

To strike while the iron is hot is his motto.

'Messieurs, look at yonder craven beast! He has assailed the character of this young girl. He is a coward, and no Frenchman. Let me tell you my belief. If he were taken and searched perhaps evidence would be found that would prove him a spy.'

Hardly are the words out of Captain Tom's lips than with a roar the Amazons hurt themselves upon the giant. He fights like a demon, and at one time threatens to escape, but others come to the assistance of his enemies, and down the street they capture him, holding his arms while the search is made.

Five seconds more have gone a shout is heard. Halls are raised aloft, bearing papers that have been taken from the person of Franc, as—papers that contain mystic maps, plans of the fortifications, and figures estimating the number of troops in Paris.

'Hang him!' is the cry. A rope appears as if by magic, and the noose is slipped over the man's neck. Then with jest and shout they drag their intended victim in the direction of the nearest lamp-post.

Captain Tom makes no effort to save the man. Indeed, after having learned that this wretch had insulted the blind girl, and sought to make her the victim of the mob's fury, he even feels a savage satisfaction in the thought that justice is about to overtake the fellow.

Just at this moment occurs something not down on the programme.

A shell, cast from a Krupp gun on the heights of Châtillon, drops into the street not forty feet beyond the surging crowd. There is a blinding flash, a terrific explosion, cries of horror and alarm.

The bonfire still burns. Captain Tom has been knocked down by the concussion, though from the way in which his head aches he at first imagines that a piece of the shell has brained him.

He struggles to his feet. Such a sight as that which confronts him. It is enough to fill one with horror. That picturesque Prussian shell has done more damage than any yet sent into the doomed city.

Half a dozen of the Amazons lie upon the street maimed or killed; others crawl away, or, rising to their feet, hasten to the shelter of doorways, as though fearing a repetition of the disaster.

Down the street a flying figure catches the attention of the American. It is the giant Francois. Satan looks after his own, and this engine of destruction, sent from the workshops of his friends, had passed by, leaving the German spy unscathed.

'We may meet again,' mutters Tom. Then he suddenly remembers the blind girl.

He fears that she may have been injured by the terrible explosion, and turns to find that she is no longer at his side. He looks around in bewilderment, not able to tell where she may have gone. It is too much to believe that she could have passed out of sight down the street in this short space of time.

He even the houses near him suspiciously, as though under the impression that one of them may have given her ingress.

Then, marking the locality in his mind, he leaves the scene of the explosion. Already people are flocking to the spot from every quarter. Just as buzzards scent carrion afar off, so these cultures of the great city flock to feast their eyes on the sight of blood.

Captain Tom has been greatly agitated by the recent events. As he walks along he mutters to himself, and certain words fall in a voice above a whisper give an indication to his thoughts.

'It is the irony of fate. Surely that voice, that figure, was Myra's; but blind. Great heavens! what does that mean? In this a dream! Am I awake? Perhaps the continual roar of the great guns has unsettled my mind. I cannot solve it now, but I will come again to this place and look for the girl I saw from the mob's mad fury. Just now I have something deeper to play.'

He ceases to commune aloud. If his thoughts are still on the subject there is no outward manifestation of the fact.

Thus he finally finds himself in front of a convent. The grey walls rise before him cold and pitiless. He looks up the street and down to see whether the 'shadow' is in sight; the dark form that for days and nights has followed him wherever he may have gone.

Nothing can be seen of a suspicious nature. Perhaps the pursuit has been given up.

He faces the convent. The door is near by and ascending the few steps he pulls the bell.

Paris no longer knows silence. Her citizens sleep with the distant growling of

the Prussians siege guns, the heavier detonations of Mont Valerien, and the bursting of shells among the houses, as their lullaby.

The evil days have come when 'children cry for bread, and there is no bread in Israel.' Famine threatens to be a worse foe than the foreign foe encamped about her walls.

In this quarter an occasional shell drops, and already the convent has been badly used. By some accident its grey walls have been picked out by the German gunners miles away as a good object at which to sight their guns in the day time.

