He has left the French army, and all for love of me," she said. "But do not talk of it, my father, for he likes it not. It is no light matter to renounce one's country for a woman's love, and this sacrifice he has made for me. For the future, he is of our people."

The old Sheik looked in wonder at St. Just; such a sacrifice was beyond his comprehension.

"How he must have loved you, child," he said. "I loved your mother, more than all others in the world; but, even for her, I would not have given up my country or my faith; have sheathed my sword for ever and exchanged the excitement of the battle field, the clash of weapons crossed in deadly combat, the rattle of musketry, the deep boom of guns, the exultant shouts of victory, the pursuit of the flying foe—all this; for the smiles and gentle dalliance of any woman, however fair. Oh! no, I could not have made the sacrifice. I marvel not that he dislikes to dwell on it. We will talk of it no more. Child, you must be no niggard in your love for him; even then you will be his debtor in devotion."

But the excitement he had undergone was telling on him, and he sank back exhausted.

"I am tired, I can talk no more," he murmured. "I feel that I can sleep."

He closed his eyes, and, in a few seconds, he was slumbering peacefully.

"Come," said Halima, "we will withdraw for a space, and return anon."

All this while, the old woman in the corner had remained motionless and silent.

Now, for the first time, Halima caught sight of her. With a little cry of pleasure, she ran forward to her and threw herself on her knees in front of her.

"Nana!" (Nurse) she cried, "I had not seen you. Surely you have not forgotten your little Halima."

Instantly the old woman's features seemed to wake to life; the look of apathy departed, and what was meant for a smile of pleasure took its place; but St. Just thought it ghastly. "My child," she cried, and opened her arms to the dainty form before her. Halima, still kneeling, bent forward and embraced her. The old woman kissed her, crooning over her the while. Then both women gabbled away in low tones, but so rapidly that St. Just, though now a fair Arab scholar, could scarce catch a word.

Presently Halima rose from her knees, and, taking her husband by the hand, she drew him forward. Then she bent her head and whispered a few words in her nurse's ear. As St. Just rightly guessed, she was telling the old woman who he was. Then she turned to St. Just.

"Henri," she said, "this is my old nurse; she was present at my birth and nursed me through my childhood; she has always been with us, and she closed

my mother's eyes."

St. Just acknowledged the introduction in a few appropriate words; but, much to his surprise, they seemed to rouse the old creature's ire; for she first favored him with a searching stare and then with an evil scowl. Instinctively St. Just felt that he had made an enemy; but why, he was at a loss to guess. He would ask Halima when they were outside. The hag took no verbal notice of his greeting, but merely mumbled to herself, her expression becoming every moment blacker; and thus they left her.

CHAPTER XIX.

The news that St. Just was married to the daughter of their chief quickly spread amongst the tribe. At first great dissatisfaction was expressed; scowls and ominous grumblings were flung at him in passing, some of the men even going so far, among themselves, as to threaten to take his life, so soon as the old Sheik should be no more. The general impression was that, taking advantage of the girl's innocence and her absence from her father, St. Just had used unfair means to make her his.

But, when it became known that the old Sheik had previously given his consent to the intended marriage, and even desired it; further, that St. Just had become a true believer and had renounced his country and adopted theirs, the grumblings gradually died away, except on the part of a few of the younger members of the tribe, who were partisans of the Sheik's banished nephew Yusuf, and had looked forward to his assuming the leadership at his uncle's death. There seemed little chance of this, they feared, now that Halima was married to a man beloved and trusted by her father.

It was now three weeks since the return of Halima with her husband; the old Sheik still lived, and had even gained some little strength, but none could doubt that it was but temporary, and that the end could not be long postponed, in spite of all his daughter's loving care from the moment of her coming.

But one day, their hopes were unexpectedly revived. The day was bright and warm, and seemed to put new vitality into the old Sheik. Halima was much surprised when he raised himself on his elbow without assistance, and said in tones far stronger than he had used of late:

"I feel strangely better this afternoon, my child, and have a longing to see

the sun once more, and to breathe the pure desert air; I would be borne to the outside of the tent, where I can see my people."

A look of joy came into his daughter's face, and she sprang up with a little cry. "Oh, father," she exclaimed, "your words sound in my ears like the trickling of water to the thirsting Bedouin; for they tell me that you will yet regain your strength; the change, so long delayed, has at last set in. Praise be to Allah for it."

"Nay, be not deceived, my daughter, 'tis but the expiring flicker before the lamp goes out. But lose not time, get help to bear me out."

So Halima, first telling her old nurse to look to her father while she went out to execute his biddings, left the tent in search of her husband and others to assist him. They soon had formed a comfortable couch of skins and cushions; and then the old man was carried out and set upon it, and propped up with pillows. Then Halima and St. Just seated themselves, one at each side of him.

At first the Sheik said nothing, contenting himself with taking deep draughts of the balmy air, and turning his eyes towards the sun the while he shaded them with his hands. Every moment he seemed to be gaining strength.

Presently he turned his face upwards towards the heavens and spread out his hands; then, at last, he spoke.

"I thank thee, All Merciful, All powerful Allah, that Thou hast permitted me once more to behold Thy glorious sun and to breathe the pure air that sweeps across the desert. And now I pray Thee sustain my strength while I impart my last washes to those from whom I shall so soon be parted."

He crossed his hands upon his knees and turned his eyes first on Halima, next on St. Just, and then went on: "While I have strength to speak, my children, I will give you my last instructions; for something tells me this is my final opportunity."

"Nay, father, say not so," cried Halima, and she laid her little hand on his withered ones and stroked them lovingly, "I cannot bear—"

"Interrupt me not, my child," he broke in solemnly; "for I have much to say to you, and I know the time is short. It is about the buried treasure that I would speak to you. Has your husband told you aught of this?"

"He told me on our journey here, my father,"

"He did well; then I need not recapitulate." Then he turned to St. Just and laid his hands upon his arm. "These are evil days for us, but they will pass. Your chief General has left the country and returned to his own land. Doubtless, he thinks that the generals and the army he has left behind will achieve his purpose of making Egypt an appanage of France. But something tells me that it will not be so; his army will melt away before the climate, and the valor of our people, and our country will be freed from the invader. And then will come the time for the restoration of my father's house in the person of my daughter—and of you, her

husband. If you rightly play your part, a great destiny awaits her, and you will share it; and I doubt not you will do so. But, to come to the matter whereof I wish to speak to you. When I am no longer with you, you must choose a fitting time for the removal of this treasure and for its disposal according to my directions. Once I hoped myself to carry out my plans concerning it; but Allah has willed otherwise; my course is run, and you must act for me.

"Here," and the old Sheik took a packet from his breast and handed it to St. Just, "you will find my views put forth; in these papers have I set down the names of the men to whom the gold and silver is to be consigned. They are men of probity and judgment; men who, like myself, have been watching and working secretly year by year, in the face of obstacles almost insurmountable, to complete our plans.

"If things go right when I am gone, Halima will be Queen of Upper Egypt, for she will be the head of a powerful tribe—the strongest and most ancient of all the desert tribes. You, as her husband, will then occupy a high position; but it will be to you no sinecure. I doubt not that, though you are now one of us, the creed and nationality you have abjured, will be urged against you. At first you will meet with opposition, but you must not be discouraged, but exercise great tact and patience, and thus in time you will surmount it."

His voice had been getting gradually weaker, and now a pallor overspread his face, which also became damp with sweat.

"I faint; the draught!" he gasped, and his head dropped forward.

St. Just placed his arm around him and rested his head upon his shoulder; while Halima held a goblet, containing a stimulating and nourishing cordial, to his lips, watching him anxiously the while. He drank it eagerly, then closed his eyes. They feared the last moment had arrived, and St. Just placed his hand upon the old man's heart. Its pulsations were stronger than he had expected. The two watchers gazed at him with affectionate solicitude, but neither spoke a word.

In a few minutes, to their relief, the old warrior opened his eyes and raised his head. Then he began to speak once more. But Halima checked him.

"Oh! father," she cried, "be still a while; you are not strong enough for further speech at present."

"My strength has come back to me, my child," he said, "and I must use it while I may; and talking will not harm me. But I will first drink again."

Fearing that opposition would hurt him even more than would the effort of talking, Halima said no more, but again held the goblet to his lips.

"I can hold it," he said somewhat touchily, and he took it from her. He handed it back to her, and then resumed.

"At one time I had hoped that your cousin Yusuf would have filled my place and ruled the tribe, when I am gone; but he has grievously offended me in the

way that you both wot, so that his place in the tribe is blotted out. But I fear he will not take his banishment with patience. Be wary of him, for I am assured that he will trouble you. However specious his promises of fidelity, trust him not; have no dealings with him. Let him not plant his foot within the borders of the tribe. If he do, have no mercy on him; kill him ruthlessly, as you would a scorpion; or a venomous snake. You will have no safety while he lives, for he has friends among the young men of the tribe, who will never cease to plot for him, till he is dead. Our good doctor will inform you of them. He is faithful, as the sun that never fails to run his allotted course. He helped you into life, my child, and his love towards you is great. And now I will rest me for a space, ere I summon my warriors about me; for, presently, I must have speech of them."

He sank back on his cushions and closed his eyes; in a few minutes, from his measured breathing, he seemed to be asleep.

In about an hour he opened his eyes and looked round inquiringly, with a dazed expression. They lighted upon Halima, and he smiled; a look of intelligence appeared upon his face.

"Ha!" he exclaimed, "I recollect; you brought me here. I have been asleep and feel refreshed for it. The sun has warmed my blood and put new strength in me. I will address my people while it lasts. Call all my warriors, and let them place themselves before me in due order."

"Oh! father," began Halima, "it is too much for you; it—"

"Be silent, child; I will have it so," he interrupted sternly.

She shrank back, cowed, and made no further effort to dissuade him.

Then the word was passed throughout the camp, and eagerly responded to.

When the whole tribe was gathered in front of him, Ben Ibrahim raised his hand, and every voice was stilled. Even the little children held their peace, impressed by the solemnity of the occasion, without knowing what it meant.

"My children," the chief began—and his voice was clear and strong—"I have called you here to rest my eyes on you once more, and to take my last farewell of you; for the river of my life has almost ceased to flow; and I do not murmur that it should be thus, for I have lived longer than is given the most of us, and it is meet that I should go. I have known every one of you from his birth, for I am older than the oldest of you. In all the many years in which I have been your chief I have striven to deal out justice to you, and, at the same time, to temper it with mercy; but man's knowledge is so limited, and his judgment is so fallible, that some of you I may unknowingly have wronged; if so, I now ask your forgiveness. My warriors, we have stood together on many a hard fought field, and our swords have drunk the blood of worthy foes. Sometimes for a brief space we have been worsted, but never have we turned our backs except when hopelessly outnumbered. Generally I have led you on to victory, and, when we

have returned to our women and our little ones, we have not come empty-handed from our enemies. I miss the faces of some who have fallen at my side, but it was the will of Allah, and we dare not question it, and there is no more glorious end than to die fighting for one's home and dear ones. I thank you for your courage and fidelity, and I charge you solemnly to yield the same to her on whom will soon devolve the headship of the tribe—my daughter Halima, whom you have known from the moment of her birth. Also to her husband, my dear son-in-law; and I take this opportunity of declaring that it was with my full consent and wish he married her, and of her own free choice. Yield him, therefore, the same unswerving confidence and obedience you have accorded me. He is worthy of it, and can, moreover, teach you many things unknown to you—new arts, by which you may defeat your enemies; new modes by which you may increase your wealth and comfort; new forms of pleasure for your leisure hours. Therefore, I say to you trust him and conform to his behests.

"You have heard me patiently, and now I ask you with my last breath—for you will see my face again no more—will you be true and faithful to my daughter and her husband, and serve them loyally as you have served me, even to laying down your lives, if it be necessary?"

There was a moment's silence, and then the assemblage shouted with one voice:—

"We will."

"Then swear it on your knees," resumed the Sheik. "Swear it in the presence of Allah, who knows all that is in your hearts, and will deal with you in the great hereafter according to your deeds, and will mete out a fearful punishment to the perjured traitor; swear that you will yield true and loyal service to my daughter and him who is her husband. They, in their turn, shall take the same oath to you."

He raised his arm, then moved it slowly downwards as a sign to them to kneel. The next moment, all were on their knees, the little children, who were too young to understand, being pressed down by their mothers. Then all the men stretched forth their hands to Halima and St. Just, and took this oath of fealty.

"We swear to take the Lady Halima as our ruler, and to be true and faithful to her and to her husband and to defend them against all adversaries while the breath is in our bodies. May Allah so deal with us, as we deal with them."

"It is well," said the Sheik, "I can die content."

When the people had regained their feet, he turned to Halima and St. Just.

"It is your turn, my children."

Then Halima laid her left hand on her father's shoulder, and St. Just moved to her side and took her other hand in his. Then, raising his right arm, he faced the multitude. Thus standing hand in hand—a handsome pair, forsooth, as every one confessed—under the broad, blue expanse, the sinking sun full in their faces,

they swore to uphold the honor of the tribe, to be true and just in all their dealings with them, and to do their utmost to promote their welfare. It was St. Just alone who spoke on behalf of both.

When he had finished speaking, Halima bent her gaze downward on her father. He was motionless, his head had fallen forward, and his eyes were partly closed and void of all expression. An awful fear crept over her.

"My father! he has fainted," she exclaimed. "Ben Kerriman!"

The doctor stepped round from behind the Sheik, and placed his ear against the old man's heart; then, looking very grave, he removed his head and took a little mirror from his pocket, and placed it before the patient's lips. When he examined it, its surface was unsullied, its brightness was undimmed. Then Ben Kerriman faced the people, on whom the hush of an impending woe had settled, and raised his hand.

"My friends," he said, "Ben Ibrahim has joined his fathers."

CHAPTER XX.

The next day the old Sheik was laid to rest with his ancestors in the "Tombs of the Kings." At first Halima was inconsolable in her grief; but, from its very intensity, it soon spent itself, and her thoughts, from dwelling upon her father, reverted to herself.

She set herself, and in this she was ably seconded by her husband, to gain popularity in her new position; and, to say this, is to say that she succeeded, for her youth and beauty, her sweet temper and winning manners, and her kindness and generosity, compelled her retainers' enthusiastic loyalty, so that they almost worshiped her; also they admired and honored him.

Altogether she was in danger of being spoiled, for St. Just also yielded to her in everything and never sought to impose his will on her. Ben Kerriman, the old doctor, noted all this with regret, and one day remonstrated with St. Just.

"My son," he said, "you will pardon an old man for offering unsought advice; for you know my strong regard for the Lady Halima. But you let her have too much of her own way; it is not good for women to be independent. She should be taught, even more for her own sake than for yours, to control her wishes; she should not have everything she wants. I know her disposition well; she is generous and affectionate; but she is by nature dictatorial and ambitious, and

filled with unsatisfied desires. And these qualities have become far more marked since her father's death. I foresee that, unless she be kept in hand, even should she gain the goal marked out by the late Sheik, and become Queen of Upper Egypt, she will not be content. What she has set her heart upon is to go to France and there to make a position for herself. Recollect, too, that she is half French; it was partly that, no doubt, that inclined her to yourself. It would be a terrible disappointment to us all, should she forsake her father's people."

St. Just thanked the old doctor for his kindly meant advice and promised seriously to consider it.

Strange to say, at that very time something was occurring that seemed to lend confirmation to the doctor's views of Halima's disposition. Soon after her father's death, she had chosen to consider herself slighted through the non-observance by a neighboring tribe of some trivial ceremony customary on the decease of a friendly Sheik; and St. Just had been surprised at the importance she had assigned to it and the temper she had shown. Since then, she had been continually urging him to invade their territory to chastise them. But he was unwilling to break the peace of the district, that had been so admirably kept by the old Sheik; and had, so far, held her back.

With a view of diverting her attention from the subject, he proposed that they should set about the recovery of the buried treasure; to his delight, she at once acceded to his suggestion. So he called together some of the elder members of the tribe—those with whom the old Sheik had been in the habit of taking counsel—and told them what he and Halima had resolved.

Accordingly, a party was formed, which, beside St. Just and Halima, consisted of six of the leading members of the tribe, Abdallah, Mahmoud and a guard of forty-five men.

St. Just had been surprised when Halima had announced her intention of accompanying the expedition, and had done his utmost to dissuade her; but she had been resolute to go, and, of course, had had her way.

So, early one morning, they set out. It was now three weeks since the old Sheik's death.

They traveled with all speed, but, for all that, it was nightfall when they reached the rocks that marked the entrance to the subterranean city. To explore it at that time could not be thought of, for all were more or less fatigued; so St. Just gave orders for the camels to be tethered and for the men to make themselves as comfortable as circumstances would permit, an impromptu tent being rigged up for Halima. Then fires were lighted, and a meal of stewed kid, supplemented with dates and rice, was prepared and duly eaten. This done, a watch was set, and the men disposed themselves to pass the night, each rolled up in his blanket. St. Just, before he retired to rest, walked through the camp, to see that all were

settled and to give his last instructions to the sentry. Then he himself lay down just outside Halima's tent.

But, tired though he was, he could not sleep; his brain was busy with thoughts of the treasure the morrow would disclose—of what it would consist, its value, and all that it might lead to. He tried to put the thoughts away from him, for he longed to sleep; but, the more he tried, the more wakeful he became, and he tossed about from side to side, in the vain hope that, by changing his position, he would effect his purpose.

Presently the sound of a light footfall reached his ear, then some one behind him touched his arm. He started up and laid his hand upon his dagger, believing himself about to be attacked. Halima stood beside.

"You startled me, sweetheart," he exclaimed in muffled tones. "Is anything the matter; are you ill?"

"Hush! no," was her reply, and she put a finger to her lips, "but I want to talk to you, undisturbed. Everyone is now asleep."

She sat down beside him and drew her hood forward, so as to conceal her face. Then, "Henri," she resumed, "do you remember what I said in Cairo the night you pressed me to become your wife?"

"A good deal was said," he answered, "on that memorable occasion; but what is it that you wish me specially to recall?"

"This, that, instead of ending my life as I had intended, I said I would live for you and Buonaparte—for love—and vengeance—vengeance on my betrayer."

St. Just was roused; he had hoped Halima was forgetting this episode in her life, as he himself was striving hard to. The subject was abhorrent to him.

"My dear," he said, "why refer to this? I had hoped it was fading from your memory. We are happy in each other's love; why cherish revengeful thoughts that are impossible of accomplishment?"

"Impossible? They are not; they shall not be. I am as firm in my resolve as ever. So you thought I had forgotten. Know that I will never rest, until I have been revenged on him. You little guess the stuff that I am made of. You know how I can love; you shall learn how I can hate." The words ended almost in a hiss.

All this was a revelation to St. Just, and, for the moment, he was nonplussed.

"Well," he said weakly, "what do you purpose doing?"

"I have thought it all out. Listen. My father told us just before he died that in this treasure, beside the gold, there is vast wealth in jewels—opals, diamonds, rubies of great size and value; but, for all that, occupying little space.

"Now my plan is this; when we have got the treasure to the camp, you shall take the gold to Cairo to those appointed by my father to receive it. Then, instead of returning to the tribe, make your way to Suez and there await me. I will join

you with the jewels, and we will take ship for France."

"A very pretty plan, but you will have to get the jewels first; no easy matter with so many eyes about."

"I'll manage that; trust a woman for hoodwinking those about her."

"But how can I set foot in France? Buonaparte would have me shot as a deserter. But, even supposing my presence were unknown, and I escaped; if we killed Buonaparte, we should pay forfeit with our heads; and then, what would profit us all our wealth?"

"Kill him? That is not my aim. No, I shall wait till his power has become supreme; then I will drag him down."

"Words, idle words, my dear, that can never eventuate in deeds. I doubt not that you have the will, but you almost make me smile. How can you, a mere woman, control the future of such a man?"

"You shall see when his hour has come, mere woman though I am. When he has reached the zenith of his power, he shall be hurled suddenly into ignominy and exile, and eat his heart out in captivity. Then he shall know that I have had a hand in all that has befallen him, and learn the intensity of my hatred."

"And you will help me to be revenged on Buonaparte?" she asked, after a little pause.

"Willingly," he answered earnestly. "He is the cause of all our trouble. To be revenged on him I am prepared to face all risks—yes, even Hell's torments, rather than abate one jot or tittle of his punishment. Are you content?"

A cruel smile of triumph played about her lips.

"I am," she said. "See that you never waver in your resolution. As for my own, it is as fixed and sure as the sun round which we move. It is the very breath of my existence, and will cease only either with my death, or its fulfillment. I have not thought out the details of my plan; there is ample time for that; but, with the wealth at our command, the instruments for retribution will not be hard to find."

"But you are weary, love, and you have much to do to-morrow, and the night is far advanced. Come into my tent, my Henri." She laid her hand on his. "Ah! you are cold," she cried with gentle sympathy. "You shall rest with my arms around you, close to my heart, and I will give you warmth, and lull you off to sleep."

He made no demur, and she led him to her tent.

Thus was the oath to be revenged on Buonaparte re-sworn. At that moment he was preparing, away in France, to take up the reins of government as First Consul, and, could he have heard them, would have laughed to scorn the threats of Halima and her husband.

CHAPTER XXI.

At daybreak the camp was all astir. Fires were replenished for the preparation of the morning meal, which some attended to, while others were told off to feed the camels. Then all breakfasted, and the final arrangements for the day's proceedings were completed.

When they were on the point of starting, much to St. Just's annoyance and regret, Halima came up ready dressed to join the party.

"My dear," he said, "you surely cannot think of going with us."

"Naturally," she replied simply.

"But it is impossible," he rejoined. "You have no conception of the roughness of the road; we have to burrow underground, and the way is full of danger. No woman could face it."

"If there is danger, the greater the reason that I should go with you. I will not run the risk of being left alone to face the world. If aught befall you, it shall strike me too."

"But," he urged, "where a man would run but little risk, a woman would run much. Besides, the care of you would impede our movements."

"I care not; I mean to go with you. Come, we are wasting time."

He saw she was immovable, and he sighed.

"Be it so," he said, and, without further words, they started.

On their way to the entrance of the subterranean passage, they had to pass the lake. To their surprise, they found that more than half of it had disappeared. The shallower portion of what had been the lake, consisted now of dried up mud, intersected with deep fissures, with here and there a shallow pool. Only at the end nearest the high rocks, beneath which lay the buried city, was the water deep, and black as night.

While St. Just was gazing at it, Mahmoud came up behind him and touched him on the arm.

"Look, master; look what I have found," he said, when St. Just turned round; and he handed him a little slab about one inch square and a quarter of an inch in thickness. In color it was of a dull reddish yellow, and on one side of it could be discerned the indistinct figure of a cat. St. Just carefully examined it, and weighed it in his hand. Then he took out his dagger and scratched the surface. It was soft; it was pure gold!

"Where did you find this?" he inquired.

Meanwhile, some of the others had come up and were gazing enviously at what was in his hand.

"In the grass, close to this hole," replied the boy, his brown face wreathed in smiles, though he had not the least notion of the value of his find; but he saw, by his master's face, that St. Just was pleased.

"Look about, some of you, and see whether you can find more," St. Just went on.

A careful search was made, but no more gold pieces were forthcoming. Evidently this was a stray one dropped either in the hiding, or removing of the treasure.

"Here, sweetheart," he said, handing it to Halima; "take this as a keepsake; it is the first fruits of our expedition."

"I will have a brooch made of it," she said.

Having seen all there was to see about the lake, they retraced their steps to where the camels were tethered. Here St. Just gave final directions to those who were to remain behind, and then the party of treasure seekers made their way to the entrance of the passage leading to the buried city, all carrying torches.

One by one they disappeared within the entrance, each man lighting his torch inside from the one preceding him, until all were within the opening. Then they proceeded cautiously down the easy descent the passage took, until they reached the point at which the real danger began; and here their leader called a halt.

Mindful, from the experience of his previous journey, of the shoot down which one had to slide—an easy task, when one was aware of it, for a man, but hazardous for a woman—he adopted special precautions for securing Halima from accident.

What he did was this—and it was only his knowledge of the length of the shoot that made it possible—he sent one man down to the bottom of the slope with a lighted torch. Arrived there, he was to lie at full length on his back close against the side of the tunnel. Then another man was to follow in the same way, setting his feet on the shoulders of the one below; and so on, until the entire length of the steep incline was occupied. By this means the whole stretch was lighted most effectively, and a passage was left at the side of the men, down which Halima could travel; in case her progress should become dangerously rapid, the men could check it. Then he tied a rope round Halima's waist, and she began the descent feet foremost on her hands and knees, he standing at the top and paying out the rope as needed. In two minutes she had reached the bottom. Then he followed, and the torch-bearers after him, beginning from the topmost man.

In due course, they reached the roadway that gave on to the ruined city, and here they halted for a moment to view the wondrous scene, which many of them now saw for the first time. Halima's eyes sparkled with excitement; she seemed enraptured.

"Wonderful!" she exclaimed. "It is like being transported to another world. I could not have imagined such a scene; never again will my eyes rest on such a sight. Oh! I would not have missed it for all the world. And to think that you would have deprived me of it, Henri."

She seemed loth to leave it, but stood turning her eyes from one point to another, without further comment. Presently St. Just recalled her to their errand.

"It is indeed a wondrous sight," he said, "but we must not dally here; we can admire it further, when we have done our work."

"You are right," she said: "let us go on."

St. Just gave the order, and the whole party made a sharp turn to the left, along the pathway to the temple, which lay not many yards away. What had been once a noble doorway was now a yawning gap, and through this they passed, to find themselves in a gigantic hall, down which ran two long rows of pillars, which served to support the roof, the span of the building being such as to require them. In the semi-darkness it was impossible to see whether the roof still stood. Between the pillars there were marble statues which, considering their antiquity, were marvelously well preserved—sufficiently so, at any rate, to show that those who had produced them were no uncivilized barbarians, but men who had a thorough knowledge of the sculptor's art.

In the center of the building a much larger statue reared itself. The figure was at least twenty feet in height, and was placed on a pedestal ten feet high, the whole resting on a flight of half a dozen steps that faced four ways. The figure represented a man perfectly proportioned and of majestic mien. It wore a crown and was draped in flowing robes; the right arm was raised and bore a sword. Doubtless, the statue was the counterfeit presentment of the god to whom the temple had been dedicated.

At the foot of this statue they found the object of their search. Around its base were piled, one upon another, strong wooden boxes bound with iron. They were oblong, eighteen inches by twelve, and about nine inches deep. St. Just counted them; there were forty-eight. Then he raised the end of one of them to judge its weight; it took more strength than he had thought. From the size of the boxes and their weight, their contents must be gold—about two hundred-weight in each, as he supposed. He made a mental calculation. Then he turned to Halima and said in French: "Gold. If they are all alike, there is the value here of about fifteen million francs."

"So much as that," she said. "It seems an immense sum. But think you the jewels are packed with the gold?"

"Most likely not; we will make a further search before we go."

Meanwhile, the restless Mahmoud, who had been peering about, called out:

"This box not full; lid cracked. Little yellow bricks, like that I found, inside."

St. Just looked and found the boy was right; the box held layers of little golden slabs.

Now that St. Just was advised roughly of the amount of treasure—the weight and number of the boxes—he had to consider the mode for its removal; he saw, at once, that he had not provided means for its transport in one journey to the camp; the camels they had brought with them could not possibly carry it all. The first thing, however, was to get it above ground, and the chief difficulty would arise in the passage with the sharp ascent.

Only half the party was underground, the rest remaining with the camels at their temporary encampment. St. Just divided his men into gangs of three, of which one would carry a torch and two a box, one at each end. There were eight of these gangs, so that, to move all the treasure, each would have to make six journeys. Their leader's intention was to have all the boxes deposited at the foot of the steep incline, before attempting to haul any of them up.

The orders given, the men began the work, the eight parties filing out of the temple, each preceded by its torch-bearer. They set off at a fair pace, but quickly slackened, and their progress became momentarily slower, as their burdens seemed to increase in weight. Two hundred-weight, borne as this had to be, is no mean load, and frequent rests were necessary; so that it took quite half an hour to do the distance there and back. Thus it would occupy three hours, merely to move the treasure to the slope. When the men returned from their first journey, they showed the stress of their exertions in their perspiring faces and still rapid breathing.

In due course, all the boxes were transported to the bottom of the slope. While this work had been in progress, St. Just had not been idle. They had provided themselves with a good supply of rope, and, with this, he had slings knotted together, in which the boxes could be slipped readily and hauled up the incline. Thus there was no loss of time, and, when all the treasure had been stacked hard by the shoot, the work of haulage was begun. Four men, by St. Just's direction, scrambled up, taking the end of a strong rope with them. Then the boxes one by one, were hitched to the middle of the cable and drawn up, the latter being pulled back, after each box had been released, by the end that remained with those below. When the boxes should have been all dragged up the slope, the rest would be comparatively easy, for the further route to the open air was both short and almost level, rising so gradually as to present no difficulties. Before this was begun, however, all the treasure was to be collected at the upper end of the shoot. St. Just believed in doing work by stages.

He waited long enough to see that his plan was working smoothly, and then, leaving one of the oldest and most respected of the tribe in charge, he and Halima, accompanied by the faithful Mahmoud, made their way back to the tem-

ple, to take a last look round. Unless the jewels were packed up with the gold, they had not yet been found, and St. Just was resolved to make a further search for them, free from the eyes of witnesses. As for Mahmoud, his master knew that he was to be trusted to keep inviolate any secret.

When they had again traversed the pathway to the left and had gained the open space before the temple, St. Just, happening to turn his head round to the right, his attention was attracted to the crater of the volcano. Only light smoke had been proceeding from it on their arrival; now sparks were mingled with it, and an occasional tongue of fire shot up; the smoke, too, had become denser and was tinged with red. Also low rumblings could be heard.

"The crater is more active than when we first came," he said. "See those showers of red hot cinders; and can you hear those sounds like distant thunder?"

"Yes, is it not grand?" said Halima. "It is like a huge fountain of golden rain and hail. I can hear the roar too; what force must be embowelled there to cause it; it sounds like fifty blacksmiths' fires all blowing at once. It certainly was not like this before. Think you we are in any danger?"

"I trust not; I think we are too far away. But we will lose no time. Come, Mahmoud, go before us with your torch."

They made their way once more into the temple, and began their search, Halima and St. Just going along by the wall on one side of the building, and Mahmoud taking the other. When they had reached the end, they retraced their steps, taking a course a little further from the walls, and so on, backwards and forwards, and thus gradually approaching the center, having left no portion of the flooring uncovered by their torches, and all the while peering carefully around.

In due course, they met in the center of the building by the huge statue; so far their search had been absolutely fruitless. They gazed in one another's faces somewhat blankly. Then St. Just looked up at the impassive figure.

"Unless that venerable gentleman holds the secret," he said, addressing Halima, "and is prepared to share it with us, I fear we shall have to return, as empty-handed as we came. I will improve my acquaintance with him."

He ran nimbly up the steps and carefully examined the pedestal on which the statue rested. It seemed to be a solid block of stone; certainly the front portion of it was, for, on his kicking it, it gave forth no hollow sound, and no lines were visible on its exterior. He moved round one corner and along the side, minutely inspecting as he went. About three inches from the end there was a vertical line or crack about a foot in length that reached the bottom of the pedestal, and at its upper end terminated in another line at right angles to it, that extended to the corner. He went round to the back and followed this horizontal line for eighteen inches, when, as he had hoped, it was joined by another vertical line, that, like the first, ran down to the pedestal's base. It was a slab of stone, in fact, eighteen

inches by twelve, three inches thick. On being struck, it sounded hollow.

"There is a cavity," he cried. "Mahmoud, come here."

Mahmoud ran up the steps, and then St. Just told him to insert his dagger into the lower part of the interstice, whilst he himself took the same course with the upper. When both daggers had got fair hold, the two men prized carefully together, and the stone began to move. Soon they could get their fingers into the opening; then, exerting all their force, they wrenched the slab away and it fell down the steps with a crash that reverberated through the temple, and startled Halima.

"Oh!" she cried unconsciously. Then, "Have you found anything?"

"I shall know presently," St. Just called back.

The stone removed, a cavity was revealed, and in this lay a small square box, apparently of silver, but so dull and tarnished that it was difficult to determine. St. Just seized it, and, in two strides, was at the bottom of the steps.

"I think I've found them," he cried; "see." And he held out the box.

Halima took it. "This is for Buonaparte," she said exultantly. "By the help of these I shall achieve my end. Was there anything more where you found this?"

"Nothing whatever. Now let us go; we have been too long already."

"Here, Mahmoud," said Halima; "carry this for me, and see that you lose it not, as you prize your life. And, further, say not a word concerning it to any one."

"Mahmoud is faithful," the boy replied reproachfully, taking the box from her. He placed it inside his loose garment, next his breast.

"Come, let us join the others,"' said St. Just, "and see what progress they have made."

The words had hardly left his lips when a deep, rumbling sound was heard. It grew louder and louder; there was a resounding blow, and then, with a crash, a large portion of the left wall of the temple fell in, and a volume of water poured in after it.

"Merciful Heavens!" cried Halima, "what has happened?"

"The lake overhead must have burst in," exclaimed St. Just. "We must fly; follow me."

And he made for the upper end of the temple, towards the right hand corner, keeping close to Halima's side and suiting his pace to hers. It would have been useless to attempt to gain the entrance, for the flooring of the temple inclined that way, and all the water was flowing towards it; and, such were its force and volume, that it would have swept them off their feet and carried them over the roadway into the abyss in which stood the ruined city.

They rushed on side by side, without uttering a word. Mahmoud, who had been behind them at the start, soon overtook and headed them.

"Follow me," he cried, in passing; "I know." And he made direct for the far

right hand corner, on reaching which, he halted and waited for the others. Now, in the search they had just been making, Mahmoud had taken the right hand side, and he had noticed a narrow doorway at the extreme end. This might afford the means of their escape.

St. Just and Halima came up panting, and the boy pointed out this opening to them. Before examining it, St. Just paused to look around, so far as the light from their torches would permit. The result somewhat reassured him, for, where they were, the floor was dry, and, if the water at all gained on them, its progress was very slow, the great mass of it rushing towards the entrance, where it found an exit. His chief fear was that the latter might not be wide enough, and that the end wall might not be able to withstand the pressure. In such a case the whole temple might come down and, if not crushed to death, they would be entombed alive. On the other hand, should the end wall stand, he hoped that, when the lake should have run dry, they could make their escape by the temple entrance.

"We are safe for the moment," he said. And he put his arm round Halima and drew her to him and kissed her fondly. "My poor darling, how you tremble. Courage, keep up your heart; we shall yet escape."

She clung to him frantically, sobbing and panting for breath.

"Oh! I am so frightened," she gasped; "to have to die so young, and in such a place. Oh! I wish I had not come."

He was too generous to reproach her for not having taken his advice.

"We shall not die, sweetheart," he made answer reassuringly. "Calm yourself; we shall need all our wits. See, the water does not come our way; it all flows out at the other end; when it has subsided, we shall be able to leave the temple. Meanwhile, let us examine this opening in the wall, and see what lies beyond."

His words gave his wife confidence, and gradually she grew calm. He advanced to the opening and, holding his torch well in front of him, he peered about.

"There is a passage," he said, "that leads somewhere; let us explore it while we wait; who knows? we may find further treasure."

So all three entered, and made their way along it; it was about four feet wide and seven high, stone cased and arched—a tunnel in fact—and it inclined gradually upwards.

They had proceeded not more than twenty yards when they were startled by a long rolling crash behind them, that brought them to a standstill.

"Oh! what is that?" cried Halima. "Something very heavy has fallen."

An awful fear crept over St. Just; he guessed just what had happened, but durst not give utterance to his thoughts.

"I will go back and see," he said; "wait here for me."

"Not for worlds," said Halima. "I will not be left for a moment. I will go

with you."

So all three retraced their steps together. St. Just's fears were soon confirmed; the entrance to the passage was completely blocked by debris of stone and mortar.

"My God!" he exclaimed, "the whole temple has come down. If we had not sheltered in this passage, we should have been buried in the ruins."

"Better that than to be buried alive," said Halima; "we are hopelessly entrapped; doomed to die of slow starvation."

"God grant us a better fate! This passage must lead somewhere; it rises, and, most likely, will take us above ground. There is no cause for despair. Come."

For his wife's sake, he affected a cheerfulness he was far from feeling, and her spirits rose proportionately.

"I will be brave," she answered, "May Allah save us!"

They turned their backs upon the ruined temple and hurried along the passage, Mahmoud in advance. When they had traversed about three hundred yards, gradually ascending all the while, the passage ended, and they emerged at a point where three roads met. The center one led down hill to the ruined city, for, now that they had left the tunnel, the light from the volcano was sufficient for them to discern it. It was useless, therefore, taking this; the choice lay between the other two, to the right and the left respectively; which were they to follow? Halima gave her decision.

"We'll try the right," she said; "it saved us once, it may again. We will follow our luck."

There seemed some sense in what she said, so St. Just resolved to act upon it. Additionally, so far as he could mentally take bearings, the direction indicated was that in which lay the camp.

"Agreed," he said; "we can but try the other, should this fail to bring us out. Mahmoud, to the right; go on in front, and keep a good look out."

But now that they had left the tunnel, they found the traveling much harder, for the road was rough and strewn with obstacles—great blocks of stone they had to skirt, and smaller ones embedded in the lava, with which the whole way was covered, so that hardly a step could be taken on the level, and they constantly stumbled, and sometimes found themselves full length upon the ground. Occasionally, their path was completely barricaded by a pile of debris, over which they had to scramble as best they could. Spite of all her husband's care, Halima received several serious bruises, her feet especially smarting and aching, so that she could scarce refrain from moaning; for all that, she made no sound, but struggled bravely on.

They were really traversing the upper portion of the ruined city, for they found themselves passing through the courtyards of deserted houses and by the

ends of still standing inner walls, on which St. Just noticed, with a curious sense of half awakened interest, wonderfully executed frescoes of battle scenes, and others. In different circumstances he would have stayed his steps to admire and wonder, for in some cases the pictures were in no way marred, and the colors so fresh that they might have been laid on the day before. But their peril was too great to leave room for admiration of passing objects; so they hurried stumbling on.

Suddenly they found their progress barred; a huge wall of rock loomed high before them; the road went no further; unless there should be a way round this new obstacle, they would have to retrace their steps and try the other road. Seating Halima on a fallen stone—she was now too tired to object to being left while the others searched about—St. Just made his way in one direction along the face of rock, and sent Mahmoud in the other, to see whether a passage could be found.

Presently the boy cried out, "Way here, Master." And almost immediately, St. Just was at his side. An opening had been cut within the rock, and thence, leading downwards was a flight of steps; but the treads were so slippery and uneven from their lava coating, that to descend them would be perilous, though, St. Just thought, possible with care. Should they slip, they might slide down into an almost fathomless abyss. For all that, he resolved to try it; indeed there seemed to be no alternative.

And now something else both puzzled and alarmed him; the air was perceptibly warmer than when they had left the temple, and every moment it grew hotter; he feared the volcano's energy was increasing. Had they escaped entombment in the temple, only to be burnt to death? The thought was maddening; he said nothing of it to his companion, and together they rejoined Halima. He told her of their discovery, and they lost no time in beginning their descent. It was performed in this wise. St. Just seated himself on the top step and then gradually worked himself, with his hands and feet, on to the next; Halima followed behind him in the same position, and Mahmoud came last, propelling himself in like fashion. Thus, in case Halima should slip, her motion would be checked by her husband's body.

Save for a few slight cuts and bruises, they reached the bottom of the flight of steps in safety—there were eighteen in all—and found themselves in a road that crossed the point at which the steps gave on it. This time they chose the left, and traveled on. The air was almost stifling and choked with dust, so that they had difficulty in breathing; but still they dragged on their weary steps in silence, Halima now leaning on her husband's arm.

After proceeding thus for half an hour, the air ever getting hotter, and at the same time lighter, they reached an open space; and here they paused to look

about them. Their torches were now of little use; the flames from the volcano lighted up the scene all round. Close on their left was a huge ruined building, that St. Just decided had been the palace of some great one. To the right, at what, in the half-smothered glare, seemed a considerable distance, the crater was belching out flames and smoke and red hot cinders, accompanied by cracklings and roarings and rumblings that were terrible to hear; whilst broad streams of white-hot, boiling lava were pouring down on the ruined city away in front, below them, where they lay like sheets of liquid fire; and, with it all, were sulphurous fumes, whose stench was sickening, that caused their eyes and throats to smart and made respiration painful.

Hope almost died within them; in such an atmosphere life could not long hold out.

"Our only chance lies in this large building," said St. Just. "The volcano bars our progress towards the right; the burning city in the front; unless we can find a way out through the building, we are hopelessly cut off."

To penetrate it was easy, for the walls were full of gaps, and they soon found themselves in a large courtyard; this was clear of obstacles and quickly crossed. As good luck would have it, an open gate-way faced them; passing through, they gained a road that rose gradually as far as they could see—evidently the main approach to the building.

Once more their hope revived, and, though faint, their strength all but exhausted, they crawled along this road. It was bordered by banks and rocks; no houses lined its sides; plainly it was a thoroughfare cut in the mountain's face or side, and leading to and from the city. Higher and higher they ascended; and now, for the first time, they could feel a cooler air blowing in their faces; it was but a breath, but it was there, and it added to their hope; this was no sulphur-laden blast—that was now behind them—but an earth-borne breeze.

"We are on the right track; we shall yet escape," cried St. Just, and there was a note almost of exultation in his voice. When one has been within the very jaws of death, even a short respite revives the fainting heart.

Suddenly Halima reeled against him and would have fallen, had he not supported her.

"I can go no farther," she gasped faintly. "Leave me here, Henri, and save yourselves, you and the boy."

"Never," he answered resolutely. "Why, sweetheart, we are saved. Before long, we shall see the sky; we are breathing pure air now."

"It is too late; I am so worn out that I have no life left in me. I care not to live, I am so weary—only to die in peace."

"You shall rest awhile; you may do it safely now; in fact a rest will be of service to us all."

He laid her gently down, and, almost in a moment, she had fallen asleep. Meanwhile St. Just and Mahmoud sat and watched. Sleep would have been everything to them also, but they durst not yield to it. How much further should they have to go, St. Just wondered wearily, before they would be free. He had now every confidence that they would escape, provided that their strength held out; but would it? That depended on the distance they had still to go; and there was Halima.

He let her sleep for about an hour, and then he roused her.

"Oh! let me be," she cried. "I am too weak to move, I was happy; it was cruel of you to disturb me."

"Dearest," he said, "it had to be; but I and Mahmoud will carry you while we can."

They took her up between them and staggered on. Their progress was now slow indeed, and they had to make frequent stoppages to rest. Oh! for a drink of water to moisten their parched tongues and throats! Still onward and upward they stumbled with their almost unconscious burden.

They reached the limit of the road and were there faced by an arched gateway cut in the solid rock. It had been guarded by a pair of bronze gates, one of which still hung on its hinges; the other lay prone before them. The gateway gave on to a tunnel, whose length they could not ascertain, for no light showed through it; it was black as night. They would have to relight their torches; so far, the crater's glare had served them. They put down Halima, and St. Just got out a tinder box and the torches were rekindled. He turned to Halima.

"Can you walk a little, do you think?" he asked. "It will be difficult to carry you with torches in our hand."

He could scarce speak, and felt that to carry her at that moment was beyond him.

"I will try," she said, "if you will each give me an arm."

And thus they crawled along, the tunnel echoing to their footsteps. No one spoke; they were past that. Their road was easier now, for it was on the level; but what they gained in that, was balanced by their failing strength. It bore slightly to the right and seemed interminable, but it was really not a quarter of the length it appeared to them. It was only that they were so worn out. On they staggered, swaying this way and that, and sometimes almost falling, each feeling that, if their journey should not soon end, they must die of sheer exhaustion.

St. Just felt Halima totter. "Bear up," he whispered—he had no voice—"we are nearly through."

But it was useless; she heard him not, but sank fainting to the ground. St. Just signed to Mahmoud, and they raised her and carried her a few yards; then they put her down to rest themselves. Thus they proceeded with many halts for

a hundred yards or so. Having to carry their torches, they had but one arm for her.

They were resting, Halima lying on the ground, when suddenly St. Just clutched Mahmoud's arm convulsively and pointed ahead; he was too far gone to speak.

In the far distance was a tiny point of light.

Once more they took up Halima, who was still unconscious, and resumed their way, but now full of hope; and hope lent them strength.

Larger and larger grew the spot of light—not the lurid light from the horrid crater, but the white light of day—so that now they could almost see their way without their torches. Suddenly St. Just's foot struck violently against some obstruction, and all three fell heavily to the ground, the shock, in their then exhausted state, rendering them unconscious.

* * * * *

Mahmoud, perhaps because he was the youngest, was the first to come to himself. He looked around, and was surprised to find he knew the place. It was a cave in which he had more than once sheltered from the storm. The way out possessed no real difficulties, though it was intricate.

Casting a glance at the two prostrate figures, and assuring himself that they still lived, he ran out of the cave; the knowledge that they were saved, and the fresh air, had given him new strength. On he sped, and, after a run of half a mile, he dashed, breathless and almost speechless, into the midst of their own tribe.

"Water!" he panted.

They offered him a pitcher, and he drank till he could hold no more. Then, in a few words, he explained what had occurred, and where St. Just and Halima would be found. The cave was known to many of the tribe, and a rescue party was at once made up.

Halima was some time recovering, but St. Just, except for the cuts and bruises he had received, was soon himself again.

He told Mahmoud, they would never have been saved, but for his assistance, and that he should remember him with gratitude and affection to his dying day. And he did. Between the master and the servant the tie was for the future more like that between two brothers. When they were alone, Mahmoud handed him the silver box, which he had preserved through all their danger.

The boxes that contained the gold were also safe, and had been transported to the camp before St. Just's return.

CHAPTER XXII.

The effects of the terrible experience she had undergone were very serious to Halima. She had been carried from the cave to the encampment on a litter, for she had not been able to stand, still less to ride or walk. She lay on a couch and moaned, acutely sensible to pain, yet seemingly unconscious, so great was her prostration. She felt bruised and sore all over, every nerve and muscle overstrained; her body was one huge ache, her joints burned like fire, and she could scarcely have suffered more had she been stretched out on the rack.

Thus she passed the weary night, vainly longing, oh! so earnestly, for the sleep that would have been everything to her, but that her sufferings would not permit; for, with the cessation of exercise, her joints stiffened and the pain increased. In the morning she was in a high fever, and delirious. It was nature's retaliation for the affront that had been put upon her; for no one may insult her with impunity, and she rebels when too much is demanded of her, as when nerves and thews are overstrained and the brain is overwrought.

St. Just, the old nurse and Ben Kerriman, the doctor, stood gravely watching the unconscious girl, who lay staring at them with wide open eyes, eyes in which there was no trace of recognition; and their heart sank within them. The old doctor's knowledge of the healing art was superficial, and he was acquainted only with the simple herbal remedies. These he administered, but with little faith in their efficiency; such hope as he had, lay in the soundness and natural vigor of her constitution, aided by her youth. He gazed upon her sorrowfully, and shook his head doubtfully—almost despairingly. For all that, he was unremitting in his care, and in this he was ably seconded by the old nurse and St. Just. He was resolved that nature should have every chance. For a week she hovered between life and death, on more than one occasion the vital spark flickering so feebly that every moment they thought it would die out. In a week the critical moment that would decide her fate arrived. It passed and she was saved; her strong constitution had gained the mastery of the fever; the temperature of her blood was lowered; the florid color faded from her face; the pulse, that had been rapid and irregular, became calm and measured; a slight moisture broke out upon the hot, parched skin, and consciousness returned. She looked up in the faces of the watchers with a feeble smile, and her lips moved slightly, but no sound escaped them. Then she closed her eyes and dropped off into a calm, refreshing sleep, that lasted many hours.

When she awoke she was able to speak. From that moment she gradually gained strength; nothing now ailed her, but extreme debility, and each day that

grew less. Ben Kerriman, in fact, was surprised at her rapid progress towards recovery.

All this time the treasure that had almost cost their lives was kept carefully guarded. It had been stored up in a hut, which had been then banked round and on the top with sand, the door only being exposed. St. Just kept the key of this, and each day he went in to count the boxes and see that they had not been tampered with. Moreover, night and day the hut was always watched by two men—not, of course, always the same—in whom implicit confidence could be placed. All these precautions were scarcely needed, for no member of the tribe would have robbed its chief; but St. Just, realizing that he was but the bailee of this great wealth, was resolved to run no risk.

He had deferred the examination of the silver casket, until his wife should be restored to health, feeling that she would like to be present at its opening; but one day, when she was thoroughly recovered and they were alone together, and likely for some time to be undisturbed, he brought it out. It was soon forced open, and then the sight disclosed to view made Halima's eyes sparkle with delight, and St. Just's to beam with satisfaction. They had expected to find precious stones, but had never dreamed of such as these. Diamonds, rubies, sapphires, emeralds, and others whose names they did not know, all flawless, and of the purest water; the diamonds colorless as ice, the others with tints rich and deep. And there were no mean sized stones among them; some as large as pigeon's eggs, others equaling the size of marbles; there were none smaller. They were all unset and badly cut, but the size and quality were there. Little as St. Just knew of the value of such gems, he was satisfied that the contents of that little silver box far out-weighed in worth the treasure stored up in the hut outside.

When the jewels had been duly inspected and admired, it was arranged that Halima should have the charge of them, and, with a view to their safe custody, she said she would sew them into a pad or belt, and wear them under her clothing, until the opportunity should arrive for their disposal.

The subject naturally brought up that of the remainder of the treasure. Now that his anxiety on the score of his wife's health was over, St. Just was desirous of relieving himself of his responsibility as soon as possible. Having no immediate personal interest in the money, its custody had become an incubus he would fain shake off. Accordingly, he now suggested that a messenger should be at once despatched to Cairo with a letter to the persons mentioned by the late sheik, informing them of the existence of the gold and of the old man's wishes in regard to it, and inquiring whether, and by what route it would be safe for him, St. Just, to bring it.

Halima wished the matter to be put oft for a time; said the treasure was quite safe where it was, that the country was so unsettled that its transport would

be hazardous, that the withdrawal of so many men as would be necessary for the convoy would leave her insufficiently protected; and advanced a number of other reasons more or less plausible, for postponing action for the present. Summed up, they simply meant that she wished to keep her husband with her.

He combated her objections one by one, showing that she made too much of them; then he dwelt on his own uneasiness at having the charge of so much wealth, and on his pledged word to the old sheik; appealing, finally, to her filial affection and her duty to her father.

This last was his most mighty argument, and it prevailed with the result that she agreed that a messenger should be sent to Cairo with all speed.

Now this decision was a most untoward one, as events will show. Had St. Just at once set out with the treasure, without previously communicating with the men in Cairo, the current of his life would have flowed in a very different channel from that it took.

It may be remembered that when St. Just rejoined the tribe with Halima, shortly before the old sheik's death, his wife's old nurse regarded him with great repugnance; though why, unless it was for his nationality, he could not understand. At first he had hoped that her undoubted love and fidelity towards his wife, whose affection for himself the old woman must have seen was strong and deep, would have wrought some change in her feelings towards him—and he, on his part, albeit by no means sympathetic towards her, had done his utmost to capture her goodwill. So far from that, however, her aversion for him seemed daily to increase, and, after Halima's illness, attained to such a pitch of hatred that, if she could have slain him with impunity, she would have done so. It was not that she indulged in any overt acts of insolence or disobedience; but the looks of diabolical malignancy she flung at him as often as she met his eyes, sufficiently revealed her sentiments.

And the cause was this; she, of course, had been Halima's chief attendant in her illness, and, during her ramblings, her young mistress had disclosed the fact of her betrayal and, in consequence, her deep sense of injury and desire for vengeance; but with no mention of the name of her seducer.

The nurse being unaware that Halima knew Buonaparte, thereupon jumped to the conclusion that St. Just was the man who had robbed her former nurseling of her virtue, having assailed her in a moment when she was off her guard; that the intimacy once begun, Halima had been unable to free herself from her relations with her betrayer, and had thus lapsed to the position of his mistress, a toy he could discard when weary of it. The statement that they were really married with Mahometan rites the old woman regarded as a mere blind to cover Halima's dishonor. The thought worked her into a state of rage and hatred that was uncontrollable, and she resolved to punish the unsuspecting

Frenchman, if by any means it could be done.

The course of events now seemed to have brought about her opportunity. The existence of the treasure was known throughout the camp, and it was rumored that it was to be sent to Cairo. When, therefore, the old woman heard that a messenger was to be despatched thither, she guessed what was his errand and laid her plans accordingly. Everything seemed to favor them, for the man selected for the mission was one of those most devoted to the late sheik's nephew, Yusuf, and withal one who deeply resented St. Just's position in the tribe. Naturally, St. Just was not aware of this, or another man would have been chosen. Yusuf had always been a favorite with the nurse; she had been present at his birth and had seen him grow to manhood, and had looked forward to seeing him eventually assume the headship of the tribe; thus his banishment by the old sheik had sorely troubled her. She now saw a chance of his reinstatement.

There were those in Cairo who would know his whereabouts. Accordingly, she sought the messenger who was to go to Cairo and who, it happened, was akin to her, and could be trusted not to betray her confidence, and instructed him to seek out Yusuf, and, should he find him, to tell him of the coming treasure; that, if he could collect a sufficient force and keep a good look out, he would be able to intercept it, and at the same time kill St. Just, who would be with it. That accomplished, there would be nothing to prevent his taking the leadership of the tribe, and making Halima his wife, should he desire it.

Should St. Just's messenger be unable to get speech of Yusuf, he was to forward her instructions to him by some one he could trust. The old woman was satisfied that, if Yusuf lived, he could be found, for many knew him; he had held an important position in the tribe and had many influential friends in Cairo.

She had no doubt that Yusuf would act upon her information, should it arrive in time; her only fear was that it might not reach him until St. Just should have advanced so far on his journey with the treasure, as to preclude Yusuf from making his arrangements for attacking him. However, that, as she piously observed, would be as Allah willed.

In due course, St. Just's messenger returned with letters from his Cairo correspondents. They had expressed delight at hearing of the treasure, and requested him to bring it on at once.

It was now February in the year 1800, and nothing stood in the way of St. Just's making an immediate start. To tell the truth, he was becoming somewhat wearied with desert life, and ready to welcome almost anything that would vary its monotony. So he set about at once to make his preparations. They were simple, including only a sufficiency of camels to transport the treasure, the devising of a ready mode of securing it on their backs, and the selection of the men to tend them; also supplies for the men's consumption by the way. The camels would

need no food, for they would be required only to take the treasure to the river bank. St. Just had decided to make the whole journey by the Nile. It would take somewhat longer than by the desert route, but he preferred it as being less tedious and much more interesting. His point of debarkation would be a village five days' journey from Cairo; St. Just had halted there before, and was acquainted with a sheik who was friendly to the tribe and would, he hoped, supply him with camels for the remaining portion of the route.

It was agreed between himself and Halima—for she held firmly to her resolution to proceed to France—that, when he should have transacted the business connected with the treasure, he should write to her, by the returning party, stating where he would await her. Having regard to the condition of the country and the risk he ran of recognition, both felt that, at this stage, no definite fixture for their meeting could be made.

When everything was ready and the moment of departure had arrived, Halima, who thought she had schooled herself to the separation, broke down altogether. She threw her arms about his neck and clung to him with desperation, almost devouring him with kisses.

"Oh! Henri," she sobbed, "I would you were not leaving me, my husband. Oh! I cannot let you go. Stay, my dear one, and let Abdallah take this treasure; he is to be trusted and will see that it be handed over safely. I am sure you need not go. Oh! would we had never seen this cursed gold!"

"Nay, my Halima," he replied sadly, and he stroked the silky head that lay against his breast; "go I must; I pledged my word to your dead father. It is hard enough, God knows, to part from you; don't make it harder for me by your tears. But our parting will not be for long, and, when we meet again, it will be for life. Before six months are passed, we shall be on our way to France."