In answer to his ring a black-robed figure comes to the little wicket in the door, exchanges a few words with the American, and then opens the heavy iron barrier, inviting him to enter.

He has been here before, and the way is familiar; so he passes on to a small parlour or reception-room, where the gas burns low.

Here he awaits the coming of one for whom he has inquired. It is a strange hour to make a call, but of late Paris has known no night since the terrible bombardment began.

While he sits there Captain Tom allows his thoughts to range backward. He finds his curiosity regarding the young girl very keen.

What could bring a blind girl out upon the streets at such an hour? Has a shell demolished her home? How could she run to him and beseech his assistance if blind? How did she know he was an American even before he had uttered a single word?

These are pertinent questions.

The worthy Captain Tom immovably. With an impatient gesture he turns away from the contemplation of such mysteries, and glances around at the walls. Then he picks up a book lying on the table, and idly turns the pages.

It is an album. Faces interest him deeply and he looks from page to page. At the very last he finds himself gazing upon the picture of a young girl. Back of her can be seen dimly the walls of the famous ruin, the Coliseum.

The man holds his breath. He has made a discovery that appals him. Under the figure is written the name 'Myra.' It is the girl whom he left in Rome, who has eluded his search so long, and whose counterpart he has rescued on this very night.

Why should the picture of the pure and artless Myra be found in the album of this plotting German spy, Linda Dubois?

CHAPTER IV.

'WINE IS A MOCKER! TAKE CARE, CAPTAIN TOM.'

The rustle of a woman's drapery arouses Captain Tom from the reverie into which he has unconsciously fallen while gazing at the sweet face in the album.

He looks up. In the narrow door-way stands a woman. She wears the dress of a nun, but it is a mockery, for her cheeks are aflame with the roset of health, such as can never be seen on the face of a sister who denies herself the pleasures of the world, and fasts in the solitude of her cell. The veil will hide them, tell-tale cheeks should she choose to go abroad upon the streets, and even the lower classes, the *canaille*, respect the dress of a sister and the red cross she carries when upon an errand of mercy in war times.

Captain Tom is not surprised at anything this remarkable woman might do, but he pretends to show astonishment.

'The dress becomes you, Ma'm'elie Linda, but why assume it? Do the rules of the convent require such sacrifices from each guest?' he asks, accepting her white, shapely hand.

She laughs merrily.

'Dear me, no, monsieur. It is mere caprice on my part. I am curious to see how the siege goes on. I would travel the streets unmolested, and in this garb I am able to go and come where I please. Most of the nuns are out now looking after the wounded, of whom the hospitals are full. They threaten to turn the churches into hospitals, and Notre Dame as well as this convent may echo with the cries of the wounded. The Lady Superior is an old friend of mine, and would do much to assist me, knowing that I mean to write a book on the siege of Paris.'

She is seated near him now, and he continues to survey her closely.

'Ma'm'elie, pardon me, but you are a remarkable woman, the most gifted lady I ever met. This wonderful book, when it appears, for whose reading it is intended—the French who are shut up in Paris, or the Germans who surround her walls?'

The fair Linda takes no offence, but smiles and shakes the truant veil back from her face.

'Wait and see, monsieur. You may be surprised to find your ideas permeating my book, for I honestly confess that much of my knowledge of military technique was gained through you.'

Captain Tom winces. At the same time he smiles inwardly, if such a thing can be, for he has been grossly inaccurate in all

things pertaining to the defence of Paris when engaged in conversation with the fair Linda.

'You are a complete mystery to me, ma'm'elie. Think how strangely we have met. First, months ago, long before the siege began, I had the pleasure of stopping your runaway horse on the Boulevard Montmartre. Our acquaintance began there.'

'Later on we met by chance at the Louvre, in the Musée Egyptian, where I find you deeply engrossed with the relics from the pyramids, and especially some curious little metal vials said to contain love powders, strange poisons, and the like, used in the times of the ancient Pharaohs.'