"Ah! I know not. Once before you left me, promising to return soon; but it was more than twelve months before my eyes again rested on you; and, in the interval, how much had happened. They told me that you were no more, and—but I cannot bear to think of all I went through then; I would blot it from the pages of my life's history. And now it may be the same again. It is not that I do not trust you, Henri, but others may control your movements and keep you from me. Oh! I have an awful foreboding that it will be so; that, when you shall have faded from my sight, it will be years before my eyes will be set on you again. Oh! stay, my husband; do not leave your Halima who loves you so. I cannot live without you!"

"Wife," he replied, "it tears my heart to leave you, but I cannot now draw back; I should be dishonored before all the tribe. Oh! seek not to restrain me, for it but prolongs our sorrow, and avails nothing."

"Oh! you are cruel!" she wailed. "You love me not as I love you."

It was true there was the more fervor in her passion, but whether it would be as enduring as her husband's was a question to be decided by the future. It is not always the fiercest fire that burns the longest; rather is its ardor the soonest spent.

Halima went on much in the same strain, he vainly endeavoring to soothe her, until he could no longer bear it. So, impressing one long, fervent kiss upon her quivering lips, he unclasped her arms from round him and tore himself from her embrace; then handed her over to her old nurse, who received her willingly enough, though she scowled ferociously at him and mumbled words of menace. Then he gave the signal for departure, and the whole party moved away.

Aided by the current and fair winds, they made good progress, and, when a fortnight had elapsed, had performed half their journey, having reached a point hard by the ruined city of Thebes. Up to this moment they had not left the boat, but here was a convenient landing place, and St. Just had a fancy for seeing something of the place. So the boat was moored a little distance from the river bank, and a smaller one they had on board was launched, and in it, St. Just, with Mahmoud and a few of the men took their places and were rowed ashore. His chief follower and the other men were given strict injunctions not to leave the larger boat till his return, which would be on the morrow. So far their journey had been without adventure; they had scarcely even seen a soul; only now and then a solitary horseman had appeared about half a mile away; and then, after looking about him, apparently with no particular object, had galloped off.

After making a cursory inspection of the ruins, while the day-light lasted, St. Just had a fire built up and lighted, for the night was cold and squally, and settled down to camp out till the morning under the shelter of a ruined wall, with Mahmoud close at hand and the others at a little distance.

Wearied just sufficiently to make rest enjoyable, he fell into a half-dreamy state, but still awake, and thought of Halima, picturing her now asleep; wondering whether at that moment he occupied her dreams; and how long it would be before they would meet again. By an easy transition his thoughts reverted to the treasure, and he fell to pondering on the probabilities of a successful issue to his undertaking, and the chances of his being recognized in Cairo by any of his former comrades. At this point he dropped off into a heavy sleep, and in his sleep his mind went back into the past. He dreamed that he was a mere youth and had just joined his regiment. A scene in his campaign in Italy came vividly before him. His company were sleeping in the marshes, when, suddenly, they were attacked. He could hear again the clash of arms, the cries of the alarmed sleepers, and, in the distance the sound of shots. It all seemed so real that, in his excitement, he awoke and, with a cry, sprang to his feet.

In a moment he realized that this was no dream, but that they were in truth

attacked. He had no occasion to rouse Mahmoud; the lad was a light sleeper and the noise had waked him. Both drew their swords and rushed on to where the conflict was proceeding. His men were contending against fearful odds, and the result of the encounter could not be doubtful. He saw the hopelessness of their position, and felt that death was staring him in the face; for all that, he did not hesitate an instant, but threw himself upon the nearest foe. Before their swords had crossed, he had recognized him as Yusuf; then he knew there had been treachery; it was impossible the man could have been there by chance. This sudden recognition and the thought it prompted, disconcerted him, and, for the moment, threw him off his guard. Yusuf was a skillful swordsman, and had had more practice with the desert weapon, with which both were armed, than had St. Just. The Arab began to press him sorely, and the young Frenchman found that he had met more than his match. Still desperately he fought on, the personality of his opponent lending fury to his attack. Indeed, both were animated by the same passion, jealousy, for Yusuf had recognized in the other the man who had snatched Halima from his arms and usurped his position in the tribe. His look of malignant triumph was awful to behold, for in his eyes his hated rival was already slain. With a skillful movement of his flexile wrist, he sent St. Just's sword flying, then drew back his arm to make the lunge that should deal the death stroke. The Frenchman felt that in another moment he would have done with life. But that moment did not come. Before the Bedouin could deal the blow, Mahmoud, who had been watching his opportunity, got behind him and ran him through the heart. Yusuf with a groan, threw up his arms and fell heavily to the ground. Before St. Just had had time to realize his respite, a blow on the head felled him also, and he knew no more.

CHAPTER XXIII.

After the description of the affray with which the preceding chapter closed, the reader will scarcely need to be informed that the message from Halima's old nurse to Yusuf duly reached that worthy.

After a few inquiries, St. Just's messenger had discovered him in Cairo, and told him of the treasure which, it was believed, was to be forwarded to the city.

Forthwith Yusuf had set to work to utilize the information. Having no means or followers of his own, it would be necessary to invoke outside assistance.

After casting about in his mind for a suitable associate, he had pitched upon a man, with whom he had some acquaintance, who followed the combined callings of pirate and slave dealer; a man who, from his daring, unscrupulousness and ferocity, as well as more than average swarthiness, had earned for himself the sobriquet of Black Ali.

The proposed adventure was quite in Black Ali's line, and he had entered with avidity into Yusuf's scheme. He had grown rich on trading in human flesh, and, accordingly, had found it easy to collect a gang of scoundrels only too ready to place themselves at his disposal for any undertaking, however desperate and lawless. It had been agreed that the treasure they hoped to seize should be scared equally by Yusuf and Black Ali. Arrangements had been quickly made and the filibustering party had set out. It being unknown whether St. Just's party with the treasure would travel by the river or the desert, both routes had been watched. The solitary horsemen St. Just had seen at intervals, from the river, had been Black Ali's scouts, and they had dogged the party all the way, had seen the young Frenchman and some of his followers land at Thebes, and conveyed the news to the slave dealer, who, when night had fallen, had surrounded with his men and set upon the sleepers, with the result already stated. Black Ali had believed that all St. Just's followers had been killed; the attack had been so sudden that they had had no time for their defense; they had hardly been awakened when they had been slaughtered; all but two, who had escaped. No one had been hurt on the side of the marauders, except Yusuf, who, as narrated, had been killed by Mahmoud, a fate no one had regretted, least of all Black Ali, who now saw himself possessed of all the treasure. Mahmoud, like his master, had been struck down, almost as soon as he had run his sword through Yusuf.

Seeing that St. Just and Mahmoud were not seriously injured—only stunned—Black Ali ordered some of his men to carry them to the river bank, whither he, with all his party, made his way. His intention was to capture the large boat with the treasure and to sell as slaves such of the crew as should not be killed, or too seriously maimed in the approaching contest.

The smaller boat, in which St. Just had landed, and another were drawn up on the river bank. These were quickly launched and crowded with as many men as they would hold; then they were rowed softly and silently to the moored boat, one making for the port and the other for the starboard side. So noiseless was their approach that it was not until they were almost alongside that they were discovered. Then an alarm was raised; but it was too late, for all were asleep, except the watch, and, before they had realized what had happened, the pirates were swarming over the gunwales of the boat. St. Just's men did what they could, but the contest was hopeless from the first. Outnumbered and but half awake, some not having time even to seize their weapons, they were in no position to

make a stout resistance. One by one they dropped before the savage onslaught of Black Ali's men, who kept ever increasing in numbers, and pressing forward, while St. Just's men fell back fighting, inch by inch. Two of them, to save their lives, sprang overboard, hoping to swim ashore; they feared less the crocodiles than their human foes. Their leader, the man St. Just had left in charge, fought desperately himself, and urged his followers to do the same. Two of the pirates fell before him to rise no more; but his courage was of no avail; a gigantic Arab rushed up and threw himself upon him, and, by sheer force, beat down his guard, then cleft his skull down even to his chin. He dropped with a dull thud, but no sound escaped his lips. And then, above the clash of arms and the shouts and groans, Black Ali's voice rang out, "Yield and I will spare your lives. Your leader is slain; further resistance has become useless."

There was a pause, and each man's hand was stayed. Then one of the crew called out, "Swear that you will not slay us, if we yield."

"I swear, by Allah," was the pirate's answer.

Satisfied that he would keep his oath, the men suffered themselves to be disarmed and bound. The whole affair had lasted but five minutes. Of the defenders, uninjured or only slightly hurt, there were but twelve; about the same number had been either killed outright, or wounded fatally. The losses of the assailants were two killed and three slightly wounded. When those who had surrendered had been secured against escape, Black Ali gave orders for the dead and badly wounded to be thrown overboard. The latter shrieked for mercy—to be allowed to die in such peace as their wounds would suffer; but they might have spared their dying gasps for mercy; as well might they have appealed to the crocodiles, whose food they would shortly be, as to the pitiless Black Ali. "Overboard with them," he cried, and overboard they went, their dying shrieks smothered in the waters of the Nile.

Next the slave dealer sent one of the small boats ashore with six men, to bring St. Just and Mahmoud on board, and with orders for the main body of his band to follow the course of the river towards Cairo, keeping well in sight of the large boat, on which he himself would make the journey; for Black Ali knew better than to entrust his newly gained treasure to the hands of others; he would not lose sight of it, till it should be safely housed.

St. Just and Mahmoud were soon on board, and then the journey, that had been so direly interrupted, was resumed; but in what different circumstances!

The hurt to St. Just's head soon healed; he had received a severe, but not a dangerous scalp wound, but his skull was not fractured, and, after enduring a few days' headache, he was himself again. But only as regards his bodily health; his mental sufferings were terrible. Black Ali had taken a savage delight in informing him and his companions that they were to be sold as slaves, and from

this doom there seemed no possibility of escape. The thought of Halima and the prospect of his life-long separation from her well nigh drove him mad. Then he fell to wondering whether any of his men had got away, and whether the news of what had happened would be conveyed to her. In any case, she would be suffering agonies of anxiety, either on account of her knowledge of what had taken place, or at receiving no tidings from him. What would she do when months had passed and she knew not whether her husband was alive or dead? Would she console herself with some other man? He knew her passionate, hot-blooded nature, and remembered her avowal that she could not lead a single life; the reflection was torment to him. Would she make her way to France, as she had always wished to? Most likely, when she had given up hope of seeing him again. He cursed Buonaparte, he cursed himself for the infatuation for her, that had led him to sacrifice his honor and his country and to abandon the career he loved and in which he felt he had had it in him to attain high rank. And what was he now? Disgraced, a captive, soon to be a slave. He put his hands before his face and groaned. In his despair and bitterness of soul, he scarcely noticed the harsh treatment he received; his captors' scoffs and jeers, the occasional cuffs they gave him, the coarseness and scantiness of his rations, his bonds—for, except when food was given him, his hands were tied; all these were nothing in comparison to the desolation of his soul. But for Mahmoud, who preserved his spirits in a manner that was marvelous, and did his best to cheer him by holding out hopes of their effecting their escape, he would have cast himself over the vessel's side and found relief from all his troubles in the Nile.

The days went on, and, in time, they found themselves lying off a village a few miles from Cairo. Here Black Ali sent a messenger ashore with instructions to his lieutenant, who had been proceeding along the river bank with the main body of the band, to procure fifty camels on which the treasure could be loaded.

The next day the camels arrived, and St. Just had the pain of seeing the treasure that was the cause of his terrible predicament, that he had endured so much to grasp, hauled out from the boat and bestowed upon their backs.

When this work was completed, Black Ali placed his lieutenant in command of the boat, with orders to proceed to Damietta. He himself would go with the treasure to Cairo, and, when he had disposed of it safely, would rejoin the party at that port. The prisoners were then to be shipped on a vessel of his own, and taken to Benzert on the coast of Tunis, and there sold. Then the two parties started, the distance between them widening gradually, until the camels bearing the disastrous treasure, passed out of the young Frenchman's sight.

CHAPTER XXIV.

The sun, now at its meridian, was pouring its scorching rays in a vertical flood upon a long, low vessel, lateen rigged, whose sails now filled out for the wind and now flapped idly against the masts, for the breeze, which was from the starboard quarter, came only in light, fitful puffs; so that the ship's progress would have been slow, had she depended solely on her sails; as it was, aided by the impetus of powerful sweeps each worked by two men, she was making about ten knots an hour. Not a cloud was to be seen; far as the eye could reach, above was one deep blue expanse, and the color was reflected in the water, through which the vessel ploughed her way. She was hugging the African shore of the Mediterranean. Not a ship could be discerned to starboard, not a sign of life to port, where on the land naught met the eye but rocks, flat stretches of barren land and sandy dunes, some covered with dense, low scrub. Not even one of those desert scavengers, the vultures, was to be seen. For all that was apparent, those on board the vessel might have comprised the whole of the human race. The stillness and silence were profound.

But not on the ship itself; there was no quiet there; the occasional moans of the captives, stripped to the waist and bending submissively while they labored at the heavy sweeps; the measured plash of these last, in the rippling water; the harsh laughter of the leisured portion of the men; the oaths of those whose turn it was to fill the rôle of taskmasters to the hapless rowers, and who paced unceasingly the vessel's deck, ever on the look-out for any one who failed to put his whole strength into his work, and savagely lashing such a one, his bare shoulders offering a ready mark for the heavy whip they wielded; the cries for mercy of those thus struck; all these combined to form a Babel that effectually banished stillness from the ship.

Among those who manned the sweeps were St. Just and Mahmoud, with others of his men. Besides them, there were on board prisoners of various nationalities, all destined by their captor for the slave market; for no respecter either of persons or of countries was Black Ali.

Stretched on the poop under a protective awning, he now lay in sleepy indolence, even his tawny and well-seasoned skin giving evidence, by its greasy polish, of the sweltering heat.

Suddenly he raised himself upon his elbow and stroked his untrimmed beard reflectively, the while he ran his cold, cruel eye along the line of rowers—from his point of view no longer men, but mere sums of money—scanning carefully each form that met his view, to see that it was doing its full share of work

with the heavy oar, to each of which two men were chained.

His glance fell now on a Greek, now on a Moorish figure; then it traveled from a Frenchman to a Negro, each crouched doglike, with his tongue out, his eyes protruding from his head, the muscles of his back and arms standing out in lumps and knots under the strain imposed on them, the sweat pouring from his skin, saturating his linen waist-cloth and causing it to cling the tighter to him.

Black Ali's eye moved down the line, beginning at the bow; at the bench nearest to him it was arrested; only one man was pulling. His fellow, overcome by his exertions, had dropped backwards, so far as his chin allowed, and, regardless of the consequences, was resting; he could work no more.

"Ho! there, you foreign dog," Black Ali shouted; and all started at his voice. "You, you sluggish Frenchman," he went on; "would you delay us by your sloth? Hadji!"—to the stalwart slave driver—"your whip wants exercise, my man; wake up this Christian dog and make him work."

Having to pass along the whole rank of rowers, Hadji thought it well to go one better than his orders. "Quicken your stroke, you dogs," he shouted, and he strode along the line. To emphasize his words, he raised his formidable whip. With a swishing sound it descended on the shoulders of the nearest man, raising a long wheal on the already cruelly scored back. A second time it fell on the devoted back, this time drawing blood. And thus down the whole line the cutting thong was wielded, finally falling upon the resting man and slashing him across the face.

Instinctively, the poor Frenchman made a movement with his arm to protect his bleeding face; but, alas, the arm was chained and could not reach it. Still, for all his pain, he made no attempt to resume his work. Either long ill-usage had made him reckless and deadened his feeling to the lash, or he was too weak to move. In another moment, his eyes closed and he fell forward.

"He is dying," said the slave driver to his master.

"Is he?" said the despot beneath the awning. "We will have no carrion on board. Cut him adrift and tow him astern; he shall feed the sharks."

The order was no sooner given than executed. The dying and almost unconscious Frenchman was unfettered from his sweep; then his wrists were bound together and lashed to a log of wood, to which was attached a rope, one end of which was made fast to the stern; then he was flung overboard, the Arabs jeering as he splashed into the water. Face forwards he was dragged onwards by the vessel. Thus, for some minutes, he floated on. Presently a dark form was seen below the surface of the water, and the wretched man, whom the sea had now restored to consciousness, knew that a shark was making for him. His terror gave him temporary strength, and he splashed and struggled wildly in the vain hope of scaring off the monster, the while he turned a backward glance of agony

at the approaching foe.

Nearer and nearer came the shark, swimming leisurely, as though debating on which spot he should first strike his victim. And now his back fin could be plainly seen above the water. The spectators on the vessel, who had gathered on the stern to see the sport, were shouting and screaming in their excitement, some even making bets as to what part of the man's body would be chosen for the shark's first bite. The slaves looked on with apathy, maintaining the while the motions of the sweeps with monotonous regularity.

There was a rush, a splash, then a piercing shriek, the shark made off with a leg and the sea around the mutilated man became dyed a ruddy hue. In his agony the victim writhed and splashed about and cried aloud. At this, the laughter of the inhuman witnesses of the scene grew louder.

But the sufferings of the wretched man were not to be much prolonged. Other sharks came up and soon another shriek was heard. Then there was silence; the hapless Frenchman had been torn limb from limb.

The day wore on, and night succeeded afternoon, and the wearied rowers were relieved by others, and allowed to sleep, in so far as the caprices of their captors would permit.

But an awful horror had fallen on them; the dreadful sight that they had witnessed had filled them with the fear that at any moment a like fate might overtake each one of them. Hurried whispers were exchanged and dark threats muttered against their captors, that boded ill for them, if only they could be put in execution. The slaves' only chance to rise and fall upon Black Ali's men would be when the gangs were changed and, for the moment, their fetters were removed. At such times, however, a careful watch was kept upon them.

Meantime they could only wait and hope.

CHAPTER XV.

In a few days the little seaport town of Benzert came in sight, and, soon afterwards, the Arab dhow was riding at anchor off the mole, about half a mile from the shore. It was the hour of noon, and across the water, in the still, clear air, could be faintly heard the hoarse shout of the muezzin calling the Faithful to the mid-day prayer. At the sound, all the slavers, murderous, thieving ruffians though they were, without a scrap of conscience or humanity, fell on their knees

and bent their heads, while they muttered their formula of praise and prayer. It was a curious sight.

This duty performed, a boat was manned and lowered, and Black Ali went ashore to arrange for the sale of his living cargo on the morrow.

The captives had done their last spell at the sweeps, and were no longer fettered to them, but were chained together by the wrists in gangs of from two to half a dozen. They were now lying huddled in groups about the deck, enjoying such repose as their thoughts allowed them. Their seeming hopeless apathy had inspired their callous taskmasters with confidence in their docility and resignation to their fate; so that Black Ali's satellites now paid little heed to them, and would have laughed to scorn the suggestion that they meditated mutiny. They believed their captives so completely cowed by the floggings and other cruelties they had undergone that all their manhood had gone out of them. And almost it had; but, cowed and abject, as they were, there was still some manhood left, and below the even surface of resignation and submission was a seething mass of rage and hatred which, given the opportunity, would find a vent, and, boiling over, would overwhelm their torturers as ruthlessly as does a stream of molten metal that has burst its way from a smelting furnace upon the unsuspecting workers.

So far, whether from the cowardice or the hopelessness of the slaves, or that a favorable opportunity had been wanting, no attempt at a rising had been made. Now there seemed a chance, for the number of their guards had been reduced, many of Black Ali's men having accompanied him ashore. Those who remained behind were lolling lazily about the deck, for the most part gazing at the shore.

St. Just and Mahmoud, chained together, were stretched in the shadow of a boat, apparently asleep. Certainly the carpenter, who was repairing a damaged boat hard by them, thought so. Occasionally he gave a glance at them, then turned his back and resumed his work, unconscious that his tool basket lay within reach of Mahmoud's hand.

But St. Just's eyes were fixed upon it covetously; given time and opportunity, in it he saw the instrument of their enfranchisement. Cautiously inclining his hands towards the apparently sleeping lad, he whispered in his ear, but no sound escaped his lips. Silently, stealthily, first looking around to see that he was not observed, Mahmoud advanced his unchained hand; gradually it neared the basket; over the edge and into it made its way. The next moment it was withdrawn, but it was no longer empty; it held a strong three-sided file. With the speed of lightning the lad thrust it into his waistband out of sight. Then he cast his eyes round furtively, to see whether any one had noticed him. His heart was beating violently, he breathed painfully, the sweat was pouring from him, he was trembling from head to foot. His glance assured him; he was satisfied that no one, but St. Just, whose trepidation was equal to his own, had seen his act. A

deep sigh escaped him; it marked his unspeakable relief, and he breathed easily.

Hardly had he concealed the file, when the order was given for the gang to move forward to receive their rations. St. Just and Mahmoud whispered a word to their neighbors, and quickly the news would permeate the band.

The lynx-eyed slave driver, by way of encouraging them to speed their steps, gave each man, in passing, a sharp cut with the whip. But St. Just and Mahmoud received theirs in silence, for both were inwardly rejoicing, and they scarcely felt the pain, so buoyed up were they with the thought that, before another hour should have passed, the inspiring cry would have been whispered through the gang.

"A file, and freedom at the hour of sunset!"

The afternoon wore on, the captives seemingly even more quiet and subdued than usual. No one, to look at them, would have guessed the hope, the impatience, the thirst for blood, that were raging beneath their calm demeanor. But, indolent and listless though they seemed, one by one they were actively employed. The file was furtively at work. Surreptitiously and with infinite caution it was passed from hand to hand, each man filing almost, but not quite through the link that joined him to his neighbor, so that with a slight effort, it could be snapped asunder. This achieved, the file was handed on.

It had been planned that, if the file's work were done in time, the rising should take place at the next call for prayer, for then their custodians would be on their knees and, for the moment, off their guard. St. Just was to give the signal; he was to raise his hand; no sound was to be uttered.

Meanwhile everything was going in their favor. The crew had given themselves up to rest, or sport, or dissipation, according to their respective moods. Some were singing boisterously, some were gaming with cards, some dicing; others were devoting themselves to the bottle; for though followers of the Prophet, these lawless preyers on humanity took no heed of his injunctions to abstain from alcohol; and with this all were more or less inflamed. Some indeed, were so far overcome that they were stretched upon the deck in drunken stupor. Most of them had cast aside their scimitars, which were lying here and there, retaining only their daggers on their persons. The muskets were stacked just below the poop deck. The laughter, the coarse jokes, the quarreling of the gamesters and the singing of the half-drunken men combined to form a Pandemonium that was almost deafening. But for this, the sound of the continued rasping of the file could scarcely have escaped their notice.

St. Just and his companions noted with satisfaction, and almost with a smile, the condition and fancied security of their oppressors; and, even more, the arms that lay about, and that they hoped would soon be in their own hands. The order had silently been passed along that, the moment they had broken their

shackles, each man was to pounce upon a weapon, and then throw himself upon a foe. Should there not be arms sufficient to go round, belaying pins and other articles that might serve as substitutes were to be seized; and the places of these had all been marked, that there should be no hunting about when the moment for attack should have arrived.

It was fortunate for the conspirators that a portion of the crew had landed with Black Ali, for their work would be the easier; and St. Just trusted that the others would not return in time to help their comrades. But, even should they, the rising would still take place, for "death before slavery; liberty at any cost," was the motto of one and all.

Hour succeeded hour and, at last, the word was passed along that the file had done its work; every man could now free himself at will; all that was wanting was the auspicious moment, and for this only patience was required.

As the sun sank hour by hour, bringing the Mussulman's prayer time ever nearer, the suspense and mental tension of the slaves became almost insupportable, and anxious eyes were turned in the direction of the shore, on the look-out for any sign of an approaching boat; but nothing intervened between them and the land. There was a strained look on every face, for the sun was now so low that the crisis might arrive at any moment. It sank below the horizon, leaving only its reflected radiance of gold and crimson. Then faintly across the water—so faintly as to be almost inaudible, and but for the land wind it would have been wholly so—came the echo of the muezzin's call. Spite of the din on board the vessel, some one heard it and called out, "The Muezzin!"

The word acted like a spell. Drinking, dicing, card-playing were laid aside; the swearer checked his swearing, the singer ceased his song; two men who had quarrelled over their game, each accusing the other of cheating, and had drawn their daggers to fight it out, replaced their weapons in their waist cloths—they would renew the fight the moment they should have performed their orisons—and even the sleepers roused themselves. Every voice was hushed; then every knee was bent.

The moment the captives had so yearned for had arrived. Every eye was turned upon St. Just.

Silently he raised his hand. Instantly, like one man the mutineers were on their feet; there was a sound of jingling metal, and each man's hands were free; a rush was made for the weapons, but there was no confusion, for each seized the arm marked out for him, those nearest the stern making for the muskets. Had they been drilled soldiers, their movements could not have been better executed. The hope of liberty had lent them discipline.

Then all their pent up fury burst its bonds, and, with a roar more awful than that of a dozen lions sighting prey, their eyes glaring with revenge and thirst for

blood, they threw themselves upon their captors.

At the sound of the clanking fetters, Black Ali's men had risen from their knees; at first so bewildered as to be incapable of taking in the situation. But, in a moment, they understood too well, and they rushed to seize their weapons, only to find they were too late. Some tried to gain the firearms, but here also they were foiled. Two or three had swords, but the rest had only daggers. They looked at one another in consternation, and their faces fell; they read their doom in the murderous looks of their assailants; but, merciless scoundrels though they were, courage was the one virtue they possessed; and, resolved to sell their lives as dearly as they could, they did not flinch from the encounter.

Then the murderous work began. The fighting was all hand to hand, for St. Just had given orders not to fire, save in the last resort, for fear of arousing those on shore; but muskets were clubbed and swords were flashed, and soon every member of the crew was hotly pressed by an opponent—some by more than one, for the mutineers now outnumbered their late masters. Having for the most part only knives and daggers, there was scarce a possibility of opposing and guard, and the others gave them little chance of coming to close quarters, whirling their clubbed muskets about until they saw their opportunity, when down with a crash they would come on some devoted head. And it was the same with those who were armed with swords; such was the rapidity of their cuts and passes, as effectually to keep the pirates at arm's length; they seemed to move with lightning speed; then, at the first opening, a dull swishing sound was heard, and the deadly steel was buried in a palpitating body, and another of Black Ali's men was sent to his account. Now and then, one of these, more agile and wary than the rest, would manage to evade the opposing sword or musket, and, rushing in, would strike his knife into his adversary. They fought with the hardihood and courage of despair, but these availed them nothing against the fury and ferocity of their assailants, who, goaded by the memory of their sufferings for the past month, now saw their way to be avenged on their tormentors, and seemed endowed with superhuman strength. What cared they for a few slashes from sword and dagger? They scarcely felt them. Among the whole of them there was not a trace of ruth or pity, no thought of quarter. They were more like raging beasts than men. They did not even think of liberty; they were swayed only by the impetus to kill. They were irresistible.

Some of them were on the poop, shouting. "A moi, mes camarades, à moi!" to those of their compatriots among the slaves. St. Just dashed up the companion leading to it. He was followed by Mahmoud and a Frenchman.

A huge Arab, one of the few who were armed with swords, rushed forward, raised his sword aloft and, putting all his strength into the blow, made a cut at St. Just's head, that, if it had found its mark, would have ended his career. But St.

Just guarded himself and the blow fell on his sword. Such was its force, however, that he staggered under it, so that the Arab was the first to recover himself for another onset. He was on the point of delivering a second blow, when, once more Mahmoud saved his master's life. With the agility of a cat, he sprang on the fellow's back and twined his arms around his throat. The next instant St. Just's sword was through his adversary's heart; it even slightly wounded Mahmoud. The Arab fell forward with a groan.

Meantime others of the slaves had gained the poop and, with the help of those already there, they made short work of the remaining members of the crew in that part of the ship.

Then all went down again to the deck. Here the fight was nearly over, for, whenever one of Black Ali's men had fallen, his late adversary had gone to the assistance of a comrade; thus the odds against the ship's defenders kept increasing. Only three of these last now survived; they struggled bravely, desperately, striving not so much to defend themselves—for they knew that this was hopeless—as to inflict injuries on their assailants. But, faint from pain and loss of blood, their efforts were but feeble: one by one, they were struck down, until the last had fallen. Then a yell of frenzied triumph went up from the emancipated slaves.

The ship presented a fearful sight. More than twenty men were strewn about the blood-stained deck, all showing ghastly wounds; some with their skulls smashed in, others with their faces so slashed and bruised as to be unrecognizable; some with their bowels protruding from their bodies, all bleeding from numerous wounds, which showed how desperate had been their fight for life. Their faces were horrible to behold. All but a very few were dead, for, as each had fallen, his antagonists had plunged their swords into him, until he had ceased to move; or had beaten his brains out with the butt ends of their muskets. But some still breathed, and groaned and writhed in agony. Their sufferings would soon be ended. The cry went up, "Stop the music of those howling dogs." It was received with a roar of laughter and shouts of, "Yes, kill them, kill them every one, the man-hunting tigers."

The murderous work was quickly finished. The vessel ran with blood from stem to stern, and a loathsome smell went up, the sickening odor of the slaughter house.

Some of the mutineers had been wounded, in most cases only slightly, some seriously, but none had received fatal injuries. The opposing parties had been too unequally armed for that. Now that their enemies were disposed of, those who were uninjured lent their assistance to their wounded comrades, and bound up their hurts. St. Just was among those who had escaped without a scratch.

At last they had attained their freedom; but, hardly had they begun to congratulate themselves on their success, when a new danger threatened them.

"A boat, a boat!"

The cry came from a man who was leaning over the bows.

All eyes turned shorewards. A boat had just put off; they knew it well. Black Ali and his companions were returning. Swiftly the victors had to decide upon their course. Their ability to cope successfully with the slave dealer and his myrmidons was not in doubt; they were well-armed and out-numbered them in the proportion of three to one. Moreover, their position on the ship gave them, an additional advantage; there would be little risk in the encounter; their danger lay in their nearness to the shore; the fight would be witnessed from the mole, and Black Ali's friends and the authorities of the place would come to his assistance; then all their late efforts would have been in vain. Ardently as they longed to meet their persecutor face to face and to mete out to him the punishment he had so richly earned, they were compelled reluctantly to forego their vengeance.

Their resolve was quickly taken; their only safety lay in flight. St. Just, by tacit consent, assumed, for the nonce, the post of leader. No sooner had they come to this decision, than his voice rang out, "Four men to the windlass and cast loose the anchor."

The minutes were too precious to be spent in weighing it; it would have to go, despite the risk they ran thereby.

Four men instantly ran up, and the next moment the windlass was whirling round; soon the end of the chain was reached and with a rattle was cast overboard.

"A sailor, a steersman," St. Just next shouted.

A tall Greek sprang to his feet.

"I can steer," he cried.

"To the helm, then," rejoined St. Just, "and stand by till the sweeps are out; then bring her round."

The order was obeyed.

"Out with the sweeps, and row for your lives," went on the captain. "Port side only, until you have got her head round to the sea; starboard side back water."

The men dashed to the benches and took their seats, no longer chained to the oars, but free men now. They began to pull as they had never pulled before; harder even than when under the slave-driver's whip, since they were rowing for their lives; for, if attacked, they would die, before they would yield themselves again to slavery.

Slowly and steadily the dhow swung round, until her bows were pointing seawards; then they set to with a will, pulling a long, even stroke that sent them rapidly through the waves.

"Up with the sails!" was the next order.

There was a whirring of ropes, as they traveled through the blocks, and up

went the large triangular sails.

"Crowd on all you can—every rag of canvas!" their leader shouted. There was no danger in this, for the wind was light, and, fortunately, from the right quarter.

Soon every sail was set, and the ship, assisted by the rowers' efforts, was bowling merrily before the wind. So promptly had all answered to their new captain's call, that, five minutes after his first order had been given, the ship had been got round, with all sails set, and had begun to move.

While his instructions were being carried out, St. Just, as well as others, was turning anxious glances towards the shore. Nearer and nearer came the approaching boat and, by the time the dhow was under way, it was little more than three hundred yards astern. But, before this, Black Ali had seen, from the activity on board, that something was amiss: and what that was he was not long left in doubt. Then his fury knew no bounds. Just when he had made arrangements to turn his living cargo into money, to see his ship and freight both taking flight certainly was calculated to excite his ire. He jumped up in the boat and cursed and raved and threw his arms about and shook his fist in menace at the retreating ship; his crew also set up a howl of baffled rage. They were answered from the dhow with jeers. Then Black Ali's men fired musket shots, but the bullets only made little splashes in the water and drew more derisive shouts and mocking laughter from the new masters of the ship.

Black Ali saw that pursuit was useless, for the distance between him and the runaway dhow was ever growing greater. He turned his boat's head towards the land and rowed for the harbor with all speed, his intention being to get some swift vessel lying there and overtake and recapture his own. In this he would have no difficulty, for, by the laws of every country, St. Just and his companions were mutineers and pirates.

The ship's crew cheered when they saw their late oppressor give up the chase, but St. Just looked grave; he would have been better satisfied had it been maintained; he guessed what Black Ali meant to do.

"Don't waste your breath in cheers, men," he exclaimed. "You will need it all. Wait till we are clear of him. He has gone for the moment, but he will soon be on our track in a ship that will out-sail us. Row your hardest; your lives and liberty are at stake. Our only chance is that they shall not sight us. In that the coming night will help us. Bend your backs, strain every nerve and muscle until the darkness shrouds us. Meantime, those of us who are now resting will lighten the vessel of this Arab carrion, and swab the deck."

The rowers saw the force of what he said, and their efforts were redoubled. The others set to work on throwing the dead bodies overboard; and, when the last was gone, began to wash the blood-stained deck; it would take many washings

and scourings with holy stone to obliterate the last vestiges of crimson.

Meanwhile the breeze had freshened, the sails were stretched almost to bursting, but there was no listing of the ship, for the wind was dead astern; the masts and cordage creaked and groaned and whistled, and the dhow seemed to be going at racing speed, the bows ploughing up the water in a deep furrow and leaving a stream of foam in the vessel's wake.

On, on, she flew, plunging into the trough of the great rollers, now rising over their crests, the water gurgling and lapping against her stern. Gradually the land became more and more indistinct, until, finally, it faded out of sight.

At last night fell; never surely had darkness been so longed for. Then the rowers' exertions slackened, and the heavy sweeps were shipped; it was time, for the men were nearly spent. Soon a fresh gang would take their places; but, before that, a palaver would be held. So far, they had sighted no pursuers, nor, look which way they would, had they seen a sail of any sort; they seemed to have the Mediterranean to themselves.

They had captured the ship; they had slain their persecutors; they had gained their liberty; they had now to consider how to avoid recapture. They would not be safe until they should have made some European port. The English had swept the Mediterranean of all war ships, but their own; and them they did not fear, for capture by them would, at the worst, mean only temporary restraint. On learning the particulars, the English authorities would hold them justified for all that had occurred. The men they feared were the slavers, privateers and pirates, with whom those waters swarmed.

When a lantern had been swung at the mast head and another placed within the binnacle, the whole crew assembled in council on the poop. St. Just opened the proceedings.

"The first thing to be done," he said, "is to appoint a captain. I am wholly ignorant of nautical affairs, so I am out of it. Now, how many practical sailors are there present?"

Half a dozen hands were raised; at the same time several voices called out, "Theodori!"

This was the tall Greek at the tiller.

"Theodori," resumed St. Just, "you seem to be the only candidate, and I am ready to place myself under your orders, till we gain the land. At the same time, I think it would give all greater confidence, if you would state your qualifications."

"I have had ten years' experience in the Mediterranean before the mast," Theodori promptly answered. "And have served for twelve months as first officer in a large coasting vessel. I can navigate the ship and, if we are not captured, can take you safely into port."

There was a mixture of modesty and confidence in his tone and bearing

that favorably impressed his hearers. All felt he was the right man for the post.

"I like your answer," said St. Just, "and for my part, am prepared to place implicit trust in you." Then he turned to the men. "What say you, comrades, shall Theodori be our captain?"

"He shall," they shouted with one accord. "Theodori! Theodori!"

St. Just put up his hand for silence, and went on. "Now we must be agreed on one thing, we must yield our captain absolute obedience—and cheerfully and willingly; there must be no questioning his orders. Only so can we hope to plant our feet on land again. So far, we have been successful; let us not jeopardize our success; there is much to be done before our safety will be secured. Captain!" to Theodori, "I await your orders."

"I accept the post," said the new captain, "and thank you all for your confidence. I hope so to sail the vessel as to show that it is not misplaced. But, before I begin my duties, we must decide whither we are bound. What port am I to make for?"

This point had not before occurred to them, and it gave rise to much discussion. The few Frenchmen among them, captured stragglers and couriers from Buonaparte's army, suggested a French port, Marseilles for choice; some, one of the islands in the Levant; others Sicily, or Italy; some wanted to go back to Egypt. St. Just was mute. His mind was so unsettled that he resolved to leave to chance his destination. After all who desired to do so had had their say, the Greek captain spoke.

"What we all want," he said, "is to get to shore as soon as possible. Now the South West corner of Sicily is the nearest land in front of us—almost due North. I shall have to sail the ship by dead reckoning, and from memory, for I hear there are no charts, chronometer or instruments for taking observations. Therefore, the less distance we have to go, the less liability of error in reckoning. I strongly advise Sicily, and the first port there we sight. But, if all agree upon some other quarter, I will do my best to take you there. What say you, men?"

There was a short, murmured conversation, and then one man, acting as spokesman for the rest, addressed the Greek. "We will be guided by you, Captain. Sail the ship to Sicily, and good luck go with us."

The meeting then broke up.

Theodori at once began to issue orders, and in a tone that showed that, once appointed, he meant to be obeyed. He called up the six men who were sailors and, after a few questions, soon learned how to place them. One he sent to the helm with instructions to keep the ship's head North; two others were made first and second officers respectively of the watch; a fourth was to be boatswain. The other two would take their turns at the tiller. He decided to keep the first watch himself.

When he had made all his arrangements, he gave orders for the men to have their rations. Then a man was placed on the look-out, and all turned in for the rest they so well deserved and greatly needed.

The night passed uneventfully and the morning broke bright and clear; then earnestly was the horizon scanned by all, Theodori standing by the helmsman with the telescope to his eye. Presently he started almost imperceptibly; astern of them a little to their port, he had discerned a small white speck—a sail in the far distance; the hull was not yet visible. Probably it was in pursuit of them, and Black Ali was on board. The captain cast his eyes up to the sails; they no longer filled out bravely, as on the night before, but swayed limply in and out, as the wind first came in little puffs, then fell away; sometimes they even flapped against the masts, for the breeze had died away, though still dead aft of them; the dhow was making but little way. For the moment the Greek looked anxious; the vessel in their wake was a much larger one, with greater sailing power; then his face brightened and a smile of triumph passed across it. What had seemed to forecast their destruction might prove the saving of them. The pursuing vessel's progress depended solely on the wind; the dhow had added propulsive power in the strong arms of her men. Even in a dead calm they could keep on their course.

"A sail astern of us," he said, and the cry was repeated by the crew. Then he called the boatswain.

"Man the sweeps," he said, "and change the gang every hour. Every man must do his best, until that ship is out of sight."

The men obeyed the orders with alacrity, St. Just and Mahmoud being the first to seize a sweep between them. Soon, assisted by the little wind there was, the ship had a fair way on her. Gradually the rowers' efforts began to tell; the vessel in their wake grew less and less and, in two hours, not a trace of her could be seen. But still the men rowed on, a fresh set being put on each hour; they required no urging to their work; they had too much at stake for that.

They saw no more of their pursuer, if such she was. Occasionally they sighted other vessels on both sides of them, but far away.

A few days passed, their freedom ever nearing consummation, and, at last, from the look-out man rang out the welcome cry of "Land ahead."

At first there seemed only a long, low, far-off cloud, but to the seaman's practiced eye it was the goal of all his hopes. The rowers were not now at work, for the wind had freshened, and a good stiff breeze was blowing. Rapidly the land grew more distinct, and presently Theodori, who was at the bow, viewing through his glass the line of coast, which he knew well, exclaimed,

"Sicily! Our nearest port will be Marsala: we will make for it."

In a few hours they were off the town; or, to be precise, two miles to the right of it, it being thought advisable to land where they would be little noticed.

The sails were lowered; then the vessel was hove to. Next, a few men were put to the sweeps to steady her, there being, as it will be remembered, no anchor to let go. There was only one boat on board—for Black Ali had the other—and this was manned and lowered, and as many took their places in it as it would safely carry. "Give way men," was then the order, and they pushed off, and started for the shore, amid the cheers of those on board. All felt now that their liberty was assured, and they were mad with joy.

The boat had to return four times before all were taken off the vessel. St. Just and Mahmoud were among the final batch. Theodori, who had so ably steered them into safety, was the last to leave the dhow. She was abandoned for any one who chose to seize her. Black Ali might regain his own, should he come up in time.

So far, there had been no mishap in landing. When the boat was run ashore for the last time, those assembled on the beach gave voice to a hearty cheer, which the others answered with a loud hurrah. Then, in their excitement and in all good temper, they began to scramble from the boat, each striving to be the first. In the general scuffle St. Just, who was standing on one of the thwarts, received a violent push, that was not intentional, from behind. He fell headlong forwards, his head striking the boat's edge with fearful force. He rolled over unconscious, with the blood pouring from a terrible gash that extended from the temple to a considerable distance behind the ear.

THE CONSUL BUONAPARTE.

EPOCH II.

THE CONSUL BUONAPARTE.

CHAPTER I.

A few days before the close of November 1803 a small trading vessel was making her way towards the Southern coast of France. A tall, handsome, though careworn-looking man, about thirty years of age, was standing in the forepart of the ship. Despite his civilian garb, there was an air about him that proclaimed a military training. His eyes were fixed with a far-off, dreamy look on the distant haze that heralded their approach to land. But he seemed to take but little interest in the prospect; he showed none of the excitement of a man returning to his country after years of absence; only a dull, leaden curiosity.

At his elbow stood a young fellow with gleaming teeth and smiling face and dark twinkling eyes. His coal-black hair and swarthy skin gave evidence that he hailed from some Southern or Eastern clime.

The older man was St. Just, the younger Mahmoud, who had now broadened and thickened, and become a man of powerful frame.

To explain their presence on a trading vessel a brief retrospect is necessary.

When last before the reader, St. Just lay unconscious in the boat, with a dreadful injury to his head. His companions, seeing that he made no attempt to rise, picked him up and laid him on the beach. Then a cloth was bound tightly round his head to check the bleeding, and they did their best to bring him round. But all their efforts were unavailing; St. Just remained in a state of stupor.

What was to be done? They did not like to leave him, and Theodori and Mahmoud would not hear of it, the latter saying that nothing would induce him to forsake the wounded man. On the other hand, to carry him into the town, would call attention to them and might lead to their arrest. Their intention had been to disperse on landing, and make their way thither by different routes in twos and threes. After some discussion, it was decided that four of them should remain with him, until a place of shelter had been found for him. The main body then separated, taking different directions. Mahmoud, of course, and Theodori were among those left behind.

When the others had cleared off, the latter started in search of help. A little way inland, was a village, and thither Theodori bent his steps. He had gone not far, when he met one whose dress showed him to be a priest. The very man, opined the Greek, and he approached him and told what had occurred. He was familiar with all the tongues in use about the Mediterranean, of which Italian was the most prevalent, and in this language he addressed him. Naturally, all he told him was that, in landing from a boat, a man had been seriously hurt, and was in dire need of surgical assistance. The padre's sympathies were enlisted, and he at once set off with Theodori to the shore and instructed the men to bear the wounded man to his own house. This done, the Greek and the two other men departed, leaving Mahmoud with St. Just. Then the good priest fetched a doctor, a friend of his, and St. Just's injuries were attended to.

He made steady progress towards recovery, so far as concerned the wound, which in a month healed up; when, in bodily health, he was as well and strong as ever.

But the injury to his head had had a strange effect upon his brain. When he regained consciousness, his memory had wholly left him; he was oblivious of everything that had occurred before the accident; the past was an absolute blank to him. Even Mahmoud he did not recognize; had he been asked his own name, or Mahmoud's, he could not have given either. The lad had told the priest that his master's name was St. Just and his own Mahmoud, and St. Just hearing the names so used, accepted them. It was strange that this should not have aroused some memories in his dormant brain; but so it was.

Mahmoud had begged so hard to be allowed to remain and serve St. Just, that the padre could not find it in his heart to say him nay; he was touched by the young man's devotion. The lad was both amazed and shocked at the condition of his master's mind, and, for a long time, tried every means to awake his sleeping memory.

He talked of Halima and the old sheik; of his accident, of Cairo, of Black Ali, of the treasure, of the French Army, and of every circumstance known to St. Just that he thought likely to take his mind back to the past; but, with all his efforts, he failed to strike one responsive chord. St. Just would give him all his attention, looking wonderingly in Mahmoud's face, would seem to be striving hard to dig into the recesses of the past, and then would answer wearily, "It is useless, Mahmoud; my mind in regard to what is in the past is dead. I recollect nothing that occurred before I woke up to find myself in bed in this good man's house. I do not even remember having ever seen you before that moment. I do not doubt the truth of what you tell me, but I remember nothing of it, nothing."

So, seeing its uselessness, and that it even gave his master pain, Mahmoud rarely made any reference to the past, and, after a month, ceased altogether.

Both the padre and the surgeon were much interested in the case, especially the latter; he had never met with such a one before. At first he thought St. Just was shamming, that he had done something that would not bear the light, and had artfully assumed his rôle of ignorance, to shelve unpleasant questions. But he soon abandoned this idea; there was no pretense about his patient's loss of memory. Then he brought other medical men to see St. Just, and all were as puzzled as himself. They talked of depression of the skull, of lesions, and abscesses on the brain; but all agreed that nothing could be done; time only might effect a cure. Should the lesion, or abscess heal, or whatever was the mischief, be removed, most likely his memory would return. They could say and do no more; in those days surgical and medical science had not attained the position it holds to-day.

So desirous was the surgeon to see the outcome of the case, that he cast about for a means to keep his patient under his eye. To this end, St. Just being nothing loth, and also grateful for the surgeon's care, he exerted himself to find him employment in the neighboring town; with the result that, aided by the priest, he obtained for him a post with an important shipping firm. St. Just's mind was active and intelligent enough in all that concerned the present, and he performed his duties with promptitude and assiduity.

With the same firm a subordinate post was found for Mahmoud. The lad's account of who they were and how they came to be where they were found was but a skeleton of the truth. He had all the cunning and shrewdness of the Arab, and, in his master's strange condition, he feared to betray something that might do him injury.

Occasionally a gleam of light from the regions of the past would flash across the Frenchman's brain, but it was only momentary and was extinguished even before it had begun to glow; and it left no trace behind. As time went on, this occurred more frequently, and he told the surgeon of it; whereat the latter argued that time would, indeed, effect the restoration of his patient's memory.

Thus three years and a half went on. Then, one day, St. Just sought the surgeon in great excitement. "Doctor," he said, "to-day there came to me a thought that surely must be a reminiscence of the past. Hitherto, when what I take to be a memory has flashed across me, it has vanished ere I could lay hold of it: I never could remember what it was. But to-day I can recall what passed through my brain an hour ago. It was but confused and faint, but, such as it was, I can remember it. A scene of battle floated before my eyes; I could hear the boom of guns, the call of trumpets; the men were dressed in uniforms that seemed familiar to me; some spoke French and some Italian; the latter gave way before the former. Then the whole scene dissolved away. I can connect this with nothing in my life; still, surely, surely, it means something to me—or is it all hallucination?"

"It is no hallucination," replied the surgeon. "It is clear to me that you have fought in the French army of Italy. Your memory will come back to you; how soon I cannot say. But I can suggest how it may be speeded, and the course you ought to take. Return to France; there you will see so many things that are familiar to you, that I doubt not you will soon recall every incident of your life. Take my advice and go at once. I shall be greatly interested in the result. All I ask is that you let me know it."

And St. Just took his friend's advice. The shipping firm in whose employ he was gave him and Mahmoud a passage in a ship bound for Marseilles. They also handed him, in addition to his salary, five thousand francs; he had served them well, and they gave the sum ungrudgingly.

This was how it had come about that St. Just and Mahmoud were now

standing side by side upon the trading vessel that was bearing them to France.

On the good ship sped, and soon the rocky islet on which stands the Chateaux d'If, famous in romance and history, came in view. Past this she flew, like a bird anxious to regain its nest, and, ere long, Marseilles was made. Then the sails were lowered, the rattling of chains was heard, the anchor fell with a plunge into the water, and the vessel was hove to.

St. Just, soon after, went ashore with Mahmoud. He had formed no plans, but, unknown to him, his career was gendering in the future and, ere long, would reach fruition. Meantime he was not without the wherewithal for his support for a few months. He had in gold the equivalent of two hundred pounds in English money.

The first thing to be done was to get shelter for the night; and St. Just asked the skipper to direct him to a respectable hostelry where the fare was good, the beds were clean and the charges moderate.

The skipper knew the very place—the Toison d'or (Golden Fleece); when at Marseilles, he put up there himself. If St. Just would accompany him to the agents of the vessel's owners, he would afterwards go with him to the inn in question, and introduce him to the landlady. The prospect was quite to the Frenchman's mind, and, in due course, they made their way together to the Toison d'or, and Mahmoud with them.

Evidently the skipper was a persona grata to the landlady, for she received him with a smiling face and warm congratulations on his return once more to the Phocean city. Altogether she was most effusive; told St. Just that any friend of Captain Ricci's was always welcome, and would receive her best attention. Then she took him upstairs to a bright, cheerful room, in which were two small beds. Everything was so neat and clean, and the hostess was so pleasant and obliging, that St. Just, who had been prepared to find that Ricci's description of the hostelry had been couched in too glowing terms, was fain to admit that every word of his friend's eulogium was deserved. He engaged the bedroom on the spot, and then sent up Mahmoud with their baggage.

This business done, the skipper suggested a parting glass, that each might wish the other "Bon voyage," and "Au Revoir," if possible.

St. Just was nothing loth, and together they adjourned to the common room; it was pretty full, for work was over for the day. All sorts and conditions of men were gathered there; market porters, dock laborers, sailors, soldiers—mostly pensioners, who had lost a leg or an arm in the numerous wars in which France for the last ten years had been engaged. Besides these, there were town officials, shop-keepers and professional men—the whole constituting a fair sample of the male inhabitants of Marseilles.

All seemed to be babbling at the same time, and in all sorts of tongues, and

dense clouds of tobacco smoke filled the room, enough to choke one; the walls and ceiling were thick with it.

At intervals along the sides, stuck into tin sconces, tallow candles flared and guttered, emitting far more smell than light, for they were so sparsely placed, as to do little more than make the darkness visible.

Towards the upper end of this sweltering, reeking, voice-resounding den, Captain Ricci and his companion made their way, and found two vacant places at a table. Casting his eye round through the haze of smoke, the skipper spied a good-looking and neatly, though somewhat smartly, dressed young woman who was moving from table to table, ministering to the requirements of the customers!

"Amélie!" he roared out; and, almost before the name had left his lips, the girl was at his side, all smiles.

They ordered some brandy, which presently Amélie brought. Ricci just then saw a friend across the room; so, after drinking up his brandy, and wishing his companion luck, he shook hands with him and moved away to join his other acquaintance. Left to his own resources, St. Just found himself listening, with a sort of half-awakened interest, to the conversation of two men beside him, who looked as if they had seen service in the wars.

St. Just had listened to their talk in a dreamy sort of way. It was something to take him from himself, but he felt little interest in it, and not all of it reached his ears.

The man who had been the chief talker now got out his pipe and began to smoke; then, bringing his head nearer to his friend he puffed out a great stream of smoke and resumed in a lower tone.

"But there's more to tell; the other day I saw that same Arab girl in Paris—"

"You saw her in Paris?" interposed the other.

"But I am certain of it. I saw her driving in a carriage and pair, dressed like a Parisian; and by her side was Colonel Tremeau, whom I knew well in Egypt; he was a captain then of ours. What it all means I know not, but she is living in great style, and passes as a Frenchwoman. She is well known in Paris, it seems, and goes by the name of Madame Halima de Moncourt."

At the sound of this name, all St. Just's listlessness vanished like a flash; he started, as though some one had struck him an unexpected blow; he felt a sudden whirring in his head, for all the world like that produced by the breaking of a clock spring. Then he experienced a strange sensation of relief; the leaden feeling that had so long oppressed him, was no longer there; his brain felt clear and light.

Halima de Moncourt! Halima! These men were talking of his wife! de Moncourt was her mother's maiden name. So she was in Paris!

Then, like a panorama, his whole past career unfolded itself before him,

special incidents in it standing out in strong relief; his first commission, the day on which he had first donned epaulets; his first experience in the battle field. Then his newly-recovered memory took him on to the memorable occasion of his first personal acquaintance with Buonaparte; when he saved his life and was afterwards introduced to Josephine, and all that had followed from it—the Egyptian campaign, his first sight of Halima, and his mad passion for her; his narrow escapes from death; the finding of the treasure and its capture; his sufferings on the slave ship and his subsequent recovery of his liberty. All the incidents of his life, even to the minutest detail, were marshaled in one long procession before his mental vision, and he knew himself at last for what he was. The knowledge gave him little satisfaction. He was a deserter, and, moreover, on the soil of France. Should any one recognize and denounce him, he knew the penalty. To save his life would tax all his inventive power, combined with daring and no little shrewdness.

But, at all risks, he must see his wife; on that he was decided; he must know in what position they were to stand towards one another. Had she once more surrendered herself to Buonaparte—or to some other man? The suggestion maddened him. And what about her oath of vengeance?

His brain was in a whirl. The heat and closeness of the fetid air became unbearable in his present frame of mind, and he went out to cool himself and think out his position in the fresh salt breezes from the harbor.

CHAPTER II.

The next morning, St. Just, accompanied by Mahmoud, began his journey Pariswards. For the sake of economy, they traveled by stage wagon. It was a cumbersome mode of transit, and the jolting frightful, for the roads were bad. They went the whole distance at a walking pace, and, with the exception of his experience on the slaver, St. Just found it the most wearisome journey he had ever taken; it was not only the time it occupied, but he felt bruised all over; sometimes, when he could no longer bear it, he got out and walked. But, at last, early in December, the spires of Paris came in sight, and never before had he hailed them with such delight.

At once he engaged a cheap lodging for himself and Mahmoud in the Rue de Dauphin. He was familiar with the district, for it was not far from the Lux-

embourg, in which palace, it will be remembered, St. Just had a post at the time of his introduction to the reader.

This little matter settled, he began his quest for Halima. From the conversation he had overheard between the two men at the Toison d'or, he had thought that this would be a simple matter; he had believed his wife well-known in Paris.

But, from the inquiries he made cautiously, he found it otherwise. From one point of view, this was satisfactory, for, from the men's remarks, he had feared she had an unenviable notoriety—that her charms, in fact, outweighed her virtue.

He began his inquiries with Mons. Gaston, the husband of his landlady, but the worthy man, although shrewd enough and a clerk in a public office, failed to obtain any light as to the whereabouts of Madame de Moncourt.

Day succeeded day, and still St. Just could gain no intelligence of his wife, and he began to think, either that she had quitted Paris, or had assumed another name. Doubtless, he could have learned what he required from the Bureau of Police, but he was unwilling to apply there. He had not reported himself to the military authorities, and thus it would be dangerous to communicate with the Police. His reason for not announcing his return to Paris was that he feared he might be sent to some military depot outside the city, and so checked in his quest of Halima. But he was becoming very anxious; he knew the risk he ran; at any time he might be recognized and denounced as a deserter. For this reason, most of his inquiries were made at night, though sometimes he ventured out by day.

One morning he was wandering about, in a despondent mood, in the neighborhood of the Halles Centrales, when a market cart filled with vegetables, was driven almost over him. To save himself, he stepped back and took shelter under the eave of one of the stalls.

He had scarcely done so, when he heard the sound of two men's voices in a further corner of the covered booth. He could not see the speakers, nor, probably, could they see him.

At first, he paid no attention to what was being said, but presently a name was uttered that caused him to become all ears.

"Is it wise for Monsieur to remain in Paris after the recent occurrence?" said the first voice.

"Of course not," was the reply, "but what would you? I cannot cross the frontier. Buonaparte will not let the de Moncourt go even to Brussels; so the plan of my traveling with her as her servant cannot be carried out."

It was the mention of his wife's name that had riveted St. Just's attention.

"Has the man Garraud been sounded?" resumed the first man.

"Yes, but to no purpose. No boat can either land at Marseilles, or leave it, without his permission; and he will not give it, without knowing all the ins and outs of the application. He is a faithful adherent of the first Consul."

"H'm," thoughtfully, "then we must find a spot near Boulogne. The English smuggler, Wright, may be relied upon, you think?"

"I think so—if he be well paid; and this we are prepared to do."

"Well, look him up, and sound him carefully. I shall see you at Auteuil to-night?"

"Certainly; I shall be at Madame's reception. It is said the Duke is to be there."

No more was said, and the next sound that reached the listener's ear was that of persons moving. Evidently, either the conference was at an end, or they feared they were being overheard. At any rate, the speakers left the booth, though not by the entrance at which stood St. Just, but by some exit at the back. Anxious to see them and, if he thought it wise, to follow them, in the hope of learning Halima's address, he hurried round the corner for the purpose. Not watching whither he was going, he ran into a chestnut roaster, whose chestnuts lay untended, while the man himself was kneeling on one knee and peering earnestly into the booth.

So sudden and forcible was their impact, that both men fell. Quick as thought, the chestnut seller was on his legs again; then, without giving a moment's consideration to his merchandise, he took to his heels.

St. Just, less fortunate, had no sooner risen to his feet than he found himself in the grasp of the two men whose voices he had overheard.

Both were roughly attired; one, whose face was smeared with black, looked like a coal dealer; the other like a laborer.

"A word with you, my friend," said he with the coal dust on his face, and, between them, they led St. Just into the booth. He made no resistance; he was without fear, and besides, it was broad daylight in a crowded neighborhood. He was slightly curious too, to know what they would say to him.

They motioned him to a wooden stool, which he took without a word. Then, when they also had seated themselves, between him and the entrance, the man who had first spoken addressed him roughly:—

"Now then, who the deuce are you, prowling about the stalls and prying into other men's affairs? Some wretched market thief, no doubt. What were you and that other rascal doing—the man that ran away?"

The man's words and manner took St. Just aback. "From my heart (De mon coeur)," he began to stammer apologetically, his pronunciation being by no means clear; so much so, that he was misunderstood. At any rate, his words were magical in their effect. Before he could add another, both men sprang to their feet and looked earnestly into his face.

"Who? What?" demanded the man who had first questioned him. "How came you here? Do you come from her?"

The other man held up a warning finger, and the speaker changed his tone and subject. "Have you any business with us, Sir, any orders for fuel, that we find you about our booth?"

He spoke nervously, and St. Just saw that he was ill at ease. He was more bewildered now than ever.

"Gentlemen," he said, and he could not forbear a smile, "you manners are, to say the least, bizarre; you begin by rating me, suggesting that I am a market thief, and then you ask me whether I bring an order for your wares. I can see that my presence has in some way disconcerted you; but why, I am at a loss to tell. Though I am in no way accountable to you for my actions, I will not emulate your want of courtesy, but will tell you frankly why you find me here. You may be able to assist me; sometimes one gains intelligence from most unlikely quarters."

His hearers looked at him in some surprise; they doubted whether he was not amusing himself at their expense. His bearing puzzled them.

"Anything we can do to assist Monsieur," began the one who had not yet spoken.

St. Just bowed and resumed, "There is little to tell, and that little is soon told. I have been but a few days in Paris, and I came to make inquiries for a person for whom I have an important communication. I was merely strolling about here on the chance of meeting some one who could give me the address of the one I seek. Now, gentlemen, you know my business. There is naught of mystery about it, though something I did or said a while ago seemed to discompose you strangely."

The men seemed now reassured, satisfied that his presence there was an accident and himself no spy upon their actions. His frankness and dauntlessness had disarmed them. They hastened to apologize, and then the man with the swarthy face went on, "It is just possible, but hardly likely, that we might give the information Monsieur seeks. If Monsieur would be at the trouble to state the name of the person he inquires about—"

"But certainly," St. Just interrupted, "the lady's name is Madame de Moncourt."

Again both men started visibly; it was plain that this name was wholly unexpected by them; and that its mention stirred them greatly. In his way St. Just was almost as astonished as themselves; he never thought to get the news he sought from them. Now he was assured that they could give it.

"Gentlemen," he said, "I see that the name is not unknown to you and that you can oblige me with the lady's address. It was a fortunate circumstance that brought me to you."

The next moment he had reason to doubt the truth of this last remark, for, in an instant, he found himself seized, and a dagger pointed at his heart. At the

same time, a voice muttered in tones that, though low, were distinct enough, "The first of your myrmidons who enters here shall see this planted in your breast."

For all the suddenness of the attack and his inward trepidation, St. Just showed no outward mark of flinching. He knew his best chance of safety lay in keeping cool and exhibiting no signs of fear.

"Is this a comedy, Gentlemen," he said, "or what? Such rapid changes in demeanor I never saw before; one moment you are all courtesy, the next all menace. I think, if you would explain yourselves, we should the better understand each other. First, for whom or what do you take me?"

"For an agent of Police," was the reply, the poniard still held in unpleasant closeness to his breast.

St. Just laughed scornfully.

"My good sirs," he said, "so far am I from that, that did they but know I am in Paris, they would arrest me. I am unarmed; search me."

Once more he was beginning to regain their confidence; what he said seemed reasonable enough.

"Will you allow us first to bind your hands?" asked the man with the coal-stained face, who seemed to take the lead throughout.

"By all means," was St. Just's answer, and he held out his hands and brought his wrists together.

One of the men took out a handkerchief and with this he tied his hands together; then searched him carefully, the other, meanwhile, still keening the dagger in position.

Finding him unarmed, as he had stated, and that he had nothing about him to connect him with the Police, the men once more became composed, and he who held the weapon lowered it. St. Just was the first to speak.

"Now, gentlemen, I trust that you are satisfied that I had no designs against you. I know nothing whatever of your business, nor do I seek to know it. But I will be frank with you; I am sure you are not what you seem; your speech and manner belie your dress. Further, I believe the man I ran against outside was watching you. You know best whether he had any object and whether you run any risk.

"And now you will confer a favor on me, by giving me the address of Madame de Moncourt."

"Peste! Monsieur," said the leading man, with a gesture of annoyance, "what folly is this? Why do you persist in assuming that we can help you to it?"

"I know you can," was the cool reply.

"You are bold, Monsieur."

"And determined," he retorted.

The men moved to a little distance from him and held a whispered consultation. After a few minutes, the first man again addressed him.

"What is the nature of your business with Madame de Moncourt? Your visit might be unwelcome to her."

"Nay, gentlemen, I have not asked your business. I claim the same consideration."

"Your name?"

"That question also I have not put to you. Thus much, however, I will tell you; that what I have to say to Madame de Moncourt will cause her the utmost satisfaction, and that she will hold him her enemy who obstructs me. If you decline to furnish me with what I ask, I shall soon elsewhere obtain it; you will merely delay, but not restrain me. Still even delay I am desirous to avoid. I have another suggestion to make, if you still doubt me; will you give me your word of honor to convey a letter from me to the lady?"

There was another whispered conversation, and, at the end of it, they advanced to him again.

"We have discussed this matter," said the man who had first addressed him, "and this is our conclusion. We are ready to take you at once to Madame de Moncourt, provided you agree to our conditions. If you are a true man and are as anxious as you say to obtain speech with her, you will show your confidence in us by agreeing to them. If you decline, we, on our part, shall decline to convey any letter from you to her."

A smile of satisfaction lighted up the hearer's face; he was to see Halima; all else mattered nothing. The promptness and decision of his answer were worthy of Buonaparte himself:—

"I accept your conditions in advance."

It was now the others' turn to smile.

"Your trust in us is highly flattering, my friend," said one; "but surely it is somewhat indiscreet. Had you not better hear our stipulations before you commit yourself to their acceptance."

"I care not what they are," St. Just rejoined impetuously; "but name them, we are wasting time."

"In the first place you will have to consent to make the journey blindfold; and, should Madame decline to see you, or fail to recognize you, or, having recognized you, desire your absence; to be brought back here in the same condition."

"I agree to that without the slightest hesitation. But surely for you to traverse the streets with a blindfolded man, either on foot or in a vehicle, would arouse suspicion; which, I take it, gentlemen, is not what you desire."

"Excellently put, Monsieur; your perspicuity does you credit. We purpose taking steps to provide against the danger you suggest. In effect, you will be

carted to our destination in the guise of merchandise—firewood, to be precise."

It was a curious mode of transit, but St. Just at once consented. He was prepared to submit to almost any inconvenience to see his wife. Then they proceeded to unfold their plan, and no time was lost in putting it in execution.

A long, open wicker basket, almost as long as a coffin, and considerably broader and higher—such as is used for carrying firewood—was dragged from the corner of the booth. Then a handkerchief was tied across St. Just's eyes. They wished to gag him, but refrained on his giving his word of honor that he would not utter a sound. Then they tied his feet together, his hands being already bound. Next he was lifted into the basket, the sides and ends of which were then lined with bundles of firewood, a layer being also laid upon the top of him.

Then one of the men went away to fetch a cart. St. Just hoped the journey was not to be a long one, for already he was beginning to feel far from comfortable; he was lying on his side, his knees doubled up to his chest. Though the air was cool and fresh outside, in his cubicle, packed round, as he was, with wood, it was almost stifling, and he began to sweat profusely. Breathing became oppressive, and his limbs soon ached with cramp. Then an intolerable itching of the skin set in, and the unsatisfied desire to scratch almost drove him mad. He fancied that his sensations must be those of a person buried alive.

After enduring this for about ten minutes—but which seemed to him a good half hour—he heard a cart draw up. Then he felt that he was being carried out and hoisted into it, and that wood and charcoal—as he supposed—were being thrown in after him.

Next, one man mounted on the cart, and another placed himself beside the horse, and they moved away.

Placed as he was, it was impossible for the passenger to see whither they were going, nor could he guess at their direction. But, after jolting and bumping along what seemed to him interminable streets, he believed they had reached a city barrier. At any rate, the cart was brought to a standstill, and a colloquy took place.

It must have been satisfactory, for they soon set off again, and now proceeded for what St. Just, in his imprisonment, thought many miles along a road without a turn. Then, from the change in his position, he could feel that they were going up hill; next, after a moment's halt, they passed through a gate; he knew this because he heard the gate clang to behind them.

At last, when his sufferings from his cramped position and the difficulty of breathing had become almost insupportable, and he was feeling that, unless they should be quickly ended, he must call out, despite his word of honor to keep silent, the cart came to a final stop.

After that, his imprisonment did not last long. The basket was soon hauled

out, and St. Just was lifted from it. He was in a pitiable condition; not only was his face streaming with perspiration, but he was wet through from the same cause from head to foot, and he was gasping for breath. When they untied his legs and arms, he was so stiff that it was some time before he could straighten them, and, of course, to stand was quite out of the question.

But oh! the relief of being able to breathe without restraint. He lay panting on the ground, drinking in deep draughts of fresh, cool air, seeming as though he would never have enough. In a few minutes, he became himself, except for the stiffness of his limbs; every bone in his body ached, and the pain when he tried to move was terrible.

All this time, no word had been spoken by his conductors; but, when they saw that he was breathing easily, they expressed their regret for the discomfort they had put him to, at the same time telling him that they were now in Madame de Moncourt's grounds.

Then they helped him to his legs and supported him while they moved him about quietly, until he could stand alone. Next they straightened and bent his arms. The pain of all this was excessive, but he bore it manfully, bore it with the hope that he was so soon to see his wife. In a short time he could work his arms and legs without much pain, though stiffly still.

"You can walk now?" asked one of his companions.

"Walk!" repeated St. Just, with a laugh, "my faith, it will be some time before I can walk like a sober man; but I can crawl, which must serve me for the present. I seem to have no joints, and my sinews feel as though they were tied in knots. Never before have I endured such purgatory. But 'tis over, and I do not regret it, since it is to bring me to Madame de Moncourt."

All this time they were in the open air.

"We will proceed then," said a voice which St. Just recognized as the smutty faced man's. And he put his arm through St. Just's, and the three proceeded to a door, through which they passed, and, by the difference in the air and sound, the blindfolded man at once knew that he was inside a building. Then he was led along a passage, another door was opened, and they entered a room, the door of which was closed behind them.

"Pray be seated, Monsieur," said the voice that had spoken last; and a chair was placed behind him.

St. Just did so, and the next moment, the bandage was taken from his eyes. After having been so long in darkness, he was almost blinded by the sudden light, and was forced to place his hand before his eyes; but, in a few seconds, they had become used to it.

"Thank God, I am able to use my eyes again," he said. "Doubtless, Monsieurs, you have not restored my sight for nothing, and you will now lead me to

Madame de Moncourt."

"Softly, Sir," was the reply; "we know not yet whether she will desire to see you. If not, you will remember our bargain, that you are to return to Paris under the same conditions that attended your arrival here.

"Pen, ink and paper are before you; write what you think proper to Madame, and it shall be delivered at once; the result will rest with her."

"What I desire above all things," replied St. Just; and he drew his chair up to the table and sat down to write. It was only a few lines, and it was in Arabic. He took this precaution lest his companions should attempt to read it, though, at the same time, he thought it most unlikely. He addressed the note in French, then handed it to one of the men, who left the room with it, the other remaining behind to watch him.

Not two minutes had elapsed when his messenger returned; there was a marked change in him. He was no longer cold and unbending, but there was a smile on his face, his tones were genial and his bearing was almost deferential.

"First let me apologize, Monsieur," he said, "for the unconventional and, I fear, painful mode of your conveyance here. I can assure you we had strong reasons for our seeming want of courtesy, and—"

"Pray say no more," interposed St. Just. "My journey, I cannot deny, was somewhat rough; but, if you bring me the news that Madame will receive me, it will be to me as though it had never been. I am impatient only for her answer to my note."

"She bids me say that it will give her great pleasure to receive you. A servant will be here to attend you to her almost immediately."

The man had scarcely ceased speaking, when the door was opened and a man in livery entered. Approaching St. Just, he bent deferentially before him, while he said:—

"Madame awaits Monsieur." Then he moved to the door and opened it. Bowing to his companions, who replied with, "An revoir, Monsieur," St. Just left the room, and then followed the man-servant, his heart beating with exultation as well as trepidation. A minute later, the door of another room was opened; then closed behind him. Instantly a well-known figure rushed up to him and flung herself into his arms.

"Henri! at last, my husband!"

"Halima, once more I have you!"

CHAPTER III.

St. Just led his wife to a couch and, seating himself beside her, placed his arm round her waist and drew her to him in a close embrace. Then, interspersing his words with fervid kisses, he exclaimed:—

"Once more we are together, my beloved, my darling, my wife. My Queen! you are more beautiful than ever. Oh! to think of all that I have missed, the years that we have been parted. And you, my Halima, have you thought of me?"

"Often indeed, my Henri, but with tears, as of one whom I should never see again; for I feared that you were no longer living. I felt sure my husband would come back to me, were he alive. Oh! why did you leave me all these years—it is more than three? It was cruel, Henri!"

"Cruel indeed, had I had the power. But I will tell you all that has befallen me since we parted. You will then see that I have not been to blame. Ah! I would have flown to your side, had I been able."

His eyes were all aflame with love, and he pressed her closely to him—almost savagely—and rained fresh kisses on her blushing face. She could not doubt the depth and fervor of his passion, and she had an intuition that it would be lasting. Moreover, his unstinted admiration was a tribute to her beauty, that appealed to the leading attribute of her being—pride in her own surpassing loveliness—and filled her with exultation and delight. No one knew better than herself the power that lies behind the eyes and smiles of a lovely woman, and in her own person, she missed no occasion of exploiting it; for the homage of the other sex was as the breath of life to her; a necessity of her existence. And she was irresistible; no man could approach her without becoming, if she so willed it, her devoted slave. Their hearts were as tinder to the spark of her personality. She was fascination in the concrete. All the Frenchmen she had met in Paris pronounced her "ravissante," and that summed her up. What contributed much to her success was that she retained the mastery of her own feelings; for no man, save St. Just, had plumbed the depth of passion in her; thus she had all others at a disadvantage. There were many that she liked, some that she had a certain fondness for, but none that could appease that love hunger that St. Just had roused in her and, when with her, satisfied. But, warm as her affection was for him, it was more ardent than enduring; for, when away from him, she was ready to console herself with others. "La donna e mobile," might well have been applied to her. She was a strange mixture, for, while erotic passion was strong in her voluptuous nature, she was discriminate in its indulgence; and, while she was sensual to the fingers' tips, there were few indeed who could boast with truth of

having enjoyed her favors.

Now, at her husband's close embrace, her whole being trembled with desire, and she bent her eyes languishingly upon his face, while she pressed her full red lips against his own; for his ardor had aroused the like in her.

"Oh! my own, my darling," she softly murmured, "I am in heaven now that you are back to me. No one has ever touched my heart like you."

For a space, with downcast eyes, she lay panting in his arms; for, what with their mutual kisses and his strong embrace, to breathe freely was impossible. Then she struggled gently.

"Loose me somewhat, dear," she gasped. "I love to feel your arms around me, but your clasp is so unyielding that I scarce can draw my breath. Nay, withdraw not altogether," she added, when he removed his arms, "but hold me gently, while you tell me all about yourself. There will be time for love's dalliances hereafter; now I am burning to be informed of your adventures."

Thus adjured, St. Just gave her a full description of all his doings since their separation. The story took long in telling, the longer that it was continually interrupted by her endearments and sympathetic comments on his sufferings. When it was ended, everything down to his arrival in Paris and his appearance in that room having been recounted she turned to him again.

"Oh! my Henri, what you have suffered," she exclaimed; "and to think that you should have lost all memory even of me! But, at least, you were spared the pain of wanting me."

"Ah! but think of the years of love that I have lost; for had I known, this wasted period would not have been. If necessary, I would have searched the whole world through for you. But my search would not have been prolonged, for love would have winged my feet, and brought me quickly to my goal."

"You can turn a pretty compliment. Tell me now, how like you me in this costume; you have never yet seen me, but in Eastern dress. Does my Parisian gown become me, with all these pretty chiffons?"

"You are ravishing, ma chérie; bewitching as you looked in Arab garb, your charms are even enhanced in European habit. You look a gay Parisian from head to foot."

Undoubtedly she did. No one, viewing her, would have guessed that in her veins there ran a drop of Arab blood, for she was fairer even than most Spanish women.

She laughed merrily at the compliment, for, in many things, she was pleased as easily as is a child, and was as open in displaying her delight.

"But now," resumed St. Just, "I am longing to hear about yourself; how it is I find you here, and what you have been doing in the interval."

"Ah! but it would take all night to tell you everything," was her reply. "By

degrees you shall know all. Rest content on this occasion with the chief incidents. You know you left me at the "Tomb of the Kings" to take that treasure on to Cairo. Oh! that horrid treasure! But for that, I should not have lost you. Well, I waited for month after month for the message from you that was to tell me where I was to meet you; and, each day, I became more sad and lonely. Ah! my Henri, how I did miss you. When no news came, my anxiety became almost insupportable, for I feared that some misfortune had befallen you; and I—I was helpless to assist you, for I knew not what it was, or where you were.

"At last, three months after you had left me, one of the men who had formed your escort came into the camp alone. He could scarcely walk, but swayed about, like a drunken man, from side to side. He was unarmed and had scarcely a rag about him, and he looked as though he had not tasted food for many days. Altogether he was in a pitiable condition. At first, he was too weak to speak; he staggered into the encampment, and then his strength gave out, and he fell at full length to the ground. When he had been sufficiently restored with food and drink, he was brought to me, and then—then, my husband, I heard the dreadful news; the very worst that could have happened had befallen me." Even now she shuddered at its recitation; there was no make-believe about it, and St. Just's heart leaped with joy and sympathy at the thought of how she must have loved him.

"He told me," she went on, "of the attack on you at Thebes, and how he had seen you fall; also that Yusuf who was in the attacking party, had been slain by Mahmoud. May Allah bless the boy for that good deed! Henri, there must have been treachery somewhere, though I know not how it came about."

"There was," he interposed. "Some traitor in the camp must have given Yusuf notice of our coming, and he, in consequence, waylaid us."

"When I heard this dreadful news, I fainted," proceeded Halima, "and it was long before I again was conscious; and then—Ah! may I never again suffer what I went through then. I rent the air with piercing shrieks, when I realized that I should never see you more; for, after what this man had told me, and hearing nothing from you, I could not doubt that you were dead. How I passed the weeks that followed—but no, I cannot bear to dwell on it; I will draw a veil over that fearful time; it was worse even than when, once before, I thought that you were lost; for then you were not my husband." She trembled violently at the recollection.

"Of course," continuing, "the treasure having been captured from you, there was an end to my father's ambitious schemes on my behalf; and I was so depressed that I felt a desert life would drive me mad. Its dullness was more than I could bear. I wanted rousing; grief and monotony were killing me. So I resolved to do alone what we had meant to do together; to travel to my mother's country. I had still the jewels, and I knew that they were of enormous value, so that I

should not be short of money. With Abdallah and a few more to escort me, I set off for Cairo, letting it be understood that I should remain there for a while and eventually rejoin the tribe.

"Arrived at Cairo, I told Abdallah only, under an oath of secrecy, of my real intentions, and that he was to take steps at once to put them into execution. He did his utmost to dissuade me, but, when he saw I was resolved, he promised to do his best to help me, and agreed to see me safe to France."

"Faithful old soul," interposed St. Just, "I am sure you could depend on him."

"Yes, indeed, I don't know what I should have done without him. He is with me still. Well, we made our way to Rosetta. Thence we took ship to Syracuse, where we landed, for the vessel went no further. Soon afterwards, Abdallah heard of a French brig that was bound for Brest, and in this we took our passage. From Brest we made our way to Paris.

"The first thing I did was to make my presence known to Buonaparte. I knew no one else in Paris, and I wanted an introduction to a dealer in precious stones, who would not rob me. He gave me this, and also told me of this villa at Auteuil, where I have since lived."

"You have renewed your intercourse with him!" St. Just exclaimed with anger, "and you professed to hate him."

"And so I do, and would circumvent him all I could; but, to do so, it is necessary that I know his schemes and movements. My vengeance is not forgotten; it is but gaining strength in slumber. I will be frank with you, Henri. He seemed overjoyed to see me, so far as one so impassive shows his feelings; and at once assumed that I desired our former relations to be restored. But I quickly undeceived him, though I told him he could visit me as a friend; and this he does. Perhaps he thinks I shall relent, but he deceives himself."

"I would he came not here," St. Just said gloomily. "He is both determined and deceitful and, should he guess your feelings towards him, will not spare you."

"Have no fear for me, my friend. I can protect myself. But it was necessary that I should be on friendly terms with him, so as to worm myself into the confidence of his ministers and adherents, and thus learn his plans."

"But how can you do this?" inquired her husband. "Surely they are not the men to reveal State Secrets!"

"They are men, my dear, and I am a woman. I have some of my sex's wit—and I am not wholly destitute of other weapons." And she looked at him coquettishly, and laughed a merry laugh. "Foolish boy, have I no powers of fascination?"

"Ah! have I not reason to know it!" he cried with strong conviction. "You are a queen, who, if you will it, can bring all men to your feet. But tell me, how did the First Consul take it when he learned that you were married?"

"Married!" she laughed gayly, "who says that I am married? My faith, not I."

St. Just loosed his hold of her with a sudden movement that was involuntary, and looked at her in wonder, to see whether she had spoken in mere banter, or in sober earnestness. He learned nothing from her face; it was an enigma to him.

"This jest is out of place with me," he said.

"No jest, my friend," she answered airily, "but the honest truth."

His face clouded and took on a stern expression.

"What mean you, Halima?" he asked, and there was deliberation in his voice. "But now, when first we met, you addressed me as your husband."

"A facon de parler, chéri. I thought 'twould please you; I ought rather to have said 'My lover.'"

He gazed at her in mingled anger and stupefaction. Then he sprang from the divan to his feet.

"Your effrontery amazes me," he said. "Pray do you pass as an unmarried woman?"

"I pass as Madame de Moncourt," she replied, flashing her eyes boldly on him, "and no one has yet had the temerity to ask for my credentials."

"I shall claim you as my wife," he said, his anger rising.

"And get shot as a deserter," was the cool response.

Her audacity and coolness staggered him; but, before he could reply, "Nay, I can save you from that," she said, "while I think of it, let me hand you this." And from a bangle on her wrist she unfastened the charm Buonaparte's wife had given him, as a reminder that her husband would spare his life, should it be jeopardized.

"I have worn it ever since we parted." She held it out to him.

But he declined it. "I will not have it," he said fiercely. "What care I for life, without you to share it? No matter what the consequences, I will proclaim you as my wife. Keep the talisman and be my murderess, if you will." Then he added with a heartfelt wail, "Oh! Halima, was all your boasted love for me but counterfeit?"

While his unbending resolution angered her, his anguish, which was but the expression of his great love for her, touched her heart. Besides which, she really loved him, and she did not mean to lose him; but she must have him on her own conditions. A smile of triumph overspread her face, but softened withal by love.

"Counterfeit," she cried. "You have had little experience of women, if you cannot discriminate between real and pretended passion. You have held me in your arms, and I have given you every proof that woman can of how I love you.

You insult me when you suggest that my passion was assumed."

"Then why repudiate our marriage?"

"For the safety of us both. Be calm, my dear, and listen to me. First, as to the position. I am no longer in Egypt; I am in France and am a naturalized Frenchwoman. And you are a Frenchman. The Mahommedan ceremony we went through is not binding on us here. Were I to proclaim myself a Christian and disown the tie between us, you would be powerless to enforce it. Impersonally I have made inquiries. No doubt were I to admit your claim, I could not afterwards have it set aside. Now those are the cold, hard facts. Next, to consider the consequence that would ensue from such admission. I have said before, that I would be frank with you, and I will; I will keep nothing from you. Buonaparte pursues me with his attentions, but I know how to keep him at a distance. For all that, if he knew that I was married, he would see in it the cause of my refusing his advances. In such a case, for how long would your life be safe? Do you think his promises to you would bar the way to his desire? Even if he spared your life, he would either imprison you, or, at best, order you to join some regiment now abroad; in any case we should be separated. I am as firm as ever in my resolve to punish Buonaparte, and I want your help. As my acknowledged husband you could not give it. I cannot spare you, dear; believe me when I say that my love for you is true and deep. No other man has ever touched my heart like you; has made it leap within my bosom, and the blood to rush like a torrent through my veins. Be reasonable, my own man, and come and sit by me, and I will wind my arms around your neck, and kiss you to compliance. Come, Henri, to your Halima, whose heart and soul are wholly yours."

She held out her arms to him invitingly.

The man cast his eyes upon her glowing face and then on her heaving bosom, over which her draperies rose and fell; thence they traveled downwards, past the rounded arms and tapering fingers, to her dainty ankles and the little slender feet that rested on a footstool; and the blood began to boil within him with desire; but still he hesitated. She saw it and resumed:

"Henri, you will not desert me. There is no one I can absolutely trust, but you. I cannot do without you, but the public knowledge of the tie between us would defeat my plans, and would, I know, result in harm to you; and that I could not bear; for you are all the world to me."

The last words were uttered low, but were full of seductive sweetness to the hearer. She turned her liquid eyes on him, eyes in which his own image was reflected, and there was a witchery in her smiling, pleading mouth. Once more his gaze roamed over the woman's sensuous perfections, and he felt drunk with passion.

He sprang forward into her extended arms, and she caught him in her sin-

uous embrace.

"My queen! My life," he murmured.

She read her victory in his eyes and words, and was content. His passion seemed to have entered into her, for she pressed him tightly to her breast, and kissed him madly—almost hungrily—on his lips and eyes, as though she could not have enough of him.

But to one's capacity even, for his endearments, Dame Nature puts a limit, and soon Halima was fain, for want of breath, to place a drag on her effusiveness. She drew back and panted to regain her breath. When somewhat calmed, she spoke again.

"Cruel man," she murmured softly, "I began to think my charms were waning, when you remained so obdurate. Tell me, have I fallen off in face or form?"

He looked her over searchingly; there was hunger and covetousness in his eyes.

"My God!" he said in a tone almost of awe. "You are more beautiful than ever; I almost tremble at your loveliness."

A deep-drawn sigh escaped him. Presently he resumed, "Now tell me what you purpose. On what footing are we to stand towards one another?"

"Exactly as before, except in name. The world is not to know of our relationship. You will visit me openly, like my other friends, and sometimes in secret; only you must be circumspect. You will have your apartments in Paris, and I shall live on here. I shall have no secrets from you; you will know and be consulted about all my plans, for your help is vital to me. I am rich, and my purse will be always at our disposal. I will give you money before you leave me. Nay, you shall have it now, lest I forget it."

She moved to an escritoire and drew forth from it a roll of notes and gave it to him. "That will suffice for present needs," she said, "Do not be sparing in its use; there is plenty more."

Then she resumed her seat beside him. "Henri," she said, once more twining her arm around his neck, "I am all your own: body and soul and every atom of me are yours; but this is our own sweet secret."

"Sweet wife," he answered softly; "and I am wholly yours; my thoughts have never strayed to any other woman. I devote my will, my life to you. Henceforth I exist but to serve you."

"Dear boy," she cooed, "and do you think I could have let you go?"

"And yet, though we have but just met for the first time for years, you would send me from you. Oh! not to-night, my Halima," he cried imploringly.

There was a sensual sparkle in her eye.

"Nay, not to-night," she answered; "after so long a parting, I cannot spare you yet. But we must be circumspect. You shall pass here merely as my guest. I

can so arrange it as to avoid suspicion."

"A hungry man is fain to accept a crust; I must make the most of what you offer," was his reply.

Now, whether throughout this burning interview Halima had spoken from her heart, whether even she had persuaded herself that all she said was true—that she had no thought for any other than her husband—need not be stated here. But so much may be chronicled, that he implicitly believed her.

They had so much to say to one another that the hours flew by unheeded; but, at last, Halima recalled herself to her shortcomings in the matter of the men who had accompanied St. Just—or rather brought him captive—and she sprang up suddenly.

"I don't know what our friends will think of us," she laughed; "I declare I had quite forgotten them; and all through you, you naughty fellow. I must send word to them that I shall be happy to receive them."

"What friends?" inquired her husband, and his tone betrayed annoyance.

"Those who brought you here."

"And who are they?"

"I will introduce you when they come. Meanwhile, will you ring the bell, my dear?"

St. Just did what he was asked, and the man who came in answer to her summons, was told to request the presence of the "two gentlemen who had arrived with Monsieur." An oath broke from her husband's lips when the servant closed the door; but she put her little hand before his mouth with a pretty action and exclaimed, "Oh! fie to say such naughty words; and so ungrateful too, when you have had me all to yourself for quite three hours."

"Ah! but think how long I've had to wait," he said. "Three years with you without a break, would not suffice me."

"Selfish glutton," she said roguishly, and her beaming countenance showed how pleased she was. The shortest route to her good will was ever by the road called Flattery.

Before she could add another word, the door was opened and the two gentlemen came in. For the moment, they seemed strangers to St. Just, but he soon recognized the features of the two men who had brought him in the cart. Had he met them without previous preparation, he certainly would not have known them. The coal merchant and the laborer were gone, and, in their places, stood two well-dressed gentlemen with clean hands and faces.

Halima advanced to them effusively, and held out her hand.

"What will you think of me? What can I say to you?" she cried. "I am in despair at the reflection of my want of courtesy. But—I will speak the truth—I had forgotten you were in the house. But indeed I had some reason, and, when

you hear it, I trust you will forgive my seeming rudeness. This it is."

She turned round to St. Just, who was standing a little way behind her, and took his hand in hers; then led him forward.

"Mons. Georges Cadoudal, Mons. St. Regent," indicating first the quondam coal-merchant and then his comrade, "I have the honor to present to you Captain Henri St. Just, my husband."

The look of wonder and almost incredulity on the faces of the newcomers, and of surprise and satisfaction on St. Just's, caused much amusement to the lady. The two gentlemen, of course, had not had a notion that she was married; and he, after what had passed between himself and Halima, had never dreamed that she would disclose the fact; in that she had, he felt both grateful and delighted.

The three gentlemen bowed stiffly. "Surely Madame is not serious?" St. Regent questioned.

"Absolutely," she replied, "Naturally, you did not know that I was married," she went on vivaciously. "Nor indeed did I, until you were good enough to bring my husband to me. 'Tis nearly four years since we met, and I thought that we should never meet again. I believed he was no more. Am I forgiven for forgetting you, Messieurs?"

"Nay, Madame," replied Cadoudal, "'tis not forgiveness you require, for you have done no wrong; congratulations you demand, and from my heart I tender them."

He laid his hand across his chest and bent low before her. Then he addressed her husband, and held out his hand. "But, if Madame is to be congratulated, tenfold more are you, Monsieur, in that you call the loveliest woman in all France your wife. Have you forgiven us, for the roughness of your ride?" he laughed.

"So entirely, if any forgiveness is required," St. Just replied, "that, with the same end in view, I would ask to be allowed to undergo the ride again; for all that, I never underwent such pain before. Even now, my limbs have not recovered their full power. Messieurs, I thank you heartily for all that you have done for me."

Then Halima spoke again.

"My friends," she said, "I have told you that he is my husband, to convince you that you may repose the fullest trust in him, but the knowledge is to go no farther; the fact must be a secret most profound; for, should it be even hinted at, the consequences might be to bring our plans to naught. Amongst friends—and, dare I breathe the word, conspirators—there should be the utmost confidence; and my husband is one of us; he is with us heart and soul in all that we have set before us; he will consult with us, and I will vouch for his good faith, his intrepidity and his zeal; for he has the same cause for hating the First Consul, as myself. You may speak, therefore, with perfect openness before him, and I beg

you will."

Naturally after this, there was the utmost friendliness between St. Just and his new acquaintances, and he made many discoveries that astonished and amazed him.

Their conversation was, soon afterwards, interrupted by the entrance of a servant, who announced that dinner was served.

"Give me your arm, Henri," said Halima. "You will permit me, Messieurs," she laughed. "My husband has been so long away from me, that he is the greatest stranger."

During and after dinner St. Just learned much more that astonished him—notably that Halima and Cadoudal had been concerned in the recent plot to put an end to Buonaparte.

This and more was told to St. Just on that eventful evening, much to his uneasiness. He found himself, unwittingly, posted on the verge of a political volcano, with a fair chance of being speedily engulfed within its crater. He had never suspected that his wife, simply to gratify her vindictive animus towards Buonaparte, would engage in schemes so dangerous and far-reaching; and take part in a conspiracy whose ramifications extended even beyond the country, and that, whether the outcome were disaster or success, must result in deluging the land with blood. And he himself was now committed to their schemes. His heart was not in the conspiracy, and he trembled at the risk his wife and he were running. He resolved to use his utmost influence to persuade her gradually to withdraw herself from her dangerous surroundings. At the same time, he could not but admit to himself that his hope of succeeding with her was slight, for he knew her spirit and determination.

It was late when, greatly to St. Just's relief, St. Regent and Cadoudal took their leave. When the door closed upon them, he sprang to his feet and stretched himself.

"Thank God, they're gone," he cried. "I've had enough of plotting for to-night; and now, my Halima, the few hours left we'll dedicate to love."

He opened his arms to her. She ran to him and hid her face upon his breast. "And, I, too," she murmured, "have been longing to be alone with you, my Henri."

CHAPTER IV.

Nothing of any moment happened during the next three weeks, the position Halima had laid down at her first meeting with her husband being rigidly maintained. He came to see her as often as she would permit, but resided at his apartment in the Rue de Dauphin, and with, of course, the ever-faithful Mahmoud, who showed much surprise at the arrangement.

Halima had expressed her wish to see him, so, on his next visit, St. Just took the young man with him. Mahmoud's delight at once more meeting his young mistress was supreme; he threw himself at her feet and uttered cries of joy in his native Arabic, blessing her and thanking Allah for having permitted him to set his eyes on her again.

She pleased him mightily when she enlarged upon his bravery and fidelity to her husband, and told him that he would find a friend in her throughout her life, because she knew that, but for him, St. Just would not be living. Nor did she forget to thank him for having slain the hated Yusuf. Then she complimented him upon his manly looks and handsome face, and prophesied that all the French girls would lose their hearts to him. Altogether, when Mahmoud left her, he was in the seventh heaven of delight, and more than ever devoted to herself and her husband. It would have gone hard with any one who should have dared to question any act or word of theirs, or say a syllable in their disparagement, in Mahmoud's hearing.

During these weeks St. Just's love for Halima, if possible, increased in fervor; with the result that, though in her presence he was supremely happy, when away from her, he was restless, discontented, and suspicious. On the whole it may be questioned whether he was not happier when he was living at Marsala, oblivious of her existence, than now, when he basked in her society for minutes, and yearned for it unsatisfied for hours.

With her it was another matter, for, though she preferred his company to that of any other man, and, when she had him to herself, placed no limitations on her passions; her love for him was neither of that depth nor of that enduring nature which was his for her. She was more like a child with a much prized toy, than a wife absorbed in her devotion to her husband.

Moreover, she had other matters to occupy her mind; she was up to her ears in intrigues with various persons, not only of the First Consul's entourage, but also of the adherents of the Bourbons. And the atmosphere of treason and conspiracy in which she lived she thoroughly enjoyed. She reveled in the power her beauty and her money gave her; and even, strange as it may appear, in the risk she ran; this to her was but a pleasurable excitement.

Buonaparte's visits to the Auteuil villa, to St. Just were a perpetual sore; not that he was jealous or suspicious of his wife—for he had accepted without reserve her statement that her old relations with the General neither had been nor would

be resumed; and he had confidence both in her will and her ability to maintain her intimacy with him on a platonic footing—but that he was filled with a deep-seated rancor against the First Consul, not only for Halima's betrayal, but also because he, St. Just, regarded him as the cause of all the sufferings and misfortunes he had undergone. Animated by this resentment, therefore so far from condemning the treasonable proceedings of his wife's associates, he acquiesced in the plotters' aims, at the same time that he doubted their accomplishment; and, additionally, the wisdom of the means proposed for bringing them about. Then there was the accompanying danger, and St. Just had had enough of that to make him circumspect.

Altogether, he resolved to mix himself as little as might be with the conspiracy; though, had he desired it, he might have learned its inmost workings; for, now that Halima had vouched for his fidelity, the conspirators were ready to place absolute trust in him. As it was, they spoke openly before him on the few occasions when he chanced to be present at their meetings; so that, had he been minded to play the traitor, he was in possession of ample information to lay the whole party by the heels.

Situated as he was, he could not wholly withdraw himself from active participation in their schemes, but he confined himself as a rule, to a subordinate position, his duties being principally the delivering of messages and letters to various persons more or less in touch with the conspiracy.

St. Just had formed a close friendship with St. Regent, one of the two men, it will be recollected, who had brought him to Halima. There was a great charm for St. Just in St. Regent's good-tempered, frank, impetuous nature. Moreover the man had a strong will and a large amount of that magnetic force which, when put forth, compels the acquiescence of those on whom it is brought to bear. And he had exercised it upon St. Just, with the result that he had gained over him complete ascendancy, and could mould him to his will.

He started a plot, in which he was determined that St. Just should take a part. The latter, though unwilling, was like wax in the other's hand, and found himself unable to resist.

St. Regent numbered among his associates one Carbon, a chemist, an ardent conspirator, like himself. To him, he and St. Just repaired, and the three, with four others of like mind, laid their heads together to evolve a plan for Buonaparte's assassination.

The outcome was, an "Infernal machine" of the following description. An ordinary hand water cart, with its barrel made of zinc, was filled with gunpowder and scraps of iron; in the tap, barely protruding from it, was placed a special fuse that, on being touched with a chemically prepared stick, would become ignited. This fuse, in a given time, would fire the gunpowder inside the barrel, when the

results would not be difficult to guess.

St. Just, much to his annoyance and dismay, was told off to perform the duty of artillery man.

The machine prepared, the next thing was to select a place for its employment; and in this the plotters would be guided either by the public announcements or by the information privately conveyed to them of the First Consul's intended movements.

Meanwhile St. Just awaited his instructions.

Lest he should be recognized—for he had abandoned his idea for the present of reporting himself to the military authorities—he was now posing to the outside world as a doctor come to Paris, not to practice, but to study. His appearance was so changed that none of his old acquaintances would have known him. His former dark locks were now cut close to the head, and by the aid of chemicals had assumed a light brown hue, and the once clean-shaven, resolutely moulded mouth and chin were now concealed under a mustache and beard to match his hair. His clothes were of a sober cut and color to suit his professional assumption, and his gait was slow and measured. Carrying the conventional silver-headed stick, and with serious mien, and apparently immersed in grave reflection, he moved about the crowded streets; no one of all the thoughtless, laughter-loving Parisians, who differed little at that time from what they are to-day, would have dreamed that he was aught but what he seemed, a sober citizen, on lawful business bent.

On a certain afternoon in the expiring year, just when it was growing dusk, St. Just received instructions to repair to the appointed spot, and perform his part in the dastardly conspiracy.

Now, though, from day to day, he had held himself in readiness for such directions as he had now received, when the news came to him that the time for action had actually arrived, he felt almost stunned, and shrank with horror from the performance of the deed imposed on him. For all that, he knew that there was no evading it; the hour for backing out was past; any treachery to his comrades, or even a mere refusal to play his part would, he was convinced, result in retribution that would cost his life. True, that, in executing the conspirators' behests, he would be placing that life in serious jeopardy; but this was preferable to the certainty of losing it.

He set out from his apartment on his murderous errand, with dragging footsteps and a heavy heart. No one, to look at him, would have guessed that, under that calm exterior, there raged a tumult of emotions. He recalled the memory of his campaigns under the great general on whose destruction he was bent, and his feet faltered. He felt he could not go through with what was ordered. For a moment, a wild idea took hold of him to retrace his steps and, at all hazards, to make his way to the Tuileries and acquaint his old commander with his im-

pending danger. He stopped and turned half round. Then the thought of what would be the consequence, the certainty that those he had betrayed would track him down and take his life, no matter how or where he tried to hide himself, restrained him from acting upon his half formed purpose. With a despairing sigh he resumed his progress to the rendezvous, the conflict being waged within him almost tearing him to pieces.

But, for all the tempest of his mind, he was careful how he held his silver-headed stick, keeping it as nearly perpendicular as he could, and never letting it touch anybody or anything except the ground; for, innocent as it appeared, it contained the potentiality of destruction. The upper half of it was hollowed out and held at the bottom a powerful acid. Above this, but separated from it, and concealed under the silver knob, was a subtle chemical. When the knob should be unscrewed and the stick sufficiently inclined, the acid would come into contact with this chemical and ignite it; on touching with this the fuse in the supposed water cart, the explosion would follow in due course.

Presently he came to a broad thoroughfare, and, once more, he halted, undecided. To his left lay the way to the Tuileries, the way to honor, pardon, and—death! To the right, that to the Opera House, whither the carriage of the First Consul would shortly pass—the way to dishonorable revenge and Halima, and, if the scheme should prove successful—Life!

His indecision was but momentary, he chose the turning to the right; it was the crisis of his career. A hollow, scornful laugh broke from him at the reflection that, should the explosion be successful, there would be no performance at the opera that night. On the other hand, should it result in a fiasco, Paris would, on the morrow, be engaged in the performance of a "Dies Iræ," in which he and his associates would be taking leading parts.

He had scarcely started afresh, after his temporary pause, when a beggar who was tapping the ground in front of him with a stick, as though blind, shoved against him. At the same moment St. Just felt something pressed into his palm. Muttering an apology, the beggar dived into the crowd and disappeared.

Instantly St. Just closed his hand, then quietly put it into his pocket; by its feel he knew he held a piece of folded paper—no doubt a message of importance. He clenched it tightly in his palm, lest some police spy, having witnessed the beggar's action, should seek to seize it; for spies in Paris were plentiful as blackberries in those perilous times, so that one could scarcely trust one's neighbor.

The conspirator strolled insouciantly towards an oil lamp which hung a little higher than his head, over a grocer's shop.

Here he withdrew the note and opened it. It was from one of the leaders in the plot, and its words were few, but to the point, for one who understood their language:

"The weather seems settled, so cloaks will not be needed." In the corner was a little flag roughly delineated in red ink.

St. Just started, and an uneasy look appeared upon his face at the reading of this note. The words, taken alone, meant that everything was going satisfactorily, that the police had apparently no suspicions, and that no special precautions needed to be taken. But the addition of the red flag imported danger, and that the words signified the exact opposite of what they stated, viz.—that the police had got wind of something and were on the alert, and that St. Just was to exercise the utmost care in all his movements, and to warn any others in the plot, that he might see, to keep themselves as little in evidence as they could. Disquieting intelligence for a man engaged on such an errand as was his.

The first thing to be done was to get rid of this unwelcome missive, for the agents of police were expert at reading cryptograms and digging out their meaning how deep soever it was buried. Should he be arrested, therefore, he had no mind that this compromising message should be found on him.

He saw a ready way to its destruction. With the hand that held the note he took out his watch, and brought it near the lamp above him, as though to learn the time. Apparently, he was unable to see distinctly by the feeble, flickering light; so he carefully transferred the watch to the hand that grasped his silver-headed stick; then, lighting the paper at the oil lamp, he held it close to the watch face, as though the better to read the figures on the dial.

It burnt more rapidly than he had expected, with the result that it scorched his finger.

With the sudden smart he forgot the rôle and tone he was assuming, and, without a thought, brought out in his natural voice a string of military oaths. Suddenly he pulled up, at the reflection of his indiscretion. But not before his imprecations had been heard.

They caught the ear of a drunken-looking man, who was supporting himself against a cabaret across the street. He was an old soldier, and instantly recognized the familiar oaths. He looked long and searchingly at St. Just, with a clearness of perception that would scarcely have been expected in a drunken man.

Annoyed at his unguarded exclamation, St. Just put his smarting finger into his mouth, and once more forgetting the added years and professional gravity he was simulating, strode rapidly down the street.

This also the watcher noted. "Military oaths, military step," he muttered. "You're not exactly what you seem, my friend. And your voice I've heard before. I shall put a name to you anon." And he wheeled round and entered the cabaret against which he had been leaning.

Meanwhile, St. Just strode on and, rounding a corner to the right, he hur-

ried forward. Half way down the street, he stopped. In the middle of the road and almost blocking it were two carts, a market man's and a water carrier's. They seemed to have collided, for the water cart was tilted on its side, with one wheel off. The water carrier was assailing the owner of the market cart with language more forcible than polite; and the other was retaliating in terms equally expressive, each charging the other with having caused the accident.

But a glance showed St. Just that this mutual vituperation was all make-believe, for in the water carrier he recognized St. Regent and in the market man another of the conspirators; but both so well disguised that, had he not been prepared beforehand, he would not have known them.

When both thought that their wordy warfare had continued long enough to allay any suspicions that they were in collusion, the driver of the market cart, first giving St. Just a wink that was almost imperceptible, moved forward for a few yards, then deliberately drew round his horse so that it and the cart behind it stood crosswise in the street and blocked it.

Soon—it is always so, even in the most trivial street accidents—a little crowd began to form. This gave St. Just the opportunity he wanted to transmit to his friends the warning he had received. Elbowing his way to them, he called out in loud tones:

"Messieurs, how is this? Come, you must clear the road; the First Consul is on his way to the Opera and will pass by almost immediately." Then in a lower tone, "Be on your guard; there is danger ahead; the police are on the qui vive."

The words had hardly left his mouth, when, in the distance, the sound of horses' hoofs was heard. They came on at a brisk trot, and, before St. Just had had time to unscrew the knob of his stick, half a dozen dragoons had wheeled round the corner of the street, and were advancing up it. They were the foremost of the First Consul's escort. With fumbling fingers, St. Just removed from his stick the silver top. He was trembling violently. Now that the supreme moment had arrived, his nerve gave out. The dastardly nature of what he purposed presented itself in full force before him. He felt he could not do the deed.

St. Regent shot a searching glance at him and understood. He saw that, though St. Just was no intending traitor, his resolution had deserted him, and that, unless he himself applied the match, their plot would be abortive. With a gesture of impatience and a muttered exclamation, he snatched the stick from the trembling man.

Meanwhile, at the First Consul's approach, a crowd had quickly gathered, impeding the progress of the cavalcade. But the soldiers, striking the people with the flat of their swords and pressing their horses on them, soon forced a passage for the carriage which, driven at a rapid pace, passed the point of danger at the very moment that St. Regent applied the match.

For a few moments, St. Just remained standing at a distance he judged safe from the fateful water cart. He was still trembling violently. Then, realizing that the explosion would occur too late to achieve its object, he elbowed his way through the seething mob and, when clear of it, made a dash for the end of the road. This he gained without impediment, but, no sooner had he done so, than he found himself grasped firmly by the arms and surrounded by a party of men, who turned the corner of the street just when he reached it.

Before he had even time to make a protest, still less to free himself, the First Consul's carriage dashed by at a rapid trot, and he caught a glimpse of Buonaparte, who was laughing at some sally of his aide-de-camp.

"Forward!" shouted the leader of the men who had seized St. Just.

But, before the order could be obeyed, and almost at the same instant, there was a roar like thunder when the electric fluid strikes a building, and two of the party were hurled violently against the shutters of a house hard by. Then a wave of blinding smoke, accompanied by a fetid stench of sulphurous gas, swept up the street, almost stifling St. Just and those who had arrested him. Then, a howl of rage went up, with threats and execrations for the perpetrators of the deed, mingled with the groans of the injured, the shrieks of the terror-stricken women and the clatter of the falling bricks. The whole air was full of dust, and the din was deafening. Nobody understood exactly what had happened, or who had caused it; only that a terrible explosion had occurred and that much havoc had been wrought by it. The babble and confusion were indescribable and panic had seized on all the crowd, men, women and children fleeing in all directions.

Then the leader of the party in whom St. Just had, by this time, recognized the agent Vipont, gave his attention to his two men who had been knocked down and had remained motionless where they had fallen. One had had his head crushed in by a piece of iron from the exploded water cart. He was a ghastly sight, his face battered out of recognition, and his blood and brains scattered about the trottoir.

The other had come so violently into contact with the shutter he had been thrown against, that the hook in it had been forced through his forehead and deep into his brain. Both men were stone dead, of course.

The horse belonging to the market cart that had been forced purposely into collision with the pretended water cart, had had one of its legs torn off, and the blood was streaming from it. It had also suffered other injuries, and portions of the shattered cart lay on it. The look of anguish in the poor creature's eyes was piteous to behold; it seemed to be appealing to those about it to end its sufferings; but none heeded it. All were too much occupied in tending their injured fellow creatures.

Vipont and his police were thus engaged, and also on the lookout for those

who had caused the outrage. Presently they found St. Regent. He was lying near the dying horse. He had been hurled some yards, and the fall had rendered him insensible, but the only outward injury he had sustained seemed to be the loss of three fingers from his left hand. They picked him up and took charge of him, but whether because he was found so near the scene of the disaster, or that they had received some information, or merely because he had been injured, St. Just had no means of judging.

Round the exploded water cart was a yawning hole, and lying half in it was the mangled carcass of the horse of one of Buonaparte's dragoons, blown almost all to pieces. Its rider had escaped with a broken leg. Many of the houses about were more or less in ruins, while all in the vicinity of the explosion had their windows broken.

"To the Temple," said the police agent to his men. "When we have safely lodged our prisoners, it will be time enough to render assistance here."

At this moment St. Just caught sight of the pretended blind beggar who, earlier in the evening, had handed him the note. The man passed close to him and, in passing whispered rapidly in his ear, "Keep faith, and hope."

Then he disappeared amongst the crowd, and the police party began to move away, St. Just held firmly by a police agent on each side, and St. Regent, insensible and in happy ignorance of what had happened to him, borne by two men on a litter they had improvised.

CHAPTER V.

His captors marched St. Just along at a brisk pace and in a short time, they reached the Place de la Bastille, whose name achieved the double purpose of keeping alive the memories of the horrors that had been perpetrated within the grim fortress that had stood there, and of signalizing the triumph of democracy.

Continuing their way, they gained the prison that had been the last abiding place of the ill-fated Louis Capet. St. Just had often passed it, but had little thought he should ever find himself a prisoner within its walls; but that had been in the days when his honor was unsullied and he was glowing with the ardor of a young soldier, confident in his ability to cut his way to fortune with his sword. Alas how utterly had his hopes been falsified!

Vipont pulled vigorously at the bell, which answered his appeal with a

strident clangor that made St. Just's heart thrill. It seemed to ring out the death-knell of his freedom, if not indeed his life. A wicket in the heavy gates was opened, and a man in uniform appeared behind it.

"A prisoner," said Vipont curtly. Then the party stepped inside and the little door was closed behind them.

They crossed the court—it had been the garden during the imprisonment of the Royal family—and the moon was shedding her rays upon the very tree under which the hapless monarch had been wont to take his daily exercise; causing the leaves to shimmer with a silver light as they were stirred by the gentle breeze. St. Just glanced up at the black facade, now dimly outlined against the dark wintry sky, and the gruesome thought flashed on him that, perhaps, he too was doomed to pace each day up and down, up and down, beneath that selfsame tree until that morning when he should be told that his last hour had come, and be hurried to the scaffold.

Vipont's party marched on with him and halted at a door, which, at the summons of the warder who had admitted them to the prison, was opened.

They entered the building, and then St. Just was escorted down a narrow passage to a flight of steps. These the man descended, and the others followed, emerging at the bottom on another passage, along which the jailer led the way, the rest of the party keeping close behind him, their footsteps echoing along the sunken corridor with thuds that reminded the prisoner of the blows he had heard at nights when the executioner and his assistants were setting up the scaffold, from which in the cold, gray morning some poor devil was to take his last look on the world. This reflection and the searching cold and damp, that seemed to pierce his very bones, and the mouldy smell that permeated the place, sent a shiver through St. Just that, despite his efforts to repress it, was visible to all.

Presently another iron door was reached, and, being opened, revealed a room about five yards by four in area. High up in one wall was a narrow, strongly barred window, that was little more than a slit, and communicated to the outer air by a sort of funnel, for even the cell's vaulted roof was below the surface of the ground. A small fireplace faced this window, and, to prevent the possibility of a prisoner's escape that way, a strong iron grating was fixed in the lower part of the chimney.

A low wooden bedstead a yard in width, a small deal table and a wooden stool comprised the furniture of this inhospitable apartment. At the sight of it St. Just's heart sank.

When the door of what was to be St. Just's home until he should be otherwise disposed of, had been thrown open, Vipont stood aside, and, bending before the prisoner in mock courtesy, motioned him to pass inside.

"I regret, Mons. le docteur," he said, "that we cannot offer you a more lux-

urious apartment; for this, I admit, is scarcely fitting for a member of the learned profession, I doubt not, you adorn. But, at any rate, you will be safe from thieves, and your scientific meditations will not be interrupted."

He wound up with a self-sufficient chuckle. St. Just made no reply, but crossed the threshold of his cell, into which the jailer had preceded him with a lantern. Then Vipont and his myrmidons withdrew. But, in a few minutes, he returned, as though he had forgotten something. He stepped quickly to the jailer's side and whispered something in his ear. Now that St. Just had had time to look at him, he saw that the jailer was a hard-featured, impassive, honest-looking fellow, with nothing in his countenance that augured cruelty or ill-nature, for the mere love of it. Whatever Vipont had said to him, the jailer raised the lantern and turned its light upon St. Just at the same time bestowing a keen glance on him. It will be borne in mind that St. Just was got up to pass for a serious, middle-aged member of a learned profession. The result of the jailer's scrutiny, which was made with much deliberation, was the muttered reply to his companion, "I am of your opinion."

Then he placed the lantern on the table and moved round behind St. Just, who, though suspicious of the glances cast at him, had no idea what they portended; but he was soon to know, for the man suddenly threw himself upon him, pinioning his arms behind him, so that he could not move.

Indeed St. Just made no attempt to do so, for the whole movement had been so rapid that he was taken quite aback. Before he had recovered his composure, Vipont had made a dash at his beard and plucked it off; when, instead of a middle-aged doctor, there stood before them a man clean-shaven and with youthful lineaments. The change it made in him was wonderful; even his frame seemed to have become more upright and muscular, so powerful is the influence of association.