'A third time we lose sight of each other, and again our meeting is brought about by fate in a singular way. Walking with my friend, General Le Creux, in the Faubourg St. Honoré, we see a string of captured Uhlans being brought into the city. The tortures of war have thrown them into the hands of the French, and all along the streets they are the subjects of curiosity and insult.'

'I see a lady in a carriage draw near. Behold! it is you, ma'm'elie. One of the Uhlans, an officer, a splendid specimen of manhood, attempts to break from the ranks; he shakes his fists at you; he cries out that you are a traitress, and deserve death; that you have deserted your lover and the native country of your mother's people to seek the delights of Paris.'

'I see you shirking back, appalled. I realize that this officer has once been your lover. He is dragged back into line, and the procession moves on. Later, influenced by more than mere curiosity, I endeavour to find him in order to hear more about you, to whom I am so deeply interested, but he has already been exchanged. Some hidden power has set the wheels in motion for him.'

'I see you often after this. We ride and walk together. You take me into your confidence with regard to your book. When last we parted you told me this was to be your future address, and that I could see you at any hour. I have come.'

While the captain speaks the fair Alsatian has regarded him closely. She is playing a deep and dangerous game, and this man has entered it in a way she had not calculated upon when arranging her plans.

At first he has been, as she believes, her dupe; her dupe now she loves as only one of her country can. The stalwart and brave American has become a hero in her eyes. All other games must play a minor part to the one in which she would make him her slave.

She thinks she has captured him with her charms of face and figure. 'But like other men before—the Uhlans officer, for instance—she can hammer his heart to suit her humour.'

This proves what a poor judge she is. Perhaps she may be able to read her own sex better.

'It is a strange hour, Captain Tom. Tell me why you have sought me?' she says, in her round, velvety voice, so like the soft purring of a cat.

He hardly dares to tell her all, but may say enough to appease her curiosity. Quick wit is needed, so that ejection may not be aroused.

'Listen, ma'm'elie, and let me tell you something that may interest you. We have seen much of each other during this time of siege, and you will pardon me if I say I have taken unusual interest in you—and your book.'

'The woman in the nun's dress taps her foot on the floor nervously, and shrugs her shapely shoulders as she listens. This reference to her book sounds like sarcasm. It may be possible that Monsieur Tom does not have so much confidence in the production of the volume as he has given her to believe.'

'Prouced,' she says, lightly.

'Under such circumstances, you remember, I obtained for you a steady and faithful body servant, one Mickey McCray, who has, I understand, served you faithfully all this while.'

'Devoted Mickey. He is a diamond in the rough,' she murmurs.

'Nor has my friendship ended there, my dear Ma'm'elie Linda. I have come here at this strange hour to prove that, though my heart beats not in sympathy with the cause you love, I still regard you highly. In a word, ma'm'elie, I am here to save you.'

The woman shows emotion. Her eyes glitter like stars, and even in this moment of supreme trial her thoughts are more for the man than connected with her own danger.

'To save me!' she repeats, in her velvety voice. 'How good of you, Captain Tom. No doubt you risk much in coming. What danger threatens me now? Has the count decided to raid my fortress, the convent, and carry me off, or does my military admirer, the general, intend to fight a duel with you because of my poor flirtations?'

'Neither, ma'm'elie. The warning I bring you concerns yourself alone. You must leave Paris.'

She laughs in a strange way. 'What you say is absurd, Captain Tom. Leave Paris, indeed! Why should I go; how can I pass through the lines?'

'You will have no difficulty up to seven to-morrow night, when the gates are closed, provided you show this passport from Trochu. If you remain after that hour it is—death!'

'Death!'

'I have said it, ma'm'elie. The governor, who gave me this pass, will insist on the full penalty of the law if you are found within the walls after the gates close.'

She wakes to a full sense of the danger menacing her. All thoughts of love are put aside. The woman gives way to the patriot.

'Monsieur le Capitain, you can tell me

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