Retaining in his grasp the beard, Vipont stepped back a pace and, advancing the lantern towards the prisoner's face, seemed to be diving into his memory for a clue that should enable him to fix the personality of the man in front of him; for the latter could see by the police agent's expression that he was convinced that they had met before.

Vipont looked long and earnestly at the captive, but to little purpose; he could not put a name to him.

All at once he in the book of memory found the page that contained the name he was in search of. A smile formed itself upon his face, the prelude to a mocking laugh, that rang loudly through the cell. He removed his hat and bent in mock courtesy before St. Just.

"Mons. St. Just," he said, "late lieutenant of the Guard at the Luxembourg Palace, we meet again. On the occasion that I have in mind, I have a fancy that

I owe to you the failure of—well, an affair I need not specify. Now I have an opportunity of satisfying the debt; and be assured you shall be paid in full."

St. Just laughed scoffingly. "We shall see, my friend, I fear you not; the less so after the reminder you have given me of our first meeting, the circumstances of which had escaped my memory. I wonder whether the First Consul knows the part you played. For myself, I will not attempt to deny that I am St. Just—though, I think you would be put to it to prove it."

"Oh, no, I shouldn't," retorted Vipont, with a sneering laugh.

Just then the sound of a distant clock, which was striking ten; was borne across the frosty air, and penetrated to the prison. It checked the agent in the middle of his laugh.

"So late!" he exclaimed. "I have dallied here too long, and must be going."

Then he continued mockingly, "Do me the favor, my good Desmartins, to show this gentleman, in whom I take the deepest interest, every attention; treat him with the greatest deference; load his table with the daintiest viands; bring out for him your choicest wines; prepare for him your downiest bed; find him amusement, that he may not know a moment's weariness; guard him from every danger. In a word, do everything to keep him safe and happy, treating him as an honored guest, extending to him cheerfully the hospitality for which the genial custodian of the Temple is so famed." Then he turned to St. Just and, in the same mocking tone continued, "Can I add anything further, Sir, to ensure your comfort? I regret that I can no longer avail myself of the pleasure of your company; but I am already due at the Opera, where I have to report to the First Consul. I am desolated that I cannot have the honor of your company thither, but I shall be pleased to bear him any message you may charge me with."

There was a mocking smile on Vipont's lips, when he finished speaking, and, with pretended deference, he once more bent low before St. Just.

The latter glared savagely at the police agent, but, when he spoke, there was no passion in his voice, only a cold incisiveness in every word that fell upon the mocker's ears and, despite his well-assumed impassiveness, caused him some uneasiness.

"Yes, go, Sir," said St. Just. "Go, by all means, to the First Consul, and tell him from me, if you have the honesty and courage to keep your promise, that, on the night to which you have alluded, you and the rascal Sotin, were the men who tried to murder him by Mons. Barras' orders. I think, when he knows this, for all your activity in his behalf to-night, you will not be long in paying another visit to the Temple, but in a somewhat different capacity from that you occupy at present. You will have an opportunity of testing the hospitality of our good friend here; of participating in the luxuries you suggested he should heap on me."

Vipont turned pale and trembled with mingled rage and dread.

"You lie, coquin," he yelled, "you vile traducer of a trusted servant of the State. I know not what you mean. But I will soon silence your perjured tongue."

And he laid his hand upon his sword and half drew it from its sheath, at the same time taking a step forward. But Desmartins interposed, and laid his hand on the police agent's arm.

"No violence, Monsieur, I beg," he said. "It is not to be permitted. I am responsible for the prisoner's safety, and you shall not do him hurt." And he placed himself between the men.

The sword dropped back into its scabbard, and Vipont, scowling, removed his grasp from it. He glared furiously at St. Just.

"Why does he insult me, then," he snarled, "the gredin? But let him wait, the coward, till I have the opportunity of chastising him. Then we shall see."

"As you say," St. Just calmly interposed, "we shall see. But I care not to bandy further words with you; and surely you are forgetting your appointment." And, to show that conversation on his part was at an end, he turned his back on Vipont and took a step or two away.

The police spy shook his fist in menace at St. Just; then, with the words, "Au revoir, coquin," he turned on his heel and quitted the cell, followed by the jailer, who took with him the lantern, leaving St. Just to darkness and his thoughts.

For a while, he remained motionless where he stood, listening to the retreating footsteps of his late companions. At last, they died away, and the silence that ensued was deathlike.

"Will Halima hear what has befallen me?" he mused. "And how will she act if she do hear it? Will she leave me to my fate? No, no, she could not be so cruel!"

He paced restlessly about, tortured by the reflections that assailed him. Beneath his conviction of her love for him there always lurked a doubt of her fidelity. He did not forget that, on their meeting after nearly four years' separation, she had looked more radiantly beautiful than ever; there had been no evidence in her appearance that she had bewailed his loss; and he did not doubt that, in his absence, she had consoled herself with other lovers, and, in like circumstances, would do so again. She had frankly admitted that the indulgence of her passions was a necessity of her life. The thought threw him into a fever of impatience and rebellion at his helplessness, and he began to cast about for a means of informing her of his predicament.

Suddenly he halted in his aimless tramp about his cell. The blind beggar—who was not really blind—had seen his capture, and, if himself unknown to Halima, would know those who were acquainted with her, and so the news would reach her. St. Just had not had time to recognize the man, even if he had ever seen him before; but he was convinced that he was in the plot.

His wife would not be long in hearing what had happened; perhaps she had heard already. And she could save him, if she would, for she had in her possession the charm that Josephine had given him, the talisman that Buonaparte had promised should three times be effective in protecting him, should the need arise and Buonaparte have the power; and surely, surely Halima would use it in his behalf.

This hope, nay, this certainty—for, after all her protestations of undying love, she would never be so base as to desert him—brought with it comparative relief, and he was able to look his position in the face, without the dread that had but now oppressed him.

Then, with reawakened confidence, he threw himself upon his narrow pallet and, worn out by the excitement he had undergone, soon dropped off into a slumber in which all his troubles were forgotten; he even dreamed that he was with Halima.

A week passed by, and gradually the captive's spirits sank, for not a whisper from the outer world had come to him, and the dreadful thought was gaining on him that, after all, he was to be abandoned to his fate. The hours dragged on in horrible monotony, his only visitor being his jailer, who came at stated intervals to supply him with the sorry food that was his fare. But, though the man was rough and almost surly, and could with difficulty be got to speak—and, when he did, it was only in monosyllables—St. Just looked forward to his visits with positive delight, parting from him with regret and counting the hours, by the chimes of distant clocks, until he should be due again. He was the captive's sole link with humanity.

St. Just made various attempts to sound him, asked him whether anyone had called at the prison in reference to his case; whether he was being talked about outside; whether he had heard again from Vipont; but he said not a word of Halima.

But he could extract nothing from Desmartins; the man was as close as a mouse trap that has just achieved its purpose. All that could be got from him was that he knew nothing. Then St. Just tried to inveigle him into talk on general topics; he was so loth to lose the sight of a human face, the sound of a human voice. But his jailer discouraged conversation and would have none of it.

However, on the evening of the seventh day of his incarceration, and without any previous intimation, the door of his cell was opened, and—not Desmartins, as he had at first assumed—but a file of soldiers entered. They were followed by their officer. He bowed to the prisoner and then told him that he had orders to remove him, and that it would be necessary to blindfold him.

"Whither do you take me?" asked St. Just.

"That I am not at liberty to say," replied the officer; "but you will learn

anon."

Then they blindfolded him, and two of the men placed themselves one on each side of him, and each took an arm to guide him; thus they led him from the room, and along the narrow passage, the jailer going in advance to show the way, and taking the same route as on St. Just's arrival.

Presently, by the change in the sounds above him, and the freshness of the atmosphere, St. Just knew that he was in the open air; in another minute he heard the prison gate clang to behind him. Then he was guided into a carriage, which was quickly driven away.

He was scarcely seated, when a voice muttered in a loud whisper in his ear, "Make no rash effort to escape, and do not speak, or attempt to remove your bandage, or you will suffer for it."

At the same time, to lend significance to the speaker's words, something cold and hard was pressed against the hearer's temple. St. Just knew it for the muzzle of a pistol, and, for a moment, shivered. But only for a moment; it needed little wit to know that, for the present at any rate, his life was safe. For all that, he deemed it prudent to obey the injunctions of his companion; so sat motionless and silent. He tried at first to follow in his mind the turns the carriage took, but, blindfold as he was, he found it hopeless, so gave it up, resigning himself with such patience as he could command to whatever was to follow. But his mind was in a fever of inquiry. Was he being conveyed to Halima's house, or to some place of safety at her instance; or were his captors taking him to some other prison, where the discipline was harsher, and the prisoners had less chance of making their escape?

The carriage creaked and rumbled on, with frequent jolts, for the roads, at all times, at that period, bad, were now, by the mingled action of frost and slush, a succession of alternate holes and hillocks. But, at last, when it seemed to St. Just that they had been traveling for hours, the carriage halted, and he was bidden to descend. Then he was again taken by the arm and guided up a narrow staircase. Arrived at the top, his conductor whispered a few words to some one there. A door was opened, and he was led into a room and halted. Then the same voice that had addressed him in the carriage spoke again.

"You are at your journey's end, and your bandage will now be removed. Light, you see, like everything else, comes to him who waits." He laughed pleasantly.

When the bandage had been removed, St. Just found himself in a moderate-sized apartment, whose walls were lined from floor to ceiling with books. He was standing before an open hearth, in which, burned a cheerful fire of wood, whose flames diffused a ruddy glow throughout the room, and a genial warmth that was more than grateful to a man who had been enduring for a week the chill, damp

air of a prison cell. On one side of the room were two long windows, now closed with shutters and hung with dark red curtains. A large oil lamp, its brilliance tempered by a deep green shade, was burning on a table in the center of the room. On the side that faced the fire was a pair of folding doors, now closed. These details St. Just took in unconsciously, for what fixed his glance, immediately that his bandage was removed, was the figure of a man who was a stranger to him. He was standing by the fire and partially supporting himself on a stick. An elderly man, thin in figure, somewhat below the average height, and of shrivelled aspect. His face was long and lean and absolutely colorless; only redeemed from lifelessness by the piercing eyes, which were ever shifting restlessly, as though trying to find an entrance into the weak places of an opponent. He was dressed from head to foot in black.

Hard by St. Just there stood another man, whose green uniform with red facings proclaimed him to be an officer of Chasseurs. He had been St. Just's companion in his drive, and he it was who had removed the handkerchief from his eyes, for he still held it in his hand.

The elder man fixed his keen glance upon St. Just for several moments, without speaking. Then suddenly he addressed him in a high-pitched voice.

"Well Mons. St. Just, what have you to say for yourself for mixing in plots against the First Consul?"

Then, before his hearer could reply, he continued to the officer in attendance: "You can withdraw, Beaumont. Wait in the anteroom, in case you should be wanted—but not within earshot of this room." And he raised his finger meaningly at the young officer, who, coloring to the roots of his hair, stammered at the slur cast on him.

"Mons. de Talleyrand, I am a soldier and a man of honor. It is an insult to suggest—"

"Go, Sir," interrupted the other sternly. "I have not time to pick and choose my words, except when matters of State demand it."

And, without further parley, the officer retired.

Then the man who had been addressed as Talleyrand resumed his conversation with St. Just; but first he moved to a chair, halting slightly in his walk.

"Well, Sir," he said, "you find my question difficult to answer. But I will spare you the dishonor of inventing denials that would be unavailing; for the information at my command is unimpeachable. But one thing I should like to know, that you alone can tell me; and that is how it happens that you, who were reported dead in Egypt more than three years ago, have now turned up alive in Paris?"

This was a much easier question to reply to than the other, and St. Just detailed, shortly, the particulars—garbled for the occasion—of his capture in the

desert and subsequent adventures, up to his landing and accident at Margala, explaining his strange loss of memory, that had extended even to his ignorance of his own identity; and how that memory had only recently been restored.

The story seemed plausible to Talleyrand, for it appeared incredible that a soldier with St. Just's prospects of advancement would willingly sacrifice his career.

"That seems reasonable," was his comment, "but what I can not understand is why, on your return to Paris, you did not at once report yourself. I should have thought that, having lost so much valuable time, you would not have wasted a moment in seeking reinstatement. How was that? You must have had some overpowering reason, and I am curious to know it?"

And he shot a searching glance at his hearer's face, as though he thought thereby to wrench the truth from him.

St. Just quailed beneath it. He knew, by hearsay, the character of the man before him, and, while anxious to conceal his conjugal relations, he recognized the risk he ran, should Talleyrand convict him of an attempt to palm off a lie on him. His difficulty was that he was in the dark as to how much his cross-questioner knew. But Talleyrand was noted for his gallantries; so St. Just thought he might look more leniently on his dereliction, if he assigned a woman as its cause. All this passed rapidly through his mind during the few seconds that elapsed before his answer. With some hesitation, and the color mounting to his face, he said:—

"I fully intended to report myself, as was my duty; but—"

"The woman tempted me," interrupted Talleyrand with a sneer, and a smile that had more of triumph than good-nature in it.

St. Just started. Oh that he could fathom the depth of the knowledge that Talleyrand possessed of him! However, the wily statesman had given him his cue.

"Scarcely that," he answered, "for it would be base to charge a woman with what was the outcome solely of my own infatuation. For I was infatuated, infatuated to the verge of madness; my passion robbed me of my judgment; so that I lived only in the present, with no thought of consequences."

"And yet you were not content to bask in the Egyptian beauty's smiles, but must needs associate yourself with plotters against the State. 'Twas there your madness really lay—not in your infatuation for Madame de Moncourt. That I readily excuse; nay more, I can applaud; your preference does you credit, Sir; I can scarcely pay her the same compliment for the interest she takes in you."

The speaker seemed to delight in saying things that made his hearers wince, and the coarse slight in his last words had that effect upon the man before him.

A momentary flash of anger gleamed in his eyes; then surprise showed on

his face. Talleyrand knew the woman for whom he had forsaken honor; and she was interesting herself on his behalf, if the statesmen's words meant anything. Probably his presence there was due to that. The thought brought much relief. But Talleyrand had made no reference to his marriage; most likely then, he was unaware of it!

"I see you have guessed my secret," he replied. "I adore the lady to whom you have just referred, and she has accorded me the privilege of a visitor. I met her first in Egypt, where I was so fortunate as to save her life."

"Indeed! And now she is using her influence to save yours. Do you know this trinket?"

He held up the charm Josephine had given to St. Just.

"I do; it belongs to me. It was given me some years ago by Madame Buonaparte, in the presence of her husband, the night I saved him from assassination."

"Dear me, you seem to have a trick of saving life," sneered Talleyrand.

"Say rather, the good Fortune. But to continue; on that occasion, the General attached a promise to the gift."

"Which he has fulfilled, and not for the first time, I understand. This is the key that has unlocked your prison cell. Madame de Moncourt, by some means,"—and he looked meaningly at St. Just—"got news of your predicament and, having this talisman of yours in her possession, entrusted it to me to pass on to the First Consul, with the reminder of his pledge to you. I have fulfilled my errand, and, on certain conditions, you are free."

St. Just could not repress a sigh of relief, for, though from the commencement of his interview he had thought that he was safe, now he was assured of it.

"I am deeply grateful to you, Sir," he said, "for your efforts on my behalf; also to Madame de Moncourt, to whom, if I may take the liberty, I will ask you to convey my heartfelt thanks."

Ignoring St. Just's request, which he had wit enough to know was not made seriously, and, in consequence, resented, Talleyrand answered sharply.

"Then show your gratitude, Sir, by abstaining in the future from dabbling in conspiracies, and by devoting yourself faithfully to your country's interests. Are you ready to act thus?"

To this St. Just answered that he was; and, at the time he really meant it.

"See that you keep your word," rejoined the other; "your honor requires much cleansing ere it will be bright. Here is your trinket, which I trust you will never again prostitute to such vile purpose as that to which it has just been put. But now, as to the conditions of your liberty. It is thought a change of air would be beneficial to you. Are you willing to leave France forthwith, for as long or as short a period as may be ordered?"

St. Just's face fell; absence from France meant also absence from Halima; but he was in no position to make terms; he had no choice but to submit; still his distaste to the position was apparent in his answer.

"If my sole choice lies between captivity in France, and liberty abroad," he said despondently, "I must fain choose the latter, though life lived out of France will be mere existence. Is my place of banishment yet decided?"

Talleyrand smiled sourly. "Things need not be quite so bad for you as your forecast; if so you will it. The First Consul is disposed to give you a chance of regaining your lost honor, but it will be your last. He is in contemplation to send you to England on a mission of some importance. To ensure success, tact, courage, secrecy and adaptability will be required; and, above all—fidelity." And he fixed his eyes significantly on his hearer. "On your conduct of the affair will depend your future. The business will not occupy you long. Your answer?"

By the time the speaker had concluded, St. Just had brightened up considerably. He hastened to reply with energy, "I accept without a moment's hesitation. Sir, I am overwhelmed with gratitude at the kindness shown me; and I pledge my honor—"

Talleyrand looked up with a curious, amused expression. "Your what, Sir?" he asked cynically.

St. Just colored with shame. For a moment he was discomposed. Then he replied, "I deserve your reprimand, Monsieur. I should have said, I give my solemn word—I swear—that I will do my utmost to assure the success of the mission to be entrusted to me. If earnestness of purpose, unwearying labor, fearlessness of danger and unswerving fidelity can secure it, I shall not fail. If needs be, I am ready to sacrifice my life, in the cause committed to me."

Talleyrand's nature was too cold, and he had too full a knowledge of the workings of the human heart for such "high falutin" to make much impression on him: indeed, he rather despised enthusiasm; in his eyes it showed want of self-control. But, in the present instance, he was satisfied that St. Just meant all he said; whether his sentiments would be enduring, was another thing.

"Your words are fair enough, Sir," he said coldly; "see that your deeds lag not behind them."

The words had scarcely left his lips, when the folding doors at the end of the room were opened, and the First Consul entered.

He paused for a moment in the doorway and then came forward. The light from the lamp, modified, as it was, by the green shade, made his countenance, always pale and passionless, look almost death-like now, and emphasized by contrast the wondrous eyes which flashed and glistened with vitality and movement. He wore the uniform of an officer of Artillery, and with scarce a decoration. His nether limbs were encased in white breeches and silk stockings; a sash of tricolor

completed his costume.

His eyes fixed the two men in the room; both felt their magnetic force, and one seemed almost turned to stone. But almost instantly, both bent before him.

"So!" he began, in a hard, dry voice, "Mons. St. Just, you have come to life again. I will inquire into that anon. Meantime, perhaps you, Mons. de Talleyrand, will explain the meaning of this—gentleman's presence here." He stamped his foot impatiently.

"Sir," began Talleyrand, in his icy tones, "I ventured to send for Mons. St. Just with a view to his being despatched to England on the mission we have discussed together. You left in my hands the selection of the agent, and, for several reasons which I shall be happy to give you when we are alone, I deemed him suitable."

"An assassin, a prisoner from the Temple! I congratulate you on the felicity of your selection," was the ironical rejoinder.

"A prisoner whom your clemency has freed. You cannot, General, have forgotten the token from Mons. St. Just I handed you."

Buonaparte had not forgotten, but for a purpose he affected to have done so. The Man of Destiny forgot nothing. "Token, what token?" he asked sharply. He dropped into a chair, then leisurely took snuff.

"This charm, Sir," said St. Just respectfully. He stepped forward and held out the trinket. "This jewel given to me by Madame Buonaparte in your presence, one memorable night, when you attached a promise to it."

"I now remember, Sir," answered the First Consul sternly, "and the pledge I gave you, but I little guessed that I should be reminded of it in such circumstances as the present. I did not expect that, in the fulfillment of my promise, I should be called upon to save a would-be assassin, and a deserter from his colors from the penalty of his crimes. But I will respect my word, Sir; your life is spared. See that you make a worthier use of it in the future." Then, in a voice of thunder, he concluded, "But have a care, Sir, have a care, lest you try my patience and forbearance beyond their limits. Never again put that trinket to so vile a use, or I fear me you will find that it has lost its virtue. Nay, I marvel that, on this occasion, you should have shielded yourself with its protection. A brave man dishonored, is glad to hide his dishonor in the grave."

The countenance he turned upon St. Just was awful in its sternness and contempt, and the confusion and abasement of the wretched man were piteous to behold. He bent his head to his chest, and trembled in every limb, and his face rivaled in its pallor even Buonaparte's. The scathing words of the First Consul had so affected him that, for the moment, he felt that death itself would have been preferable, and regretted that the talisman had been employed to save his life. His breath came hard and fast, and he made several ineffectual attempts to

speak; at last he gasped out:

"Sir I thank you for your clemency. I am so bewildered, so abashed, I despise myself so much, that I can scarce find words. I can only say—you have spared my life, do with it what you will."

Buonaparte eyed him searchingly. From his inscrutable expression it was impossible to judge whether St. Just's words and manner had affected him.

"And what guarantee have I of your future behavior?" he replied. "Wait here."

He signed to Talleyrand, and they left the room together.

Ten minutes passed, during which St. Just, in some measure, recovered his composure. At the end of that time, they returned, and Buonaparte, without referring to his last question and without noticing St. Just walked across the room and placed his back against the marble mantelpiece. Then he began to kick with his heel the smouldering embers in the grate.

Meanwhile Talleyrand addressed St. Just. "You will proceed to England with the utmost speed, and there make it your business to become acquainted with a certain Sir Henry Emerson. He is a King's Messenger, and we have information that he will be setting out next week for Holland with dispatches. It is of vital importance that we should know their purport. It will be for you, when on the spot, to devise the best means of bringing this about. Take copies of them, if you can, and restore them without his knowledge; but, if this should be impossible, secure the papers, and let me have them without a moment's loss of time. You may not be able to achieve your purpose before Sir Henry Emerson has set cut; if so, you must dog his footsteps until you do succeed. Don't be too nice about the methods you employ: use bribery, violence, anything so that you do not fail.

"On reaching London, you will go instantly to the house of one Perry, a hosier at this address"—he handed it to St. Just—"and ask 'where you can get the best bees.' If the man laughs at you, go away, for he is not the right person; but try again later. If to your inquiry he reply that he is a large bee farmer himself, you may state your business freely, and he will give you every assistance. He is keeping a watch on the movements of this King's Messenger.

"Here are ten thousand francs." He handed him a bundle of notes. "You can change them, according to your requirements into English money at a money changer's. Perry will see to that for you. Should you require more, apply to him, and he will give it to you."

A clock on the mantelpiece struck two. St. Just was surprised to find it was so late; his drive to this house must have taken hours. It puzzled him to know where he was; not in Paris, clearly.

"You have had your instructions, Sir," said the First Consul, speaking for

the first time, since his second entrance into the room, "and will start at once; and, as you value your life, be true. Another act of treachery, and nothing shall protect you."

St. Just stepped forward, and was beginning to renew his protestations of fidelity and gratitude, when Buonaparte waved him back and, with a frown, walked rapidly from the room.

Then Talleyrand addressed St. Just. "To-morrow, at eleven, you will start for Boulogne. There you will embark on the La Flèche. You have a fair knowledge of English, I understand. You will pass as the Comte St. Clair. Live as the others do—not ostentatiously, but don't grudge expenditure, when needful. Return the moment you have achieved the object of your mission.

"One last injunction; don't go to Auteuil, before you start."

He looked meaningly at St. Just. "Ah, you meant to; don't."

He touched a bell and an attendant entered.

"Captain Beaumont," he said.

The man withdrew and, in a few seconds, that officer stood before him.

"You will escort Mons. St. Just in a carriage to his apartment."

He bowed to both men and they left the room. Five minutes afterwards they quitted Malmaison and took the road to Paris.

CHAPTER VI.

It was hard on daybreak when St. Just reached his lodging in the Rue de Dauphin, and the people in the house were not yet up; but the summons at the door soon aroused them. His landlord was at first disposed to be unfriendly, but when he saw the handsome carriage and horses, the liveries of the coachman and footman, and the officer in uniform who had accompanied his lodger, he made no ado about admitting him, and became almost fulsome in his words of welcome. The belief of the worthy couple had been that St. Just had been spending his week's absence in the country; and they had been confirmed in it by a beautiful lady who had driven up in a carriage and told them that it was so. She had also interviewed his servant Mahmoud, whom it appeared, she knew, and had taken him away with her.

Before going she had left a note for St. Just; and this was all they had to tell him.

Halima's note contained but these few words:—

"Am quite well. We shall meet again soon. I have taken Mahmoud with me. I know you will not want him for the present.

Then, Halima guessed, if she did not positively know, of his coming journey to England.

His preparations did not take him long, and he left Paris at the time Talleyrand had ordered him to start, and reached Boulogne on the evening of the following day. He soon found the La Flèche, a small vessel, at anchor in the harbor. He presented himself to the captain as the Comte St. Clair, according to instructions, and handed him papers authorizing his passage to England.

The next morning, so soon as it was light, they moved out of the harbor, but the breeze was so light, and what there was of it, so unfavorable to their course, that they had to keep continually tacking; thus it was night before they sighted the shores of England. As it was, they were taken somewhat out of their course, and the nearest port was Shoreham; this they made. St. Just was landed in a sir all boat a short distance from the port itself, which, indeed, at that time, was little more than a cluster of cottages—a hamlet; though now a town of some importance.

Taking his small bag in his hand—for he had not cared to encumber himself with luggage, intending to supply himself in London with such clothing as he required—he began to make his way across the sandy flats that intervened between the shore and the high road, meaning, on gaining Shoreham, to obtain some means of conveyance to Brighton, and thence to take the coach to London. He was told that, by bearing direct northwards from the sea, he would soon hit the road.

The night was dark, for there was no moon, and but a few stars were to be seen; but that his way was so direct, he would not have attempted it without a guide. Not a sound was to be heard, not even the fall of his own feet, for the sand and the tufts of coarse grass that dotted it formed a soft carpet that made his footsteps noiseless. But walking was somewhat arduous; the more so that he had to feel his way, or he would have fallen, for the ground was full of little mounds and hollows. His progress, accordingly, was slow.

He went stumbling along, but never actually falling and had made about half the distance to the road, when, all at once, close by his ear, he heard the words shouted in a strident voice, "Here he is, lads!" and, the next moment, received a violent blow on the head that felled him to the ground, and, before he had so

much as seen his assailant, he was stretched insensible on the sand.

When he recovered consciousness, he found himself in a low, scantily and rudely furnished room, which, from the nets and ropes that hung against the walls and lay in heaps upon the floor, proclaimed its owner to be a fisherman. With the feeling, so common to us all when sleeping, and some one is approaching us, he felt that he was being watched, and he opened his eyes. A rough-looking, middle-aged man was bending over him, scrutinizing him intently, with an expression of mingled anxiety and alarm. But, when the Frenchman opened his eyes, that were now lighted with intelligence, the fisherman's strained look relaxed, and a smile of satisfaction took its place.

"Glad to see you coming round, Sir," he said cheerily. "You'll soon be all right now; but I was mortal feared once; I began to think you were going to turn it up. How are you feeling, Sir?"

St. Just looked at him inquiringly, and with some alarm, as one does at unexpectedly finding oneself in an unknown place and in the presence of a stranger; but the man, though rough, looked kindly and good-natured; so that St. Just's anxiety was but brief.

"My head aches badly here," he answered; and he put his hand at the back part of his crown. The action made him wince; the place felt so tender.

"I must have fallen, or been struck. What has happened? Where am I? Who are you?" Then before the other could reply, he resumed, "Ah, I remember now; I was crossing the sands and some one knocked me down. Was it you, and if so, why?"

"No, it wasn't me, Sir," replied the man, "and it was all a mistake." He went on to explain that, in the dark, St. Just had been mistaken for some one against whom his son had a grudge, and been knocked down in consequence. On discovering the mistake, he and his son had brought him to their cabin. He now expressed his sorrow and asked how he could serve St. Just.

"I am much obliged to you," replied St. Just dryly. "Suppose you lend me a hand to help me up, for I am still weak and dizzy."

The man gave him his hand willingly, and raised his visitor to a sitting posture on the bed. St. Just rubbed his eyes, then let them wander round the room. From the appearance of the roof and walls, and from the thunder of the waves, which he could hear against the sides of where he was, he was satisfied that he was in a cavern on the shore.

"This is not a house," he said, "we are underground; do you live here?"

"Well, it's all the house I have, when I'm at home, but I'm mostly out."

"And what's your name, and what are you?"

"John Slade, fisherman."

St. Just turned his eyes keenly on him and smiled faintly. "And you do a

little foreign trade as well, eh? Brandy, cigars, silks and lace?"

John Slade started and scowled at the injured man, who continued with a laugh, "You needn't be alarmed, my friend, the secret of your retreat is safe with me; I've nothing to do with the coastguard. Besides, as you must have discovered, I am a foreigner, a Frenchman, and I know no one in this country. But I have business in London and must be there as soon as possible. How long have I been here?"

"Since the night afore yesterday. You'll soon be all right now, and I'll see you to the coach for London. I daresay you'll be well enough to start to-morrow. But now, Master, couldn't you take something to eat and drink?"

St. Just thought he could. As a fact, he was feeling very hungry; he had had nothing for two days.

A good night's rest made him another man, and, the next morning, he got into John Slade's boat, and the smuggler rowed him to Brighton. The boat was moored, and his companion went ashore with him and carried his bag to the starting place of the London coach. Then they parted with mutual expressions of goodwill—for St. Just had quite forgiven the mistake that had laid him prostrate—and the young Frenchman was soon rattling along the road to London.

As yet, he had formulated no plan of action; he deferred that, until he should have seen the hosier in the Strand. So he hailed a hackney coach and told the driver to take him to the address Mons. de Talleyrand had given.

Fortunately Mr. Perry was in his shop and, on St. Just's putting the question to him about the bees, he gave the expected answer; then he asked his visitor into his parlor at the back of the shop, and inquired in what way he could serve him.

The latter, having been told that he might speak to the hosier without restraint, at once explained his errand, and asked his hearer the best way to set about it.

Perry was a man of much better social standing and education than the generality of London tradesmen of a hundred years ago. He had not been born in the ranks of shopkeepers, but in his early days had fallen desperately in love with the pretty daughter of the former proprietor of this shop. The girl's virtue being every whit on a level with her beauty, despite his efforts to deprave it, he had been compelled either to marry her, or give up her pursuit; unable to do the latter, he had done the former, and her father dying shortly afterwards, he had found himself in possession of the business, which was too good to be relinquished, the more so that he was without means or occupation.

Chance had thrown him into the way of many of the French émigrés at that time in London. He had traveled in France and could speak the language. There was a good deal of the mole in him, and he was fond of burrowing into secrets. Gradually he had strengthened his relations with these emigrants, so that he had

wormed himself into their confidence, and there were few of their plots for the restoration of the French king with which he was unacquainted. Believing in his sympathies, they spoke openly before him and even consulted him about their schemes; almost he had become their trusted agent. And while all this fed his appetite for excitement and his love for plotting, it, at the same time, put money in his pocket, for any services he rendered were well paid for. As a matter of fact, his sympathies were not with the French King's party, for, while filled with horror at the bloodshed of the "Terror," he considered that the French people were quite right in rising against the oppressors—king, nobles and priests—who had ground them down for centuries.

The Revolutionists had their spies in England, and they were not long in discovering Perry's intimacy with the Monarchists. By judicious soundings, they found that he had no real love for these. He could, therefore, knowing so many of their secrets, render them important services. So overtures were made to him, which he accepted, and, at the time of St. Just's visit, he was a recognized agent of the French Republic, while all the time affecting Monarchist proclivities. He was well paid by the Republic, so that now he was receiving money from both sides. But he was careful not to give himself away, keeping the secrets of each party inviolate from the other. Thus he performed with satisfaction to himself the formidable feat of running with the hare and hunting with the hounds.

Such was the man with whom St. Just now found himself in counsel.

It appeared that Perry knew Sir Henry Emerson well; this was doubtless known in Paris and was why St. Just had been instructed to apply to him. Sir Henry had called at the shop only a day or two before and, when ordering certain articles of hosiery, had mentioned casually that he was expecting every day to be ordered to the Continent with dispatches.

Perry told him that Sir Henry was in the habit almost nightly of visiting a certain gambling hell near the Haymarket, at which the hosier had the entrée and occasionally tempted Fortune. He advised that his visitor should accompany him there that night for the double purpose of familiarizing himself with Sir Henry Emerson's appearance and ascertaining, if possible, whether the date of his departure for Holland was yet fixed.

This being settled, Perry took him to a costumier, where he fitted himself with fashionable attire of English cut, he, Perry, supplying him with such hosiery and under-linen as he required. Then, having engaged a room for him at the Golden Cross Hotel, at Charing Cross, he left him, with the promise that he would call for him at a late hour that night, when they would proceed together to the gaming house.

In due course, they made their way thither. At the moment of their arrival at the door, a close carriage, with no armorial bearings on the panels, and drawn

by a well-matched pair of horses, pulled up before it. St. Just and his companion drew back to let the occupants precede them.

A well-built man, above the middle height and inclined to stoutness, alighted from the carriage. His features were handsome, but inclined to puffiness. Perry nudged his companion slightly and whispered, "The Prince Regent."

The prince was followed by another man, and the two disappeared within the house, the door having been already opened in answer to the summons of a footman.

Perry waited a few minutes, so as not to follow too closely on the Prince's heels, and then knocked at the same door. It was opened by a man in livery, who greeted Perry respectfully, and then pulled a bell, that tinkled in the distance, and they moved down the passage, at the end of which was a green baize door, that opened noiselessly at their approach, and then closed behind them. They found themselves in a hall that blazed with light. A gorgeously clad, powdered footman stepped forward and relieved them of their roquelaures—they retained their hats—then preceded them up a broad staircase, so softly carpeted that their footfalls could not be heard. At the head of it was another green baize door, before which stood a negro of Herculean proportions, gorgeously arrayed. The footman murmured something and the door swung open.

The scene presented to St. Just's view was as startling as it was novel to him. Proceeding, as he had, direct from the military school to the battle field, he had little personal knowledge of the vices and amusements of Society, and was proportionately astonished. In a large room, furnished luxuriously, and, withal, somewhat meretriciously, the walls lined with long mirrors and pictures suggesting that the persons there delineated were the denizens of countries whose climate was more than temperate—to judge from their costume, or the absence of it; ottomans and lounges, heavily gilt and silk upholstered, dotted about; and the whole brilliantly illuminated by the soft light of innumerable wax candles;—were about sixty persons of both sexes—the men predominating—in evening dress of the very latest fashion, some of the ladies being conspicuous more by the audacity than the elegance of their attire. Some were walking about the room talking and laughing, occasionally pausing at the different tables to watch the progress of the game. But most of them were either seated at the tables, or standing behind the sitters engaged at play. Faro, hazard and other convenient modes for winning and losing money rapidly were going on.

Perry cast his eye carefully round the room, and nodded to several persons whom he knew. "The man we want is not here yet," he whispered to St. Just. "I think we had better join in the play, if we can find a table where it is not too high. For a stranger to come here and refrain from doing so would look singular."

St. Just at once assented, and they strolled about the room in search of a

table.

Presently a man called out, "Come and try your luck, Perry; you won't be ruined, we are only small fry here."

"Yes," replied the hosier, "my friend and I will join you;" and he introduced St. Just—as the Comte St. Clair, of course.

They had been seated at the table but a few minutes, when Sir Henry Emerson entered the room, and Perry pointed him out to St. Just, and, during the evening, took an opportunity of introducing them to one another. Sir Henry, who took the so-called Comte St. Clair to be an émigré, and was a strong Royalist, received him in a friendly manner and offered to present him to the Prince at a Levee to be held next day. He added that he would not have another opportunity for some time, for that, at the conclusion of the function, he would have to start for Holland with dispatches.

This was the very information St. Just desired. If the documents were to be in his hands before Sir Henry left England, he had little time to lose. He thanked the speaker for his courtesy, of which he said he would avail himself, and would present himself for the purpose at the house of the King's Messenger at the time appointed. Then, the hour being late, he shook hands with him, and he and Perry took their leave. A modus operandi had to be decided on, and there was little time to do it in.

However, before they turned in for the night, they had evolved a scheme they thought would work, if Fortune should prove kind. There was this about it, that, if that on which they counted for success were absent, they would be no worse off than they were before, and no one would know of their conspiracy. Since Sir Henry Emerson was to set out so soon as the Levee should be over, they hoped to see the coveted dispatch lying in some conspicuous position in his room—if it was not already in his dispatch box—lest, by any chance he should forget it.

And the next day, when St. Just called, according to appointment, clad in a levee uniform procured from a costumier, he found that they had not miscalculated; for there, on a sideboard, in Sir Henry's room—he occupied a suite of chambers in King Street, St. James—lay a packet addressed to "——, His Majesty's Minister Plenipotentiary at The Hague."

Perry had accompanied St. Just, making as his excuse a little present he had brought from his shop for the unsuspecting King's Messenger.

A look of intelligence passed between the two conspirators when they saw the packet on the sideboard, which stood close to the door.

Sir Henry Emerson greeted St. Just courteously and then looked inquiringly at Perry, at the same time saying, "Ah, Perry, my friend, what's brought you? Did you think the Count couldn't be trusted to find his way here alone in

a hackney coach?"

"Not that, Sir Henry," replied the hosier, "But the air is sharp in Holland at this time of year, and I have just got in some woolen jackets—quite a new article—to wear under the coat; and I have ventured to ask your acceptance of one; you are one of my oldest customers, and your approval will be of service to me." He held a fiat brown paper parcel in his hand.

"Upon my word, Perry, you're a good fellow," said Sir Henry. "Egad, it was very thoughtful of you and I am much obliged to you. I've no doubt I shall find it very comforting, for, as you say, Holland is deuced cold in January. I am afraid I have scarcely time to try it on just now, for the Count and I must be off to the Levee; but when I come back."

"No need for that, Sir," answered Perry; "it is sure to fit. These things are knitted and, within certain limits, will fit any one. I will leave it on the sideboard." He walked up to it, stood his stick in a corner made by it, and put his parcel on the top of the dispatch for Holland, at the same time dexterously slipping the packet from underneath it and transferring it to his breast pocket, his back being turned to the other two.

This done, he faced about, wished the two gentlemen good day and took his leave.

"It is time for us to be going too, Count," said Sir Henry, so soon as Perry had taken his departure, "and I think our coach is at the door."

St. Just rose with alacrity. He was only too anxious to be gone, before his host should have discovered that the dispatch was missing.

"I am at your service, Sir Henry," he replied.

"Hulloa!" cried Sir Henry on their way out, "Perry has left his stick behind," and he pointed to a walking stick in the angle the wall made with the sideboard. "Well, it will be safe enough here; no doubt he will remember where he left it, when he misses it, and will call for it."

Then they stepped into the coach and were driven to St. James's Palace to pay their respects to "the first gentleman in Europe."

Three hours later they returned, St. Just accompanying the King's Messenger to his chambers. He came in merely to thank him for the attention he had received and to wish him "bon voyage," and was in the act of leaving, when Perry was announced.

"I stupidly forgot my stick, Sir Henry," he began at once, "when I was here three hours ago. Ah, there it is;" espying it in the corner. It was a handsome stick with a heavy embossed gold knob; such a stick as one would not like to lose; so that he might be well excused for calling for it. He walked quickly to it, placing one hand in his breast pocket at the same time. Then, as though a sudden thought had struck him, he said, "Oh, if you have now the time, Sir Henry, you

might try on the jacket." At the same time he took up the brown paper parcel from the sideboard and brought it towards Sir Henry. On the spot that it had covered lay the dispatch once more.

"By all means," replied Sir Henry, "if it will not take long; for I am due to leave in half an hour."

Perry quickly undid the parcel, the jacket was brought out, admired, tried on and pronounced an excellent fit, all in the course of a couple of minutes. Then St. Just and Perry took their leave, the latter, this time not forgetting to take his walking stick.

Not a word passed between them on the subject of their visit to Sir Henry Emerson, until they were closeted in Perry's parlor. Then St. Just, who had been itching all the way to learn what Perry had done, burst out, "I suppose you managed to take a copy of the dispatch, since I saw what looked like the original lying on the sideboard, when you took up the parcel."

"I did," was the reply, "but it took me all my time; there was so much of it."

He went to a drawer, unlocked it, took out some papers and handed them to St. Just. "This is the copy."

St. Just's eyes sparkled with satisfaction.

"Bravo, my friend," he said, "you have done well. I don't know what I should have done without you. This is much better than the original, for the English Government will not know what has occurred; whereas, if the original had been missed, it would have aroused suspicion, and a fresh dispatch of different import might have been substituted for it. Is there any chance of their discovering that the envelope has been tampered with? But perhaps you used a fresh one. But how about the Foreign Office seal?"

Perry laughed. "Those are some of my little secrets," he replied; "but it was the same envelope I replaced, and you may rest assured, my friend, that it will not be guessed that it has been tampered with. It was fortunate that everything favored us. I expected much more manoeuvring would have been required to get the packet."

All that remained now, was to remunerate Perry for his services. St. Just gave him notes for five thousand francs, with which the hosier seemed well satisfied.

Later in the evening, they visited several places of amusement, and, the next morning, St. Just took leave of Perry, and started on his return for France. Three days later he presented himself before Mons. de Talleyrand.

CHAPTER VII.

It appeared that the dispatch, a copy of which St. Just had contrived to get, was of great importance. The First Consul and Talleyrand, accordingly, were proportionately gratified, and expressed their satisfaction at St. Just's aptitude and alertness. But there was no warmth about their words, for both were men who put a chain upon their thoughts and a mask upon their faces. The cynical diplomatist, moreover, discouraged and even ridiculed, in others anything that approached enthusiasm. But St. Just had not looked for fulsome praise, and, knowing the character of the two great men, was satisfied with such faint approval as he had received. They had said enough to show him that they thought he had done well. And this was proved by the First Consul's last words when St. Just was quitting his presence. "Keep Mons. de Talleyrand informed of your abode, Sir; there may be other work for you to do."

From this, St. Just had little doubt there would be; that, before long, Mons. de Talleyrand would send for him again.

A thrill of satisfaction speeded through him at the thought, for, at the sight of Buonaparte once more, all the subtle influence the General had on those who came in contact with him had returned; he forgot his grievance and pursuit of vengeance, and desired nothing better than to devote himself faithfully for the future to the service of his old commander. If only Halima would forego her cravings for revenge. There lay the obstacle to his desire. He resolved to make a strong appeal to her. But his hope of success was small, for he knew her headstrong, dictatorial nature, and how bitter was her rancor against Buonaparte. He longed to retrace his devious steps and regain the path of honor; but, were it not, at the same time, the path of passion, he knew he would not have the strength to take it. Strong as were the cords that were drawing him towards Buonaparte, the fetters forged by Halima were stronger still.

These reflections filled him with despondency, for he could not rid himself of the conviction that, with Halima unyielding, disaster was impending; the only question was how soon.

For the moment there was no need to discuss the point with the Egyptian Beauty, as Talleyrand had called her; for he was, so to speak, in a position of neutrality. He would wait and see what the future had in store for him.

St. Just had not miscalculated, for, three days after his return to Paris, he received a summons from the wily statesman who at that time directed the Foreign Affairs of France.

Talleyrand suggested that he should go back to England and remain there,

until otherwise instructed, as a secret agent of the French Government. He would have to learn all he could of the movements of the émigrés and the plans of the English Government, and report them to his own. Further, he would have to execute such instructions as he received.

The proposal was a compliment to his sagacity and discretion, and so St. Just received it, and was proportionately gratified. Coming from the quarter whence it did, it amounted to a command that, even had he desired to do so, he would not have dared to disobey.

St. Just knew this well; so, without the slightest hesitation, and with professions of gratitude and allegiance to the Republic, he accepted the offer made him.

He was given a week for his arrangements; then he was to start for England.

On leaving the minister, he made his way at once to Halima. Now that it was known to the authorities that he was alive and had returned to Paris, there was no further need for secrecy in his intercourse with his wife; he could visit Auteuil openly, and as often as he liked.

At first Halima was indignant when she heard of the mission he had undertaken, and she upbraided him, affecting to believe that he had accepted it in order to get away from her. This was too monstrous, and he indignantly repudiated the imputation, which, he said, could not have been made seriously. No one knew better than herself the sacrifices he had made for her. He trusted it was only an outburst of ill-temper—anger and disappointment at the prospect of their being parted; and this he told her, and she admitted it, saying that she knew he loved her. Then she tried her woman's wiles on him; throwing her arms around his neck, with mingled embraces, tears and kisses, she besought him not to leave her; told him that she loved him more than life, that it would be cruel to desert her; that she would die without him. He must tell Mons. de Talleyrand that, on reconsideration, he felt himself unequal to the work required of him, and must beg to be excused.

He pointed out to her the impossibility, the madness of such a course, and at last succeeded in convincing her that, were he to do what she suggested, it would defeat the very object they had in view—the enjoyment of each other's company, that he would at once become an object of suspicion, would be watched and would speedily find himself arrested. Thus they would be separated. Reluctantly, she was compelled to admit the force of what he said.

"Let me think," she said when he had finished speaking. Her first fury had spent itself, and, having regard to her emotional nature, she was calm.

It was several minutes before she spoke again.

Then, "If you must go, and it seems you must, I will follow you to England," she declared. "I will not be separated from you again, after the years we have been

parted. I love France: still I should like to see England. I suppose the people are not quite uncivilized."

St. Just smiled at this. Coming from a native of the desert, her knowledge of men and manners, up to a recent date, having been picked up at Cairo, the conceit amused him.

She went on, "I am not sure, besides, that a temporary absence from France, at the present time, would not be wise. Things are becoming somewhat risky here. Since that affair in which you were implicated, the police have shown more activity than ever. Some of our friends have thought it prudent to leave Paris; some even have gone to England. We can organize our plans for Buonaparte's confusion in greater safety there. Really, Henri, I am beginning to think that your appointment is a fortunate occurrence; you will now be able to give us valuable help. Oh! if the First Consul could only know that he is appointing as his agent, a man who is pledged to contrive his ruin; who, when told to watch the Royalists and report their doings, will give him false intelligence, and will warn them when in danger and keep them informed of what is doing in the other camp! The First Consul paying an agent to betray him! Oh! it is a rare comedy; it is delicious." Her eyes sparkled with delight, her face rippled with animation and she broke into a ringing laugh, in which was not the slightest affectation.

But St. Just looked very grave. The picture she had drawn of him was so absolutely true—and so contemptible. A spy, and not an honest spy; a traitor to the man who paid him for his espionage. He writhed inwardly at his horrible position. What was comedy to her was to him the direst tragedy; the enormity of his offense came home to him. To any honorable man, whose judgment was not bemused by passion, the situation would be unbearable. Now was the time, if ever, to pour out his heart in one last appeal to her to relieve him of his pledge to be avenged on Buonaparte. He had little hope of its success, but he would make it.

"Oh! Halima," he cried, and there was a ring of pleading in his tone that would have roused an echo in any heart not deadened by revenge; "why nurse this vengeance against that man? Time generally blunts the edge of the weapon sharpened for vindictiveness. It is four years since this injury was wrought, and no one, but you and me, has knowledge of it. If I can overlook it, why not you? This scheme of vengeance is blasting my whole career, and, if I am still to prosecute it, will render me, in the trusted position that has been forced upon me, so despicable in my own eyes, that death even would be preferable. Oh! if you love me—and you say you do—get free of these conspiracies, which, in your own heart, you know you join in, not from love of France, but hate of Buonaparte. And it is useless; he is too strong for you; how can the hawk aspire to conquer in a contest with the eagle? Be advised by me, my dearest, let your vengeance

sleep; or, better, let it die. We love each other, we have ample means, I have a career before me; this paltry passion of revenge alone obstructs the road to honor and contentment. Oh, my dear one, my life, my soul, if you only knew the hell that is within me, you would be merciful to me, by sparing him. It is not that I love him, but he means France, and I love my country—and I love my honor. Say, love, shall it be so? Shall we not bury in the limbo of oblivion the recollection of your wrong? Oh, Halima, relieve me of my pledge to you, and leave me free to do my duty to my country."

He ceased speaking, and scanned her anxiously, to mark the affect of his appeal. But the hope that was on his face changed quickly to despair. Her eyes flashed upon him angrily, and the look she turned on him was pitiless, infuriated, contemptuous.

"Never!" she cried, and her voice rose almost to a shriek. "I will never abandon my revenge. I can wait for its accomplishment, and I know that time will bring it me. And you, if you are so poor a thing, you, my husband, that you will not make my wrong your own, depart; leave me to work it out alone. But, if you do, much as I have loved you, I shall hate you for your pusillanimity even more than I hate him. Almost I hate you now, for that you can suggest forgetfulness of my wrong. Leave me now, ere I say words to you that cannot be recalled."

Her bosom was heaving with emotion, her eyes were like two balls of fire that seemed to bulge beneath her brow, and she paced with rapid steps about the room. "Go," she repeated, and she threw her hand out towards him; "go, before my temper gets beyond control."

And, with the feeling that all hope was gone, he left her.

It was two months later; early in March. Both St. Just and Halima were in London. Three days after his fruitless appeal to her to forego her scheme of vengeance and leave him free to follow the path of duty, he had started for England, whither, a fortnight afterwards, she had followed him.

* * * * *

Halima was living in a London suburb—the district now known as Earl's Court. A Lord Hartford, a strong supporter of the French Royalists, and a friend and great admirer of the dark-eyed beauty, had placed a house he had there at her disposal. It was a roomy, old-fashioned red-brick structure standing in its own grounds, which were of considerable extent.

It was one o'clock in the morning. In a large room to the right of the hall, a room with long French windows that gave in to the well-kept garden, a merry party sat at supper; the men numbered about thirty, while the ladies did not ex-

ceed a dozen; all were dressed in the height of the prevailing fashion, and each wore a white rosette pinned to coat or gown, the emblem of the cause they were supporting. The meal was practically over, and many of the guests had drawn their chairs back from the table and were sitting about in groups engaged in animated conversation, interspersed with occasional bursts of merriment and ringing laughter from the lips of some fair woman; for they had supped well, and the wine had passed round freely, warming hearts, sharpening wits and unlocking lips.

One person alone sat moodily apart, seeming to take no interest in the doings of the merry crew; a thin, sallow complexioned man with a nervous manner; his eyes moved uneasily about the room, and, more from restlessness, to judge from his appearance, than that he took much pleasure in it, he kept taking sips from a glass of wine that stood in front of him. When anyone addressed him, it was as Mons. de Guichard, but his real name was Querel. He had been a surgeon in the Royalist army and had joined in the plot to reinstate the Bourbons, and affected to be one of the most ardent supporters of the cause.

Suddenly there was a lull in the laughter and conversation, and all eyes were turned to the most beautiful and most extravagantly dressed woman present. She was robed in a gown of white satin, cut, with an audacity that bordered on immodesty, so as to display as much as she durst of the voluptuous charms with which Nature had endowed her—her beautifully rounded arms, which were bare to the shoulder, where a narrow band, gem-studded, crossed them, and the exquisite curves of her neck and swelling bosom, on which a diamond necklace reflected a thousand sparkles from the wax-lights about the room. Her blue black eyes were like two gleaming stars as she flashed them round the company; her face was flushed with excitement, in part due to wine, and her expression and whole bearing testified to a feeling of triumphant joy at the consciousness of her rare outward gifts and their power to sway the other sex and mold all men to her will.

The eyes of the man with the sallow face, de Guichard, no longer roved about the room, but fixed themselves on her with a hungry lust that was almost brutal.

Halima sprang quickly to her feet and raised aloft a glass filled almost to the brim with foaming wine. Instantly the talk and laughter, that had been lessening, in expectation of her action, became completely hushed. Not only so, but all sat immovable.

"Ladies and Gentlemen," she began, "before we part, I have a toast to give you. Most of you were present at our meeting before supper, and know what was resolved on, but, for the information of those who were not in time for it, I will repeat that our plans are at last complete for restoring to France her rightful King.

A messenger goes to-night to make them known to our faithful friends in Paris, and to encourage them to keep up their hearts. Courage, my friends, for the blow will soon be struck that shall hurl the bragging upstart from the height he has had the temerity to mount. This is the toast I ask you to join me in: 'Success to the White Rosette and the cause it typifies, our King's.' Also to our next meeting in Paris, fixed for the 25th of March. Vive le Roi!"

She swung the glass about her head, sprinkling, unintentionally, drops of wine on those about her; then she brought it to her lips and emptied it at a draught; then flung it down, and it splintered into fragments on the floor.

Instantly all present sprang to their feet, and the cry went up "Success to the White Rosette! Vive le Roi!" the shriller notes of the women mingling with the rougher tones of the men. The glasses were clinked together then drained to the bottom and, finally like Halima's shattered to atoms on the ground. Employed in a cause deemed almost sacred, they should be put to no common use again. Then deafening shouts and cheers went up, and the enthusiasm became intense, the gentlemen drawing and brandishing their swords, and the ladies waving their pocket-handkerchiefs, and fluttering their fans. "Vive le Roi! Vive Louis XVIII" again and again they cried.

Gradually the excitement wore itself away, and the party began to separate, some taking their departure, others making their way to the drawing-room, whence soon the strains of music could be heard. Some of the gentlemen, inveterate topers, following the custom of the times, lingered in the dining-room over their wine, but others, votaries of Venus, rather than of Bacchus, followed the ladies into the drawing-room. Amongst them was Mons. de Guichard, whose eye quickly singled out their hostess, who flitted about from group to group, dropping sugared words, varied according to the taste and sex of the recipients, among ladies and gentlemen alike. He made several efforts to gain her side, but each time, almost before he had reached her, she had moved away.

But, at last, he saw his opportunity. He had seated himself near the door, and Halima had just taken leave of some of her guests, and was passing him on her return. He rose to his feet, and bowing courteously, "Madame," he said, "may I beg the favor of five minutes' conversation with you privately on a matter of great moment?"

His manner was so confused, he hesitated and was so ill at ease, his face contorted and twitching with emotion she failed to comprehend, that her first sentiment was of alarm.

"Alone?" she asked, her tone and face expressing her surprise.

He made no verbal answer, but merely bowed assent.

Halima had no lack of courage, and her first emotion had been but momentary. "If you will follow me, Monsieur," she said. "But I trust our interview will

not take long. Indeed, I cannot for more than a few minutes neglect my duties as a hostess."

She passed out of the room and led the way along the hall—throwing a dark cloak over her shoulders on the way—to a glass door that, by a short flight of steps, gave access to the garden, he following her. With rapid strides, they threaded several winding paths, coming out at last in front of a small pavilion, which she entered, inviting him to follow.

Halima closed the door, then, tapping the floor impatiently with her foot, she said, "I hope our business will not occupy us for more than a brief space, and that its importance will justify my seeming rudeness to my guests. Besides," and here she stifled a yawn behind her fan, "the hour grows late, and I am tired."

For a moment, the man stood silent, then, with gleaming eyes, their brightness scintillating even in the semi-darkness of the chamber, his words rushed out in a torrent.

"Oh! Madame, can you not see what I would say to you? You are a woman, does not your heart tell you of the fire that is consuming me? Madame, no words of mine—nay, it is not in the power of language to express it—can make you know the depth of my devotion to you. I love you, I adore you, I could kiss the very ground your foot has pressed. My peace of mind is gone, a tempest rages furiously within me. Every word you say to another stings me, every look, every smile bestowed on others is gall and wormwood to me. I live only in your presence. Without you, death is to be desired. Why think you I have put my life in peril and joined this conspiracy? 'Tis for love of you. Kings, countries, statesmen, all else in this world, count to me for nothing when weighed with you. With you I feel it in me to achieve great things, to dare all dangers. Your society is eagerly desired, you are admired, beloved, you hold an important position in this enterprise to reinstate the King; but, supported by your love, I can secure for you even a higher place than you have yet attained, or ever will without me. Madame, does not my fervor melt you? Will you bid me hope?"

He ceased speaking, and gazed down into her face, searching anxiously for some sign that he had moved her. His face was deathly white, and his breath came throbbingly in the intensity of his suspense.

But she remained unmoved. For one thing, she did not like the man; had never felt assured that he was trustworthy. Had almost any other man evinced such passion for her, even had it awakened no responsive chord in her, would have felt touched, and, to spare him would have checked him at the outset. But this man she felt she hated.

"I don't know which amazes me the most, Sir," she replied; "your temerity, or your vanity. What have I ever said or done to warrant your addressing me in terms of love? I can charge myself with nothing that should have prompted it.

It must be that you have too liberally indulged in wine, and that your wits have gone awandering. I will leave you to regain your scattered senses."

The measured incisiveness of her tone, and the contemptuous expression of her face would have silenced most men, but he was mad with passion. When she moved to go, he placed himself before her. "If I am drunk," he said, "'tis not with wine, but love. Oh! how can so fair a form, that glows with life, and warmth, enshrine so cold a heart? An icicle shut up within a jeweled casket. You heed not that my heart is lacerated, and for love of you. But have a care, for passion makes one desperate. Oh! Madame," and his voice changed suddenly to a wail, "forgive me and relent." He reached out his hand and clutched her dress.

"Unhand me, Sir." She spoke quietly enough, but rage was gathering in her face, and some little trepidation. They were some distance from the house and, for aught she knew, no one was within call.

But his passion had passed beyond his power. A salacious glare was in his eye, and his lips twitched lustfully. The next moment he had caught her to him and almost stifled her in his embrace. She felt his hot breath on her face, his kisses on her lips. Oh! how she loathed the man. A piercing shriek went up. There was a sound of rushing feet outside, the door of the pavilion was flung open, and two men burst in.

One wore a plain traveling suit, the other was dressed in the height of fashion; but both were shrouded in long cloaks.

At their entrance, de Guichard loosed his hold on Halima, who was panting and almost speechless with rage and shame, at the insult put upon her.

The first of the newcomers—he was St. Just—turned savagely on de Guichard. "Explain your presence here, Sir," he exclaimed.

But the man stood tongue-tied. The change in the position had been so rapid and unlooked for, that he was at a loss for words.

"This man has insulted me, Henri," Halima broke in, speaking in gasps; "I came here with him, believing he had political secrets to impart; but he took the opportunity of forcing his attentions on me, and when I repelled him, he seized me in his arms and kissed me. Then I screamed."

"Hah! is it so, Sir?" exclaimed St. Just. "I will teach you a lesson, you will not easily forget. If you received what you deserve, I would thrash you like a cur; but, since you have the appearance of a gentleman and wear a sword. I will give you the opportunity of using it. Draw, Sir!"

St. Just's words and Halima's had given de Guichard time to regain his self-possession.

"And pray, Sir," he said, "what right have you to interfere in another's love affair? I came here by this lady's invitation. Doubtless, but for you and your companion, we should have arranged our little difference, for 'the quarrels of

lovers are the renewal of love.'"

"We waste time, Sir," St. Just broke out. "Draw, before I buffet you in the face. I might prove a special right to make this lady's quarrel mine; but I am content to assert that by which every honorable man is moved to avenge a woman's injuries."

"I do not fight before women," returned de Guichard sullenly. "And there is no light here; we cannot fight in the dark."

"As to fighting before a woman, Sir," Halima interposed, "for that you have my full permission; further, it would afford me satisfaction; the wrong is mine, I should like to witness its avenging. And, for light, that soon can be procured. Oblige me with your tinder box, Sir." The last words were spoken to her husband.

He gave her what she asked for, and soon she had set a light to several wax candles about the room. While she was thus engaged, no word was spoken aloud, but St. Just stepped up to his companion and whispered in his ear. The other nodded in reply, and then St. Just removed his cloak.

Her task performed, Halima took her stand beside her husband, a joyous, cruel glow of expectation on her face. She sprang from a race of warriors, and the din of battle was music to her ears; her eyes were like two dancing sparks, as they flashed impatiently at the prospect of a struggle between two men with hatred in their breasts; and her nostrils were distended, as though, in anticipation, they sniffed the scent of blood. The animal bulked largely in her nature. She seemed to have no fear as to the result of the encounter; indeed she had not thought of that, and if she had, she would not have been greatly troubled; for she knew her husband was a skillful swordsman; of the other's prowess she knew nothing.

Both men were very pale, St. Just with rage, de Guichard with that and baffled lust.

"Are you ready, Gentlemen?" cried Halima, who seemed to have taken the whole management upon herself. "Then draw."

She stepped back and placed herself midway between the combatants, the stranger taking up a like position facing her.

Then the two men advanced, and drew their weapons. There was the clash of steel opposed to steel; the duel had begun.

It was soon apparent that science would play but a small part in the encounter; the temper of both men forbade it; St. Just fought furiously, de Guichard desperately; the exchanges were made rapidly and with a will: there was no attempt at feinting—only the cut and dried attacks, parried in the ordinary way. So far as skill went, there was not much to choose between the combatants; their strength also seemed well-matched. Spite of the vigorous nature of their onslaughts, for some minutes there was no palpable result; all that happened was that they began to labor more in breathing. Suddenly St. Just, in making a furi-

ous lunge, slipped on the polished floor and fell, his blade, in the fall, snapping short off at the hilt.

De Guichard, desiring only to escape, now thought he saw his chance. Making a cut at the candle held by St. Just's companion, he sliced off the lighted end: then, in the comparative darkness and confusion, he bounded to the door and rushed out into the darkness, brushing against a man who was advancing. Meanwhile, St. Just had regained his feet and, seeing his late opponent's retreating back, had hurled his sword hilt after him.

The next moment, preceded by a torrent of strong oaths in Breton French, a man entered the pavilion. He looked from one to the other in surprise; then, recognizing St. Just, "Confound it, man, do you want to break my shins? Am I Goliath and you David that you sling things at me?"

At this the man who had accompanied St. Just threw himself into a chair and laughed heartily.

But Halima and St. Just exclaimed together, "Cadoudal! How come you here? We thought you were in Paris?"

"No," replied Cadoudal, "I landed in England this morning and came on here at once in the hope of meeting His Royal Highness; and I am fortunate in doing so." He bowed low to the man who had entered with St. Just, the Comte d'Artois. "The time for our rising is close at hand. 'Tis now, or never with us. We must start for Paris at once. The Jacobins wait but a signal from us to light the torch of revolution."

"Bravo! Vive le Roi!" cried Halima, almost before Cadoudal had ceased speaking. "Down with the oppressor. To Paris, gentlemen, to Paris." She sprang to her feet and began to chant a Royalist hymn.

In the excitement that followed on the disclosure of the Chouan leader's news, de Guichard, now speeding citywards, was forgotten. And, on the morrow, while the other conspirators yet lingered, and St. Just was hastening to Ettenheim, with a letter for the ill-fated Duc d'Enghein, urging him to join the cause, the traitor de Guichard was being borne across the channel, as fast as ship could take him, to France and Buonaparte.

CHAPTER VIII.

A long stretch of road wound its way along, until it was lost in the distance in a

thin white thread. At intervals at both sides were wooden pillars painted in the national colors of Baden. Not far away, a broad river swept along, following the same course as the road.

Moving along the road in silence, was a squadron of dragoons, at their head a stern-faced officer; but between him and it, two closely-guarded carriages.

In the first was seated St. Just, and by his side an older man, whom the former had just addressed as General Dumouriez, opposite to them sat two soldiers, their guards. In the second carriage was a young man of refined appearance, whose countenance, at this moment, was racked with anguish.

"My wife, my poor wife!" he murmured.

The sun was rising on the 15th of March, 1804.

* * * * *

Within the narrow walls of a square-chamber, which was bare of furniture, save for a common wooden table, a man was seated on a rudely constructed stool. His face could not be seen, for it was hidden in his hands, his elbows resting on his knees. His whole attitude bespoke despair—despair that was well-founded, for he was waiting, waiting hopelessly, for the death he felt was close at hand.

It was St. Just, and he was immured in the fortress of Vincennes.

Presently he started to his feet, and then could be seen the havoc wrought upon his countenance by grief and disappointment. The bloom of health was gone, and his cheeks were pale and sunken, the bones above them bulging over the cavities below; the flesh hung down in leathery folds; deep lines scored his forehead, and his eyes, dim and lusterless, were seated far back in their sockets. Nothing in his appearance recalled the gay lieutenant of the Directory.

He began to pace his narrow cell with rapid steps, as though he hoped thereby to thrust away from him the thought of his impending fate. Backwards and forwards, like a caged animal, he tramped the straitened chamber; but, though he speeded his footsteps till they approached a run, he could put no space between his thoughts and him; he knew that hope had flown; their plot had failed, and he was lost.

With a sigh, so deep and loud that it sounded like a groan, he checked his restless pacing, and sank once more wearily on to the wooden stool.

Then, like the fugitive figures in a kaleidoscope, the late occurrences, that had followed each other in a rush, arranged themselves in changing pictures before his mental eye, and thought moved with them.

The picture of his wife came first, standing in the pavilion in the garden of Hartford House, her lovely face glowing with excitement at Cadoudal's news and the prospect of the speedy success of their conspiracy. He had taken leave of

her and the Comte d'Artois and Cadoudal there and then, and started forthwith on his mission to the heads of the conspiracy. What was she doing now? By her obstinacy and vindictiveness she had wrought his ruin. Not intentionally, but it had been the necessary sequence of her conduct. Despite his passion for her, the anger raged so fiercely in him, that, for the moment, he felt he almost hated her; that, if she then had stood before him, he could have struck her down. He cursed the mad infatuation that had merged his life in hers.

Then he followed in imagination his movements in that fateful journey, from the moment of his leaving her; his drive that night by poste chaise to the little town of Alfriston in Sussex, and the breakfast that followed at the Star Inn there. Then his embarkation, at the mouth of the Cuckmere River, upon Captain Wright's sloop, and the midnight landing below the cliff at Bévile. He could almost feel himself now being hauled up that cliff with a swinging him round and round and bruising him against protruding lumps of chalk; he could almost hear the screaming of the gulls disturbed by him in his ascent.

He recalled the days of terror that had followed, when each conspirator (traveling for the most part without papers) sometimes as a beggar, sometimes as a pedlar, secretly and swiftly as he could, tramped his way along the country that lay between the sea and Paris. He thought of the many perils of discovery he had undergone from barking dogs at country houses on his way, and the espionage, and suspicions of some of the Government officials; of his manner of getting into Paris, hidden, as he had been, under the tarpaulin of a hay-wagon, whose driver he had hoodwinked into the belief that he was a deserter.

Then onward marched his thoughts and he found himself at Ettenheim with the Duc d'Enghien. He remembered that that visit had been rendered futile by the Duc's mistress, who had besought her lover not to risk his life in France, but to abide where he then was; and that her arguments had prevailed.

At this, he had gone on to Paris to report the failure of his mission to the Duc; and there had been a period of awful waiting, of terrible suspense. Then, when everything had seemed ripe for action, still no active steps had been taken; everyone had seemed afraid to make the plunge into the whirlpool of revolt. And, while they had hesitated, whispers of treachery had been heard, at first vague and contradictory; gradually they had gathered strength, and, at last, the news had thundered on them that Moreau and Pichegru had been arrested, and that the Comte d'Artois had fled precipitately to the coast.

Their leaders gone, the others had feared to rise; and he himself had hurried again to Ettenheim to warn the Duc d'Enghien of his danger.

How vividly he recalled the interview in the library, the hurried burning of the compromising papers, and the scattering of their ashes in the moat; the tearful entreaties of the Duchesse (so called) that they should remain there just one more

night; and then, last scene of all, the startling summons at the chateau, the tramp of the soldiers through the corridors, when they had gained admission, the rude awakening, the peremptory orders to rise and dress immediately, the journey, in the still, silent night, that had ended at Vincennes.

This was the final picture that was presented to his mind, and it brought him to the present. He was a prisoner in the gloomy fortress, from which death only would release him! Truly his heart was full of anguish and regret; he had sacrificed all for love of Halima, and, notwithstanding, had failed in gaining that for which he had made the sacrifice; for he could not doubt that he had seen her for the last time. The First Consul would not again forgive him; he had warned him on the last occasion.

He moved wearily to the window of his cell and gazed out on the inner moat, pressing his head against the iron bars; it was burning and racked with pain, and the cold was grateful to him.

It was close on dawn, and in the dim gray light, there came in view a party of soldiers with an officer. Some carried torches and lighted lanterns, and others spades and mattocks.

The officer looked around and, presently, pointed to a spot; then the men began to dig there, the watcher at the narrow window speculating, with half-listless curiosity, what could be their object; were they seeking a buried treasure?

Gradually the light of day crept up, and, at its approach, the torches' flare and the feeble glimmer from the lanterns began to wane, until, when the golden sheen, fast spreading over the Eastern sky, announced the birth of another day, they could no longer be discerned.

Then the meaning of what these men were doing flashed all at once upon St. Just, and he became sick with horror. The shape and size of the opening they were making proclaimed with fearful certainty its purpose. It was a grave.

For whom? For him? A great fear fell upon him; a deadly faintness overcame him for the moment, but, with a strong effort, he forced it back. He could not take his eyes away; a sort of fascination seemed to glue them to the scene.

At last the grave was finished and the diggers stood at ease, and began to wipe the sweat from off their foreheads, for the work had been both arduous and rapidly performed. Suddenly their officer gave the word of command, and caps were replaced and the men ranged themselves in a line and stood at attention.

The reason was soon apparent; a file of soldiers wheeled round the corner and were halted at some thirty paces from the grave. Then more soldiers came in sight, and in the midst of them—some before and some behind him—walked a man, wearing only his shirt and pantaloons. The prisoner was marched up to the newly opened grave and halted; his guards fell back and he stood there alone, awaiting death.

Then the full horror of the situation burst forth upon St. Just; the man who faced him was the Duc d'Enghien. Doubtless his own fate would be the same!

And now an officer approached the man whose course was all but run; and St. Just could see that the Duc was addressing him with vehemence; nay, in the clear still air, he could hear his very words.

"Sir, I protest against this outrage, in the face of God and man. Your ruler must be mad to do that which will raise all Europe against him."

But the officer shook his head and refused to allow him to proceed. Meanwhile, the firing party had been drawn up in line, their muskets in position. The officer in command stepped back, then raised his sword.

There was a sharp cry and, at the same moment, the crack of musketry. The murdered Royalist reeled, spun half round, clutching convulsively at his throat with both hands, in his death agony, and fell backward into the grave.

Sick at heart at the bloody spectacle he had just witnessed, St. Just strove to avert his gaze, but a compelling fascination seemed to chain him to the window. The officer gave some directions to the men. Those with spades advanced and began to throw in the soil. The foul deed that horrified all Europe was accomplished.

The filling of the grave was soon completed, and the footsteps of the last actors in the grisly drama died away, and all that remained to mark the tragedy that had been enacted was a slight mound upon the ground, watched by a little dog—his master's favorite—that, ever and anon, sent up a piteous howl to note its sense of its bereavement.

Then St. Just, no longer supported by excitement, felt his knees begin to totter, and a deadly sickness overtake him; he clutched at the iron bars to hold him up, but his grasp was feeble, and gradually it relaxed.

He swayed to and fro; then fell fainting to the floor.

THE EMPEROR NAPOLEON.

EPOCH III.

THE EMPEROR NAPOLEON.

CHAPTER I.

Eighteen months elapsed before there was any change in St. Just's condition. All that time he remained a prisoner in the fortress of Vincennes.

When, at the sight of the execution of the Duc d'Enghien, he had fallen fainting to the ground, he had struck his head violently against the stone floor, with the result that when, later, his jailer entered his cell, he was still insensible. All attempts to rouse him proving fruitless, the garrison surgeon was called in. He pronounced St. Just's condition to be very serious, and warned the Government that, unless the patient received the utmost care, he would slip through their fingers. So he was at once removed to a more comfortable apartment; but it was several months before he regained his strength. Brain fever, the result of the privations he had undergone, culminating in the awful shock of the Duc d'Enghien's murder, set in, and, for weeks, he lay unconscious, sometimes delirious, with occasional lucid intervals. More than once they thought that life had left him, but he rallied just in time. At last, the fever was subdued, and, from that moment, though he was at first so weak as to be unable to raise his hand, he began rapidly to regain his strength.

In all probability his illness saved his life, for to try him for treason was impossible. The Governor informed Buonaparte of his condition, and received orders that he was to be detained in the fortress until further notice, but to be treated with no unnecessary harshness, and to be allowed such liberty as was consistent with his safe keeping. This had been due to Josephine's intercession; she had not forgotten St. Just's services to her husband on the night when she first met the young lieutenant; also she had been struck with his handsome face and manly bearing, and had a somewhat tender feeling towards him.

When he had recovered, he was allowed a fair amount of liberty within the fortress, with as much outdoor exercise as he desired, but this was on parole. At first he was naturally very anxious, for he had not forgotten the tragedy he had witnessed, and for some months he lived in perpetual apprehension of hearing that the moment for his execution had arrived: or, at any rate, that he was to be tried for treason—and this would have amounted in the end to the same thing; for that he would be found guilty there could not be a doubt.

But, when month succeeded month, and he received no untoward news, his hope revived and gradually strengthened into confidence that his life was to be spared.

The fact was that stirring events in France had succeeded each other with such rapidity, and Buonaparte's mind was so occupied with weightier matters,

that he forgot all about St. Just, who might have spent the remainder of his days a prisoner, but for an accident to be presently described.

One evening, when he was sitting by his window musing over all that had occurred to him since he had regained his memory at Marsala and returned to France, he was surprised to receive a visit from the governor. He was surprised because it was usual, when that functionary desired an interview with a prisoner, for such prisoner to be brought before him at his own quarters; not for him to go to the prisoner.

So, when his door was opened and St. Just recognized his visitor, he feared that it portended mischief to himself, and a vague dread came over him. He sprang in some confusion from his seat, and had just begun to greet the governor respectfully when his eye fell on another person who was following him. The sight almost took away his breath; if his apprehension of evil had been vague before, it was now distinct enough, for the man was Buonaparte!

"The—the First Consul!" he gasped in terror, when the short figure and pale face of the "Man of Destiny" confronted him.

A grim smile flitted about the great man's features, and, with his hands crossed behind his back, he turned to the governor, who, hat in hand, had stood aside respectfully; then he said in his harsh, rapid tones:—

"Evidently, Mons. le Gouverneur, your lodgers hear nothing of what goes on in the outside world."

"Not a word, Sire; it is forbidden within these walls."

At that word, "Sire," St. Just gave a start. What did it portend? He noted, too, that the governor's manner was rather that of a subject to a monarch than of an official to the head of a republic. Had Buonaparte indeed, become King of France?

While he was still wondering, Buonaparte, who, in the dim twilight had not recognized him, turned to him and inquired sharply, "Your name, sir."

"St. Just, Sire," was the reply, he deeming it wise to use the same form of address that the governor had employed; but he was trembling visibly.

Buonaparte started, and again a cruel smile hovered about his mouth; then the words fell from him in a torrent:—

"So it is you, Sir. I had forgotten you. By my faith, it was a fitting return you made for my clemency in allowing you to live. You plotted against me once and I forgave you; I have spared your life a second time, regardful of my promise; can you suppose that, but for that, you would have lived an hour after you had been brought here? And it is to my wife that you are principally indebted; it was she who reminded me of my pledge. You have a good friend in the Empress. But for her, you would have been shot, as you deserved, and buried in yonder ditch." And he pointed towards the window, and beyond to the very spot on which the

young Duc d'Enghien had been done to death.

St. Just's first fear had somehow passed away, and an irresistible impulse took possession of him to speak out all that was in his mind. Smarting at the Emperor's contemptuous lashings, boiling over with indignation at his wife's seduction and all that had followed as a consequence, he felt that even the certainty of instant death could not restrain him. He must speak and he would.

He drew himself upright and looked unflinchingly in the conqueror's face.

"It is true that you have spared my life," he said; "but of what value is it, since you have poisoned it? It would have been no misfortune to have died like him, whose grave you can see out yonder, innocent of all, except the attempt to rid France of a despot. I could even have welcomed death, had I succeeded."

The governor was astonished at St. Just's temerity. He stepped forward and drew his sword, and, but for the Emperor's interference, would have cut down the audacious speaker.

But Napoleon waved him back.

"Nay, do not seek to check him," he said calmly. "I would hear him out. When the tongue wags freely, we learn who are our friends and who our enemies. Proceed, Sir," to St. Just.

At the Emperor's words and tone St. Just was greatly discomposed, but, having started, he could not now draw back. For all that, his confidence and rage were waning fast, and he proceeded stumblingly:—

"Was it honorable to seduce the woman to whom I was affianced, and, with that object, to do your best to send me to my death? In such circumstances, would not you strive to be revenged; would not you strike down the man who should dishonor her you love?"

"Tut, tut, man," struck in Napoleon, "I like not generalities. Let us inform ourselves of whom we talk about. Is it Madame de Moncourt of whom you speak?"

"It is."

"And pray, Sir, what right had one of my officers when on duty in the field to enter into a marriage contract without my permission? But let that pass. In the first instance I did not know how matters stood between you. Possibly, had you taken me into your confidence, events might have taken a different course. But do you mean to tell me seriously that this is the reason of your treachery? That, with a grand career before you, you sacrificed your whole future for a woman; that, instead of remaining brave and honorable, as I know you were, you could become a traitor to your country, a deserter from your colors, a creature forced to crawl about disguised, a plotter of assassination; and all this because a woman has smiled upon another? What is woman? a toy, a plaything for an hour; a bagatelle not worth consideration in comparison to a man's career. I did not

think you had been so great a fool. And it was for this, you madman, that you raised your feeble hand at me!"

And the Emperor laughed boisterously. St. Just became more and more confused. Napoleon's mockery hit him hard. All his angry vehemence had left him, and with it all his hope. He no longer stood erect, but hung his head. He felt as though his speech had left him; but, with a mighty effort he managed to force out the words:—

"Yes, that was my sole reason. Now do with me what you will. I do not flinch from death, and will meet it like a soldier." And, with these words, he once more stood upright, expecting, the next moment, to hear his doom. He was resolved to receive it like a man.

For a short space no one spoke. As for the governor, he was amazed. It astounded him how any one could dare to beard Napoleon.

The Emperor took a step or two to the window and gazed out, his eye reposing on the low mound, below which lay buried the body of the murdered Bourbon. He was debating how to deal with the man who had had the rashness to speak his mind to him. He was not magnanimous, but he was whimsical; many of his actions that were attributed to generosity were actually the outcome of caprice, and, sometimes, of a belief in fate.

Twice he resorted to his snuff-box, as though hoping to gain inspiration from it. Then he wheeled round sharply and fixed his piercing eyes upon St. Just, who stood trembling at his own audacity, and at the expectation that the first words that would reach his ear would sound his death knell. He was astonished, therefore, at what they really were.

"You have made a great mistake, my friend. Doubtless the best way to prevent its repetition, would be to have you shot. But I will spare your life, once more; you might think, otherwise, that I went in fear of you. Pshaw! a lion does not dread a snapping cur. For all that I would send you to the traitor's fate, but that the memory of one man's death restrains me." He pointed to the ominous mound that varied the level of the moat. "You may thank your star for that."

He paused and began to pace the room, the eyes of the other two men watching every moment; they scarce durst breathe. Their suspense was becoming almost unbearable, when he spoke again.

"You shall have your liberty once more, Sir; but—before I leave, I will sign the necessary papers for your release—not in France. On leaving here, you will proceed to Ministry of Marine with a letter I shall give you, authorizing and instructing the Minister to give you a packet of papers. With these you will proceed to England, where you will hand them to Mr. Perry, the hosier in London. You know the man, having made his acquaintance on a previous occasion, when he helped you to intercept a despatch from the English Government to their Minis-

ter at the Hague. I have no more to add, except that you will not return to France, without permission. If you do, your death be on your head."

He turned to go; then wheeled round suddenly and shook his hand threateningly at St. Just. "And beware, Sir; think not to escape my vengeance, if you again betray my trust. Even in England you will find my arm long enough to reach you. Spies will dog your steps; so have a care, Sir, have a care."

He walked rapidly to the door, the governor, at his heels, the latter throwing the words to St. Just on his way out, "I will have everything put in order for your journey at once."

Left to himself, St. Just tottered to a seat and panted audibly, for such were the strength and conflict of his emotions and the violent beating of his heart, which seemed struggling to burst from its fleshy prison, that his breath could only come in short, quick sobs. He seemed to have withered up under the fire of Napoleon's scorching words. Shame, remorse, hatred, thirst for vengeance, and a sense of utter impotence, all fought together within him, and were tearing him to pieces in the contest. Oh! that he could relive the past, blot out the present, cast in a nobler mould his future! But alas! he knew the hopelessness of his aspirations! He had the rectitude to wish aright, but not the will to do. He knew that, in Halima's hands, he would be as wax. Honor, for him, involved a life apart from her; for the Emperor, in sending him to England, was, without meaning it, sending him to dishonor.

For one mad moment, he thought of refusing to obey the Emperor's command, and submitting to the consequences. It was certain death; but what of that? It would save his honor. And the pain; that would be only momentary; he had suffered far more anguish in the battlefield; and to be shot was a fitting end to a soldier's life.

But death meant never again to set eyes on Halima. No, he could not face it. Not yet.

An hour later he had left Vincennes, and, three days afterwards, he was in London.

At once he made his way to Hartford House, his mind disturbed with mingled hopes and fears. For aught he knew, his wife no longer lived, and, if she did, it did not follow that she was even in England.

But his mind was quickly set at rest on both these points. Of the servants who came in answer to his summons he inquired whether Halima still lived there, asking for her in her mother's name, for he did not know whether she had thought fit to adopt his own.

The man replied that Madame de Moncourt still lived there and was at home. Oh! the relief at this intelligence! By his emotions at that moment, St. Just knew what would have been his feelings, had the reply been different. Yes,

Halima was still all in all to him. His spirits sprang up with a bound; he had made his inquiry in a tone of mingled eagerness and dread; but now his whole mien and manner changed; a gleam of pleasure lighted up his face, and his tone was bright and cheerful.

"Will you tell Madame," he said, "that a messenger has arrived from France on business of importance, and begs the favor of an interview?"

Since the servant did not know him, he would not give his name.

The man invited him to enter, and showed him into an anteroom off the hall.

Presently he heard a step upon the staircase, that sent a thrill right through him and made the heart within him dance with joy. For the moment, all the past was blotted out; all his shame, his rage, his desire to be revenged upon Napoleon, were as though they had never been; he lived only in the present.

He had been warming his hands before the fire, but, at the opening of the door, he swung round and faced her.

She advanced into the room with a quick, gliding motion, a look of eager expectation on her face. Then, bending courteously, she said, "I bid you welcome, Sir. I understand you are direct from France, and are the bearer of important news. Does it by any chance concern—Vincennes? I am deeply interested in one—"

All the while she had fixed her eyes piercingly, inquiringly upon St. Just, scrutinizing him from head to foot. Suddenly they glowed with a brighter light, and a flash of joyous recognition was darted from their depths.

"Henri!" she cried, nay, almost shrieked; and she rushed to him and threw her arms around his neck. She drew his head down to her own and covered him with kisses. "Oh! my darling, to think that you are given back to me once more. And I had mourned you so, and had tried, oh my very hardest, for your release; and the terror I have been in lest—but there, I cannot put it into words. But it is over, and you have come back to me, my dearest. Oh! my happiness is too great."

She burst out laughing; then she began to sob hysterically, and the tears fell from her eyes in scalding drops.

St. Just laid his hand gently on her gold brown locks and stroked them fondly. "Don't weep, my own," he said; "this is no time for tears; tears are for sorrow, not for joy; and we are happy now. Ah, chérie, you don't know what it is for me to be with you again, after all that I have suffered, it is like heaven, but I will spare you the recital of what I have undergone. Our hours shall not be so misspent, and we have lost too many since first we met. So, dry your tears, my sweet, and let me see you smile."

She looked up at him, smiling lovingly through the drops that glistened, like liquid diamonds, on her cheeks. "It is joy, my Henri," she murmured sobbingly.

"It has been too much for me to see you so unexpectedly; but I shall be myself again directly." Then she stroked his face again.

It was two hours later and the reunited couple were still seated together in Halima's boudoir, whither she had taken him. Of course she had coaxed out of him a full account of all that he had seen and done and suffered since their last meeting. At his relation of the Duc d'Enghien's murder, the tears rushed to her eyes; but her grief was only momentary, for it was overwhelmed in the swirl of indignation that swept over her. She sprang to her feet and began to pace rapidly about the room; the blood rushed in a torrent to her face, and there was a dangerous glitter in her eyes.

"Coward! inhuman monster!" she exclaimed. "Oh! that women can be the mothers of such men—more bloody and ruthless than any tiger. One would almost believe that, at his conception, Allah must have slept, and the enemy of mankind been thus left free to wreak his malice on humanity unchecked. Oh! cruel, cruel! But it shall be the worse for him. Of late my lust for vengeance has seemed to languish somewhat; but this cold-blooded, this perfidious murder of an innocent man has put new life in it, and it will now increase in strength so long as the breath is in me, or it finds satisfaction in the hurling of the bloody upstart into infamy. I am glad you have given me this full account for it has put the seal on my resolve."

She seated herself again upon the couch, with a sudden movement threw one leg over the other, and swung her foot restlessly to and fro. Her bosom was heaving with agitation, and her nostrils quivered with violence of her passion. All her husband's efforts to compose her were unavailing; for the time, her passion for him seemed to have spent itself. He now sat mutely watching her. Presently she spoke again.

"And the French people have made this fiend their Emperor! Poor deluded fools! And he boasts that he will bring all Europe to his feet. And I think he will. So be it; the higher the eagle soars, the more crushing will be his fall when wounded. Ha! ha! So far my incantations have revealed the truth; I doubt not now they will be fulfilled in their entirety. I shall live to see his downfall and disgrace; then I will mock at him in his despair."

She turned her face towards the fire and gazed absently at the glowing embers; for the moment so lost in her reflection that she forgot that she was not alone.

With a start, she roused herself and faced St. Just, then laid her hand lightly on his arm.

"So he has entrusted you with papers for his agent." She spoke in her natural tone, without excitement; but, though the outward expression of her hatred was for the present satisfied, her longing for revenge was as intense as ever, and her

determination.

St. Just assented. "That is so."

"And where are these papers?"

"In the lining of my cloak."

"And what do you intend to do with them?"

"Deliver them to the man, Perry, of course."

"Do you know their contents?"

"No."

"Do you mean to examine them?"

"I should not dream of it. I should not dare. I should be a traitor."

"And you would act as the instrument of this perfidious despot, our bitter enemy, in the advancement of his nefarious designs to keep the rightful King of France in exile, and its people holden in his iron grip! You would miss this opportunity of discovering his intentions and informing his opponents of them! Why, those papers may contain intelligence that may make, or mar him. It may be vital to our cause!" She bounded from the couch and faced him. Then she went on disdainfully. "And you would not dream of it; you would not dare; you would be a traitor! Oh! you craven, you poor-hearted creature! Is it blood that flows along your veins, or is it milk. Oh! to think that I should have given my heart to such a man!" Her voice was rising rapidly with her temper, and her face flushed red. "But I should dream of it; I should dare; and I should be no traitor; and I will see those papers!" Her words seemed to tumble over one another as she rushed them out, and the last ended almost in a shriek.

St. Just turned pale and shivered at her violence. He thought he had already plumbed the strength and depth of her emotions, but found them still unfathomable. Again he felt that he was helpless in her hands. Only personal violence would restrain her, and that he would not dream of.

"My dearest, what you ask for is impossible," he remonstrated, but his accents lagged behind his words.

"Impossible," she cried, "No, but certain; and I mean to have them."

And, before St. Just could say another word, she had seized his cloak, which had been flung across a chair hard by the door, and had darted from the room. Pursuit was useless, for she was fleet of foot and could easily out-run him. Almost before he knew that she was gone, he heard the key turned in the door outside, and her footsteps vanishing in the distance. He was a prisoner, until it should please her to release him.

His heart went down within him. What would be the upshot of what had just occurred? Would she restore the papers to him when she had mastered what was in them—perhaps made a copy of them? A grim smile came over him at the thought that this would be playing off on him the very trick that he himself had

played upon Sir Henry Emerson.

Fool that he had been! Why could he not have delivered his papers to the hosier, Perry, before going to see his wife? Then this awful predicament would have been avoided. Again his insensate passion for this Delilah had made him betray his trust. And he had meant to be true this time—certainly so far as the delivery of this despatch. He cursed himself for not having foreseen that, when once Halima had discovered the object of his journey, she would do her best to make it futile, when, by so doing, she would baffle Buonaparte.

And now what could he do? Nothing against her will; she had him, so to speak, bound and gagged.

In a fit of desperation, he rushed to the bell and pulled it frantically; so violently, indeed, that he quickly broke it. But no one came in answer to his summons. Halima had given orders to the contrary. Also she had placed a strong man-servant at the door, with instructions to stop St. Just should he burst it open. He did try, but his efforts were in vain. Again and again he threw himself against it, but the door was strong and resisted every impulse.

Then he began to shout with all his strength, now employing threats and now entreaties. But still no one came to him. At last, he was compelled to cease for want of breath. Patience only seemed left to him, but how could he be patient?

He threw himself into a chair, worn out with his exertions, and abandoned himself to the bitterness of his thoughts. So bitter indeed were they, and so plunged in misery was he and so unhinged, that he could not have been safely entrusted with a lethal weapon; for probably that evening would have been his last. It was fortunate that Halima had removed his traveling cloak, for it contained a brace of loaded pistols.

The twilight deepened and glided into night, and then, wearied out, he fell asleep. Hour succeeded hour, until the night was nearly spent and dawn approached.

He did not hear a carriage pull up before the house, but, almost immediately afterwards, he felt himself roughly shaken. Opening his eyes, he saw a servant standing over him with a candle in his hand.

Without speaking, the man put into his hand a note, which ran as follows:

"Accompany the bearers whither they take you, without fear. Halima."

"Where is Madame?" he asked the servant.

"I do not know, Sir," the man replied respectfully, "she left home some hours ago, and has not yet returned."

Then he added, "The messengers await you, Sir, in a coach below."

Wondering, half sleepily, what would happen next, and caring little, for he had lost all hope, St. Just followed the servant to the door and stepped into the carriage, which, the rapid glance he gave it showed him, was a private one. Two

Bow Street runners got in after him, and immediately the coach was driven off at a rapid trot. In a quarter of an hour, they reached the toll bar at Hyde Park Corner. The gate was opened at their approach, the coachman shouted something, and, without stopping they drove through. Ten minutes later, the carriage drew up before a house in Downing Street. St. Just was requested to get out, and his companions in his drive each thrust an arm through one of his and led him up the steps in front of the house, then up a flight of stairs and into a square room on the first floor. It was dimly lighted, for only one candle was burning on a table; so that St. Just could not see much of his surroundings; but he could distinguish folding doors on the side of the room that faced him.

The men asked him to be seated; then took their stand between him and the door. From beyond the folding doors, he could hear the hum of conversation and, amongst the voices, he fancied he could distinguish Halima's. He strained his ears and was now sure of it. Then, at any rate, no harm was meant to him.

Presently he heard the clock of the neighboring Horse Guards strike the fourth quarter, and then One, two, three, four, five, six, seven. He must have slept for many hours, then, at the house at Earl's Court.

Hardly had the last stroke died away, when the folding doors were opened, and Mr. Pitt, the Prime Minister, the Prince Regent, and, to St. Just's surprise, Halima entered the apartment. They were followed by a secretary. Plainly the Prince had not been to bed, for he was still habited in the uniform he had worn at dinner the night before; he still looked as if he had dined—or drunk "not wisely, but too well."

He ogled Halima, who gave him back a saucy glance; then he whispered something in the ear of Mr. Pitt, who told the "runners" to withdraw and wait outside the door.

Then Mr. Pitt, in a pleasant tone and courteous manner, asked St. Just to draw up to them and take a seat. The Regent seated himself on one side of a long table near the end, and Halima took a chair that faced him, the Premier placing himself at the top. The secretary took a place a little lower down, away from them.

"Mons. St. Just," said Mr. Pitt, addressing him, "your action in this matter does you credit. Madame, your wife, has informed me of your scruples in giving up the papers entrusted to you by your Government. In the circumstances they were natural; but I think you will find it to your advantage—in fact it seems to me your only course—now to follow our instructions and advice."

"Quite the only course; very much to your advantage; much obleeged to you," hiccoughed the Regent, at this point, with a hazy idea that he was forwarding the proceedings.

Mr. Pitt glanced at him contemptuously and went on: "The letters you sent

us by Madame," and he pointed to a packet on the table, "have been copied. They will be duly delivered at their destination—Mr. Perry's—by Madame's servant"—he meant Mahmoud—"whom, we understand, Mr. Perry knows; therefore no suspicion will be aroused. The copies that have been made of them you will deliver in person to our Admiral, Lord Nelson. With that object you will be shipped on board H.M.S. La France"—seeing the look of surprise on St. Just's face—"a French vessel recently captured in the channel. You will have to run the gauntlet of whatever French ships may be found between here and Gibraltar, not far from which, I fancy, Lord Nelson will be met with. You may wonder why you have been selected for this mission, so I will satisfy you. We believe the despatches you brought from Paris to be genuine, to mean what they say. But, sometimes, such documents are penned and despatched in order that they may be seized by the enemy and so mislead him—to lead him into a trap. It, therefore, seems desirable to make you the messenger to Lord Nelson. If the information given here"—and he tapped the packet with his finger—"should be false, the Admiral will know how to deal with you."

This was pleasant hearing for St. Just. It seemed possible that he had escaped being shot as a traitor by French bullets, only to swing from a British yardarm as a spy. But, for the moment, he said nothing; Mr. Pitt proceeded, "To be frank with you, you will be a hostage for the genuineness of your despatch. Now that you realize the position, perhaps you would like to express your opinion of the reliability of these documents. It might save us anxiety and yourself this voyage—and, perhaps—your neck, for the Admiral is a strict disciplinarian."

St. Just did realize the position; it was as clear as daylight.

"I can only say in reply to that," rejoined St. Just, "that I have not an idea what the despatch contains, nor whether it was written to mislead, or not. For the last eighteen months I have been imprisoned at Vincennes, and not a word of what took place in Europe during the whole time reached my ears. Three days ago I was released and sent here with these papers, and ordered to remain in England, awaiting fresh instructions. I know no more."

"I thoroughly believe you, Mons. St. Just," replied the Premier. "For all that, we like to be on the safe side; and I fear you will have to take this voyage. The papers are ready for Mons. St. Just, Mr. Sidney?" he wound up interrogatively to the Secretary.

"They are, Sir," was the reply.

St. Just sat sad and stupefied. Once more, he had no sooner rejoined his wife than he was to be torn away from her. Fate was indeed cruel to him.

Now Halima had so represented matters as to make it appear that he had betrayed his trust and voluntarily handed over the papers to the English Government; but with a show of opposition to protect himself from Napoleon's

vengeance, should it come to his ears, and he, St. Just, fall into the Emperor's hands. But he had no mind to lie under such an imputation, and was on the point of making a vehement protest, and explaining that he was no party to Mr. Pitt's being in possession of the papers; that he had been robbed of them; when Halima, reading his intention in his face, first silenced him with a look, and, then getting up, went round to him. "Henri!" she murmured cooingly. Her accents brought back to him the memory of days of love and dalliance spent together in the luxurious house at Cairo; of nights out in the desert under the starlit sky; of moments when they had been in peril of their lives, and they two had been all in all to one another. His name, now uttered by her in her softest tones, that breathed of love, thrilled him from head to foot, and sent the blood leaping through his veins. The words he had meant to utter remained unspoken.

"Henri," she laid her hand gently on his arm, "be silent, if you love me. I read your thoughts. You would tell them how the papers reached their hands; that you had no part in the transaction. If you value your liberty, your life—and mine, for your death would be also mine—say nothing. It will not alter their resolve to send you. At present, they have trust in you; do nothing to destroy that trust. Even as it is, they have some little doubt, though I have worked hard for you.

"I pray that Buonaparte, in making you the bearer of despatches to his agents, has not played you false; for if aught is wrong, and they are a mere ruse, the English will shoot you like a dog. So be warned by me, chéri, for my sake, if you care not for yourself; for I cannot lose you. But there is no time for more. Farewell, my dearest. May Allah bring you safely to me again."

During this short murmured conversation, the others had withdrawn somewhat from St. Just and Halima, and were discussing something in low tones together, and signing papers. Halima glanced at them, and, seeing that she was unobserved, bent forward swiftly, and kissed him lightly and noiselessly on the cheek; then slid back rapidly to her seat.

St. Just sat motionless. He felt like one suddenly launched into the middle of a dream, in which all sorts of impossibilities and incongruities and anachronisms are jumbled up together, and yet, to the dreamer, have the semblance of reality and rationality. His brain was in a whirl. All the resolutions and fidelity to Napoleon, formulated in his cell at Vincennes, had taken wing, at the touch of a woman's hand, at the music of a woman's voice, at the imprint of a woman's lips. He scarcely knew what was going on about him.

He was roused from his reverie by the opening of one of the folding doors and the entrance of a young officer in the uniform of a Hussar. The young man bowed respectfully, but without servility, to the company; then, bringing his spurred heels sharply to attention, he stood erect awaiting orders. The Prime

Minister addressed him in a clear, incisive tone, "Captain Anson, you will convey this gentleman," indicating St. Just, "and the papers with which you will be entrusted to Commander Fergusson of H.M.S. La France, now lying off Shoreham. You will travel as fast as your escort can cover the ground, for it is imperative that you reach the ship before twelve o'clock, at which hour she is to sail. It is vital that Mons. St. Just shall embark in her. You will, therefore, guard him carefully and hand him over with these papers to Captain Fergusson."

The officer bowed, and Mr. Pitt went on:—"The Regent has placed at your disposal one of his private traveling carriages. You will show this," handing him a paper, which he and the Regent had signed and stamped with the Royal Arms, "to all postmasters and others, so that you may take precedence of every one in the choice of horses.

"What escort did you bring?"

"Twenty men, Sir, in accordance with the instructions in your letter to the Colonel. I received his orders soon after six this morning, and I left Hounslow almost immediately."

"Egad, Sir, that is not bad work," put in the Regent, who, all this time, had been whispering to Halima.

"Take every care of Mons. St. Just," resumed the Premier. "Treat him with all courtesy and instruct Captain Fergusson to do the same. You will ride in the carriage with him, and will not permit him, on any pretext, to communicate with any one on the way. I have nothing more to add."

He bowed to Captain Anson; then leaned back in his chair.

The Regent pulled out his watch. "Damnation!" he exclaimed, "it's close on eight o'clock. Ah! I thought so." At that moment the Horse Guards clock began to strike that hour. "You must ride hard, gentlemen. You've sixty-two miles to cover in four hours. Come, I've done Brighton in the time; and you won't be stopped—except by highwaymen; but those gentlemen mostly work by night."

He laughed, and, leaning forward, began to recount an adventure of his own, in which a highwayman had figured, when he had been stopped upon the Brighton Road. But, while he was talking, the Hussar, bowing comprehensively all round, had led his prisoner from the room; the last thing they heard, as they paced the corridor, being the coarse laugh of the Regent and the words, "Damnation, impudent, eh, Pitt? Truth, upon honor; egad what impudent——"

The words died away, and, in a few seconds, St. Just found himself in the traveling carriage—a royal one. It was beautifully padded and with springs so carefully adjusted that, even on the roughest road, the jolting was almost imperceptible. Four horses were harnessed to it.

The royal-liveried postilions glanced curiously at their unusual "fares," the door was banged to, the escort surrounded the carriage, and then, at a word from

the grizzled sergeant in command, the cavalcade set out.

CHAPTER II.

Headed by a portion of their escort, they started at a rapid trot, wheeled round the corner of Downing Street, then past the Houses of Parliament and across Westminster Bridge, and on to where the Brighton Road begins.

Soon they had passed the outskirts of the metropolis and were in the open country. Then they put on a spanking pace, over hill and down dale, the horses galloping on every level stretch of road and down all safe descents, and even up gentle rises. The carriage oscillated from side to side, with the speed at which they were traveling, but there was little jolting, for in those days the Brighton Road was famous for its high condition, and was as smooth almost as a billiard table.

Their first halting place was the White Hart at Reigate, where they stopped for a change of horses. Here Captain Anson left the carriage and, after placing a soldier at each door with orders to prevent St. Just from leaving the carriage or speaking to any one, returned almost immediately, followed by the obsequious landlord with a basket, a welcome sight to the prisoner in the carriage, who was famishing.

The escort were, after resting their horses, to return to their barracks at Hounslow, for it would have been impossible for the men, without remounts, to accompany the carriage all the way. Captain Anson ordered two of the troopers to mount to the box; then, all being ready, they rattled off again with their fresh team.

There was a bottle of wine in the basket, and certain appetizing viands, and, under their influence, the tongues of both the occupants of the carriage became unloosed; for, up to this time, there had been little conversation. But now Captain Anson, in particular, became quite talkative, relating many amusing anecdotes and giving St. Just an insight into fashionable life in London in the Regency. Thus the time occupied between Reigate and Crawley sped by without their noticing it, so that they reached the latter village when they thought that they had but just cleared the outskirts of Red Hill.

When they drew up before the George, the officer frowned, for, just in front of them, was another post-chaise; while, from the inn yard, some fresh horses

were being led out.

Then St. Just heard the sound of angry voices in altercation. "Ah!" thought he, "a dispute about the horses, no doubt;" and in this he was correct. Next, some one tried to approach the carriage, but this the two troopers placed on guard prevented. The fresh team was quickly harnessed, and the carriage moved on again. In passing the inn door, St. Just noticed on the doorstep a swearing, gesticulating figure he well knew. It was Perry, the hosier of the Strand. For the first time since the commencement of his journey St. Just was glad to get away, for he had no wish to be recognized by his London friend; the circumstance would certainly have been communicated to Paris.

"Poor old chap," laughed Anson, while they were making the steep ascent leading to Hand Cross village, "I'm afraid we've upset him vastly, in borrowing his horses. He made no end of a hubbub and swore I should not have them, without your personal command."

"Mine?" asked the other in surprise; "What did he know about me?"

"Why?" laughed Captain Anson; "seeing the Royal carriage and liveries he thought the Regent was inside; the more so when I showed him my authority. It was all I could do to keep him from coming to the carriage to pay his respects to the Prince, whom, he said, he knew. I had to tell him that his Royal Highness was asleep, and that I would not permit him to be disturbed. I don't know who the fellow is, but he said he had important business with one Stephen Dumbell at Bolney, and that he must see him before noon; that all sorts of awful things would happen, if he didn't. I'm afraid Stephen Dumbell will have to possess his soul in patience, until his friend procures another team."

St. Just laughed too, but only in a half-hearted way, for Perry's appearance had filled him with uneasy thoughts. Again it came to him what an egregious act of folly it had been, his not having delivered his despatch before seeing Halima. Then all that had since happened, and his present predicament would have been avoided. It was possible, nay probable, that his dereliction of duty would have wide-spreading consequences; might even change the whole current of affairs in Europe. And why should Perry be leaving England so suddenly, for that he, like them, was making his way to Shoreham, St. Just felt certain.

He was glad to learn that Perry was unknown to Captain Anson, and he kept his own knowledge of him to himself.

Meanwhile the carriage rattled on; now descending at a breakneck pace the long decline that led to the pretty little hamlet of Bolney; then on past the Cross Roads, leaving on the right the road to sleepy Cowfold and the more active and larger, but hardly less old-fashioned Horsham.

On they dashed, past the grand old mansion of Hickstead, at that time approached, as was that of Cuckfield, by a fine avenue of trees, most of which have

long disappeared, together with the monks who planted them.

On, on, on, and now it was in verity a race with time. Captain Anson thrust his head out of the carriage window. "Faster, faster!" he cried to the postillions. "A guinea each, if we arrive in time."

And, in answer to his appeal, the men plied vigorously whip and spur to the panting, sweating horses; and soon they were tearing long as fast as they could gallop over the bridge that spans the river Arun hard by Lancing. On, on, they sped and, at last, Shoreham loomed in view.

Then, when their goal was all but reached and Captain Anson, after consulting his watch, had fallen back to his corner with a sigh of relief and a smile of satisfaction, for he saw that he would be in time; a serious mishap occurred. With a sudden jerk, the carriage came to a stop, and the occupants found themselves violently thrown forward and involuntarily jostling one another. In an instant, Anson was on his feet and shouting to the postilions from the window. But a glance sufficed to show him what had happened; the two leaders were down; they had fallen from sheer exhaustion—galloped to a standstill. The two that remained upon their legs were trembling in every limb, and so bathed in sweat that they might have been swimming a river.

Captain Anson was terribly upset; it looked as though, just when success seemed within his reach, he was to be foiled. But he was a man of energy and not easily daunted; he would use every means to discharge his trust—so much depended on it; not only to his country, but to himself.

"Two of the horses are down," he said to his companion. "I must ask you to get out, Mons. St. Just." He had already decided what to do.

St. Just at once did as requested.

Then, issuing his orders with decision, the officer told the two soldiers on the box to descend and guard St. Just. The postilions were already on their feet. These he told to unharness the two shaft horses, and to remove the riding saddle and bridle from one of the leaders that had fallen, but were now once more on their legs, and replace them on the shaft horse that was without them. All this was done almost by the time he had given his orders. Then he carefully examined the two saddled horses to see which, in his judgment, was the stronger and swifter of the two. Indicating the other, he addressed St. Just. "Kindly mount, Mons. St. Just," he said. "We shall have to complete our journey on horseback. Excuse my want of ceremony, but time is pressing."

The Frenchman made no difficulty; he realized the futility of opposition; so he placed his foot in the stirrup with alacrity, and, the next instant, was in the saddle. Captain Anson had been watching him, and saw at a glance, that he was quite at home on horseback.

"You are used to riding, Mons. St. Just," he said pleasantly.

"I have had plenty of practice as an aide-de-camp under General Buonaparte," was the reply.

Captain Anson then rapidly gave instructions to the postilions and soldiers to follow on to Shoreham with the post-chaise so soon as the two horses should have rested sufficiently to be harnessed to it. Then he turned again to St. Just.

"Plain speaking between soldiers is the best, Monsieur," he said. "Let me call your attention, therefore, to the fact that I am better mounted than yourself and that I carry a brace of loaded pistols. Should you attempt to make your escape, I will shoot you without the least demur. I trust you will not impose so painful a duty on me."

St. Just laughed. "You will not require to use your pistol, Captain Anson. I am not absolutely devoid of sense. I am at your service."

They gave their horses rein and started at a brisk trot, but soon warmed up into a canter.

It was ten minutes to the hour when they sighted the cruiser, which was anchored just outside the harbor mouth. They were now almost alongside the harbor, and Captain Anson was looking anxiously about for a means of reaching the La France; and luck befriended him. A fishing boat, within hail, was floating lazily with the tide towards the harbor mouth.

"Boat ahoy!" cried Anson.

"Aye, aye, Sir," came the cheery answer.

"In the King's name. Five guineas, if you put us on board yonder cruiser before she sails."

"Done!" shouted the hardy fisherman, who was at the tiller, and he soon brought the little craft alongside where the two men stood, for by this time they had dismounted.

The horses were given in charge of a custom house official, with instructions to await the officer's return, and then they stepped aboard the boat.

"Look alive, man," said Captain Anson; "put in all you know; that vessel must not sail before we board her."

"Never fear, we'll do it, Sir," replied the sturdy boatman, and he and his two mates quickly put the boat about. There was a stiff nor'wester blowing, and the tide was with them, so that the clumsy craft began to make fair way; but every now and then she dipped her nose into the surf-capped rollers that marked the harbor bar, sending showers of brackish spray into the faces of the passengers, and, in fact, all over them, so that they soon were drenched to the skin. But little recked one of them of this; all that he cared for was to reach the vessel.

Nearer and nearer they approached her, and now were almost close upon her. They could hear the sharp tones of the officers shouting their commands; could hear even the creaking of the capstan, as inch by inch the anchor was being

dragged up from its muddy depths; and also the voice of the musical Jack who was singing to give the men the time, which he himself took from the notes of an indifferently played fiddle.

Captain Anson placed his hands to his mouth and bawled, "Ship ahoy! Despatches!" Then suddenly he removed them. "By God, she is moving," his voice rising almost to a shriek; "she is under weigh."

And indeed she was, her sails beginning to belly out in the freshening breeze.

"Aye, aye," muttered the old boatman at the helm, quite calmly, "but she'll tack yet, to let the wind take her down channel. You'll see, Sir, we shall manage it."

He put the helm hard over, and the fishing vessel, answering, swung round and was brought up by the side almost under the cruiser's bows.

"Ship ahoy!" yelled the fisherman.

"In the King's name, despatches," shouted Anson, springing to his feet and waving the papers above his head, and almost falling overboard in his excitement.

"All right," was shouted in reply; "Come on board as sharp as you can." A tow rope was flung over the craft, and deftly caught and made fast to her by the fisherman, who then pulled her alongside the cruiser.

St. Just waited for a second or two, when the heave of the sea, that lifted him almost to the shrouds, gave him his opportunity. Quickly grabbing a second rope, he clambered up hand over hand and landed safely upon the cruiser's deck.

Not so the debonair Hussar. Unused to the position, he made his leap just a shade too late, and got drenched to his skin in consequence.

A gray-haired, bushy whiskered man of forty-five came up to him the moment that he touched the deck.

"I am Captain Fergusson," he said. "You say you have despatches for me, Sir. You were only just in time; and I must start at once, for I cannot lose the tide."

"I am Captain Anson," replied the other, "—th Hussars." Then he continued, politely, and looking every inch a gentleman, despite his drenched appearance—the water was streaming from him, and making little pools about him—"My orders are to hand over to you, yonder gentleman"—pointing to St. Just, who was standing motionless, gazing absently at the roofs of the little town that seemed, with the motion of the vessel, to be bobbing up and down—"with instructions that he is to be guarded carefully and allowed to hold no communication with anyone but yourself; consistently with that, he is to receive every consideration. These papers will tell you all.

"This," handing the Captain a large, blue, official-looking envelope, "contains your sailing orders; and this, despatches for the Admiral." He passed the various documents to Captain Fergusson, who replied:

"I need scarcely say, Captain Anson, that the instructions here contained will be obeyed to the very letter. And now you must have a glass of Nantz, after your wetting."

"I thank you," replied Anson, "but it is impossible. I dare not detain you; and I, too, must return immediately."

He shook hands with the Captain, and then turned to St. Just, and held out his hand. "Good-bye, Mons. St. Just, and Au revoir. I wish you good luck, I trust you will forgive me for what may have appeared harshness in my manner. It was not in my heart; but merely a necessity of the performance of my duty. I hope in the future we may meet as friends in more congenial circumstances."

He smiled pleasantly, as indeed he might; so far as he was concerned, everything had turned out satisfactorily.

St. Just took the proffered hand and shook it warmly. "No excuse whatever is called for, Captain Anson," he replied; "you performed an uncongenial task with every courtesy."

Then Captain Anson swung himself overboard and lowered himself by a rope into the fishing-boat. She cast off and, at once, began tacking for the shore, St. Just watching her till she disappeared into the harbor.

Captain Fergusson glanced rapidly over his new instructions, and gave the necessary orders; and, not till the little vessel was fairly on her course, did he give his attention to St. Just.

Then he approached him. "For the time it seems I am to be your jailer, Mons. St. Just. I will make things as pleasant and comfortable as I can for you, consistent with your safe custody; but I shall have to confine you to your cabin and place an armed sentry at your door. Except for two hours' exercise daily on the poop, you will have to spend all your time there. If you care to read, I can supply you with some books."

St. Just bowed. "I am in your hands," he said. "I cannot complain; it is the fortune of war. But one thing I should like to ask; how long is my confinement likely to continue?"

"About three weeks, I fancy; but it depends upon wind and weather."

"And my destination?"

Captain Fergusson gave a peculiar laugh. "Ah! that I cannot say," he said. "Sims," to an officer standing near, "conduct this gentleman to the middle cabin on the port side of the upper deck, and place a marine at the door."

He bowed to St. Just, to signify that the interview was ended, and then walked away to his cabin to con more carefully the orders he had received. They were brief and simple, but their very brevity and simplicity gave him food for thought.

The envelope was addressed:—

"To Commander Fergusson H.M.S. La France."
The contents were as follows:—

"Sir,

"We commit to your charge a Buonapartist, Mons. St. Just, taken with the accompanying despatches from the French Government. You will deliver him and them to Admiral Lord Nelson, last heard of in Lat. —— Long. ——.

"If the Admiral find the information in the papers trustworthy, Mons. St. Just is to be brought back to England. If not, let Lord Nelson deal with him as the bearer of false news in time of war deserves.

Signed: George, Prince Regent.
——, First Lord of the Admiralty.
W. Pitt, First Lord of the Treasury
and Prime Minister.

And this shall be your warrant for what you do."

Meanwhile St. Just had been conducted to his cabin, a narrow room about ten feet long and from six to eight in width; its furniture a bunk, a chair and a seaman's chest, empty except for washing requisites of the commonest description, the lid forming a table in the daytime. The cabin was lighted by a small port hole.

This then was to be his abode for the next three weeks—or more, and then—? The reflection made him shudder. He knew his fate depended on the truthfulness of the despatches taken from him—or rather on their result.

The hours seemed to drag on terribly. For a change, he paced about his little cabin; then he threw himself upon his bunk and tried to sleep; and, at last, succeeded.

How long he slept he did not know, but it was dark when he awoke, aroused by the opening of his door. Someone came in with a lantern, which he hung up on an iron hook in the rafters overhead. Then he laid some books upon the sea chest. It was Sims, the officer who had brought him to the cabin.

Following him was a sailor with a tray, on which were a bottle of rum and a glass, some cold pork, ship's biscuits, butter, and sundry other eatables, as well as knives and forks. He placed the tray upon the sea chest and then withdrew.

"Halloa! hors de combat?" said Sims, thinking St. Just's position due to mal de mer. "You'll get used to the sea in a day or two, and then you'll be all right."

St. Just sat up, his eyes blinking in the lamp light.

"It's not sea sickness I'm suffering from," he laughed, "but cabin sickness. The appointments here can scarcely be called luxurious, and I find my own company the reverse of cheerful."

"Anything else you want?" asked Sims who, St. Just thought, seemed a pleasant, hearty fellow.

St. Just laughed again. "Now what a question to ask a prisoner," he said.

"Well, I'd give you your liberty, old fellow, if I could; but short of that?"

"You are very good. To begin with then, what I most want is a change of clothing and a pipe."

"The last I can manage on the spot; as to the first, I'll talk to the Captain about it, and we'll see what we can do."

He put his hand into his pocket and brought out his own pipe and some tobacco, and these he handed to the captive.

St. Just's eyes glistened at the sight.

He grasped the proffered articles with avidity and thanked the donor with effusion.

After a little further talk, the young officer was obliged to leave him. Then St. Just became conscious that he was hungry; so he fell to upon the pork and biscuits. The fare was coarse, and the biscuits were desperately hard, and he had to hammer them into little pieces with the handle of his knife.

But, on the whole, he made an excellent meal, for what was wanting in the quality of the food was made up by appetite in himself. Then came the crowning luxury of the pipe. He smoked three. Then he turned into his berth, and so finished his first day on board the English cruiser, which was spinning merrily on her way towards Cadiz. She averaged ten knots an hour, for the wind was with them, and the Captain had crowded on her all the sail that she could carry.

For St. Just, one day was much like another, and he found the hours drag slowly, in spite of the companionship of his pipe. The one pleasure he looked forward to was his two hours' daily exercise on deck. The sight of the dancing waves and the blue sky overhead, and the smell of the fresh salt breeze, seemed to instill him with new life, but it made him long for his liberty all the more.

Once the La France had a narrow escape of being captured. A large French brig was sighted in the distance and, at once, gave chase; she began rapidly to overhaul them. When the Frenchman was within gunshot, Captain Fergusson was not long in knowing it; the ball struck the sea only a few yards on their starboard side. The disparity in the size of the two ships was such that the only alternatives of the English one's escaping capture were, either to be able by smarter seamanship to dodge the Frenchman, or that an English ship should come to their assistance. Captain Fergusson knew the importance of his reaching the British Admiral, and this added to his anxiety; it may even be said it was its sole cause.

Eagerly he scanned the distance, the compass round, on the chance of sighting a vessel that flew the Union Jack; but not a sail of any sort could he discover, save that which was bringing the Frenchman ever nearer. St. Just was enjoying his interval of exercise while the chase proceeded, and watched with great excitement the distance between the two vessels lessening.

Gradually the brig gained on them, and ever and anon a shot ploughed up the sea all round the gallant little cruiser; but, so far, she had not been struck. Captain Fergusson, for all he knew that a contest could practically have but one result, was resolved to fight before hauling down his flag. So he had the deck cleared for action, and the cannon shotted. Then, with a look of desperate resolve, he calmly waited. Nothing it seemed could save him.

But, all at once, the tension on his face relaxed, and his eye brightened; a chance he had not reckoned in his calculations was to befriend him. Looking southward, in the opposite direction to the brig, he noticed that the air was becoming hazy. His practiced eye informed him what it was—a sea mist. If they could only hold on long enough, they would run into it, and so be lost to the view of their pursuer.

"By God!" he cried excitedly to the First Lieutenant, "if only we can get into that fog we shall give the Frenchman the slip."

At that moment a shot struck the little vessel on the taffrail, but did no serious damage, and no one on board was hit. It was the last, for, soon afterwards, the La France ran into the mist and was lost to sight.

This was the only exciting incident during St. Just's stay on the cruiser. After this, day succeeded day with unvarying monotony, until the morning of the 20th of October in this eventful year of 1805. Then Captain Fergusson sighted in the distance the English fleet. It was bearing down towards them in two lines, one led by Nelson in the Victory, the other by Collingwood in the Redoubtable.

When within signalling distance Captain Fergusson ran up the Union Jack, following it with the private signal. This having been acknowledged, the flags went up to signify that he had despatches and a prisoner.

Gradually the little vessel neared the fleet, and, when she was within hailing distance of the Victory, a voice rang out:

"Captain Fergusson to come on board with prisoner and despatches."

Forthwith he proceeded to St. Just's cabin, where the Frenchman lay asleep. "Sorry to disturb you, Mons. St. Just, but we are in the middle of the English fleet, and I have orders from the Admiral to take you on board at once; so please dress as speedily as you can."

A few minutes' rowing, and they were alongside the Victory, the eyes of every one on deck upon them; for the news had gone about that there were tidings of the allied French and Spanish fleets, and all were longing to be at them.

St. Just slowly mounted the gangway. At its head stood an officer in uniform, whom Fergusson addressed as Captain Hardy. Captain Hardy took him apart and told him that he was to go with him at once to the Admiral; so, after giving orders to an officer to watch St. Just, the two proceeded to Lord Nelson's cabin.

Soon afterwards, many captains of other vessels in the fleet were signalled to come on board, and the ship was kept in a continual bustle by their arrival in quick succession. Then long and earnest deliberations went on below. Meanwhile St. Just remained standing on the poop, well guarded, and the object of great curiosity on the sailors' part. It was said that he was a spy who had been captured. He scarcely noticed the glances leveled at him, for he had plenty to occupy his mind. For aught he knew, he was within a few minutes of his death. No wonder he looked pale and anxious.

After some time, a midshipman approached, with instructions that he was to follow him. He was conducted to Lord Nelson's cabin.

At first, to the Frenchman's unaccustomed eyes, the gloom was such—for there was no light, but that which struggled through the port-holes—that he could scarce distinguish the persons gathered in the room; but his sight quickly accommodated itself to the partial light. Then he noticed a long table, down each side of which were seated naval officers in full-dress uniform. In the center, his back supported against a bulkhead, was a small, spare man, with a thin, worn face and a large nose, and grizzled hair. Like the other officers, he was in full uniform, and it was noticeable that his right sleeve was empty and looped up to a button hole of his coat. His left breast glittered with stars and orders. One side of his face was turned to an officer at his left, and he was whispering something to him behind his hand. The eye turned towards St. Just was scarred and sightless. St. Just did not need to be told that the man before him was the redoubted English Admiral, Lord Nelson.

The Admiral turned to St. Just and asked him: "Do you know the contents of the despatches of which you are the bearer?"

The Frenchman drew himself up to an erect position and saluted in military fashion.

"I do not, Sir," he replied promptly.

"Detail how you became possessed of them."

Every eye was turned keenly on St. Just, as though to read how far he spoke the truth.

Calmly and deliberately he related the circumstances; how that, having been imprisoned for so long, he had been offered his liberty, provided he delivered these despatches to a Buonapartist agent in London; how that he had not been given the least inkling of what was in them, nor any oral message for the agent. Then, mindful of Halima's injunctions, he went on to say that he had shown the

papers to his wife, who had taken then to the Prime Minister. He could tell the Admiral nothing more.

There was a moment's silence, and then an elderly officer at the end of the table laughed.

The Admiral turned upon him sharply, "Well, Sir?"

The answer came with equal promptness and in a powerful brogue.

"My Lord, 'tis a foine wit the fellow has. But, be jabers, Oi, for one, will not be believing the truth. If the French fleet—bad cess to 'em—meant to sail from Cadiz, wouldn't they have kept it quiet; and would they have let this information fall into our hands, except for the purpose of misleading us as to their rale intentions?"

No one spoke audibly for a moment, but a low murmur went round, and it soon became evident that the old sailor's opinion had several supporters. One or two, indeed growled audibly:—

"Well spoken, Temeraire."

The Admiral raised his empty sleeve and flapped it to and fro, then spoke:

"Fergusson, you have had the best opportunity of judging how far this gentleman is to be believed. What is your opinion?"

Like most jailers, who are not naturally cruel, Fergusson had a protective sentiment towards his late prisoner; so he replied:

"I have had no means of testing his truthfulness, my Lord. On the other hand, I have no cause to doubt it."

"Oi should trice the rascal to the yardarm, Sir," interposed the Irish officer who had previously spoken.

"What say you, Hardy?"

"I say, do nothing till after the battle. It would be murder."

The Admiral smiled pleasantly. His flag-captain's opinion coincided entirely with his own.

"Gentlemen," he said, "I believe these despatches to be genuine; that they were not meant to fall into our hands. At any rate, I intend to act upon the information they contain. I am confident that to-morrow's dawn will witness the defeat of another Armada; that, once more, the brave hearts of English sailors will win a glorious victory for our country."

Further speech on the Admiral's part was prevented by the entrance of a midshipman. The youngster saluted Nelson and then laid before him on the table a pencilled note:

"The enemy's fleet is sighted.

"Collingwood."

The words were read out, and then followed a burst of cheering.

The Admiral reached his hat and moved from his seat. To the midshipman who had just entered he said, "Remove this gentleman to Midshipman P's cabin" (that to which Nelson was afterwards carried when he had received his death wound, and in which he died). Then he addressed St. Just, "If I win to-morrow's battle, Sir, I pledge my word of honor to land you in England, in return for this day's service. If I fail and find that I have been led into a trap by your despatches—Well—" And he threw him a warning look.

Stupefied and with a sinking heart and without a word, St. Just bowed to the Admiral and retired. Then the midshipman took charge of him and conducted him to the cabin indicated, a gloomy hole lighted only by a small window giving on to the alley way. Here he sat for hours in solitude.

Later, towards night, the occupant of the cabin came in, and the prisoner ventured to ask him whether he knew what in the despatches was the information that had been considered so important.

"You don't know?" was the reply. "Well, the report is that an English correspondent of the French Government gave information to Boney of the strength and destination of our fleet; and that the French Admiral undertook to send us to the bottom and then come to the assistance of the invasion army at Boulogne. The despatch you handed to our Government, it is said, acknowledges the receipt of the agent's intelligence and asks for later news, at the same time disclosing the intended movements of the French fleet."

"Phew!" breathed the Frenchman, and began to perspire profusely.

He had little dreamed of the momentous issues involved in the miscarriage of the despatch, and he trembled at the magnitude of the disaster he foresaw.

"I'm for sleep," resumed the midshipman; "perhaps the last I shall enjoy in this life. There will be bloody work to-morrow, and for many of us, both French and English, the coming dawn will be the last."

With that, he turned into his bunk, and was almost immediately asleep. But St. Just sat on in gloomy silence. There was no sleep for him that night.

And the next day was that memorable 21st of October, 1805, when the most glorious of England's many naval victories was won.

St. Just took no share in it, so that its recital forms no part of his history. Cooped up, as he was, all day in the narrow, ill-lighted cabin, except for the deafening booming of the cannon, and the concussion when the shots from the Frenchmen struck the ship, he knew nothing of the progress of the battle; or which side was gaining in the encounter. But in his enforced idleness, expecting

every minute to be sent to the bottom of the sea, his misery and suspense were such, that even death itself would almost have been welcome.

But his solitude was broken in upon in a way he had little dreamed of. He heard the sound of shuttling feet outside; then the door was thrown open and some sailors entered, bearing in their arms the dying Admiral.

His eyes fell upon St. Just, and, for all his agony, he was not forgetful of his promise. He turned to one of the officers and pointed to the Frenchman. "I have given my word that that gentleman shall be landed in England safe and sound. See to it that I do not die forsworn."

And, so soon as might be, the promise was performed.

CHAPTER III.

Nearly four years had passed since St. Just was present, as an auditor rather than as a spectator, at the battle of Trafalgar; and it was now towards the end of June, 1809. He had landed in England after that battle, in December of the same year, and had thenceforth made it his home, at such times as he was not upon his travels—and they had been fairly numerous.

About midnight on a certain day in this same month of June, a post-chaise was being driven rapidly along the road that led from Paris to St. Cloud.

Seated in it were two persons. One was a venerable looking old man with a white beard; the other a man not much past thirty, but looking almost middle-aged, and with the stamp of care and melancholy on his features. The first was the old man Abdallah, who had accompanied Halima in her journey from the desert to the shores of France, and had since established himself in Paris as a jeweler. His companion was St. Just, but so changed in looks that his former friends would not have known him. It was not hard work—though he had been no sluggard in the interval—that had wrought this transformation, but the preyings of an uneasy mind; disappointment, shame, remorse, self-contempt, and, later, jealousy, had kept him without a moment's peace and added two decades to his looks. Major St. Just, the aide-de-camp of Buonaparte, had been a well-set, muscular young fellow, with a bright brown eye and the glow of health upon his cheek; full of life and ardor, with a springy step, and having the soul of honor. Captain Henri, the English spy, was gray and shriveled, his face all scored with lines, his eyes dull and shifting, shrinking from the glance of his fellow men, his visage shrouded

with a veil of gloom and sadness; and he walked with the slow, uncertain gait of a man who seeks to shuffle by without attracting notice. Still, for one on the weather side of fifty, he would have been deemed by those who had not known him in his better days, a handsome man, for his features were well-molded and refined.

During the four years, or nearly so, that had elapsed since he had left Paris, a Buonapartist agent on the mission, which had culminated in his presence, as a prisoner, at the battle of Trafalgar, his life had been a chequered one, and, more than once, he had been in the direst peril.

Halima had sent him here and there and everywhere, according to her whim, and he had not dared refuse. In fact he had been little more than her messenger. The usual relations between wife and husband had in their case been reversed. It had been her part to issue orders, his to execute them. He had seen but little of her, for he had been almost always journeying, and might almost as well have had no wife. Once or twice he had feebly attempted to rebel, but she had quickly cowed him into submission by the threat of breaking off all relations with him.

She had become more masterful than ever, more restless and excitable and more active and determined in her plots against Napoleon; she was, indeed, the moving spirit amongst the conspirators. For all that, in her husband's absence, she found time for her amours, and indulged in them with all the passion and abandon of her nature.

She had despatched her husband—the news of his presence at the battle of Trafalgar had leaked out, and it was confidently reported to the French Government that he had met his death there—on many secret expeditions; for instance, he had gone as the accredited agent of the English Government to Spain and Austria; he had had interviews with persons trusted by the "Man of Destiny," but who had revealed to him secrets of the highest political importance; he had even gone so far afield as the United States.

Many a strange tale could Fouché's agents have narrated of a certain Jules Durand—one of St. Just's pseudonyms—who had had long interviews with their Chief, and had made numerous journeys between France and England, his real character and personality being unsuspected.

And Halima, though her headquarters were in England, had made several flying visits to the Continent, in the prosecution of her schemes. On one occasion, at the very time that the Emperor Alexander was being entertained by Napoleon with imperial magnificence, she, in the person of a certain Mademoiselle de Deauville, interviewed the Russian Emperor, when the subject of his

attitude towards England was discussed, and negotiations, that resulted in the subsequent alliance of the two Powers, were begun. Plot after plot was foiled, but still she was not daunted, every failure seeming only to strengthen her resolve and the bitterness of her animosity towards the Emperor of the French.

But to return to the occupants of the post-chaise, which was speeding through the darkness as fast as horses could lay hoof to ground.

On the seat opposite to them was a small box. The older man was endeavoring to dissuade the other from some course on which he seemed strongly bent.

"Be advised by me, Monsieur," he said, laying his hand persuasively on the other's arm; "do not move further in this matter. Let me order the postilions to turn their horses' heads again towards Paris. It is for your own sake I ask it."

"Pish! Abdallah," replied St. Just impatiently, "you waste your words; it is useless to attempt to turn me from ray purpose; I have taken my decision and will go through with it. Besides, do you suppose that, when I show to Josephine the proofs of her husband's design to divorce her and marry this Austrian Archduchess, she will flinch? No, rest assured that we shall gain our ends—at least I shall. For what other purpose, indeed, can she have appointed this meeting with me to-night?"

The Empress Josephine had given him many tokens that she was not indifferent to him, and, complimented by her notice, he had conceived for her a sort of passion; not such a passion as he had for Halima—for, had Halima remained true to him, he would not have given a thought to Josephine; and even now, his wife, had she so willed it, could have brought him to her feet again, with never a thought for any other woman—but an intimate relationship that, when leavened by compliments and risky phrases, and amorous sighs and suggestive glances, he chose to dignify by the name of love. He thought himself a very fine fellow, in that he dared to make advances to an Empress.

Abdallah saw that his protest might as well have been uttered to the winds, so he contented himself with a grunt and a shake of the head; meaning that it was a bad business and that he washed his hands of it.

No more was said between them, each remaining seated in moody silence, the while the carriage bowled along.

Presently it rattled across the bridge that spans the Seine; then they turned sharply to the left down an avenue leading to the palace gate. Here the carriage halted, and the occupants got out.

Instead of proceeding up the avenue, the main entrance to the palace, whose gloomy facade indistinctly loomed ahead of them, St. Just and his companion took a further detour to the left, bringing up, after a short walk, before a narrow gate. Abdallah took a key from his pocket and unlocked it; and both passed through.

They had but just re-closed it when a voice called out, "Hola! Who goes there?" and a tall sentry, topped with a huge bearskin that made him look gigantic in the gloom, seemed to spring out of the ground before them. He held his musket at the ready, and they could see the glimmering of the steel bayonet at its muzzle.

Before those challenged by the sentinel could make reply, another figure appeared upon the scene. He carried a lantern and, when he spoke, there was an air of authority about his tone that showed he was an officer.

"What's all this?" the words were shot out sharply.

"Not so last, Colonel Tremeau, I beseech you," said a peculiarly sweet voice behind the officer, and a woman in a superb evening toilette, but her head and shoulders enveloped in a shawl, emerged from a clump of trees and advanced to them. The lamplight was not strong enough to show her features, standing, as she was, in the shadow of the trees, but St. Just noticed that her figure was magnificent.

"I will answer for these gentlemen," she continued, "and, if that do not suffice you, here is an authority you will not dispute."

She handed the officer a ring of gold set with a superb single emerald. He glanced at it, and then, in a tone of some surprise he murmured, "The Empress' ring! Pass on, gentlemen," he went on aloud; "your authority is good enough. I did not know you were expected. Yet, stay; your names! It is my duty to obtain them. The names of all callers have to be sent in to the Palace Marshall for transmission to the Emperor."

"The Court jeweler and his assistant, with jewelry for Her Majesty," replied Abdallah sharply, and he held up the small box that had been on the carriage seat.

Colonel Tremeau seemed to hesitate, so once more the lady intervened:—

"Come, Sir, come; why this demeanor? These persons attend here by the orders of the Empress. She would make a present to one of her ladies, whose fête day is on the morrow."

The officer, without further parley, entered the particulars on his tablets; then moved aside to allow the men to pass, the lady leading the way. Following her they quickly traversed the garden, taking the path that led towards the "Bassin de Fer à Cheval." Thence, taking an avenue that bore southwards and lay parallel to the Seine, they emerged, after a short walk, upon an open space, whose center was occupied by a lofty tower, a replica of the monument of Lysicrates at Athens, recently erected by the Emperor.

Before this the lady halted. Then, opening a door, she invited them to enter. "The Empress is within," she said, "and is expecting you."

They passed into a room lighted by wax candles placed in sconces, and furnished with a rustic table and garden seats; and there were many windows in it.

At one of these, that faced the door, Josephine was seated. She was wearing a white evening gown, heavily embroidered with gold; a lovely and fascinating woman still, though at this time she was entering her tenth lustrum.

At their entrance she turned her face to her visitors—for she had been looking out of the window—and addressed them in a pleasant tone:—"Ah! gentlemen, I am glad you have arrived; I was beginning to fear you would disappoint me."

Both men bowed low, and St. Just made answer, "We made all speed, Your Majesty, and it has but this moment struck the hour at which you bade us come."

"Is that so?" rejoined the Empress. "Then I have been unreasonably impatient. But, when events of moment are in the balance, a weak woman may be pardoned for feeling thus. We are not fashioned to control ourselves like men."

"For which the good God be thanked," put in St. Just.

She shook her head at him reprovingly, but smiling archly; which showed that his speech had not displeased her. Then she addressed the lady. "Hermionie, you may take a stroll, or, if you prefer it, you may retire for the night. I shall not require your further services, and I have business with these gentlemen."

The lady, who had removed her shawl, displaying to St. Just a lovely face, dropped a low curtsey to the Empress, and withdrew. "The night is warm," she said, "I will take a stroll in the garden."

When the door had closed behind her, Josephine turned eagerly to the two men. "Now, gentlemen," she said, "let me hear the business you would discuss with me."

"Madame," replied St. Just, and he advanced to her and held out the charm she had given him in her husband's presence nearly ten years before; "unworthy though I am of the honor, I crave permission to recall myself to your remembrance by this token."

The sight of what he showed her had a strong effect upon her. Surprise and doubt and joy, all were printed on her countenance. Gradually doubt, and then surprise, died out of her face, and only delight remained. For, changed, though he was, she knew him. Again, for the third time, she had met the man who, without meaning it, had touched her heart at their first interview; whom she scarce durst acknowledge to herself she loved; whose life, by reason of that love, she had intervened to save.

"St. Just!" she panted. "It is, indeed, then you." Then, her voice still trembling with emotion, she turned to old Abdallah. "Leave us, my friend, I pray you, leave us. I would see Mons. St. Just alone."

The old man withdrew.

St. Just threw himself on his knees before her; then he seized her hand and covered it with kisses, she making no endeavor to release it.

"My Queen! My Empress!" he exclaimed with fervor. "By the memory

of those halcyon days in the Forest of Fontainebleau when, in the guise of a woodcutter, I dwelt near you and feasted my eyes upon your grace and loveliness; when you would wander to my lonely hut, and our souls would commune in—dare I say it—love; in remembrance of those moments, I beseech you hear me."

He looked languishingly at Josephine and, for the time being, felt that he meant every word he said.

The Empress colored slightly in pleased confusion. "Two years ago," she murmured and she dropped her eyes; for in her, too, there was some make-believe. Then, as though the words had dropped from her unawares, she added, "Hush, I must not listen to such words, and you, Henri, must not utter them. Besides, foolish fellow, you know you do not mean them."

Now what more encouragement than this could a man desire? His protestations of affection were redoubled. "Nay, but by Heaven, I do, all and more."

"Stop, I beseech you. I cannot hear you; to do so would be dishonorable, as it is for you to speak in such a strain. Nay, you will anger me, if you proceed."

She was beginning to be fearful of herself; his words had moved her strangely. "But what has happened," she went on tenderly, "that has wrought this change in your appearance; a change so great that at first I failed to recognize you? You look years older than when last we met. Then your hair was black as the raven's wing; now it is fast whitening; you must have suffered much!" And, moved by the impulse of her gentle heart, without thinking what she did, she laid her hand upon his head and lightly stroked his hair.

St. Just leaped quickly to his feet and made as though he would have taken her in his arms. "You mistake me, Sir," she said, her breast heaving with agitation; "and you forget yourself and who and what I am. You must be mad, if you cannot distinguish between a woman's sympathy, and love. Restrain yourself, or this interview must end at once. Now tell me what is the matter on which you desired so urgently to see me; and I will pardon what has gone before."

At that moment, had not their minds been so intent on one another, they might have heard the sound of approaching footsteps; but love is often deaf, as well as blind.

"I have traveled night and day from the seat of war, to give you news that will cause you great unhappiness and destroy your peace of mind. But my sole reason is the hope that, being warned, you may be enabled to take measures to avert what is impending."

He paused before proceeding, to give the Empress time to prepare herself for what he had to say. She had an inkling of it, for vague rumors had reached her ears. But his words alarmed her greatly; her cheeks blanched, her features stiffened and a look of terror started to her eyes. For a moment she gazed at him, motionless and with parted lips. Then, "What is it?" she panted. "Tell me. Do

not keep me in suspense; that I cannot bear. Do not fear for me; whatever it is, I shall make no scene. Only let me hear the worst at once. But, I fear, I greatly fear I guess it."

"The Emperor has tired of you and is meditating a divorce, and an alliance with the daughter of the Emperor of Austria."

Two persons, a man and woman, had just seated themselves below the window. Both started when they heard the words that had fallen from St. Just, and the woman would have uttered an exclamation; but the man instantly placed his hand before her mouth and whispered, "Hush! Hermionie, hush!"

St. Just continued, "Nay more, I know that both Talleyrand and Fouché have received instructions on the subject."

The Empress gazed at him in terror, grief and entreaty in her eyes. At first she seemed bereft of speech. But, in a few moments, she replied, "Alas! I feared he was losing his affection for me; but that he should contemplate divorcing me—such villainy I never dreamed of. But it cannot be; surely the laws of France would not permit it."

"I fear the laws of France will avail but little against Napoleon," replied St. Just. "At present he is France and can make such laws as suit him."

"Oh! I cannot believe it. Why, I am all the world to Napoleon. It is impossible that he could be so base, after his ardent protestations of affection."

She was trying to persuade herself that what she said was true; but intuitively she knew the contrary. For facts and rumors kept crowding to her mind, all tending to confirm the dreadful news. The vague stories of her husband's infidelities; his cold treatment and occasional cruel taunts when he found he had no hope of her giving him an heir; all these recollections flashed upon her now with added force, and murdered hope.

But, woman-like, she turned on her informant.

"Base traitor!" she exclaimed, "because I was weak enough to let you see that I have for you the sentiments of a friend, you dare to come to me and breathe slanders against my husband."

But she knew they were not slanders, and her momentary rage died out; St. Just was not to blame. She sank into a seat—for she had been standing—and sobbed without restraint.

At this juncture, the listeners outside the window moved away. The woman had risen first, and the man had tried to check her; but she had whispered angrily, "I will not be an eavesdropper," and had stepped away, and he had been obliged to

follow her.

St. Just waited in silence until her tears had somewhat lessened. Then he spoke:

"Josephine, there is a chance of averting this calamity. What I have told you is absolutely true; but I can give you further news that, if judiciously employed, may turn Napoleon from his purpose. Listen; the Emperor of Russia and Talleyrand have come to the conclusion that England is their best ally, and are plotting to bring such an alliance into being. Moreover, Europe is secretly arming for the struggle with Napoleon. It may not come just yet, but it must come soon. Now, if you should warn the Emperor of all this, he might be grateful and, out of gratitude, abandon his intention of divorcing you. Read these papers, and you will see that I have grounds for what I say."

The Empress dried her tears and took the papers he handed to her; then settled herself to their perusal. They confirmed every word St. Just had uttered.

"Have you pen and ink and paper?" she said, when she had finished. He reopened the despatch box from which he had taken the papers, and handed her what she asked for.

She seated herself at the table and began to write, not as a suppliant, but as one who was conveying valuable information and stood firmly on her rights. Her exalted status gave her confidence. Her letter was lengthy and took some time in writing, and, meanwhile, not a word was exchanged between them. St. Just had thrown himself into a chair, and waited patiently.

At last she had disburdened her mind, and the scratching of the pen was stopped. She took the papers St. Just had given her, and tied them all together, with her own letter on the top. Then, on another sheet of paper, she scribbled the following words:

"On the Emperor's service. The bearer is a courier from the Empress. All who can are to help him in the name of France. Josephine."

This she sealed with her own seal and handed, with the packet of papers, to St. Just.

"There, I can do no more," she said. "God grant it may have the result I hope. Hide your very fastest," she continued; "lose not a moment by the way. You must reach Napoleon, ere he has had time to move in this nefarious scheme. And remember that the heart of the Empress goes with you to the Emperor."

"And dare I hope," he answered, "that the heart of Josephine goes with me too?"

She threw him a captivating glance, and smiled archly. Frivolous, and with no deep-seated feeling, as she was, the letter had revived her spirits, and she had persuaded herself that all would now be well.

"Foolish boy," she answered merrily. "Come and see me the moment you

have achieved your errand, and you will find that Josephine is not ungrateful."

And with this he was compelled to be content.

Near the cascade, already mentioned, the man and the woman, who had overheard part of the conversation between the Empress Josephine and St. Just, were seated on a rustic bench. Their attitude, proclaimed that they were lovers, for the man's arm was round her waist, and her head was resting lovingly against his shoulder.

"Peace, Hermionie, peace, I say," the man said sharply. "I will hear no more. I repeat, it is for the good of the State. It must be done. Besides, the Emperor desires it; that suffices me!"

She turned from him petulantly like some spoilt child.

"It is cruel, it is unjust," she said, "and I hate cruelty and injustice, and will do all I can to oppose them. I repeat, I will tell the Empress what we have overheard, what was not intended for our ears. And Colonel Tremeau, I command you to keep secret what you have learned to-night." Then, in a softer tone, "Nay, I am wrong to use that tone. Dear Charles, if you love me, keep it secret."

Few men could have resisted her pleading tone, and still fewer gazed into her lovely face, without yielding to its entreaty; but this man was selfish and self-seeking to the core.

"You will do as you like," he answered in a hard, decisive tone, "as to telling the Empress; but," and he paused to emphasize what he was saying, "in that case, our marriage will not take place."

His cold, impassive tones sent an icy chill to his hearer's heart. His words seemed to admit of no appeal.

"Charles!" the girl faltered, "Oh! you must; I have your promise. After having taken advantage of my love, in a moment's weakness, and robbed me of that which a maiden holds most dear, you could not be so cruel, so dishonorable as to desert me, after what I have told you."

She shook with her emotion and burst into a flood of tears. Then she threw her soft white arms around his neck and kissed him passionately, as though to coax from him the concession that was her right.

For all his selfishness, the man was touched by this exhibition of despair and, to console her for the moment, he replied:

"There, there; don't weep, chérie. It shall be as you wish. I will give you the shelter of my name; it is your due. So dry your eyes, my darling; they do not become your pretty face. Trust your Charles. I will see that no one shall speak lightly of you."

His words were fair enough, but whether he would make them good the

future should decide. All that he cared for now was to make her amenable to his will, with as little fuss as needs be. She was in his power, and he knew that she was bound to yield.

And she, poor trusting fool, believed, and the smiles broke through her tears.

"No, no," she said, "the world must never say that Hermionie de Vannes is less virtuous than she should be. And I never really doubted you, my Charles; I knew you were a man of honor and would be true to me. Kiss me, dearest, and say you are not angry with me, and forgive me that I ever seemed to doubt you; I will be guided wholly by you. I will do anything you wish, and say nothing to the Empress."

"Now you're my own little girl again," he said condescendingly, and he kissed her warmly.

"Hermionie! Hermionie! where are you?"

It was the Empress's voice across the garden calling her.

"The Empress," said the man. "Good night, my sweet; sleep soundly and dream of me; don't let your loving heart be troubled with anxious thoughts. All will be well with you."

He kissed her again, then sprang away into the darkness; and Hermionie hastened to the tower, where she found the Empress with St. Just standing by her side. It was on the verge of dawn, and they were gazing silently upon the view. Below them in the distance the Seine meandered, and to their left the bridge of St. Cloud could be just discerned.

The Empress was the first to speak.

"See, the clouds are breaking, the mists disperse, another day is dawning. We can just begin to see the green tops of the trees in the wood (the Bois de Boulogne); and yonder is Butte Montmartre, its summit crowned with those aged trees. Oh! how beautiful! And how fresh is everything in nature when the sun first wakes the world! See the first glimmer of his rays reflected far away on the dome of the Invalides. And now one can discern the shadowy forms of the houses of Paris emerging into view, as the mist floats slowly away. Ah! Paris, dear delightful, thoughtless, witty, restless, lively Paris, how I love you. But you are cruel too. Tell me my fate, you complex City. Will my Emperor return to me?"

She stretched her arms out appealingly to the slumbering city.

The birds were wakening into life and beginning to twitter amongst the shrubs; and some were already breaking into song. A lark was making melody in the sky above, carolling his earliest matins with joyous notes, trilling a welcome to the new-born day.

"Nature herself replies to your Majesty's behest," put in St. Just. "That bird

forecasts your fate. Your life is to be one unending song."

He leaned forward and took her hand; then raised it to his lips.

"I would it might be so," she sighed; "but my mind misgives me. Come, Hermionie, it is time we sought our beds, if all the Palace is not to know of our proceedings. And you, sir," turning to St. Just, "ought not to tarry. I fear you will altogether miss your rest."

Once more he bent low over the Empress's hand. "In your service, Madame," he said gallantly, "I desire no rest. To do your will is a recreation in itself. And I pledge my word not to lay head to pillow, until I have handed your mission to the Emperor. Farewell, Madame, until I have redeemed my word."

She gave his hand a meaning pressure and whispered in his ear, "Farewell, and may God keep you. My heart goes with you, my true knight, my—lover!"

An hour later, he had started for the frontier, and was riding for all that he was worth; wholly unconscious that Colonel Tremeau had been closeted with the Palace Marshal detailing what he had overheard; and that, in consequence, the news was already on its way to Bounaparte.

CHAPTER IV.

It was night, a few days later. From above in the spangled heavens the silver moon was shedding her softened beams upon the expiring camp fires; and along the range of hills, the bugle notes rang out, above the murmur of the camp, the order, "All lights out;" the signal for the wearied army to seek forgetfulness and repose in sleep.

Away to the left, from the burning village of Wagram flames ever and anon shot up, lighting the country round and casting a ruddy glow upon a tent pitched on a mound round which the French army was encamped. Above the tent, the emblem of France's glory, the tricolor flapped and floated in the breeze. At frequent intervals, two grenadiers of the Imperial Guard, who were pacing to and fro before the tent, paused in their sentry-go to listen anxiously; for on the right of the French lines, hard by the silver streak that marked the river Danube, the distant boom of artillery and the fainter rattle of musketry could be heard. Already then, the fighting had begun.

Within the tent sat the master of these legions. Untiringly, while all around him slept, he worked. He was writing, with feverish haste, at the desk that lay

open upon the table, the dim lantern casting its feeble rays upon the pale, impressive face, and reflecting just a glimmer on the gilt buttons and epaulets of the green and red Chasseur uniform he wore.

Occasionally he paused to think, and, at such moments, his glance fell on the sleeping secretary, who was, doubtless, dreaming of his cherished wife and children away in sunny France.

"Pauvre enfant!" muttered the Emperor, and resumed his writing.

Suddenly he threw down his pen and rose to his feet; then stretched his limbs. He was cramped with long-continued writing. His sensitive ear had caught the sound of the firing, and he stepped quickly to the opening of the tent.

The noise grew louder, and he could even sniff the smoke from powder. Evidently the engagement was extending, and might jeopardize his position. An anxious look appeared upon his face. He turned his head within, and his eye traveled quickly round the tent and lighted on a long blue cloak that lay across his camp bed. This he threw over his shoulders; then, having buckled on his sword, he left the tent.

At sight of him, the two grenadiers presented arms. He carelessly acknowledged their salute, and then began to pace up and down the little plateau before the tent. As was usual with him when deep in thought, his hands were crossed behind his back, and his chin was bent down upon his breast.

Hour succeeded hour, midnight came and went; and in the East the first gray streaks of dawn appeared, but still Napoleon maintained his monotonous tramp before his tent, pausing occasionally to listen.

At last, angry and impatient, he left his post and started with rapid strides to walk towards the advanced Guard.

Few men unused to the intricacies of the camp, covering at it did, several square miles, could have found their way thither without a guide, but Napoleon walked on unerringly. He seemed to know every inch of the ground.

At last, he paused in his solitary tramp, and halted, for a few moments, by a belt of trees, the silver-blue waters of the Danube flowing swiftly almost at his feet.

A short way down the river was a picket stationed to guard a small footbridge, and he could see the soldiers sitting by the fire, and, borne to him by the freshening breeze, he could hear their merry peals of laughter and occasional exclamations, called forth by some amusing story. He was amazed at their lightheartedness, when they knew that a battle was impending, and angered at the laxity with which their guard was kept. He stamped his foot, and in his face there came a look that boded ill for the commander of the picket.

"Fools!" he muttered. "Is it thus they keep their watch! Where is their officer?"

And the Emperor was just starting towards the group to learn the answer to his question, when something occurred that roused the laughing, chattering picket and brought them to their feet.

A horseman dashed across the narrow bridge. He was riding for his life, which each moment seemed to place in greater jeopardy, for in hot pursuit of him were some thirty Austrians. Mounted on white horses and with their white uniforms, they looked in the dim light like specters. They were gaining rapidly on the flying man, for his horse was almost done, and theirs seemed fresh enough.

The Emperor caught sight of what was going on, and made his way quickly to the picket. Meanwhile, all was bustle with them. The men had sprung to their feet and formed themselves into some sort of order to receive the enemy, whom they much outnumbered.

Meantime, the fugitive kept advancing, urging, by whip and spur, his jaded steed to greater efforts. Safety seemed almost in his grasp, and, encouraged by the presence of his compatriots, he waved his hand aloft, and shouted, "France and the Emperor!"

The picket cheered in response, and, with cries of "Vive l'Empereur," rushed to meet their foe. Then both sides went at it pell mell; shots were fired, but these soon ceased when the combatants got to close quarters; then it became a hand to hand struggle between swords and bayonets, and cuts and thrusts were freely exchanged, to the accompaniment of shouts and cheers from those who were unhurt, and groans from the wounded and the dying. Other Austrians swam their horses across the river to the assistance of their comrades, and, for the moment, despite the stubborn resistance of the French, who yielded only inch by inch, victory inclined to the attacking side. But soon reinforcements poured in on the French side, and the engagement raged more furiously than ever. For a short space the outpost seemed in danger, for Austrian troops on the other side of the river were collecting and hurrying across. But at this juncture, just when affairs were looking critical for Napoleon's men, some guns from the heights in possession of the French opened fire, sweeping the plains across the Danube. The hailstorm of grape and canister was murderous, and, there being no shelter for them, the Austrians first wavered and then incontinently took to flight. The small body on this side of the river were thus isolated, and could make no further stand against the dash and élan of the French. So the retreat was sounded and the survivors of them galloped across the bridge, followed by a storm of musket shots from the victorious enemy, that brought many a white uniform to the dust. Few of them, indeed, regained their comrades. The whole affair had occupied but a few minutes, and Napoleon, who had mounted a trooper's horse, and ridden up to the picket at the outset, had sat watching it immovably throughout.

When all was over, the flying horseman, who had so narrowly escaped

capture, gained his side. Then, reining in his panting charger, he saluted.

"Whence come you, Sir," asked the Emperor sternly.

"From France, Sire, with despatches, marked immediate, from the Empress," was the prompt reply.

"Follow me to my tent, if your horse can carry you so far. Then I will see that the Empress's communication receives attention." And, to suit his pace to the new-comer's, he moved on at a walk, the other in his wake.

Arrived at the tent, Napoleon woke his secretary; he wanted him to write his answer to Josephine's despatch.

St. Just, for he was the courier who had so nearly lost his life, had not expected to find another person present, and felt embarrassed. Knowing the subject of the Empress's communication, he wished to have his interview with the Emperor alone. He hesitated for a moment, and then said deprecatingly:—"The Empress strictly charged me, Sire, to give you these papers when you were alone."

At the same time he held out the packet. Surprise and anger at the speaker's boldness in daring to criticise his actions, showed on Napoleon's face.

"My secretary does not count," he answered sharply.

"In the Empress's eyes I think he does, Sire," rejoined St. Just, astonished, and at the same time, fearful at his own temerity.

There was silence for a few moments, and the Emperor gave him a look that made him tremble. He seemed on the point of letting his passion have its fling; but suddenly his expression changed, and he said deliberately, "The Empress's wishes are my commands." Then to the secretary, "Leave us."

So soon as the secretary had departed, the Emperor snatched the packet from St. Just and then, for the first time, became aware of his identity. He started in surprise, for he had believed that his former aide-de-camp was dead—killed at Trafalgar, as it had been reported.

"Hah!" he exclaimed. "You, again! Then you were not hanged by that cursed English Admiral. What means this continual game of hide and seek? You seem to be gifted with the cat's tenacity of life. But I will inquire into your affairs anon. At present Her Majesty's despatch demands my notice."

He cut the silken cord that bound the papers, seated himself at a table and opened them out before him; then conned them carefully. Meanwhile, St. Just stood motionless and silent; but his brain was active; there was much to move it; he realized that he was in deadly peril, and knew that his life depended on the Emperor's mood.

Presently the Emperor started to his feet and, taking no notice of St. Just, went to a despatch box in the corner, and from it took a document. This also he read carefully, comparing it with some of the papers St. Just had brought. He threw it down upon the table with an angry "Pish!" Then he called out sharply,

"Guard!"

There was a hurried movement outside the tent; then a file of soldiers came in view and drew up, motionless as statues, before the opening.

The Emperor, without moving from the table, addressed the sergeant. "Go to my secretary's tent and tell the officer who brought the last despatch to attend me instantly. Should he not be there, he must be sought until you find him."

The sergeant saluted and withdrew.

Then Napoleon went again to the despatch box; this time he took from it two miniatures.

At the one he looked at first, his face took on an expression of mingled affection and regret. It was the counterfeit presentment of the Empress Josephine, taken many years before; and the painter had been happy in his conception, for, though he had not actually sacrificed truth to flattery in any single feature, yet he had, somehow, so idealized the whole, as to depict a marvelously lovely face, that certainly surpassed in fascination the original. She seemed to be just opening her mouth to speak; one could almost see the lips in motion; and the eyes and every feature were instinct with the vivacity which was her greatest charm.

The Emperor gazed at it for a minute. Then, "No, no," he muttered; "it is useless." He sighed, then laid the miniature, lovingly and reluctantly, as it seemed, upon the table.

Then he took up the other, and this also he subjected to a long and earnest scrutiny. It was the portrait of a much younger woman—a mere girl in fact—with far less pretentions to feminine attractions than had Josephine. This was the Archduchess Marie Louise, the daughter of Napoleon's most stubborn foe: but, for all that, chosen by the great conquerer to be his wife, so soon as he should have freed himself from his present matrimonial claims.

With fear and trembling, and a sickening feeling at his heart, St. Just stood watching every movement, and scanning every feature of Napoleon; but to the mood of the man within, the stern, impassive countenance gave no clue. Hope was not wholly dead in St. Just, but despair predominated.

A quick, military step was heard approaching, and, immediately afterwards, an officer entered the tent, first pausing at the entrance to salute the Emperor.

A glance sufficed to show St. Just that his journey had been fruitless. The dread, muttered words "Too late" penetrated to his brain, and all the heart went out of him. The newcomer was Colonel Tremeau, the officer he had met a few days before in the garden at St. Cloud. He guessed that his conversation with the Empress had been overheard. He must have traveled post haste in order to outstrip him—and he had succeeded.

Napoleon noted the surprise and terror of St. Just, and a cruel smile began

to flit about his face—the smile that did not betoken approval of the person whom it felt, but was, rather, devilish, and calculated to fill the stoutest heart with dread.

"You know this gentleman, Mons. St. Just," he said, and his tone was cold and calm. "You should have ridden faster. You did not know it was a race. Your rival came in first. Your information was forestalled; your plot has failed."

St. Just was almost dumbfounded; words seemed to fail him; he had no time to think; still he must say something. Pale as death and not knowing what he did say, he stammered:

"Sire, permit me a word, one word I beseech you,"

"Say on, but make your words as few as possible."

"There is no plot, Sire," resumed the luckless emissary; "I have ridden here without resting by the way, at the Empress's express commands, to convey to you intelligence that Her Majesty thought vital to France and you. The papers that came into her hands and that she charged me to deliver to your Majesty, seemed to show that our country is in danger. England is on the point of joining hands with Russia; all Europe is rising secretly against you. Your armies are retreating everywhere in Spain.

"You hold in your hand, Sire, the proofs of the duplicity and worse, of Talleyrand and Fouché. Think you that they would wish to part you from the Empress, save for their own ends?"

He paused, appalled at his own audacity.

"By Heavens, Sir," the Emperor stormed, and he sprang to his feet, and stamped with rage, "you presume too far. I will submit no longer to your insolence. I will have you shot. Colonel Tremeau, arrest that man."

Colonel Tremeau made a step forward to obey the Emperor's command, but paused when the other raised his hand and addressed Napoleon.

"Pause one moment, Sire," he said, "and consider what you would do. I have the Empress's safe conduct. Surely you would not stain your honor as a soldier and a man by laying a finger on a peaceful envoy."

Then, to do him justice, more concerned for Josephine than for himself, distracted at the thought of her pain at receiving no reply to her appeal, and at the suspicion that he had betrayed her, he went down on one knee before Napoleon, and besought him to weigh carefully the serious news in the despatches. "Arrest me, Sire," he concluded; "kill me, if you will; but save the Empress and yourself."

"Possibly the Empress would rather save her paramour," interjected Colonel Tremeau sneeringly.

At this, Napoleon turned round suddenly to the last speaker, his face convulsed with rage, and from his eyes fire seemed to flash.

"What mean you, Sir?" he shouted. "Explain your vile innuendo instantly, or you, too, shall be arrested."

Thus challenged, Tremeau told of St. Just's midnight visit to St. Cloud and of what he had overheard there. St. Just listened to him in silence, and, listening, thought it was all over with him. He could not but admit to himself that Tremeau stated fairly what had taken place. He showed no animus, spoke calmly and dispassionately, and put no false color on the truth. Also it became plain that Tremeau had not heard all; he must have gone before the interview with Josephine was over. Poor though it was, this was some slight consolation.

When the officer had finished his account, at first the Emperor said nothing. He took the miniature of Josephine from the table and threw it on the ground; then stamped upon it, grinding it to fragments under his heel. Then, his features working unceasingly and his hands clenching and unclenching in his fury, he called out, "Guard!"

The file appeared with their sergeant at their head. He gathered up the despatches and crumpled them together; then passed them to the sergeant. "Burn these papers at once. Stay, I will see you do it."

He strode rapidly outside the tent to a camp fire a few yards off; then flung the papers into it. St. Just had stepped outside the tent and been a silent watcher of the scene. The Emperor strode up to him. "Go, Sir, to the Empress," he said sternly, "and tell her what you have seen. That is my answer to her letter and enclosures. As for you," and he looked St. Just contemptuously from head to foot, "I give Her Majesty credit for better taste, than to place on Colonel Tremeau's words the construction they might bear. You have mistaken condescension for a sentiment that implies equality. The lion's consort mates only with her kind, and could find no attraction in a cur."

At this moment an officer of high rank galloped up, his charger flecked with foam; he drew rein when he reached Napoleon.

"The Austrians are advancing, Sire,"—he brought the words out breathlessly—"and the men are impatient to attack." The change in the Emperor's face was almost magical; the rage that had contorted it had vanished like a flash, at the officer's first words, and now there was a glow of pleasure on it; the impassiveness was gone, and the light of anticipated victory was in his eye. He forgot the man who had so raised his ire, and even Josephine.

"This is welcome news," he answered joyously; "we will give them a lesson for their rashness. Return, Marshal, instantly, and let the advance be sounded. I will be with you before they get to work." Then he turned to Colonel Tremeau. "Leave me now, Sir, I will see you after the battle. At present I would be alone."

The Marshal rode away and Tremeau withdrew.

Napoleon re-entered his tent, and St. Just, from the outside, saw him bring the portrait of the Austrian Arch-duchess to his lips, while the Frenchwoman's lay shattered at his feet.

Then Josephine's envoy moved away. He was sick at heart, chafing at Napoleon's contemptuous words, and despondent at the utter failure of his mission. How he should break the news to Josephine, he scarce durst think.

Meanwhile, the Emperor rode forth to beat the Austrians. History tell us how, throughout that long and hard fought day, wherever the fight was thickest and the danger greatest, he was to be found. Perchance, he hoped that some stray bullet would still that conscience that was vainly telling him that what he meditated against Josephine was a hideous crime.

CHAPTER V.

Nearly five months had passed since the battle of Wagram had been fought and won; since the momentous interview between the Emperor and St. Just that had resulted so disastrously for Josephine. Then it had been warm, sunny June, the sky one sheet of azure; now it was the last day in November, when all was chill and dreary, and a dark pall hung over everything. It was a day on which even a Mark Tapley would have found it hard to preserve his spirits.

The action of the drama had been shifted from Austria to France, and the scene on which the curtain was now to rise was the Palace of Fontainebleau.

Here, on the evening of the aforesaid day in November, Josephine, still Empress, but not long to be, was pacing, restlessly and with agitated mien, the floor of her private apartment. She was still beautiful, but the sadness of her face, and the look almost of terror in it were painful to behold. Just so might have looked Mary, Queen of Scots, on her way to execution. She was royally attired, and the aid of every feminine art had been invoked to enhance the many charms she had, and to create the few she lacked. A diamond tiara sparkled on her head, and over her shoulders, to protect them from the draughts, was thrown a violet velvet mantle studded with the imperial bees, the Emperor affected.

The infinite pains to make herself attractive, had been taken for him, for he was momentarily expected. He had arrived some hours before from Paris, but they had not yet met.

Prepared by St. Just, as she had been, for the last three months for the coming interview—he had informed her of the failure of his errand to her husband—now that the moment for it was close at hand, she was filled with trepidation; and, though she had been anxiously looking forward to it with increasing hope,

she would now have postponed it, if she could. She had remarked but now, on meeting some of the ministers returning from an audience with the Emperor, how curt had been their salutations, how they had hurried away from her after the barest ceremonious courtesy, as though fearing to be questioned by her; how even the officers of her own household looked furtively at her, and the people outside the palace regarded her with coldness, as though guessing that her reign was almost at an end. Even in her Maids of Honor she thought she saw a change; they seemed less respectful, less observant of the Court etiquette, that Napoleon made de rigueur; more familiar in their manner. Poor woman, no wonder she was sad; every friend seemed to have deserted her; save only St. Just, who was now a Captain of her Guard, and on his fidelity she knew she could rely; but then he was flattered by her marked notice of him, and nursed a sort of languid passion for her.

Suddenly the unhappy woman paused in her pacings to and fro, and started, and her heart throbbed painfully. A firm, sharp step, that she and those about her recognized, could be heard without in the antechamber and rapidly approaching. At once, the ladies rose and placed themselves in an attitude of respectful reverence, in which some fear was mingled. He was not given to control his sentiments, and his courtiers never knew in what mood he might be found.

The door flew open and the Emperor entered. He looked worried and confused. Like the Empress, he was in evening dress. The ladies all bent low before him.

Acknowledging their obeisance with the slightest movement of his head, he passed on towards Josephine.

The moment she had first hoped for, and then dreaded, had arrived. With a mighty effort she strove to close the door upon her fear and to assume a gladness she was far from feeling.

She sprang towards him with a joyous cry, and stretched out her arms to him, but her face was very pale, and there was a hunted expression in her eyes; she was trembling violently. All this Napoleon noted and a frown gathered on his brow. But for this, he would have responded in the same spirit to her tones and gesture. As it was, his greeting was chill and formal, and, the moment it was performed, he added in a cold, harsh tone:

"Come, Josephine, let us walk together in the corridor before dinner."

Filled with a nameless dread, and without a word, the Empress took his arm, and they passed from the apartment, the ladies meanwhile throwing expressive glances at each other. Threading the suite of rooms, they reached the gallery de François Premier. The long corridor, unlighted as it was, looked weird and uncanny in the twilight, and presented an almost endless vista. Its gloom and silence sent a shiver through the Empress; its aspect was so different from what it

was when she had seen it last, illumined with thousands of wax candles and filled with courtiers in brilliant uniforms and ladies in elaborate toilettes; the walls echoing with the hum of sprightly conversation, broken every now and then by the rippling laugh of some fair woman. Now, not a sound, but their own footfalls, could be heard. Even the sculptured salamanders seemed to grin maliciously, and the figures on the tapestried walls to frown on her. With a shudder and involuntarily, she tightened her grasp upon her husband's arm.

The Emperor, on his part, strolled on almost joyously, but such joy as was in him was assumed. It was more a sense of satisfaction that an unpleasant business would soon be done with. Try as he might, he could not persuade himself that what he meditated was well. He saw the cruelty of the act to her; yet his Ministers desired it; said it would consolidate his power; that for him to found a dynasty would be good for France. But even now his heart was torn by the emotions that warred within.

At last, involuntarily, a cry of pity broke from him, "My poor Josephine," and he looked down upon her pityingly. She started with alarm; it was coming, what she feared.

"Napoleon," she gasped timidly, "What is it, and why do you look so strangely at me?" She led, almost dragged him, to a seat in a window that looked out upon a quaint old-fashioned garden, in which were yew trees pruned into formal and fantastic shapes, many of which, in the gathering darkness, looked like human figures standing motionless, surrounded by huge animals all still as death.

"Tell your Josephine what troubles you," she resumed in pleading tones, when they were seated. "Forget for one short hour the cares of State, and let us be all in all to one another."

Nervously he clasped her hand in his, and, with eyes cast down upon the ground in very shame at the base part he was about to play, he strove to speak. But his words did not come willingly.

"How—how can I tell you," he began; "but I must, though it cuts me to the heart. Josephine! my dear Josephine! You know how I have loved you!.... To you, to you alone, I owe the only moments of happiness I have tasted in this world. But, Josephine, my destiny is not to be controlled by my desire. My dearest affections must yield to the interests of France. They—the Ministers wish me to separate from you. They—they say that it is necessary for the welfare of France that I should have an heir to follow me in the Empire I have founded. They tell me I must marry again." His voice had sunk lower and lower, till the last words had become all but inaudible.

"And who are they," she cried impetuously, "that dare to tell the conqueror of Egypt, of Italy, of Austria; the ruler of the foremost country in the world,

that he must do anything?" Then, changing her tone to one of supplication, she continued. "You talk of marrying again; do I not already enjoy few enough of a wife's privileges, that you should think of putting me away? You do not give me the opportunity of wearying you, for you are so much away on your numerous campaigns. I do not complain, for what is a woman in comparison to affairs of State; but I feel your frequent absences sorely.

"Oh! Napoleon, think how we have loved each other; recall the days of old when you were troubled, and came to Josephine for sympathy and consolation."

She rose to her feet and faced him. "You have raised me to an exalted station, to a position that any woman would be proud of; it is a great thing to be an Empress; doubtless I am the envy of millions of my sex! But it is not the Emperor, it is Napoleon whom I love. These trappings are as naught to me, without your love; this imperial mantle, I cast it from me; this sparkling bauble, I tear it from my brow;" and, suiting her action to her words, she tossed the mantle from her shoulders and dashed her tiara on the ground.

"Sire, I come to you, all powerful, as you now are; I come to you, a suppliant, as you once came to me." She cast herself upon her knees before him. "Oh! do not mock me with the State; what right has it to intervene between two loving hearts, to abrogate God's ordinances? Oh! Napoleon, say you love me." She grovelled at his feet and clasped her arms around his knees; she could scarce proceed for the tears that were streaming down her face and the sobs that she could not repress. "Oh! be Emperor in deed as well as name," she went on in broken accents. "Why should you vex yourself about a son to follow you as Emperor and King, you who can make Emperors and Kings at will? And for the State, you are the State, as Louis le Grand in his time proudly said he was."

Then, seeing his unbending look, "I see my appeal is useless. Say no more, I understand you. I expected this, but the blow is not the less mortal."

She sank exhausted on the floor before him.

Hard and selfish, as he was, he had some heart, and at the sight of her killing grief and the lovely, tear-stained face, that he had never before seen, except wreathed in smiles, a wave of pity for a moment rolled over his resolve, and almost stifled it. Her pleadings had raised strong emotions. He rose and began to pace the gallery, with head bent forward and hands clasped behind his back. "Stay," he said. Then he began to mutter to himself, "Yes, I would I could defy them." His hands twitched nervously. Suddenly he snapped his fingers. "Yes, and I will defy them. Am I not Emperor, and shall they dictate to me? By Heavens, no. They will only cringe before me, when I tell them that I refuse to be coerced by them." His hand strayed unconsciously to his pocket, and touched something. "And yet—" Then all at once his manner changed. A man was advancing along the gallery. It was St. Just, resplendent in his uniform as Captain of the Empress's

guards. Napoleon's eye fell on him, and he remembered what Colonel Tremeau had said about him, he had called him the paramour of the Empress.

At sight of him, a frown gathered on the Emperor's brow, and his face became convulsed with rage. "No," he broke out in a voice of thunder, "No, I will not alter my determination. My Ministers are right. Ah! traitress," to Josephine, who had been anxiously watching his relenting mien, but now had uttered a cry, the knell of her expiring hope, "dost think I do not know that, when I am absent, you console yourself with others? It was so from the very first. There was that man who was with you in the days of the Revolution; did you not meet him again in Italy? Then there have been others, I have heard of, but how many I know not. And now this man," pointing to St. Just. He turned savagely on him. "Pray, Sir, what business have you here?"

The Emperor's fury awed St. Just. On entering the gallery he had not known that it was tenanted, though he was looking for Napoleon. "I came, Sire," he answered deprecatingly, "in the exercise of my duty as Captain of the Empress's guard. I was not aware that you and Her Majesty were here, or I should not have so presumed."

"You lie, Sir," roared Napoleon furiously. "You came to spy. Renegade, deserter, traitor, you are always intruding on the scene. But this time you shall not escape me; by Heavens; you shall die, as you have so long deserved!"

Instantly he drew his sword and made a savage cut at the Captain of the Guard, that would have ended that officer's career, had he not stepped nimbly back. Then, smarting under the Emperor's scathing words, and moved by sympathy for the insulted Empress, he did what ever afterwards, when he thought of it, filled him with amazement at his temerity. He drew his sword and placed himself in a position of defense before the Emperor.

The combat began. The Emperor attacked with ungovernable fury; so reckless was he, taking no pains to guard himself, that, had the other chosen, he could several times have run him through, and thus terminated the First Empire; but he kept calm, contenting himself with remaining on the defensive, parrying Napoleon's furious onslaughts, with such skill as he was master of. But to guard oneself in a duel, without taking advantage of openings for attack, when one's opponent is enraged and active, and fights regardless of his own danger, is no easy matter. And St. Just had all and more than he could do, for, presently, the Emperor, in making a furious lunge in tierce, was so far successful that he ripped St. Just's sleeve and slightly wounded his sword arm. This roused the officer's temper, and he began to press Napoleon in his turn, driving him into a corner; though still it was his intention to avoid even pricking him, if he could so far control himself.

At the first onset, Josephine had tried to scream for help, but, so paralyzed

with terror was she, that her voice refused to come. So, with wide open eyes and terror-struck, she watched the combat, mute and motionless.

Napoleon, in making a fierce thrust, now slipped and fell upon his knee. He was at his opponent's mercy, as, indeed he had been all along, for all he had not known it.

Burning with the sense of his own injuries, and exasperated beyond control, St. Just had shortened his sword and was about to plunge it into his opponent, when Josephine rushed forward and seized his arm.

"No, no," she cried, "what would you do? It is the Emperor you would slay. More, he is my husband."

"And he would divorce you," St. Just retorted angrily. But Josephine had saved the Emperor. The few words she had uttered had given his assailant time to think, and he became once more master of himself.

Meantime Napoleon had risen to his feet and regained his sword. The Captain of the Empress's guard snapped his own sword across his knee, flung the pieces on the floor, and stood defenseless and erect before the Emperor. Then, as though all that had just passed had never been, he saluted, and said respectfully, "Mons. de Talleyrand desires an audience with Your Majesty; he awaits you in the White Drawing Room."

Boiling with indignation at his defeat, and longing to cut him down or run him through, but conscious that he had received his life at the speaker's hands, the Emperor yet felt that it was impossible to slay an unarmed man, and before the Empress, too. Perhaps it was, in reality, her presence that stayed his hand. At any rate, he lowered his sword. But the look of concentrated malice he turned upon St. Just was fearful to behold. "Why did you not deliver your message when you first intruded here?" he asked in a voice that was hoarse with passion.

"Sire, you scarce gave me the opportunity," was the calm reply.

"Go, Sir," resumed the Emperor. "I give you one hour to quit the palace; if, by that time, you are not gone, then woe betide you; no power on earth shall save you from my vengeance."

Then he turned to Josephine.

"Madame, the King of Westphalia dines with us to-night. See that you be ready to receive him." Then, moving his head in the direction of St. Just, he hissed out the words, "Make hay while you may; you have little time." Then he added sternly and emphatically, "I go to tell Mons. de Talleyrand to arrange for the divorce forthwith."

"Sire, Napoleon, hear me," shrieked the unhappy Empress, and she moved towards him impulsively.

"I have said it," he said coldly, then stepped quickly towards the door.

Josephine staggered back and would have fallen, but that St. Just caught

her in his arms and saved her.

At the door Napoleon paused and turned his head, his figure sharply silhouetted upon the panelling, by the moon, which showed up the red ribbon of the Legion of Honor he wore, and accentuated the pallor of his face.

"You have one hour," to St. Just.

He left the gallery, and the door closed with a clang behind him.

The sound roused the Empress and she withdrew herself slowly from St. Just's support, and stumbled to a seat. She looked up at him, terror-stricken and bewildered.

"He is gone from me," she moaned. "I have lost him. Oh! what shall I do, what shall I do? Cruel, cruel!"

She pressed her hands against her head, as though to still its throbbing. Until her first grief should have spent itself, St. Just knew that to attempt to comfort her would be useless; and there was nothing he could say. He stood watching her in silence.

For some time she wept silently. Then, suddenly she sprang up, and her eye fell on the broken sword. She stooped towards it and raised it from the floor.

Divining her intention, St. Just dashed forward and wrested it from her hand. "Not that," he cried; "you must be mad."

"And have I not suffered enough to make me so? Why should I live? I cannot live. Oh! let me die," she wailed.

"Never," he replied impetuously. "There is yet happiness in store for you; life and hope."

"I will live, then; I may help him yet. Give it me," pointing to the broken sword.

"You swear you will not use it?"

"I swear. I shall keep it as a memorial of your fidelity. If ever I should be in dire distress and want your help, I shall send this sword-hilt to you. Then, come to me at once, for I shall need you sorely. Be careful for yourself; for Josephine's sake be careful, and do not needlessly meet danger. It cuts me to the heart to part with you, but you must go."

Her voice was broken with her sobs, and there was a hopelessness about her tone that went straight to her hearer's heart.

He went down on his knee and passionately kissed her hand. A bracelet containing a miniature of herself dropped from her wrist. He stooped and picked it up.

"Keep it, my friend," she said, "in memory of the unhappy Josephine."

She bent forward and brushed his forehead with her lips. "We shall not meet again, except to help him who has rejected me. If I seem unfaithful it is to serve him; to regain his love. But now he loves me not, so this token of affection

to a faithful friend is no treason to him. Farewell, my dear, you must not tarry."

But, ere the last words had left her mouth, St. Just had sprung to his feet. Her words and the touch of her lips upon his brow had sent the blood coursing madly through his veins. His heart was in a ferment. Before she had divined his purpose, he had taken her in his arms and was passionately kissing her. Was it his fancy only, or did she really return his kisses? At least, she showed no resentment. "Farewell," again she murmured faintly. She struggled slightly to free herself, and he released her.

Then he ran to an open window and, with one last look at her, he vaulted through it and sped across the garden. On he flew, scarce noticing where he went, intent only on cutting one of the main avenues, for the time was going on, and his hour of grace would soon be spent; and then, unless he should be well clear of the precincts of the palace, the full weight of Napoleon's fury would be hurled at him. Soon he struck into a broad drive, and, by following this, it led him to the Porte Dauphin. Passing through the gate, he was hurrying onwards, when he felt a slight touch on his arm. With a start, he checked his footsteps and, not knowing whether it proceeded from friend or foe, instinctively he laid his hand upon his sword. He saw two figures in the darkness, a man and a boy; the man holding two horses by the bridles.

A silvery laugh rang out upon the stillness of the night and, the next moment, two voices spoke, together:—"Master!" "Henri!" The speakers were Mahmoud and his mistress.

"Halima!" cried St. Just astounded. "How come you here?"

"Am I not everywhere where my vengeance leads me?" she answered gayly. "And I fancy I was wanted here. Deluded schemer, it is useless trying to keep me in the dark; my agents have kept me informed of all your doings. So you have been doing a little plotting on your own account—and a little philandering too, eh? Oh! fie, you who swore that you had eyes for no other woman, that your life was torture when away from me. Oh! faithless, cruel deceiver!" And again her laughter rang out merrily.

It was so plainly unaffected, too, that even a less jealous man than was St. Just could not have avoided the conviction that he had not been greatly missed; that his wife had found consolation in another quarter. He bit his lip in mortification.

"Curses on Abdallah!" he muttered.

"Nay, curse him not, my dear," she answered airily; "he has not lowered you in my esteem. I blame you not; for, unwittingly, you have done good service. 'Tis, is't not, that the Emperor divorces Josephine?"

He nodded; he was offended at her banter, and somewhat shamed.

"Good," she replied, referring to the divorce. "It is the beginning of the end.

Now tell me more."

Rapidly he sketched out what had passed, detailing Napoleon's fury and his threat to have him shot, unless he were away at once.

When he had concluded. "You have no time to lose, my dear," she said. "Mount, mount quickly, and ride away. They must not find you here. Make your way with all speed to England; there, at least, you will be safe."

"And you?" he asked.

"I shall be not long after you. Await me there. For the moment, I have work in France. My vengeance is working towards its climax. It will surely come, I know, but how soon I know not. Now go, dear."

He embraced her tenderly. "Oh! Halima, my best-beloved," he said, "why cannot we always be together?" Then he mounted one of the horses and galloped off into the blackness of the night.

CAPTIVE, BUT EMPEROR STILL.

EPOCH IV.

CAPTIVE, BUT EMPEROR STILL.

CHAPTER I.

It is to be regretted that of St. Just's MS., from which this story is compiled, many pages have been lost. The reader will have noticed that there are several gaps in the narrative—years in which his time is unaccounted for. From the numbering of the leaves preserved, it appears that more than a hundred pages are missing, pages that cover the period between the moment when St. Just left Halima after his duel with Napoleon in November, 1809, and the Emperor's abdication at Fontainebleau, 1814.

So that it is impossible to state with certainty whether, when St. Just rode

away from his wife with the intention of gaining England, and informing the British Government of Napoleon's contemplated divorce, he carried out his purpose. This much however is known, that, by some means he managed to escape the Emperor's vengeance. How he occupied himself in the five years' interval cannot now be ascertained; but, from allusions in the subsequent portions of his MS. it would seem that for a portion of the time he served in the Russian Army, and took part in harassing Napoleon in his retreat from Moscow. How he got to Russia is not clear; but it is likely enough that he was sent there by the British Government with despatches for the Emperor Alexander.

Doubtless he was engaged in many adventures, at the instigation of his wife, but of these there is no account.

In the five years that had elapsed, great changes had taken place. Napoleon, no longer Emperor of the French, was confined to the island of Elba, in which he exercised a petty sovereignty; having been driven from his country by the treachery of his Counsellors and Marshals, backed up by the victorious forces of the Allies.

Halima was exultant at his downfall, in which, somehow, she persuaded herself she had had a hand. True, she had been plotting against him for years, but it may well be doubted that her actions had had the slightest influence on events; but she thought so, and was, in consequence content.

Josephine, the one woman who had had true and lasting love for the Emperor, was dead, her end, no doubt, accelerated by the divorce.

Louis XVIII was king of France, but, with the usual obstinacy of the Bourbons, he failed to recognize the enormous change that had taken place in the temper and sentiment of the people; and already there were signs, for those who had the wit to understand them, that, under the surface there were smoldering embers of discontent that would burn fiercely at the first fanning. But the powers in France were unaware of it, and the deluded monarch sat his throne in cheerful self-sufficiency.

But it is with England, not with France, that the reader has now to do.

The first of January in the year 1815 was remarkable for its mildness, enhanced, in the locality which was the scene of the events next to be recorded, by the blazing sun which was pouring its rays generously upon the earth from the blue expanse of cloudless sky, making the sap stir in the leafless trees, and dyeing the herbage a more vivid green.

In the Spring and Summer the scene would have been a lovely one, and even now, it was not without its charms—the charms that belong to an English landscape.

Away in the distance lay in the Sussex Downs, sheltering from the cold blasts from the North, a roomy, weather-beaten, red-brick house, at present the

abode of Halima and St. Just. A short distance from this house, and looking down upon it, was Wolstonbury Hill, nestling beneath which was the little church of Hurstpierpoint; the spire only was visible from the house, by reason of the trees that intervened. Away to the right was Devil's Dyke, and still further in the same direction lay Shoreham Gap. Extending the range of his vision the gazer would discern a clump of trees, called Chantingbury Ring, a well-known landmark for miles round—the sailors say that, coming up channel, you can see it thirty miles away.

In the old-fashioned garden that surrounded the house and was bounded by the high road between London and Brighton—about ten miles distant from the house—strolled on this same first of January, a lady and a gentleman. Let it be said at once that they were Halima and St. Just. Her age at this time was about three and thirty. She was still a lovely woman, but had parted with her girlish looks. Some might even think that her increased years had added to her charms; there was no waning in them; only maturity; and from her intercourse with high-bred men and women, she had acquired an ease of manner, a dignity of presence and a wit and polish in her conversation that, with her quick intelligence, made her more fascinating even than of yore. Withal, she had lost none of her strong will power and imperiousness. She was dressed handsomely, but more quietly than heretofore.

As for St. Just, he was noticeably aged, though the change in him in the last five years was not so great as in the five that had preceded them. He walked with a slight limp, the result of a wound received in Spain.

Presently they halted in their walk, and stood silently watching the sun just beginning to slip behind the leafless trees that crowned a little knoll to the West. At the same time the chime of distant bells struck on their ears.

St. Just was the first to break the silence.

"Art happy, chérie, in the reflection that your vengeance is complete; that our enemy, Napoleon, no longer the great, is exiled; that my wanderings about the Continent are over, and that now we can be all in all to one another."

"But is it really true?" she asked.

"True enough, my dearest. Did you not read it in the newspaper I brought last week, when I went to London?"

"But newspapers oft lie. I am still not easy. You know, or ought to by this time, that I depend on what my spirits tell me; not altogether on what is common knowledge. And they have told me—"

"Hush! little woman, not so loud; you may be overheard. As it is, these English about here are suspicious of us, because we're French; what would they think, should they see and hear you at your incantations? I believe they would burn you as a witch."

She burst into a merry, careless laugh. "They must catch me first," she said.

But he did not join in her merriment.

"Don't laugh, my dear," he said. "If harm should come to you—" he sighed.

"No harm will come to me. If any should threaten me, my spirits would forewarn me of it."

They resumed their walk in silence, pacing up and down the graveled walks. He seemed moody and disturbed.

By this time the sun had disappeared, and the air had become cold and raw. Halima shivered. "I shall go in, Henri," she said. "It is getting cold. This country is not like our sunny France." After a moment's pause, she went on complainingly, "Where are your reflections straying to?"

"I was thinking," he replied in an absent tone, "of what I had been reading in the newspaper. I was thinking of the unhappy woman who was Napoleon's wife."

"Of Marie Louise?" she asked.

"No, of Josephine."

"Ah! I might have expected it," she retorted angrily and there was a dangerous light in her eyes, that might have warned him. But it only angered him. He turned upon her sharply.

"You sneer, but she was a noble woman. I am proud to admit that she regarded me with favor. I would have done much for her. But for your devilish ingenuity and persistent malice, I might have saved him for her sake."

"That you could not have done," she answered scornfully, "against my will."

"Pray how?"

"Recall to your mind the eve of the battle of Wagram. Ah! you would have made him believe in her, but for me. Abdallah was my agent, as you know."

St. Just nodded in assent.

"He was watched by one of the Empress's Maids of Honor."

"Yes; go on," interposed the man, in a tone of unnatural calm. He was putting a rein on his excitement. He felt that he was about to get an insight into circumstances that had puzzled him.

"She was in the power of her lover," resumed Halima, "a Colonel of the Guard. What was his name? Ah!" after a moment's pause, "Tremeau. He was watched by the palace Marshal, who was in the pay of Fouché. Fouché had his own interest to serve, and was in league with Talleyrand; and he, in his turn, was intriguing with Pitt and Malmesbury and other enemies of Napoleon. And I was in it all; I knew all that was going on, and helped to pull the strings. I was kept informed of all your doings at Fontainebleau, my dear—amours and all."

"I see," he said; "spy upon spy."

"V'là!" she exclaimed, airily, "One must watch one's husband when he is

away. I know something of the ways of men. I always followed your movements, when you were traveling."

"Except in Spain."

"No, not even excepting Spain, for there I was kept au courant by Tremeau, who, you may remember, was in that country after Napoleon's second marriage. He was in favor with Marshal Soult, and betrayed his plans to Wellington. Yes, my friend, I had a finger in the Spanish pie, not less than in other articles of Napoleon's menu."

"But my missions?"

"Blinds, my innocent, mere blinds; the instructions in your papers were not intended to be acted on. They were written to mislead, in case they should be taken from you. I soon found out that you were only half in earnest about Napoleon; that, once under the glamour of his presence, you would return to your allegiance to him. Fortunately, I discovered this in time. Had you been trusted, you might have wrought irreparable mischief."

"Then I was played with all along?" was his moody comment.

"I would not put it so offensively as that, my friend. Let us say that the part you played was not a leading one; but you filled your rôle, such as it was, with credit. A stronger part would, I fear, have proved too much for you. You may thank me, therefore, that you were not cast for the jeune premier."

She laughed, a little scornful laugh that was not pleasant to the hearer.

For a few seconds, St. Just made no rejoinder. Then, looking at her sternly, he enquired, "Do you tell me seriously that you had anything to do with Tremeau's listening to my conversation with Josephine at St. Cloud, and afterwards forestalling me in my mission to the Emperor?"

"Certainly I do."

"You did an innocent woman a grievous wrong; what harm had she ever done to you?"

"None that I know of. I was not jealous of her, if you suggest that. I did not mind your philandering with her in my absence. Without vanity, I think I might put my attractions in the scale with hers. No, I had not the least animus against her; she was a quantité négligeable, a victim to the odium Napoleon would incur by her divorce."

"'Twas a heartless act. Had you no consideration for your fellow woman?"

"What thought had Buonaparte for me, when he robbed me of my innocence?" she retorted sharply.

He recoiled from her, as though he had been struck. "Ah! don't," he said imploringly. "Why remind me of it? It was almost blotted from my mind."

"But never from mine," and her eyes looked hard and cruel, and gleamed with a vindictive fire.

She tripped away from him, and he turned round to watch her until she disappeared into the house. A deep sigh escaped him. For the last ten years—the best of his life and hers—he had been her husband in little more than name; no sooner had he returned from one mission, than he had been despatched upon another. Now he came to think of it, he had been the mere instrument of her revenge, a tool in her hands, a sort of confidential servant; and, even so, not wholly trusted. The position irked him terribly, and, for the first time in his life, a something, that he hardly durst acknowledge as regret, stole over him, that they had ever met.

"I wonder what would have happened," he said half aloud, "if I had never left Napoleon."

He sighed again, then began slowly moving to the house.

A noise of shouting in the distance made him check his steps. He listened; the sound came nearer, and still nearer. Then, besides the shouting, he could distinguish the clattering of horses' hoofs and the pattering of running feet. Plainly, men mounted and on foot were hurrying along the high road in chase of somebody or something. And now a cry fell on his ear, that took him back to the bygone days—to France.

"A moi, mes amis; à moi, au secours!"

Without a moment's hesitation, St. Just dashed down the carriage way in the direction of the sounds. When he reached the gates, he saw an emaciated figure, panting and exhausted, running down the road; and, about a hundred yards behind the fugitive, some dragoons, with an officer at their head. The officer was waving his sword and shouting, "Stop him, stop him, in the king's name. He is a French prisoner escaped from Lewes." Some laborers in the neighborhood were following the dragoons. Other villagers hearing the noise, came up from the opposite direction with lanterns, to see what it was about.

Thus hemmed in, the hunted creature had no chance of escape. Seeing this, he would have given up the attempt and quietly submitted to re-capture; when St. Just, knowing, or rather guessing, that those who were pursuing him knew no French, shouted to him, "A moi, pour France."

The fugitive dashed on, and fell palpitating at St. Just's feet.

"The very man I sought," he gasped. "Take it." And St. Just felt a small, but weighty, parcel thrust into his hands, under cover of the darkness. To save the man from capture was impossible, for the soldiers were close upon him; and St. Just had only time to conceal the packet, when the commander of the dragoons rode up, a few yards in advance of his men. The fugitive had scrambled to his feet.

"Caught, you French rascal," exclaimed the officer, striking at him with the flat of his sword. The man bent to dodge the blow, and then, before anyone could

divine his purpose, he made a dash at the holster before the saddle, and seized one of the officer's pistols. In an instant he had fired.

His aim was true. The officer swayed in his saddle, bent forward, then rolled off his horse to the ground, shot through the heart. But, before this had happened, there was another explosion. The assassin had raised the pistol to his head and fired the second barrel. He dropped to the ground and lay huddled up beside his victim. At the same moment, the foremost trooper rode up and dismounted to examine the body of his officer. He was stone dead.

The villagers crowded round the other man. He moved slightly. St. Just bent over him. The wounded Frenchman murmured the words, "May the good God forgive my sin;" then a shiver passed through his frame and he was dead. St. Just examined the man's features by the lantern's light, and was shocked to recognize in them Tremeau, the man of whom he and his wife had but now been talking.

The other soldiers had now come up, and the sergeant dismounted and proceeded to search the body. There was nothing on him, but the rags that covered him.

The sergeant scratched his head and seemed perplexed. How to remove two bodies on the high road with no proper means of transport, and whither he should take them, required deliberation.

He was considerably relieved, accordingly, when a short, broadset man, with gray whiskers and a florid face, and dressed like a country gentleman, came up. He had half a dozen greyhounds with him. The villagers made way for him and touched their caps respectfully.

"It is the squire, a magistrate," St. Just muttered to the Sergeant; "He will see to this business."

"Hullo! neighbors, what's the matter?" asked the squire.

He spoke in a sharp, jerky manner, with a strong Sussex intonation. Provincialisms were more marked then, than in these railroad days.

St. Just who had been the nearest witness to the tragedy, told the magistrate what had occurred, omitting however, the fact of Tremeau's having handed him the packet, for no one had seen the transfer.

"The damnable villain!" was the squire's comment, when St. Just had finished. "Thank God, we have done with these murderous French at last. Boney has been so soundly thrashed, that he will never work more mischief." Which showed that the squire did not excel in prophecy. But the villagers held the same opinion. "You're right there, Squire; we've done with Boney at last, but he's took a deal of doing," assented one, who seemed to take the lead. The others sent up a little cheer, but the grim sergeant only nodded.

"Take both bodies to the Hall," the Squire resumed. "I will communicate

with the coroner; the inquest can be held there. You, Mons. St. Just, will, of course, attend it. And you, Sergeant."

St. Just assented, then wished the Squire good-evening and withdrew. He was anxious to put the packet in a place of safety for future examination, when he should be alone; for now, he expected his wife to come out every moment, to inquire the meaning of the disturbance; she must have heard the shots.

When he reached his study, he took the packet from his pocket and examined the outside. It was stitched up in a sleeve of French Guardsman's coat, and greatly to his surprise, he found it was addressed to himself.

"**Major St. Just** England."

Then it really had been meant for him. How fortunate that he had happened to be on the spot. He had supposed, naturally, that it concerned Colonel Tremeau, or some friend of his, and that he himself had been intended only as a messenger for its delivery.

He locked it up in his escritoire, and then went to seek his wife.

Later, another surprise awaited him, for, at the inquest, he discovered that the murdered officer was that very Captain Anson who, ten years before, had driven with him, a prisoner, along that same road, when on his way, unknowingly, to Trafalgar.

CHAPTER II.

It was late the same night, or, to be precise, at an early hour—long before daybreak—on the following morning, before St. Just found an opportunity of examining the packet that had so strangely reached his hands; for Halima was never fond of retiring early for the night. But, at last, she went to bed, and then St. Just betook himself to the room he called his own.

It was a cozy, pleasant room, and, at this time, a cheering fire was blazing in the grate. As he glanced around, his eye fell on the various familiar objects gathered in his journeyings and associated with his profession. Over the mantelpiece was the sword that he had worn in Egypt; while, in a small glass case below it, was the little reddish yellow brick of gold that he and Halima had picked

up by the lake, beneath which had lain the subterranean city. In the bookcase on his right were three calf-bound volumes found at Moscow in the ruins of the Kremlin. Two of these were stamped with Napoleon's arms, the third displayed the Imperial arms of Russia.

He glanced at these and other memorials of his travels; then, with a sigh for what he might have done and been, but for his infatuation for the dark-eyed beauty who controlled him, he stepped to the escritoire and took out the packet.

Then a curious hesitation came upon him: a sort of fear of the news it might contain. He turned the packet about in his hands, his fingers trembling, and again carefully scrutinized the address. He did not recognize the writing and tried to think out the writer's personality.

At last he murmured, "Why do I hesitate? Why do I fear, I who have thrice braved Napoleon's wrath, and remained unscathed? Pshaw! I can have nothing to fear, so here goes."

And, with a hand that shook, for all the bravery of his words, he took a pair of scissors from the table and cut the stitches that secured the wrapper.

On removing this, what first met his gaze was a small packet carefully secured in oilskin. It was sealed with a seal that made his heart beat faster, and brought the tears to his eyes; for in the impression he recognized the cipher of the Empress Josephine.

This packet was addressed:

"S. M. I. L'Empereur Napoleon."

St. Just laid it down and took up a second package, heavier and bulkier than the first. This was addressed to himself and was in Josephine's handwriting.

"**To Major St. Just**, Greeting and Farewell."

This, also, he laid down, but with a sigh. He would open it when he had satisfied himself as to the remaining contents of the parcel. They were two pieces of English newspaper covered with manuscripts in French. Translated, the words ran as follows:

"A word from the lips of Charles Tremeau, formerly Colonel of the Imperial Guard, written with all sincerity at the House at Lewes to Mons. St. Just.

"Sir, knowing that my life, since I was so badly wounded in the fight at Vittoria in Spain, can be but of short duration, I hasten to send to you—if by any chance it can be sent—the enclosed packet, which was handed to me by the

Empress Josephine, with instructions to forward it to you, in order that you might warn the Emperor of the dangers threatening him. It was meant to reach you last year, when you were in Paris. I pray you lose no time, when this and the enclosures find you. I have to ask your forgiveness for a breach of trust I now confess.

"Thinking that the papers entrusted to me by the Empress might implicate you and her in the Emperor's estimation, and thus make capital for myself, I opened the packet and made myself master of its contents. Hardly had I done so when I was forced to flee from Paris on account of Fouché, who was seeking me, and into whose clutches I had no mind to fall. Accordingly, I bargained for a passage to England with one Slade, of Brighton, a Sussex fisherman, then in the Port of Havre. Unfortunately for me, when we landed, he was arrested by the Custom House officers as a smuggler, and I with him. We were marched off to Lewes jail, where we have been incarcerated for the past two months. Alas! alas! most bitterly I repent my folly and dishonorable conduct.

"At my wife's instance, I took copies of these papers and sent them to the English Government, hoping they would set me free. This was a month ago, and I have heard nothing. Perhaps they have deposited them among their Archives, labeled as the wanderings of a lunatic! If so, the worse for them, but it is right that you should know what I have done; then you will be on your guard.

"It only remains for me to charge you to deliver the enclosed papers—they are the originals from the Empress—to the Emperor at Elba.

"This is written in the hope that I may find the means for it to reach you.

(Signed) C. Tremeau, Chef de bataillon."

Below was added later:

"An opportunity for escape presents itself, or so we hope. To-morrow, all being well, I shall deliver these in person. Slade and I have arranged to escape together. We shall separate outside the jail and meet afterwards at his house near the village of Brighton. I give his address below, in case aught should befall me after I have seen you. Should this be so, explain my absence. Use him as you think well. He knows all and may be trusted.

"T."

Then followed Slade's address.

In much bewilderment, St. Just put down the papers; then, carefully, actuated by his affection, he took up the packet addressed to him in Josephine's handwriting. On opening it, the first thing that met his eyes was the sword-hilt he had given her at Fontainebleau, five years before. To it was attached a slip of paper with these words on it:

"In my hour of agony I found you a friend. Again I call on you, by the memory of this sword-hilt, to befriend me. I rely on your fidelity to deliver the accompanying packet to the Emperor, my husband, for so do I always regard him in my heart. So, go to him, my faithful and well-beloved friend, so soon as you receive this, I entreat you. Spare no trouble, lose no time, but go at once. You swore to help me, long ago, if ever you could; and I know you will. And now you can, for I count what you do for the Emperor as done for me. Then start, dear friend, on receipt of this, for the sake of France, for Napoleon's, above all, for the sake of her who signs herself, as she ever will,

"**Josephine** "Empress Queen."

This letter from the dead hand of the Empress strongly moved St. Just. The tone of piteous entreaty that rang through it touched his heart, and her unswerving faith in him made a strong appeal alike to honor and affection. She did not know his grievance against Napoleon, when she asked him to assist the Emperor; therefore she was not to blame. And he—well, he would ignore it; for the time, at any rate.

"Adorable woman!" he exclaimed. "Faithful, trusting creature! And to think that I shall never see you more! All that is left me is to execute your behest. And I will; you shall not have trusted me in vain. Yes, this very day I'll start."

He glanced at his watch.

"Three. I can be at Brighton by four, if I ride sharply; and four hours later at Havre, with a favorable wind. I ought to reach the Emperor by the 13th or the 14th, at the latest. Yes, I must set out at once. Now to apprise Halima of my absence."

He seated himself at his writing table and, after pondering for a few moments, scribbled the following words:

"My dearest. Important business, the details of which I have not time to enter into now, calls me immediately to London. I will explain on my return.

"Yours, Henri."

This letter he addressed to her and laid on the table, where it would be sure to catch her eye, when she should come down in the morning. While doing so, a grim smile flitted across his face; he was thinking of Halima's rage when she should find that he had gone without consulting her. How she would stamp about and storm; would vent her spleen on the unhappy servants; they would have but a sorry time of it.

He went to the mantelpiece and took down his sword. "This sword," he murmured, "was first drawn in his service, and, if he require it, it shall be again."

He took up the packet for the Emperor, and placed it in his pocket. Then he picked up the Empress's letter to himself and re-read it. This done, he raised it to his lips and kissed it passionately. "I long to keep it in remembrance of her," he murmured, "but it is not safe."

He stepped up to the fire and threw it on the flames, and followed it with Tremeau's confession. He waited till both were shriveled into blackness; then left the room.

Pausing in the hall outside, he unhooked from a peg a riding cloak and a three-cornered hat. From a cabinet he took a pair of strong warm gloves and a brace of pistols, which he carefully loaded and put into his pocket. Then, as noiselessly as possible, he quitted the house by a side-door in the study, and made his way to the stables, which were close at hand.

Here he selected from a stall a suitable roadster, and saddled him with his own hands, not choosing to wake the grooms, who were sleeping soundly in the loft above. Then, he left the stable and proceeded down the avenue, leading the horse.

He had just mounted and was about to turn into the high road, when he received a check he had not bargained for. Barring his way, was a party of mounted men. There was sufficient light—for it was a clear, starlight night—for him to see that they were soldiers, and, by their uniform, hussars. While he was wondering what their presence could portend, a voice called out in peremptory tones, "Halt."

Clearly the words were addressed to him, for the others were already stationary. Desirous of concealing his identity, on the chance that they might be coming to arrest him—not that he was aware of having done anything to warrant it, but that his experience had made him apprehensive—he decided to pretend to be a groom; so, to the challenge he replied in broad Sussex dialect, "Who be you, Sirs, and what be you adoin' here? This here ain't a public road. If you want Shoreham, it's straight on to the right. Let me pass, please, Masters. I've got to ride for all I know for the doctor. My mistress is lying near on death, and master is watching beside her bed. Let me pass, sirs; it is a case of life and death!"

But the men made no attempt to stir, and the voice that had before challenged him called out, "Is not your master named St. Just?"

"Aye, that be's name," rejoined the pseudo-countryman. "Let me get through. I tell you my mistress is mortal bad, and I cannot stop for naught."

"Harkee, sirrah,"—the words came from a fresh voice—"your master is accused of conspiring against the King, and we have a warrant for his arrest. Lead us to him instantly, or it will be the worse for you." And the speaker moved his horse close up to St. Just.

There was something in the man's tone that seemed familiar to St. Just; he was confident he had heard the voice before. And, now that its owner had come alongside of him, he recognized him in an instant. He was Sir Henry Emerson, the man whose despatches he had purloined in the character of the Comte St. Clair.

Taught by the many perils he had passed through, he was generally prepared for an emergency, and never lost his presence of mind. On the present occasion, while the colloquy had been proceeding, he had been casting about for a plan of escape; and had decided on his course of action. Convinced that it was useless to parley farther—more than ever now that he had recognized Sir Henry Emerson—he slashed, with his riding whip, the King's Messenger across the face; then, suddenly wheeling round, he struck his spurs into his horse and leaped the fence that bordered one side of the avenue.

In making his jump, St. Just had been careful to select his spot. It so happened that, for some distance along the other side of the hedge, right down to the high road, the ground had been excavated for sandstone, for which that part of Sussex was celebrated. It was, therefore, full of pits, and anyone, jumping into them in the dark, must sustain serious injury, if not death. St. Just, however, knew the bearings well, and he had chosen the only spot on which one could alight with safety. It gave on to a grassy track that threaded its way between the various quarries and, after a long detour, came out eventually on to the high road, nearer Brighton.

St. Just's action had been so sudden that his would-be captors were thoroughly bewildered and, at first, could not conceive what had become of him. A moment ago he had been there; now he had disappeared. That was all that they were certain of. Sir Henry Emerson gave a yell of mingled pain and rage, and the officer and his men came round him to learn the cause of it. With a volley of curses, he explained. Meanwhile, the sound of horse's hoofs could be heard upon the turf, gradually growing fainter, until they were no longer audible. They knew nothing of the country, so to pursue the fugitive would be useless. Besides, in their opinion, he was not the man they wanted, and he could be dealt with when he came back with the doctor. So they proceeded slowly up the avenue towards the house, Sir Henry Emerson, with a red wheal across his face, cursing and swearing at every step.

Meanwhile St. Just was cantering along the grassy track, and, in due course, gained the lane which led to the high road. Here he breathed his horse for a minute or two, listening the while with pained intentness for the first sound of approaching horsemen: but not a footfall, either of horse or man, was to be heard. The stillness was almost absolute; not a whisper of animated life, or a breath of wind to stir the leafless trees. Once more he gave his horse the rein and quickly urged him to a gallop. Though, for the moment, he had escaped, his pursuers would quickly discover that the man who had slipped through their fingers was the very one they wanted, and would soon be after him. On he sped, sweeping across Sayre's Common as though the devil were at his heels; then, continuing with unabated speed, he gained the foot of Dale Hill, leading to Rye Coombe. Here he dismounted and once more strained his ears for the slightest sound that should import pursuit; but still the silence was profound. He ascended the hill on foot, walking briskly and leading his horse. At the top of the hill he remounted. It was now a level stretch to Brighton, and he made the most of it, thundering along the road at topmost speed, until within half a mile of Brighton; then he moderated his pace. Slade's house was in the outskirts of the village, as Brighton then was, and he pulled up at the fisherman's door, just when the clock of St. Nicholas' Church, not far distant, was chiming half past four.

A sharp knock, a few hurried words, and a little money, and the business was arranged.

One of John Slade's sons, Tommy, a bright-looking lad of two and twenty, who loved anything that savored of adventure, entered heart and soul into the "lark," as he mentally phrased it, and hailed with delight the proposal that he should ride back St. Just's horse to the Plough Inn at Rye Coombe. He was to don the Frenchman's hat and cloak, and he guaranteed to lead his pursuers a pretty race, if they should sight him.

When this matter had been arranged, St. Just disguised himself as a fisherman, and then he and the elder Slade walked quickly up the hill, at whose foot the cottage stood, and struck out for St. Nicholas' Church. Here they turned to the right and, after continuing for a short distance, knocked at the door of one of an isolated group of cottages, where lived the mate of the John Edward, as Slade's sloop was named—after himself.

Roused from his slumbers, and grumbling considerably thereat, Harry Wingfield was quickly told the reason. The sloop was to start, as rapidly as she could be got off, with the French gentleman for Havre or Fécamp, whichever port would be the easier to make.

They made their way down West Street for the shore.

"How is it the sloop comes to be moored here, instead of at Shoreham?" asked St. Just.

"Well, Sir, since father died, I've lived here. Wingfield here," and he jerked his thumb towards the mate, "know'd I'd be wantin' him middlin' early this morning for I'd sent him word. That's why he was so slippy in comin' down when we knocked. I've only just got from Lewes—given 'em the slip, you know—and, if not off pretty sharp, they'll have me. I meant to sail at five this mornin' just on the turn of the tide; so you're only just in time; a little later and I should have flown."

St. Just made a suitable reply, and, by this time, they had reached the bottom of the street. They shaped their way to the "Blockhouse"—or rather, the remains of it—that had been erected by Henry VIII to defend the coast. Below this lay the sloop. Borrowing a boat, they rowed quickly to her. The crew were on board, so the anchor was weighed instantly, the sails were set and the John Edward was headed for the coast of France.

CHAPTER III.

The little sloop John Edward duly made the port of Havre.

Here Fortune smiled upon St. Just, for he learned that a ship was lying in the "roads" on the point of sailing for Naples, and that its captain was an old acquaintance, Captain Brenneau, aforetime commanding the La Flèche. So he started for the owner's office to engage a passage. He parted cordially from the smuggler-fisherman, for they had become very friendly on the passage, and St. Just had told him of his errand to Napoleon. Tremeau had said that Slade was to be trusted, and St. Just thought he would be interested in his movements. He had told him also of Tremeau's tragic end, at which the fisherman had been much affected; he and the French Colonel had seen much of one another in Lewes jail, and had escaped together.

In shaking hands with his late passenger and making him wince with the vigor of his grasp, Slade said heartily, "Good luck go with you, Sir; and, when you return to England, I hope you'll come and see me. No, no, Sir," when St. Just pressed money on him, "I won't take a penny off you. I didn't put to sea on your account, for I was bound to make myself scarce, till things had settled down a bit; and you're a friend of that there Tremeau, a decent chap I will say for a Frenchy."

And, with these farewell words ringing in his ears, and another grip of the honest fellow's hand, St. Just left him and went aboard L'aigle d'or (the

Golden Eagle) where he found Captain Brenneau anxiously pacing the quarter-deck, watching the men hoisting in the stores.

He failed to recognize St. Just, dressed, as he was, like a fisherman, and roughly ordered him away. "I will have no loafers (faineants) about my ship;" for St. Just was hanging about, idly gazing at the workers.

St. Just broke into a laugh and recalled himself to the Captain's remembrance, and then proceeded to state the object of his voyage and to ask Brenneau whether he would drop him at Elba. To this the other at once agreed and, on the following day they sailed.

Now, had they proceeded thither direct, Elba should have been reached, ten or eleven days later; but Captain Brenneau had to call at Marseilles to see the owners, and here the vessel was detained for ten days loading further cargo; so that it was not until the first of February that they sighted the little island that now comprised all Napoleon's empire.

It was dark by the time they were near enough to lower a boat.

St. Just bid farewell to the Captain, and took his seat in it; the boat put off, and, in half an hour made the harbor and was brought up by a flight of steps in the harbor wall. Here St. Just got out, and the boat pushed off to make her way back to the ship.

He stood watching the departing boat for about five minutes; and he was on the point of ascending the steps, when he heard voices just above him. He paused to listen.

"I tell you," said one voice, "that to-night he is expected from the country. It is the best chance we have yet had."

"But," said another voice, "he is always guarded; it will be useless."

"Not to-night. He and Bertrand return alone to meet ——," St. Just could not catch the name—"who brings intelligence from Pauline."

"And where do you propose to stop him?"

"At the ——" again the word was inaudible to St. Just.

"You will take your stand, hat in hand, in the middle of the road; take this dog with you, leading it with a string, as though you were blind, and beg alms of the Emperor. Then, when the carriage has stopped to avoid running over you, lean forward and fire both pistols at him. He will be seated on the right side, remember."

"And what part do you take?"

"We cover your retreat."

"Is it certain that this man has promised us a ship?"

"Yes, yes; an hour ago, when the fog lifted, I saw her standing off the shore. And a boat to take us to her is at this moment waiting at the spot arranged."

St. Just was horrified at what he heard. Clearly there was on foot a plot to

assassinate the Emperor. What could he do to circumvent it? Not knowing where to find Napoleon, he could not warn him. He was an absolute stranger in the place, too. And no time was to be lost; for, so far as he could tell, the attack might be made at any moment. Certainly it was to be to-night. His agitation became terrible, while he vainly tried to puzzle out some plan of saving Napoleon's life. He was in a trap, for his only means of getting away from where he was, was by the steps, and these men were at the top. For a certainty they would know that he had overheard their conversation, when he should show himself, and, for their own safety, would attack him, in the hope of silencing him for ever. Doubtless he could secure his own safety by remaining where he was, until they should have gone. But then, the Emperor? He had come all the way from England on what he regarded as a sacred trust from Josephine, to help the Emperor to the utmost of his power, and, come what might, this time he would not betray his trust. He was periling his life in appearing before the Emperor; by facing the conspirators above, he would be but anticipating danger. And this he made up his mind to do. He would steal noiselessly up the steps, and, the moment he gained the top, without a word, he would fall upon these men. Two circumstances were in his favor—the start they would receive when he suddenly burst upon them; and the advantages that lay in striking the first blow. Besides this, he was convinced, by what he had overheard, that they were cowards.

Silently he removed his cloak, lest it should impede his movements, and laid it on the steps. Then he examined his pistols—they were double-barreled—to see that they were duly primed. Satisfied on this point, he placed one in the right breast pocket of his coat, so that his left hand could grasp it readily; and the other in a pocket in the skirt. Next, slowly and with the utmost care, lest the clink of metal should be heard, he withdrew his sword from the scabbard. Then, step by step and bending low, he crept up the flight of stairs, pausing at each to steady himself. No Red Indian bent on falling upon his enemy in his sleep could have moved more stealthily. He could still hear the men above him talking, but their tones were lower than before, and his mind was so intent on his own movements that he caught only a word or two now and then. So far as he could judge from the different intonations, three men were talking. But he had no fear. He had many faults, but want of courage, when it came to fighting, was not one of them. Besides, in the present instance, his opponents might be accounted as only two, for he would cut down one almost before they would know that they were attacked.

On, like a tiger crouching and dragging himself slowly towards his unsuspecting prey, he glided, mounting ever higher; until, at last, he was within three steps of the top. The restraint he had placed upon himself in his efforts to make no noise, scarce even to breathe, had made him short of breath; so he paused for

a moment to regain it, preparatory to the rush he meditated.

It was a minute before he could breathe easily. Then, with a dash, he was at the top of the steps and rushing at the men. There were three of them, as he had thought, and they were standing about two yards from where he had landed, all close together and talking in low tones. There was no one else in sight. They started apart, on seeing him, with an exclamation of alarm; but he was on them almost before it had left their lips. There was a cry of pain, then a groan, as St. Just's swift weapon was withdrawn, and the man nearest to him lay writhing on the ground. The other two, seeing their companion fall and realizing the imminent peril they were in, unsheathed their daggers, and, in an instant almost, had rolled their cloaks round their left arms—they were hanging over them at the time, and by a rapid whirling movement of the wearers' arms, they were coiled round—and prepared to defend their lives. They felt it would be useless to attempt to fly. St. Just saw that he had all his work to do. They dodged about him with the activity of cats, always keeping at a safe distance, but now and then making feints at advancing, and one or the other continually trying to attack him from behind. He had to keep turning round, whirling his sword about the while, with such velocity that sometimes it seemed to be multiplied by three or four. He began to be apprehensive of the result, for the men were young and agile, and seemed to be untiring. So active were they, that he feared to attempt to withdraw his pistol, lest at that moment they should take him unawares. The fight had now been going on for several minutes, and St. Just's breath was failing him. He had not bargained for so sharp a contest. He could not last much longer. Becoming desperate at this reflection, he rushed frantically, with sword uplifted, at the nearest of his assailants, regardless of himself. But luck befriended him. In his hurry to avoid the sudden onslaught, the man struck his foot against something and lost his balance. Before he could recover it, St. Just's sword had reached him and inflicted an awful gash in his neck, that brought him to the ground. At the same instant St. Just felt a sharp pain in his left arm. Aiming at his back in the hope of striking his heart, the other man had missed the spot, owing to a movement on St. Just's part, so that the blow had descended on his arm. Feeling the smart, St. Just turned quickly. His assailant was too close for him to cut or pierce him with his sword, but he raised his hand and brought the hilt down on the man's head, with all his force. The man dropped like a stone.

St. Just was laboring painfully with his efforts, and he rested on his sword to take his breath and to think things out.

"The Emperor is saved for to-night," he gasped, when he was able to speak; "but it was tough work, I was nearly done for; I could not have held out much longer."

When he had recovered himself he went down the steps to regain his cloak.

He threw it over his shoulders and went up again. Then, without heeding the prostrate men, and caring little whether they were alive or dead, he set off at a brisk walk, intending to make inquiries how he was to reach the Emperor.

He had just got beyond the precincts of the harbor, when he heard a step and saw a light approaching. The man who bore it came quickly on, and, in another minute, was close to him. A lantern was held up to him, and a face peered into his.

St. Just was dumfounded; the man was his old comrade, Garraud.

"Garraud! don't you know me?" he exclaimed. "I'm St. Just."

From his action, Garraud might have seen a specter. He started so violently that he dropped the lantern. Then, "My God! St. Just, is it really you?" he said, "I thought you dead. And what brings you here?"

St. Just told him of his errand from the dead Empress, and then went on to speak about the plot he had overheard, and how he had dealt with the conspirators.

"Heavens! what a narrow escape," cried Garraud. "We must alarm the guard at once, and seek for the others. There must be more in this affair than the three you have disposed of. You seem to be continually in adventures, my friend."

They walked away together, and, ten minutes later, a dozen Polish lancers were trotting quickly down the road by which the Emperor was expected, carrying a message from St. Just, confirmed by Garraud.

Then the two reunited friends made their way to the Palace, as the tumbledown building the Emperor occupied was called, where there was as much ceremony as had been observed at the Tuileries and Fontainebleau in the olden days.

Two hours later, St. Just was summoned to the Emperor's presence, being ushered in by General Bertrand.

The apartment was poorly furnished; the contrast to Fontainebleau struck St. Just with amazement. A few gilt chairs from the Tuileries were scattered about the room, serving merely to emphasize its bareness; in the center was a long trestle table, on which was spread a large map of the island; a small writing table stood in one corner, and along the side of a wall an old chintz-covered sofa. These completed all the furniture.

The Emperor at the moment of St. Just's entrance was standing before the fire-place, pressing down the blazing logs in it with his foot, a trick of his.

He was wearing a very old uniform of the Guards, his only decoration being the cross of the Legion of Honor; his boots were dirty, and, altogether, there was a general appearance of slovenliness about him. He was even paler than when St. Just had last seen him, and he looked anxious and dissatisfied. He had grown

stouter, too. He was wearing his cocked hat, but it was pushed off from his brow, and was balanced on the back of his head. But, despite the deterioration in his appearance, there was still an air of majesty, and he had not lost his commanding mien.

As it had ever been with him in Napoleon's presence, St. Just felt awed, and, when the Emperor turned round, he knelt at his feet and kissed his hand.

"Rise, Sir, rise," said the great man sharply. "We look not for the ceremonial here that was the rule in France."

St Just rose to his feet. "I have the honor, Sire," he said, with great respect, "to be the bearer of information for your private ear."

"Go, Bertrand," said the Emperor instantly, without replying to St. Just. "Leave me with this gentleman; but remain within call." Then, when the Marshal had left the room, he continued to St. Just, "Now Sir! Your message must needs be pressing when you dare to present yourself to me, after what occurred when last we met. I have not forgotten that I have an account to settle with you. Methinks your courage exceeds your judgment."

This was not an encouraging reception, and while St. Just hesitated, he went on speaking in still sharper tones, "Come Sir, explain why you are here."

He paused for St. Just's reply, and began to pace the room impatiently.

"Sire," replied St. Just, "I need no reminder of the circumstances of our last meeting, and I take this opportunity of expressing my contrition for my conduct on that occasion, and praying your forgiveness. It is in accordance with a promise then given to the Empress that I am here to-night. On the first day of the New Year I received this packet, accompanied by a letter from Her Majesty, charging me to deliver it to you. Coming as it did from a hand then cold in death, I regarded it as a sacred trust, and instantly I started to fulfill it."

He handed the packet to the Emperor, who immediately asked how it had come into his possession.

St. Just told him, and of Tremeau's letter to him and his tragic end. Also of Tremeau's breach of trust in having opened the packet and sent a copy of its contents to the English Government. Then he gave a rapid sketch of the incidents of his start from home, up to the moment of his arrival at Elba, winding up with an account of the conversation he had overheard on landing, and of his encounter with the men who were plotting to assassinate the Emperor.

Napoleon listened to him attentively, without a word. His countenance was absolutely immobile; so far as any one could judge from looking at it, St. Just's narration was no concern of his; but, all the while, he was weighing in his mind whether the speaker was to be believed. More than once he had broken his trust; he might be lying now.

"Have you anything to add?" he asked in a cold, impassive tone, when St.

Just had finished speaking.

St. Just was in great pain; his wounded arm was smarting terribly; he had lost a great deal of blood, there was a curious dizziness in his head, and a strange weakness was creeping over him; he felt unequal to further conversation. But, making a strong effort, he replied, "Only this, if Your Majesty will forgive my boldness; but my loyalty to your person gives me courage. Once before, upon the eve of Wagram, I brought you State papers from the Empress, containing grave intelligence. You doubted their trustworthiness and destroyed them. I cannot but think that, had Your Majesty acted on that information, affairs would have shaped themselves for you more fortunately. And now, a second time, I bring you a despatch from her. I have not a suspicion of its contents, but, from the earnest entreaty of her letter that I should convey her packet to you with my own hand and with the utmost speed, I know they must be of the gravest moment to Your Majesty. Oh! Sire," he continued with impassioned earnestness, "if a humble person, such as I am, dare advise, I beseech you, this time to be guided by the Empress. Your interests were ever nearer to her heart than were all others. I—know—I risk—my—"

He tottered, sank into a chair, then rolled on to the floor in a swoon.

When he recovered consciousness, he found himself lying in the anteroom, and Garraud bending over him. He stared vacantly into his friend's face. "What has happened?" he stammered, "where am I?"

"Bravo! my friend," cried Garraud cheerfully, "you're all right now; you fainted, you know; lost a good deal of blood from your wound; over-excitement, and so on. But you must keep quiet. Don't talk, but listen; the Emperor is now closeted with his suite. You may be wanted."

"I recollect now," replied St. Just. "I was with the Emperor, and I swooned; but I am well enough now; only a trifle weak." And, with a little struggle, he raised himself and sat upright.

Soon afterwards, General Bertrand entered with a smiling face.

"If you are well enough, Mons. St. Just," he said, "the Emperor desires to see you at once."

St. Just rose slowly; his arm was in a sling; unknown to him, Napoleon's surgeon had attended to him by express command, and had bound up his wound.

In the adjoining room he found the Emperor, surrounded by his suite. When he entered, the words he heard rejoiced not less than they amazed him.

"Gentlemen," the Emperor was saying, "we leave for Paris the moment it can possibly be arranged. France calls us, and we, her sons, must obey her summons. She needs her Emperor, and she shall not need in vain. Therefore, prepare to start; but not a word of our intentions must be breathed outside these walls. You may now retire; all but Mons. St. Just, with whom I desire a word or two." He

bent his head slightly in token of dismissal. All bowed low before him and then filed out; all, except St. Just, who stood awaiting Napoleon's will with inward trepidation.

But he was quickly reassured, for, the moment they were left alone, the Emperor advanced to him with a pleased expression, and held out his hand.

"Mons. St. Just," he said, "I wish to take your hand in token of forgiveness. I believe I wronged you.

"Had I, last April, received the news that you, at the risk of your life, have brought me, I should never have quitted Paris. As you have just heard me say, I am going to return; and, in consequence of the intelligence of which you have been the bearer. In token of my appreciation of your services, I hand you this. I will not say, live up to it, for I know you will."

He detached from his coat the decoration of the Legion of Honor, and handed it to St. Just.

St. Just was overwhelmed at the unexpected honor and, while he took it, was at a loss for words; but his face expressed all that was in his mind.

"But—but, Sire," at last he stammered, "this is the cross of a Commandant!"

"Quite so," replied Napoleon reassuringly; "and, to give you the status to support the dignity, I create you Count of Elba, and will see that you be endowed with a sufficient income. Now, I will not keep you longer, for you require rest. Don't stay to thank me, Count. Bertrand shall make out your patent of nobility to-morrow."

So St. Just, murmuring his thanks and protests of fidelity, but scarce knowing what he was doing, bowed low to the Emperor and withdrew.

Apparently St. Just never received his patent, for the following note forms a portion of his MS.:

"It was never done. Bertrand meant to do it, but it got put off from time to time, owing to his multifarious occupations; and on February 25th we sailed; I have never seen my titular island since, though I still have, at this time of writing, my cross. 4 June 1820."

CHAPTER IV.

After Napoleon's landing in France on his escape from Elba, events moved fast. As everyone knows, his progress from the coast to Paris was a triumphal march;

the people and the soldiers alike receiving him with effusion. The generals sent to effect his capture became magnetized by his presence and, instead of arresting him as a conspirator, hailed him with acclamation as their leader and enrolled themselves beneath his standard. Their soldiers followed them with the wildest enthusiasm, fresh troops successively sent forward to oppose him, taking the same course; so that, by the time he reached the capital, he was at the head of a powerful army, mostly veterans and commanded by the finest generals in the world. Thus, there was no one left to bar his progress; the opposition had melted away; such leading men as had not cast in their lot with his, had fled the country, and the King with them. The words in which Julius Cæsar used to describe his own achievements, altered thus, would even more suitably have applied to Buonaparte:—"Imperator venit, visus est, vicit."

The news of his return fell like a thunderclap on the ears of Europe, and diplomatists and generals became as busy as ants when their home has been disturbed, devising means to crush once and forever the bold usurper. But, if they were active for his downfall, he was untiring in his efforts to strengthen his position and to make preparations for the impending onslaught; for he knew how terrible would be its force, and that nothing but consummate generalship, aided by extraordinary fortune, could avail him; the Allies were resolute and agreed about hurling him from power. So, during those memorable Hundred Days, his energy never flagged, and he performed prodigies of work, inquiring into everything himself—no detail was too small for him.

Fortresses were strengthened, provisioned and armed; thousands upon thousands of France's already depleted population were drafted into the army and drilled incessantly from morn to night; the foundries were kept going night and day, casting artillery; muskets and arms of every sort were poured out by tens of thousands; stores of every description were collected, men and women were hard at work all day in turning out materials for uniforms, and others in making them up as fast as their nimble fingers could ply their needles; never before in so short a period was such a mass of war material got together. And the Emperor saw to everything.

To be sure, he was ably seconded by his generals and ministers, for the enthusiasm was prodigious. Everything was done to excite the passions of the French against the rest of Europe, and to inspire them with confidence in the Emperor's invincibility. But there were some few—the more thoughtful of them—who doubted.

Throughout this period of preparation, St. Just saw a good deal of the Emperor, who had now taken him back into his favor, and seemed to have no doubt of his fidelity. Napoleon's trust was amply justified, for, now that the ci-devant traitor was removed from his wife's influence, his former devotion to his old

commander had returned in greater strength than ever, and no persuasion or temptation could have made him swerve from his allegiance. Not even Halima herself could have achieved it.

The Emperor had placed him on his staff, and raised him to the rank of a colonel, and had bestowed other marks of favor on him, pecuniary and otherwise. Also he took him into his confidence on private matters, sometimes discussing with him subjects strictly personal to himself.

The Emperor often employed him on private missions and enquiries that required tact and promptness and fidelity for their performance; and he had never reason to be dissatisfied with the result. All this was very flattering to St. Just, and nourished his devotion.

The wound he had received in Elba had healed by the time he landed in France, and, beyond an occasional twinge, his arm was as sound as ever.

One day, ten days after the return to Paris—that is to say, early in April—St. Just was summoned to a private audience with the Emperor.

"Colonel," began Napoleon, the moment St. Just entered, "I want someone I can trust implicitly to proceed to Vienna upon an errand that will make demands alike on his acuteness and his courage. I have the utmost confidence in you, and should prefer you as my messenger to any one else. I know you have had much experience of continental travel."

He looked at St. Just with a knowing smile that showed he knew a good deal more of his movements at Halima's instance than had been suspected by the other. St. Just reddened slightly, but remained silent, waiting for further information.

"If you agree to go," the Emperor went on—St. Just was about to say impetuously that, of course, he would go, when Napoleon held up his hand to check him. "Stay," he said, "wait till I have finished. The man who undertakes this mission for me will run great risk; if he fail, I may be powerless to assist him. They may shoot him as a spy; or they may imprison him. Now, are you prepared to take the risk? I issue no command, for I might be sending you to your death. It is not the Emperor who orders, but the friend who asks."

Now, in putting the matter in the way he did, the Emperor showed much astuteness. Had he merely issued his order for St. Just to go, the aide-de-camp would, of course, have started without demur; but he would have gone unwillingly, for he liked Paris; the bustle and activity going on, and in which he bore a prominent part, had great attractions for him, and he was anxiously looking forward to the moment when, their preparations completed, the French army should, with Napoleon at its head, meet its enemies face to face. Above all, he was a soldier: the smell of powder was a sweet savor in his nostrils, the boom of cannon and the roll of musketry were as music in his ears. By going to Vienna

he might lose the chance of winning distinction on the field. But, beyond all this, he would be separated from the Emperor, his intimate intercourse with whom was now his chief delight and pride.

And Napoleon knew all this; he was a keen observer of those about him, and he had read St. Just aright. So he put his wishes on this occasion by way of favor; thus first anticipating and then smothering St. Just's dissatisfaction, making him swell with pride at the confidence reposed in him, and burn with enthusiasm to execute the Emperor's behests.

Not a moment did he hesitate when Napoleon finished speaking.

"Sire," was his prompt reply, "I deeply feel the honor your choice confers on me. Willingly, gladly I will execute your errand, and will do my utmost to bring it to a successful issue. The Emperor has but to command, and I will cheerfully obey. I trust I shall not fail in accomplishing the end you have in view; but, be assured, Sire, that, if I should, it will not be through lack of zeal. How soon am I to start, Sire, and what are my instructions?"

His face was glowing with enthusiasm, and the Emperor was moved at his devotion, and said a few gracious words by way of thanks; then he proceeded to explain to his staff officer what it was he had to do.

The Empress Marie Louise, with Napoleon's son, the titular King of Rome, was living at Vienna at her father's court; and Napoleon and his ministers thought it would be a good stroke of policy to get her into France. Once there, they hoped she could be influenced to intervene with the Allied Powers on his behalf. If she could gain her father to the Emperor's side, he might prevail on the other Powers not to interfere with the present regime in France, so long as the people themselves were satisfied. The Empress, if she could be got possession of, would be, it was hoped, a sort of hostage for the Powers' non-interference with her husband.

Already there was a plan on foot for the execution of this project, and St. Just had been selected by Napoleon as the agent.

He was to proceed with all speed to the Austrian Capital, and there—in person should it be possible, but, if not, by some trusty messenger—he was to convey to the Empress a letter from the Emperor, urging her to accompany the bearer to France.

It was hoped that, having regard to private communications which had already taken place, the Empress would yield to the Emperor's request and place herself under the protection of St. Just. She really had expressed her willingness to return to France, if it could be managed secretly. According to the plan that had been arranged, she was to leave the palace at night by a side door and join St. Just outside; then they were to make their way as rapidly as possible to Munich, where an escort would receive the Empress and accompany her to Paris. All

this was detailed at length by the Emperor to St. Just, with the names of certain persons at Vienna who were in the plot, and could be trusted. His last words were,

"You will find the Empress at Schönbrunn. Twenty-four hours after meeting her you must be at Munich. Spare no expense. When once you get possession of the Empress, fly. Now go, my friend, and good luck go with you."

St. Just bent before the Emperor and kissed his hand; then he withdrew. An hour afterwards he had quitted Paris.

St. Just's MS. from which this story is compiled gives no details of his journey to Vienna, the reason probably being that, inasmuch as his errand resulted in a fiasco, he did not wish to be reminded of it; but, from hints dropped here and there, it may be gathered that he reached his destination and saw the Empress. It would seem that he was duped, and by Halima once more. Fouché, with whom she had close relations, and who, in his heart, believed that Napoleon's day was over, and was opposed to the project for the furtherance of which St. Just was acting, must have told her. In the result, a lady closely veiled met him at the palace, as arranged, and the programme was duly carried out. But, on their setting foot in France, he found that his companion was not the Empress, but his wife. His chagrin and rage may be imagined; they must have been unbounded, and, probably for the first time in her life, Halima failed to pacify him and mould him to her will. At any rate, he makes no mention of what took place on his return; not even of how the Emperor received him, when he learned how St. Just had been beguiled. Evidently the subject was too sore a one for St. Just to bear to dwell upon. Much of the foregoing statement is based on surmise; but it is pieced together from stray notes in the MS. and is, probably, a fair account of what occurred.

When St. Just returned to Paris, he fell into his old groove; warlike preparations were hurried on; conscripts were drilled more assiduously than ever; arrangements were made for the government of the country in Napoleon's absence; and at last the moment came when the Emperor set out to cast the die that was to make or mar his fortune once for all.

CHAPTER V.

The morning of the 16th of June, 1815, was just dawning; for, away in the North-east, a faint shimmer in the sky, that grew momentarily stronger, was heralding the approach of day.

The French army was once more on foreign soil; it had advanced into that country which, from its having been the scene of so many well-contested fields, so many sanguinary conflicts, had acquired the name of Europe's Cockpit.

That portion of the army, to which St. Just was for the moment joined, was posted on a height hard by some windmills, which, in an emergency, would form a temporary shelter and give time for the troops to rally after a check.

In the distance facing them, was the Prussian contingent of the Allied army, under Blucher, its center holding Ligny, its right and left wings extending respectively towards St. Amand and Sombrey. Between the two armies was a broad ravine.

St. Just, mounted on a handsome chestnut charger, had arrived, not long before, with despatches from Marshal Ney to the Emperor. At the moment, he had dismounted to give his horse a rest, and was standing motionless by the windmills, his arm thrust through the bridle, his eyes and ears alike on the alert. Suddenly the sound of firing, in the distance, broke on his ear, now rapid, now merely dropping shots; occasionally, for a short space, ceasing altogether. He listened attentively, and the sound grew louder. He judged, from the quarter whence it came, that it was the advanced guard driving the Prussians back from the village of Fleurus. If the two were engaged, it must be the Prussians who were retiring; the French guards would never give ground to such a foe—for St. Just, like most of Napoleon's officers, held the Prussians in contempt.

While, he was figuring to himself the changes in the several positions that the engagement then proceeding would bring about, he heard the tramp of horses, and the Emperor, accompanied by his staff, rode up.

"Ah! St. Just," he cried, "what are you doing here?"

"My horse was tired, Sire, and I was giving him a few moments' rest. I was told by the picket officer that you were expected at the windmills almost immediately, and I thought I should find you sooner by waiting here than by seeking you, since I did not know from which direction you would come. Marshal Ney sent me to say that he is hindered in his advance on Quatre Bras, by the enemy, who are in force beyond Frasnes."

The Emperor, who was habited in his well-known gray overcoat, for the morning was chilly, scribbled these words on a piece of paper:—"Advance, at all hazards, on Quatre Bras at once. Send men by the village of Marchais to occupy the heights of Brie. I must have them by two o'clock. At that hour I shall order a charge of the whole front to support you. You ought not to have lost so much time; if you had already advanced, we should have had the Prussians in our grasp."

He handed the paper to St. Just. "Take this at once to Marshal Ney, and ride your hardest. Urge on the Marshal the necessity of an immediate advance."

St. Just mounted and rode off at full gallop, for the Emperor's message was imperative. He would get a remount from Marshal Ney, for he knew that, when he reached him, his horse would be exhausted.

On gaining Frasnes, he found that Ney was only then preparing to advance. Ney read the Emperor's message carefully, and deliberated. It was all very well to give the order, but he doubted the strength of his command for the task before him.

While he was still hesitating, a dragoon rode up in haste. "Marshal,"—he saluted and shot out the words—"Colonel ——, commanding the advance guard, bids me say that the Prince of Orange has occupied Quatre Bras."

"Perdition!" shouted Ney, much upset at the intelligence. "At all costs we must drive him out." Then, turning to St. Just; "you see, Colonel, the difficulty I am in. The Emperor does not know of it; it is impossible for me to move the men as he desires; my force is not sufficient in the face of this last news. Here, take those men to the front;" pointing to a squadron of Dragoons. He seemed quite bewildered, and scarce knew what to do, hesitating whether to follow the Emperor's orders or to act on his own knowledge, gained on the spot, of the position.

"But, Sir," St. Just protested, "what about the men for the heights of Brie?"

"I tell you they cannot be spared, Sir," was the Marshal's sharp reply. "Go, Sir; the Emperor has placed me in command here. I must have time."

St. Just was attached to Ney's command, and he durst not disobey; so he made no further protest. He saw that, for some reason, the Marshal was delaying, and it troubled him. He said no word audibly, but he muttered, "It is terrible, but I am helpless. At any rate, I can obey."

He exchanged his wearied horse for a fresher one, then placed himself at the head of the squadron and started for the front. He could hear the sound of firing in the direction of Ligny on the right, and also straight ahead of him. Advancing at a rapid trot, he came up to some battalions of French infantry. They were hotly engaged with the enemy, firing as fast as they could load.

"They run, they run," shouted an officer by his side.

"Who?" asked St. Just sharply.

"The Brunswickers; see!" And he pointed towards the eddying cloud in front.

St. Just looked, but it was impossible to judge in the smoke and the confusion how the fight was going. All he saw was that the French were falling fast; right and left, and all around him they were dropping under the storm of bullets. To remain idly looking on was more than he could stand; the impulse to

rush forward at the foe, to ride them down and hack and hew, was tearing him to pieces, and to remain a passive spectator was no longer possible. At last, although he had received no orders to advance, he shouted, "Charge!" and galloped forward to an opening between two squares. With a cheer, his men dashed after him. Straight before them, but concealed by the dense smoke, and formed into a square, were the Forty-second Highlanders, who had been advancing and had missed their position, so that they were unsupported. Into this square plunged St. Just's Dragoons with an impetuosity that could not be withstood. The Highlanders wavered, then broke and, in a moment, the Dragoons were in the midst of them, slashing and thrusting, and hewing like fiends let loose. The English, without knowing it, had approached so near the French lines that the battalions behind St. Just rushed in and attacked the Highlanders with the bayonet.

When St. Just and his men had cut their way through the square, sending, in their passage, many a gallant Scotsman to his account, his sword was red with blood, and yet he could scarce remember that he had used it; in his excitement, he had not had time to think, and had hardly realized what was going on.

His men and himself, mad with the lust of battle and the desire to kill, their appetite for blood increased by what it fed on, now threw themselves on a body of Black Brunswickers. It was reckless folly, for the latter far out-numbered them, and both horses and men were fresh; whereas St. Just's were blown. Blindly and madly, they rushed upon the Germans, but their foe stood firm. They retired and charged again, but not the least impression could they make upon the serried mass before them; St. Just's men were beaten back with frightful loss. Seeing the hopelessness of further fighting, St. Just ordered a retreat. At a short distance on the left was a glade with trees, and to these the discomfited Dragoons betook themselves, in the hope of finding temporary shelter. But the Brunswickers swooped down upon them with shouts of triumph.

In and out between the trees they fought with desperation, dyeing the ground crimson with their blood. More of the victorious Belgians came up, and the glade rang with oaths and shrieks, the clash of arms and the crack of pistol shots; and mingled with them, the cries of the wounded and the dying.

St. Just's horse was killed under him and, in falling, brought his rider to the ground, entangling his leg in the stirrup, so that he could not rise. Thus he was taken prisoner. His captors hurried him through the wood till they came to the highway leading from Brussels to Quatre Bras.

At this point, a mounted general officer with a prominent Roman nose, and dressed in a plain uniform and wearing a cocked hat devoid of plumes, confronted them. He was accompanied by an aide-de-camp.

"Who are you, Sir?" he asked sharply, addressing the prisoner.

St. Just drew himself up and saluted.

"Colonel St. Just," he answered, "of the Emperor's Imperial Guard."

"Hah!" said the aide-de-camp, and, leaning forward, he spoke in a low tone to his companion, who immediately called out to the soldiers, "Fall back there!" Then to St. Just, "A word with you, Sir. Now, Sir, I know who you are, and all about you. I also know your wife. Now, tell me what are Buonaparte's plans, or—" and he paused ominously.

"Or what?" St. Just asked promptly.

"I will have you shot for a spy. You are well known for one."

"I refuse to say a word," was the unflinching answer, and he looked the general officer boldly in the face.

The latter wasted no time in argument. He turned to the aide-de-camp. "Matthews, see this man shot." Then, without another word, he rode away, satisfied that his order would be carried out. As St. Just learned afterwards, he was the Duke of Wellington.

St. Just's position was desperate indeed; for all that, he did not lose his presence of mind. If he should go quietly, he would infallibly be shot. He resolved to make a dash for life; should he fail, the result would be the same as if he had not tried; he would be shot—in the back instead of in the face—a distinction without a difference. Suddenly the thought flashed on him of how Tremeau had acted in somewhat similar circumstances—before his house in Sussex. St. Just was alone before the officer, his captors having fallen back some paces, in obedience to the orders of the Duke. Instantly his resolution was taken. Before any one could dream of his intention, he had dashed upon the officer, hurled him from his horse and vaulted into the vacant saddle. Then, wheeling the horse round, he set off at a gallop, shouting "Vive L'Empereur."

The whole affair had been so sudden, that his captors were dumfounded with astonishment, and, for the moment, were at a loss how to act.

The officer sprang to his feet and shouted, "Fire on him!"

But, by this time, the fugitive had got many yards away. He heard the order given and instantly bent low in his saddle. Crack, crack, crack, went three musket shots. He could feel the bullets whistle past him. Before they could load again, he was out of range.

He rode for his life, tearing down the road at topmost speed. A few stragglers—English—blocked his path.

"Despatches from the Duke!" he shouted. "Make way!"

They did; his English words had saved him. On he flew. Presently he became conscious of a horse's hoofs striking the ground rapidly behind him. He was convinced he was being pursued. It was the officer who had been charged to see him shot. He had caught a Dragoon's stray horse, and was thundering after the runaway. St. Just could feel that his pursuer was gaining on him. Just when

life and liberty seemed his, was he to be deprived of both?

But now a greater danger than the officer in his wake assailed him. In a field a few yards from the road was a man in the dreaded scarlet uniform. The officer shouted to him to shoot St. Just. The English soldier leveled his musket, taking a steady aim, his object plainly being to fire point blank, just when St. Just was passing. The Frenchman saw his peril and suddenly ducked his head.

Bang! he felt a sudden, scorching smart and a bullet cut a channel across his forehead; then the blood began to trickle down his face.

All at once, on the other side of a ploughed field on his right, he espied a troop of the Emperor's Polish Lancers. They were sabering some Belgian infantry. He turned into the field and crossed it at a gallop. His strength was failing him, for the blood was pouring from his wound. A few more strides and he had gained his comrades. He was saved! He swayed unsteadily in his saddle, then rolled off and fell unconscious at their feet.

When he awoke to consciousness, he found himself in a clean white bed with a French officer by his side. His comrade also had been wounded, for his head was swathed in a bloodstained cloth.

"Where am I?" St. Just asked in a weak voice, and looking, bewildered, first into the other's face and then around the room.

"At La Belle Alliance, a farm house," was the reply; continuing, "The decisive battle will be fought to-morrow. Hark! what is that? A carriage!"

He went to the window and looked out. "'Tis the Emperor's carriage; and he is getting out."

In less than a minute, a staff officer entered the room, followed immediately by Napoleon.

At the sight of him, St. Just first raised himself to a sitting posture on the bed, then staggered to his feet and saluted. He felt weak and dizzy.

The Emperor, who was now paler than his wont, and looked ill and worried, spoke to him kindly, making a few inquiries about his wound and how he got it. Then he repeated what the officer had said, that the decisive battle would be fought on the morrow, and inquired whether St. Just would be able to take part in it.

To this St. Just replied that nothing should prevent him; that his wound was a mere scratch, and that he was merely a little weak, and that a night's rest would put him on his feet.

The Emperor moved to the window and gazed out. "To-morrow," he muttered musingly, "to-morrow."

* * * * *

The morning of the 18th of June was ushered in with pouring rain. It came down in heavy showers, almost in sheets, drenching the expectant combatants to the skin, and making the ground so soft and spongy that much of it was like a swamp; so that the movements of the artillery were slow and difficult; often the men had to assist the horses in getting the wheels out of the furrows of slush and mud. Thus, it was half past ten before the army had taken up its position.

Before this, the Emperor had posted himself on the heights of Rossome. St. Just, still weak, was by his side. From ten in the morning till six in the evening he remained there, inactive, following with his eyes, as well as he could, the movements of the army.

The Emperor sat motionless on his horse, continually bringing his telescope to his eye to watch the progress of the battle, and sending frequent messages by his aides-de-camp to his generals in all parts of the field. His countenance betrayed the terrible anxiety he felt. Every now and then he gazed out into the far distance for the first sign of reinforcements.

"Grouchy," he murmured, "why does not Grouchy come? He should have been here long ere this."

He turned suddenly to St. Just and spoke to him for the first time for hours. It was now six o'clock.

"Tarry no longer. Say to Kellermann, the cavalry is to advance; and the day is ours. Tell him to sound the charge at once."

St. Just saluted and dashed off.

By the time he had reached General Kellermann, his mind misgave him as to the Emperors meaning. Did he intend all the cavalry to take part in the charge, or only Kellermann's division? There was now no means of ascertaining. All he could do was to repeat to General Kellermann the Emperor's words, and leave him to put his own construction on them. But he did it with great misgiving. "The Emperor's orders are," he said, "that the cavalry is to advance, and that you are to sound the charge at once."

Kellermann thought the whole body of cavalry was to charge, and passed on the order to General Guyot, who commanded a division of seven thousand horse, who had been waiting for hours in ungovernable excitement. This was not what the Emperor had intended; these seven thousand were the reserve.

It was a fatal error, and, too late, Napoleon saw it. It lost the day, for, at this critical period, the battle was drawn. The English could not advance, and, in consequence of the Emperor's having despatched ten thousand men to hold Bulow, the Prussian general, in check, the French were not in a position to follow up any advantage the cavalry charge might give them.

St. Just joined himself to General Kellermann's command and charged with them. They rushed off at a gallop, the thousands of hoofs making the ground

shake beneath them. Again and again they dashed with desperate valor at the English infantry, but could make no permanent impression; frequently they broke the line opposed to them; but the stubborn Englishmen had a valor equal to their own, and always rallied, closing up their ranks as fast as they were broken. More and more furiously did the Frenchmen fight, but it was all of no avail. They had made their final throw, and it had proved a blank. Their loss of men was fearful, and, before reinforcements could be hurried up, Blucher, with his Prussians had come up.

This was the turning point of the day. From that moment, the French case was hopeless, and they had to admit defeat. The Retreat was sounded; but soon all order was abandoned, and it became a rout, and the cry of "sauve qui peut" went up. The worsted French scattered pell-mell in all directions.

St. Just, forced back in the rout that followed this welcome and almost indispensable accession to the strength of the "thin red line," of English, once more regained the Emperor's side.

Night was advancing and the Emperor could no longer direct his routed troops. It was too dark for practical orders either to be given, or, if given, carried out. But he still lingered, and was only forced away in the general rush, St. Just and two or three others with him.

Across that ghastly field they rode; and what a ride! Every now and then some bivouac fire, not yet expired, would flicker up in the darkness and show the flying Emperor to the host of wounded that bestrewed his path. Many of the poor creatures, when they recognized him, would raise themselves upon their elbows and, even while they groaned with pain, would faintly cheer, then sink back exhausted by their effort, only to be trampled to death alike by friend and foe in the mad flight of pursuer and pursued.

On and on and on the little party rode, wearied and dejected, almost without a word. A short halt was made at Genappe, merely to obtain fresh horses. At one o'clock on the morning of the 19th they reached Quatre Bras. Here they remained, and rested for an hour, and the Emperor despatched orders to try to check the rout and collect the scattered fragments of the army. Also St. Just says, to inform General Grouchy of their defeat.

At dawn the journey was resumed by way of Laon, and thence, by rapid stages, to Paris.

CHAPTER VI.

It was the 28th of June. Much had happened in the ten days that had elapsed since the battle of Waterloo. Napoleon had returned to Paris; had found both the Chamber of Peers and the Chamber of Representatives determined no longer to retain him as the ruler of the country; had abdicated in consequence; and was now on his way to Rochefort with the intention of escaping to the United States.

Near the Tuileries was a cul de sac, called the Ruelle de Dauphin, and here was situated at this time the Hotel Mirabeau, where St. Just was living by himself.

On the afternoon of the day last mentioned a woman, closely veiled, and followed by two men, entered this building and proceeded to the third story. Here a latch-key in the woman's hand admitted them to a small vestibule that led to a long, narrow room. In one corner of this apartment was a door, which, on being opened, disclosed a closet.

The movements of the persons who had just entered were peculiar.

The woman crossed the room, opened the door of the closet, and motioned to the men to enter; "When I kiss him," she said, then closed the door upon them.

Then she took off her cloak and removed her veil, placing both on a chair. There was a mirror in the room and, naturally, the next thing she did was to step up to it. It reflected the face of Halima, and on it was a look of triumph, tinged with hatred. She turned away with a scornful smile, and sat down to wait. Evidently she was expecting some one. She was still a woman of rare beauty, but long-continued determination, in the face of repeated disappointments, had imparted to her expression a certain hardness, that, in former days, had not been there. For the rest, as regards appearance, she was somewhat fuller in figure than of yore.

Napoleon's return from Elba had been a dreadful blow to her, and, for the moment, she had reeled under it. To find that, only a few months after she had thought his fall complete, he was once more supreme in France, had at first taken all the spirit out of her. But, when the initial shock had passed, she had soon plucked up again and set her busy, vindictive brain to work to devise fresh plans for her betrayer's overthrow. It was not that she now resented, or even thought of, the act that had been the original cause of her vindictiveness; if she had dwelt on it, it would have been rather with a feeling of complacency, and even pride, that a man who had risen to such a height of power should have honored her with his amorous regard.

Rather, what moved her now, what fostered her desire for vengeance, added virulence to her malice, and strengthened her resolve, was the revelation of her own importance, in contra-distinction to Napoleon's power, the frequency with which her plottings had been baffled, the little there was to show for all the wealth she had so lavishly expended in the prosecution of her schemes. For, though, in her self-sufficiency, she tried to persuade herself that she had taken a leading part

in causing the Emperor's misfortunes; yet her own heart told her it was a very small one.

Now, for the second time, Napoleon's downfall seemed complete and permanent. Surely this time there would be no recovery. She thought out the position calmly, and decided that it was impossible. His defeat at Waterloo had been so overwhelming, and the Allies were so resolute to crush him, and so strong.

These were her reflections while she sat there waiting, and her smile deepened in malignant triumph.

Since she had fooled her husband in his mission to the Empress Marie Louise, they had not met. On their return to France on that occasion, he had separated from her and had resolutely declined all her advances to resume cohabitation. Heart and soul, he was now devoted to the Emperor, and her power to make him swerve from his allegiance was gone. But she knew all that he was doing, or nearly all, for in all his movements her spies dogged his steps.

Presently she heard on the stairs a footfall that she knew. The door opened and St. Just came in.

At the sight of her, he started and stood still. "Halima!" he exclaimed slowly, his surprise showing in his tone, "what brings you here?" The usual ring of welcome in his voice no longer sounded.

She noted its absence and, though not surprised, resented it. A sullen curtain veiled the brightness of her face; but only for an instant; then she became all smiles and sweetness. She had a part to play, and was an adept in all the wiliness of the Oriental.

"Fie, uncourteous man," she answered playfully, "to speak like that and look so cross; and just because his loving wife has come to see him, when he won't come to her. Oh! Henri, dear, I cannot bear this separation. And it is not right; husband and wife should not be parted. I have come to ask forgiveness for the trick I played you in Vienna; but I little guessed you would take it so to heart, or I would not have done it. Surely, by this time, you have forgiven me. Oh! Henri, let me come back to you!"

She paused and looked at him expectantly.

But he made no reply; only stood there immovable; and his face was full of trouble and indecision.

"What!" she resumed, "still unforgiving? Nay, Henri, I did not think it of you. But I will kiss you into acquiescence. I will lay my heart against your own, and you shall feel its throbs, and its mate within you shall leap to meet it, and I will soften you to pardon."

All this time St. Just was standing with his back towards the closet door, to which Halima's eyes had several times been furtively directed. Noiselessly and gradually this door was opening.

Halima's last words had hardly left her mouth—deceiver that she was—when she rushed at St. Just with her arms wide open, and threw them round his neck, drawing his face down to her own. "Kiss me, my Henri," she cooed in the note he knew so well; and, unconsciously, at the magic of her voice, his arms embraced her and he pressed his lips to hers.

The door behind St. Just was now wide open, and, stealthily, with the sinuous movements of a panther, the two men glided towards their unsuspecting victim. Then, when close to him, suddenly they threw themselves upon him, pinioning his arms so that he was helpless. At the same moment, Halima loosened her hold on him and freed herself from his embrace, standing away from him with a look of triumph on her face. In another instant, before he had realized what had happened, he was on his back and held in an iron grip by his assailants. They were powerful men, each far stronger than St. Just, so that he was like an infant in their hands. He saw the futility of resistance, and did not attempt it. But he turned on Halima such a look of sad reproach and grief as would have touched the heart even of a Lucretia Borgia. And it touched Halima's; still she did not falter in her purpose.

"Delilah!" The tone told what was in his mind; sorrow and indignation, reproach and murdered love, failure and despondency; it expressed them all.

"I know all you feel," she answered, "all you think of me; but it had to be, there was no other way. You have that about you that I was resolved to see; and I knew that no persuasion of mine would make you part with it. Force was the only instrument at my disposal. It saves your reputation, too; there is no disgrace in yielding to superior strength, so you have nothing for which to blame yourself. No harm whatever is intended you; only a temporary inconvenience. You must see the hopelessness of resistance; bow to the inevitable, therefore, and show your sense by not attempting it. But, in any case, I mean to have those papers."

She faced him without flinching, with stern, unbending aspect, and her tone was resolute.

Her warning had been almost needless, for held as he was, he could move neither hand nor foot.

He laughed scornfully; then answered bitterly, "Doubtless your advice, Madame, was well-intended, but you might have spared yourself the giving it, for no one knows better than myself my utter helplessness. Even with one of these lusty rogues I should, unarmed, have had no chance. But, were my arms but free, even though I know that death would be the outcome, I would struggle, while life lasted, to defend my trust. Oh! God! to be thus constrained!"

His despairing accents thrilled her.

"I know it, Henri," she replied; "there lives no braver man than you." Then she turned to the men. "Bind him hand and foot, and search him."

She looked on calmly, though her heart was in a tumult, while they took strong cords from their pockets, and proceeded to tie first his hands and then his feet together. St. Just made no resistance; where would have been the use? But he glared savagely at Halima, all the while, in a way that made her tremble.

Then they searched him carefully. Their quest resulted in the discovery of a sealed letter, the object of Halima's proceedings. In a fever of excitement, she tore it open and began to read it.

"Ha!" she cried suddenly, "so Napoleon thinks to escape to the United States; I had half expected it." She drew herself up, and her voice was raised almost to a scream. "But never while Halima lives to bar the way. Fouché must know of this at once. He may be trusted to take measures to prevent it." Then, in a calmer tone, she addressed herself to the two men.

"Guard well your prisoner till my return. Allow him to communicate with no one. Should he attempt to call out, gag him. But harm him not, or you shall suffer for it." Then turning once more to St. Just, "Au revoir, my husband, I shall return anon."

St. Just scowled at her, but made no reply. Then she left him.

Two days later, on the 30th of June, Captain Maitland commanding H.M.S. Bellerophon received a quill that contained a note inscribed on tissue paper. It was to warn him that Napoleon purposed leaving Rochefort for America on the 3rd July, and to keep a sharp look-out to frustrate the attempt.

It is a matter of history how, in consequence of the vigilance of the English—eleven British men-of-war were cruising off the port—who had received intelligence of his intention, Napoleon found it impossible to get away.

Thus Halima's interview with Fouché had not been abortive, and, at last, she had the satisfaction of feeling that she had struck a decisive blow at the man she had chosen to consider as her enemy, and had so persistently and, for the most part, fruitlessly conspired against.

Two hours later Halima returned to St. Just's apartments in the Hotel Mirabeau. She found him seated in a chair, with his hands and feet still bound and the two men guarding him.

The look of triumph on her face at her departure was no longer there; now she showed trouble and depression—even fear. She had had time to think, and, with reflection, had come the dread that she had offended her husband past forgiveness. For years she had been dominated by two emotions—a craving to achieve the ruin of Napoleon; and passion for her husband—not, for a moment, that she was true to him when he was absent. Of these, the former had been far the stronger. But now, this was satisfied. She was free to devote herself entirely to her husband, to let her passion for him have full play. More than anything, she now desired to regain his love. But alas! she greatly feared she had strained it

past resilience; it was like a spring that had been over-bent. She came in, shamefacedly, almost abjectly, tremblingly, walking, like Agag, "delicately."

St. Just glanced sternly at her and frowned ominously.

"Why have you returned?" he asked; "to flout me with the tidings that you have added yet another to the already crushing misfortunes of France's greatest son."

"That I have prevented the escape from justice of her greatest criminal."

Then she turned to the two men. "Loose this gentleman, but be careful not to hurt him. Then leave us, but remain within call. I would speak in private with my husband."

The men unbound St. Just, and then withdrew.

"Henri," she began, pleading in her gentlest tones, "forgive me. Now that I have avenged myself upon the man I hated with a hatred that was uncontrollable, that so filled my being that there was scarce a corner for any other passion; now that, with its satisfaction, that hatred has been swept away, love has rushed in upon me, like a torrent, to fill the void; love for you, Henri, whom I acknowledge I have wickedly neglected and used only for my own ends. I know you are angry with me now, and I have merited your anger. But, oh! be generous and forgive me. I swear that never again will I be otherwise than a true and devoted wife. All my love, aye, all my being is now yours. You have no rival in my heart. I will strive my hardest—but it will need no striving, for it will be my chief delight—to compensate for my past neglect. For every year that is added to the roll of time, I will give you ten years of love; when painful memories assail you, I will chase them away with kisses; should sickness come to you, I will be to you the gentlest, most patient nurse that man could have; I will see only with your eyes; hear only with your ears; speak only with your lips. My very thoughts shall be enslaved to you—and proudly so. Oh! forget the troublous years we have passed through, and let us start a new life together from to-day, never to be parted for an hour."

All the time that she was pleading, she was gazing anxiously in his face for the first sign of yielding; but she gazed in vain. She saw no softening of the stern expression, no kindling of the cold, dark eyes, no tinting of the deadly pallor of the face. Austere and motionless he sat, listening, but in no wise moved. Napoleon himself could not have looked more stern. And, all the while, he had uttered not a word.

She could see that she had made no impression, and it frightened her. She had seen him furious before, but never with a look like this. An awful fear came over her that she had lost him; she shivered, and her face became as pale as his. For she was in deadly earnest; with all the strength of her passionate nature, she loved him, and, at that moment, felt that she could not survive the loss of him. But she would not yet relinquish hope. She would exhaust all the armory of her

persuasive weapons first.

She threw herself on the ground and clasped him round the legs; then turned her face up to him beseechingly, the tears streaming from her eyes. "Henri," she wailed, "you terrify me when you look like that. Oh! bend your eyes on me with love, as in the olden days. Am I less beautiful than of yore? Men do not tell me so. Oh! recall the time of Cairo and the desert, when our days and nights were wholly given up to love, when we were all in all to one another. I can love; you know how I can love, and you were never wearied with it; you used to say that you never had enough, although I lavished all I had on you. Then I was an untutored girl, with no knowledge that could interest a man; with nothing but my love to give. Now I have learned much, and can hold my own in the world of rank and intellect; men listen when I talk, and not alone from courtesy, for they take counsel with me on the gravest matters. You know this, Henri, you know that I am better fitted to be your helpmeet than when first you loved me."

The anguish in her face was terrible, but still he sat implacable and mute.

"Oh! cruel, cruel!" she went on; "will nothing touch your heart; or is it turned to stone? Henri, my husband, give me back your love, forgive me and take me to your heart again, or I shall die. I cannot live without you. What, still obdurate? Oh! speak to me!"

Then he unloosed his tongue.

"Yes, I will speak. Traitress! Adulteress! for I know that, in my absence, you forgot your honor as a wife, and gave rein to your unbridled passions." She started and the blood rushed for an instant to her face; then forsook it, and she became even whiter than before. But she uttered no word of protest. "I have heard you patiently, but unmoved. The time when your pleadings could beguile me, is past for ever. I will do you the justice to believe that you are speaking from your heart, but there is no response in mine. I acknowledge to the full your beauty, but the glamour that enthralled me has passed away. Your presence has become hateful to me, the touch of your fingers is abhorrent. Till I knew you, I was an honorable man, with a career before me in which my soul delighted, and in which I should have won distinction. I might have become a Marshal of France; nay, I am sure, I should, unless I had lost my life in battle; but, even so, I should have preserved my honor.

"Then, one fatal day, I met you, and I loved you. Oh! how I loved you! loved you so that I flung duty to the winds and betrayed my trust. I blame you not for this; you were absolutely innocent, and you used no perfidy to ensnare me. The fault was wholly mine. My love for you was irresistible; for it, I forsook the colors of my country. And I was happy in your love.

"For all that, although you were at first guiltless, my disgrace and ruin are due to you. I could easily have made my peace with Buonaparte, explained that

I had been captured, and he would have forgiven me. My advancement would have been rapid, in those stirring times; I might have kept both love and honor. But you used my passion for my ruin; you forced me to choose between the two, and I, in my infatuation, chose love. And all to satisfy your devilish craving for revenge; and revenge for what? For what you deemed a grievous wrong; but what, in the light of your after conduct as a wife—for you have wronged me far more than he wronged you, and in the same way too—you should have considered but a venial error, born of impulse. From year to year you pursued Napoleon with persistent hatred, and, though your machinations had no actual consequence, yet the will to harm him never flagged. To gratify your vengeful cravings, you played upon my love; and I, poor, weak, loving fool, allowed it, and let you use me as you would, for the furtherance of your schemes. And, after all, I did not get that for which I had staked my honor. You know how little of your society I have had all these years. While you were leading a life of luxury, lavishing your smiles and meretricious charms on other men, I was scouring the continent on your wicked errands, a traitor to my country, engaged in petty trickery, at times suffering the greatest hardships, always in peril of my life and liberty. Twice I underwent imprisonment, with the fear of death before my eyes, and several times was wounded. And, for all that my hardships were for love of you, yet you did not trust me, but set your spies on me, and sent me on fool's errands, and baffled me when I had my own ends to serve. Time after time I appealed to you; you saw how I was suffering from the disgrace of my position, but nothing moved you; you remained resolute and implacable; unless I worked your will, I should not retain your love. Your love! You never loved me; it was but the lust of passion, or you would not have used me thus. You made of me your tool, your hireling, nay, your abject slave."

"I did, I did," she murmured. "I confess it all. I was mad with hatred, and it so possessed me that I scarce knew what I did. But I will devote my life to you henceforth. I will do my utmost to make up for it, and will live only to do your will. I will be your slave now. Oh! Henri! forgive me and take me to your heart again!"

She loosened her hands from his knees, and clasped them together and knelt before him, abject in her abandonment, and gazed up at him imploringly.

But her grief, her piteous appeal had no effect on him. The recollection of all she had made him suffer had bereft him of compassion. His love had died away. Gradually it had waned, and it was his many absences from her side—her own doing—that had caused it; by slow degrees he had learned to do without her; at first with torture, then, with indifference, and finally with relief; and her act of two hours before had brushed away the last vestige of his love. It was gone forever; contempt and hatred had usurped its place.

"Never," he answered, "I have done with you for ever. Take your fatal beauty to another market. At last I am free from its enslavement. You deserve that I should strike you dead for all that you have made me suffer; but you are not worth that a man should jeopardize his life to punish you.

"Go, while I can control myself, for I would not have your murder on my soul. But never see my face again, if you place any value on your life; for, in such a case, I will not answer for your safety."

But his last words were inaudible to the wretched woman at his feet; for, before he had finished speaking, she had swooned away.

Even then there was no relenting on his part; no thought of the many hours when she had lain in his embrace, of the countless kisses they had interchanged, of the words of love that each had whispered in the other's ear. He looked down upon her sternly, not a gleam of pity in his eye.

"Hola! there, without," he called. The two men came in.

"See to this woman, she has fainted." They looked at him suspiciously, as though they thought he had used violence towards her.

He saw their glances. "Nay," he said, "I have not hurt her; her own heart is her assailant; she has but swooned. I will leave you to restore her. It would only add to her distress to see me when she returns to consciousness. So soon as she is able to be moved, transport her to her house, or where she will."

He strode to the door and left them, the men making no attempt to check him.

He never saw his wife again.

At this point St. Just's MS. ends abruptly, so that his after life can only be surmised. Probably, with Napoleon's banishment, he retired from the French army, being unwilling to serve under the new regime. The same uncertainty rests upon the fortunes of the beautiful Egyptian for whom he had suffered and sacrificed so much; for, from the moment when he left her swooning in his apartments at the Hotel Mirabeau, he makes no mention of her.

A glimmer of light is shed on St. Just's own movements by the following unfinished letter found with the MS. and transcribed below verbatim.

"**On board the English ship Minerva** 3rd May, 1821.

"My dear Garraud,

After years of silence, I take up my pen to write to you, my earliest comrade; and what has moved me now I cannot say—some sudden impulse.

"At the moment of my writing, St. Helena, the living tomb of the great Emperor, is fading out of sight.

"He is dying; so they told me yesterday. More than a year ago I saw him. With the help of our friend Brenneau—you remember him, the merchant captain—I landed at St. Helena. He had a message for this Sir Hudson Lowe, whom, they have placed as keeper of the Emperor.

"When he had delivered this, we walked as far as Longwood, where Napoleon lives.

"Night was falling, and a strong desire came over me to see him. I concealed myself until it was quite dark, and then tapped gently at a window. It was opened, and Count Bertrand looked out. This was better luck than I had expected, for he knew me instantly, and helped me through the window.

"In a few minutes, I stood before the Emperor. I saw a great change in his appearance. He had gained much flesh since I had last seen him, and there was a flabbiness, with an unhealthy pallor, about his face, that indicated disease. The brightness of his eye was gone, and he looked woefully dejected.

"He received me kindly, and seemed glad to see me, and talked with me of by-gone days and various persons and events in France.

"I fell on my knees and begged him to forgive me for having mixed myself up in plots against him.

"'Rise, Colonel St. Just,' he said, and he took me by the hand—me who had conspired against him—'It is a pity we so long misunderstood each other.'

"Then I wept. 'Ah Sire,' I cried, 'Had I known before what I have since discovered, I should have acted differently.'

"'Ah, my friend,' he said, 'how many of us would act differently, did we but know in time. But we cannot unlive the past, and regrets are vain. I forgive you any wrong you did me. Think kindly of Napoleon, no matter what the world may say of him.'

"Then, touched by his kindness, and weeping at the thought of all his greatness come to this, I left him and rejoined Brenneau, and we made our way back to the ship.

"We have remained together ever since, trading in Africa, and have made money at it. We are now two days out on our way to Italy. On our arrival, I will join you in Rome, and bring my memoranda of events in my own life, from the rise of Napoleon's star to the time of its setting in the lonely rockbound island. Together we will go over them again.

"I keep the papers in one of the old boxes in which I found the treasure that I told you of. I have preserved it as a memorial of that marvelous subterranean city.

"There is so much movement in the vessel, that I can scarce keep pen to

paper. It is blowing hard.

"Brenneau has just run down to say that a hurricane is approaching. More, when the weather has calmed down again."

This unfinished letter was found in the box with the MS. referred to. Probably the storm got worse, and St. Just had placed it there for safety. What happened afterwards is not within mortal ken; whether the ship went down with every soul on board; or St. Just or any others were saved and landed on the volcanic isle on which the box was found; or that it was floated thither by the waves; or sunk on the spot on which the rock was afterwards thrown up; will remain for ever

A SECRET OF THE SEA.

*** END OF THIS PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK FOR LOVE OF A BEDOUIN MAID ***

A Word from Project Gutenberg

We will update this book if we find any errors.

This book can be found under: https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/47372

Creating the works from print editions not protected by U.S. copyright law means that no one owns a United States copyright in these works, so the Foundation (and you!) can copy and distribute it in the United States without permission and without paying copyright royalties. Special rules, set forth in the General Terms of Use part of this license, apply to copying and distributing Project Gutenberg™ electronic works to protect the Project Gutenberg™ concept and trademark. Project Gutenberg is a registered trademark, and may not be used if you charge for the eBooks, unless you receive specific permission. If you do not charge anything for copies of this eBook, complying with the rules is very easy. You may use this eBook for nearly any purpose such as creation of derivative works, reports, performances and research. They may be modified and printed and given away – you may do practically *anything* in the United States with eBooks not protected by U.S. copyright law. Redistribution is subject to the trademark license, especially commercial redistribution.

The Full Project Gutenberg License

Please read this before you distribute or use this work.

To protect the Project Gutenberg™ mission of promoting the free distribution of electronic works, by using or distributing this work (or any other work associated in any way with the phrase "Project Gutenberg"), you agree to comply with all the terms of the Full Project Gutenberg™ License available with this file or online at https://www.gutenberg.org/license.

Section 1. General Terms of Use & Redistributing Project Gutenberg™ electronic works

1.A. By reading or using any part of this Project Gutenberg™ electronic work,

you indicate that you have read, understand, agree to and accept all the terms of this license and intellectual property (trademark/copyright) agreement. If you do not agree to abide by all the terms of this agreement, you must cease using and return or destroy all copies of Project Gutenberg™ electronic works in your possession. If you paid a fee for obtaining a copy of or access to a Project Gutenberg™ electronic work and you do not agree to be bound by the terms of this agreement, you may obtain a refund from the person or entity to whom you paid the fee as set forth in paragraph 1.E.8.

1.B. "Project Gutenberg" is a registered trademark. It may only be used on or associated in any way with an electronic work by people who agree to be bound by the terms of this agreement. There are a few things that you can do with most Project Gutenberg™ electronic works even without complying with the full terms of this agreement. See paragraph 1.C below. There are a lot of things you can do with Project Gutenberg™ electronic works if you follow the terms of this agreement and help preserve free future access to Project Gutenberg™ electronic works. See paragraph 1.E below.

1.C. The Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation ("the Foundation" or PGLAF), owns a compilation copyright in the collection of Project Gutenberg™ electronic works. Nearly all the individual works in the collection are in the public domain in the United States. If an individual work is unprotected by copyright law in the United States and you are located in the United States, we do not claim a right to prevent you from copying, distributing, performing, displaying or creating derivative works based on the work as long as all references to Project Gutenberg are removed. Of course, we hope that you will support the Project Gutenberg™ mission of promoting free access to electronic works by freely sharing Project Gutenberg™ works in compliance with the terms of this agreement for keeping the Project Gutenberg™ name associated with the work. You can easily comply with the terms of this agreement by keeping this work in the same format with its attached full Project Gutenberg™ License when you share it without charge with others.

1.D. The copyright laws of the place where you are located also govern what you can do with this work. Copyright laws in most countries are in a constant state of change. If you are outside the United States, check the laws of your country in addition to the terms of this agreement before downloading, copying, displaying, performing, distributing or creating derivative works based on this work or any other Project Gutenberg™ work. The Foundation makes no representations concerning the copyright status of any work in any country outside the United States.

1.E. Unless you have removed all references to Project Gutenberg:

1.E.1. The following sentence, with active links to, or other immediate ac-

cess to, the full Project Gutenberg™ License must appear prominently whenever any copy of a Project Gutenberg™ work (any work on which the phrase "Project Gutenberg" appears, or with which the phrase "Project Gutenberg" is associated) is accessed, displayed, performed, viewed, copied or distributed:

> This eBook is for the use of anyone anywhere in the United States and most other parts of the world at no cost and with almost no restrictions whatsoever. You may copy it, give it away or re-use it under the terms of the Project Gutenberg License included with this eBook or online at https://www.gutenberg.org . If you are not located in the United States, you'll have to check the laws of the country where you are located before using this ebook.

1.E.2. If an individual Project Gutenberg™ electronic work is derived from texts not protected by U.S. copyright law (does not contain a notice indicating that it is posted with permission of the copyright holder), the work can be copied and distributed to anyone in the United States without paying any fees or charges. If you are redistributing or providing access to a work with the phrase "Project Gutenberg" associated with or appearing on the work, you must comply either with the requirements of paragraphs 1.E.1 through 1.E.7 or obtain permission for the use of the work and the Project Gutenberg™ trademark as set forth in paragraphs 1.E.8 or 1.E.9.

1.E.3. If an individual Project Gutenberg™ electronic work is posted with the permission of the copyright holder, your use and distribution must comply with both paragraphs 1.E.1 through 1.E.7 and any additional terms imposed by the copyright holder. Additional terms will be linked to the Project Gutenberg™ License for all works posted with the permission of the copyright holder found at the beginning of this work.

1.E.4. Do not unlink or detach or remove the full Project Gutenberg™ License terms from this work, or any files containing a part of this work or any other work associated with Project Gutenberg™.

1.E.5. Do not copy, display, perform, distribute or redistribute this electronic work, or any part of this electronic work, without prominently displaying the sentence set forth in paragraph 1.E.1 with active links or immediate access to the full terms of the Project Gutenberg™ License.

1.E.6. You may convert to and distribute this work in any binary, compressed, marked up, nonproprietary or proprietary form, including any word processing or hypertext form. However, if you provide access to or distribute copies of a Project Gutenberg™ work in a format other than "Plain Vanilla ASCII" or other format used in the official version posted on the official Project Guten-

berg™ web site (https://www.gutenberg.org), you must, at no additional cost, fee or expense to the user, provide a copy, a means of exporting a copy, or a means of obtaining a copy upon request, of the work in its original "Plain Vanilla ASCII" or other form. Any alternate format must include the full Project Gutenberg™ License as specified in paragraph 1.E.1.

1.E.7. Do not charge a fee for access to, viewing, displaying, performing, copying or distributing any Project Gutenberg™ works unless you comply with paragraph 1.E.8 or 1.E.9.

1.E.8. You may charge a reasonable fee for copies of or providing access to or distributing Project Gutenberg™ electronic works provided that

- You pay a royalty fee of 20% of the gross profits you derive from the use of Project Gutenberg™ works calculated using the method you already use to calculate your applicable taxes. The fee is owed to the owner of the Project Gutenberg™ trademark, but he has agreed to donate royalties under this paragraph to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation. Royalty payments must be paid within 60 days following each date on which you prepare (or are legally required to prepare) your periodic tax returns. Royalty payments should be clearly marked as such and sent to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation at the address specified in Section 4, "Information about donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation."

- You provide a full refund of any money paid by a user who notifies you in writing (or by e-mail) within 30 days of receipt that s/he does not agree to the terms of the full Project Gutenberg™ License. You must require such a user to return or destroy all copies of the works possessed in a physical medium and discontinue all use of and all access to other copies of Project Gutenberg™ works.

- You provide, in accordance with paragraph 1.F.3, a full refund of any money paid for a work or a replacement copy, if a defect in the electronic work is discovered and reported to you within 90 days of receipt of the work.

- You comply with all other terms of this agreement for free distribution of Project Gutenberg™ works.

1.E.9. If you wish to charge a fee or distribute a Project Gutenberg™ electronic work or group of works on different terms than are set forth in this agreement, you must obtain permission in writing from both the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation and The Project Gutenberg Trademark LLC, the owner of the

Project Gutenberg™ trademark. Contact the Foundation as set forth in Section 3. below.

1.F.

1.F.1. Project Gutenberg volunteers and employees expend considerable effort to identify, do copyright research on, transcribe and proofread works not protected by U.S. copyright law in creating the Project Gutenberg™ collection. Despite these efforts, Project Gutenberg™ electronic works, and the medium on which they may be stored, may contain "Defects," such as, but not limited to, incomplete, inaccurate or corrupt data, transcription errors, a copyright or other intellectual property infringement, a defective or damaged disk or other medium, a computer virus, or computer codes that damage or cannot be read by your equipment.

1.F.2. LIMITED WARRANTY, DISCLAIMER OF DAMAGES – Except for the "Right of Replacement or Refund" described in paragraph 1.F.3, the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, the owner of the Project Gutenberg™ trademark, and any other party distributing a Project Gutenberg™ electronic work under this agreement, disclaim all liability to you for damages, costs and expenses, including legal fees. YOU AGREE THAT YOU HAVE NO REMEDIES FOR NEGLIGENCE, STRICT LIABILITY, BREACH OF WARRANTY OR BREACH OF CONTRACT EXCEPT THOSE PROVIDED IN PARAGRAPH 1.F.3. YOU AGREE THAT THE FOUNDATION, THE TRADEMARK OWNER, AND ANY DISTRIBUTOR UNDER THIS AGREEMENT WILL NOT BE LIABLE TO YOU FOR ACTUAL, DIRECT, INDIRECT, CONSEQUENTIAL, PUNITIVE OR INCIDENTAL DAMAGES EVEN IF YOU GIVE NOTICE OF THE POSSIBILITY OF SUCH DAMAGE.

1.F.3. LIMITED RIGHT OF REPLACEMENT OR REFUND – If you discover a defect in this electronic work within 90 days of receiving it, you can receive a refund of the money (if any) you paid for it by sending a written explanation to the person you received the work from. If you received the work on a physical medium, you must return the medium with your written explanation. The person or entity that provided you with the defective work may elect to provide a replacement copy in lieu of a refund. If you received the work electronically, the person or entity providing it to you may choose to give you a second opportunity to receive the work electronically in lieu of a refund. If the second copy is also defective, you may demand a refund in writing without further opportunities to fix the problem.

1.F.4. Except for the limited right of replacement or refund set forth in paragraph 1.F.3, this work is provided to you 'AS-IS,' WITH NO OTHER WARRANTIES OF ANY KIND, EXPRESS OR IMPLIED, INCLUDING BUT NOT LIMITED TO WARRANTIES OF MERCHANTABILITY OR FITNESS FOR ANY PUR-

POSE.

1.F.5. Some states do not allow disclaimers of certain implied warranties or the exclusion or limitation of certain types of damages. If any disclaimer or limitation set forth in this agreement violates the law of the state applicable to this agreement, the agreement shall be interpreted to make the maximum disclaimer or limitation permitted by the applicable state law. The invalidity or unenforceability of any provision of this agreement shall not void the remaining provisions.

1.F.6. INDEMNITY – You agree to indemnify and hold the Foundation, the trademark owner, any agent or employee of the Foundation, anyone providing copies of Project Gutenberg™ electronic works in accordance with this agreement, and any volunteers associated with the production, promotion and distribution of Project Gutenberg™ electronic works, harmless from all liability, costs and expenses, including legal fees, that arise directly or indirectly from any of the following which you do or cause to occur: (a) distribution of this or any Project Gutenberg™ work, (b) alteration, modification, or additions or deletions to any Project Gutenberg™ work, and (c) any Defect you cause.

Section 2. Information about the Mission of Project Gutenberg™

Project Gutenberg™ is synonymous with the free distribution of electronic works in formats readable by the widest variety of computers including obsolete, old, middle-aged and new computers. It exists because of the efforts of hundreds of volunteers and donations from people in all walks of life.

Volunteers and financial support to provide volunteers with the assistance they need, is critical to reaching Project Gutenberg™'s goals and ensuring that the Project Gutenberg™ collection will remain freely available for generations to come. In 2001, the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation was created to provide a secure and permanent future for Project Gutenberg™ and future generations. To learn more about the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation and how your efforts and donations can help, see Sections 3 and 4 and the Foundation web page at https://www.pglaf.org .

Section 3. Information about the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation

The Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation is a non profit 501(c)(3) educational corporation organized under the laws of the state of Mississippi and granted tax exempt status by the Internal Revenue Service. The Foundation's EIN or federal tax identification number is 64-6221541. Contributions to the Project

Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation are tax deductible to the full extent permitted by U.S. federal laws and your state's laws.

The Foundation's principal office is in Fairbanks, Alaska, with the mailing address: PO Box 750175, Fairbanks, AK 99775, but its volunteers and employees are scattered throughout numerous locations. Its business office is located at 809 North 1500 West, Salt Lake City, UT 84116, (801) 596-1887, email business@pglaf.org. Email contact links and up to date contact information can be found at the Foundation's web site and official page at www.gutenberg.org/contact

For additional contact information:

Dr. Gregory B. Newby
Chief Executive and Director
gbnewby@pglaf.org

Section 4. Information about Donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation

Project Gutenberg™ depends upon and cannot survive without wide spread public support and donations to carry out its mission of increasing the number of public domain and licensed works that can be freely distributed in machine readable form accessible by the widest array of equipment including outdated equipment. Many small donations ($1 to $5,000) are particularly important to maintaining tax exempt status with the IRS.

The Foundation is committed to complying with the laws regulating charities and charitable donations in all 50 states of the United States. Compliance requirements are not uniform and it takes a considerable effort, much paperwork and many fees to meet and keep up with these requirements. We do not solicit donations in locations where we have not received written confirmation of compliance. To SEND DONATIONS or determine the status of compliance for any particular state visit https://www.gutenberg.org/donate

While we cannot and do not solicit contributions from states where we have not met the solicitation requirements, we know of no prohibition against accepting unsolicited donations from donors in such states who approach us with offers to donate.

International donations are gratefully accepted, but we cannot make any statements concerning tax treatment of donations received from outside the United States. U.S. laws alone swamp our small staff.

Please check the Project Gutenberg Web pages for current donation meth-

ods and addresses. Donations are accepted in a number of other ways including checks, online payments and credit card donations. To donate, please visit: https://www.gutenberg.org/donate

Section 5. General Information About Project Gutenberg™ electronic works.

Professor Michael S. Hart was the originator of the Project Gutenberg™ concept of a library of electronic works that could be freely shared with anyone. For thirty years, he produced and distributed Project Gutenberg™ eBooks with only a loose network of volunteer support.

Project Gutenberg™ eBooks are often created from several printed editions, all of which are confirmed as not protected by copyright in the U.S. unless a copyright notice is included. Thus, we do not necessarily keep eBooks in compliance with any particular paper edition.

Most people start at our Web site which has the main PG search facility:

https://www.gutenberg.org

This Web site includes information about Project Gutenberg™, including how to make donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, how to help produce our new eBooks, and how to subscribe to our email newsletter to hear about new eBooks.