

what it is they accuse Linda Dubois of being?"

"They say you are a spy, ma'm'selle. That, instead of gathering facts for a book, you transfer them to the hands of the enemy. I believe one of your tools has been captured."

"Poor Francois!" she says, musingly. "He always said the quillotine would be his fate, but now it may be a sergeant and his file."

Francois! It is the name of the man who led the mob after the girl; he who had so narrowly escaped annihilation at their hands.

Captain Tom realizes this; remembers that the fellow chased the girl whom he believes to be Myra, and putting things together, glances toward the album holding her picture. Dimly he attempts to form a theory, but it falls to pieces for want of connecting links.

"Do you admit the fact, mam'selle? You need have no fears of me, for the document you hold proves my friendship."

Yes, she says, boldly, endeavouring to magnetize him with her sparkling eyes. "I admit the truth of the charge. I am a spy."

"You are as bold as you are beautiful," he says, with something of irony in his tone.

Although Captain Tom can admire a woman like Linda Dubois she is not the kind of being to capture his heart. The girl Myra, whom he had found and lost in Rome, and whose image he has haunted him ever since, is of an entirely different type, and appeals to softer feelings within his heart.

"Tell me, Monsieur Tom, what induced you to spare me? You, whom I have learned within six hours to be in the employ of the French government. Why did you secure me this chance of escape?"

She hangs her whole existence on this sentence, holding her very breath while awaiting his answer.

If he will only say, "Because I love you," what cares she that the heavens are black above her; that the nature of her mission to Paris is no longer a secret, and an ignominious death very near? Love with a woman reaches beyond all else, and Linda Dubois possesses a heart of fire, coquette though she may have been.

Captain Tom does not fall into the trap. His regard for the lovely woman has never gone beyond the admiration point, though he would think it poor policy to say so now.

"It does not matter, ma'm'selle, what the motive may have been, I am enough interested in your welfare to intervene when the authorities have declared your life forfeited. I come with this paper. I warn you of the danger. You can quietly leave Paris and be safe among your friends."

"And if I refuse to go?"

He shrugs his shoulders in the French way.

"That is your lookout, ma'm'selle. I should be sorry to hear you make such a decision," he says, solemnly, "for as sure as the French forts are thundering their defiance at the foe just now, Governor Trochu means to have you pay the penalty of your indiscretion, if you remain in Paris."

Her manner changes.

"Captain Tom, twice have you saved my life. Tell me what I can do in return. There is nothing too great to ask, if it lies in my power to grant."

He is deceived. Forgets the nature of the woman with whom he deal; falls into a little trap, as it were, headlong.

"I know of nothing, ma'm'selle, unless you would tell me who the young girl is whose picture is in yonder album—she at the Coliseum. How you became acquainted with her. Where she may be found at present."

He stops abruptly. Something in her face and eyes warn him. Just as the rattle-snake whirs its note when strange feet draw near.

"You are deeply interested in Myra?" she asks.

He assumes indifference just in time.

"She makes me think of a sister whom I lost years ago. Her name was Myra, too. Never mind, ma'm'selle, another time will do as well."

His words appease her. The angry look vanishes, and a smile covers her lovely face.

"Then you expect to meet me again some day, Monsieur le Capitaine?"

"It would be strange if fortune did not bring us together again," he replies, smiling.

"You are not going so soon, monsieur?"

"It is as well. I have finished my business here; why delay? Besides, my duty calls. It is as you say, I am in the government employ. My grandfather was Lafayette's nearest friend, and I seek to repay the debt we owe to la belle France."

"You will drink a glass of light wine with me?"

He looks into those glorious eyes. He is lost!

"At last, ma belle, with pleasure," he murmurs.

The woman in the nun's dress leaves the room, and Captain Tom seats himself again.

He is yawning behind his hand when a very singular thing occurs.

A figure glides into the room noiselessly, and lays a folded paper on the table at his elbow.

Turning, the girl places a finger on her lips, motions to the table, and vanishes.

Captain Tom jumps to his feet.

"Bless my soul! This is odd! That was Myra herself or her wraith! What next, I wonder! Nothing wrong with those eyes. Justier, how their glance thrills me. What does this paper mean? Quite dramatic, I declare!"

He tears it open and reads:

"Wine is a mocker. Take care, Captain Tom!"

CHAPTER V.

THE SNAKE THAT LAY IN THE AMBER GLASS.

There can be no mistaking the nature of the note.

It comes in the form of a warning, proving that a man may be in double danger within the walls of besieged Paris.

The fact that Myra has sent it gives the brave American a peculiar feeling. He is threatened with a rush of blood to the heart, a very dangerous symptom among young persons.

"Bless her," he murmurs, "beautiful mystery that she is. I save her from the mad populace, and now she returns the favour. Something within tells me this is not the end."

It may at any rate be the end of him unless he heeds the warning conveyed in Myra's note, for danger hangs heavy over the head of Captain Tom, danger from more than one source, threatening to drag him down into the maelstrom which is about to rend fair Paris.

Being a man of action instead of a dreamer, the American immediately sets his mind upon the game that is upon him.

In one sense it is not a very great surprise, this fact of his being threatened by the fair Alsatian. She has been playing a desperate game with Captain Tom as an antagonist, and, as present appearances would indicate, has lost.

What her object may be in endeavouring to drug him he does not pretend to analyse just now, but it must be a deep one.

She knows he is in the service of the French government, while she works in secret with the German flag next her heart. This alone makes them foes; but Captain Tom has seen much of the world, and unless he makes a terrible mistake the fair Linda cares more for him than an ordinary individual. This fact adds another strange link in the chain that is being forged around him.

These things pass through his mind with great rapidity, and he has about made up a plan of action, when he hears the rustling of feminine garments, that indicates Linda's return.

She comes with a bright smile, bearing a small silver salver, on which is a bottle of wine and two glasses. Her guest is sitting just where she left him. Linda glances at him keenly, but reads nothing upon that impassive face, for Captain Tom is not in the habit of betraying his thoughts.

While she sets the salver on a small table she endeavours to make up his mind how his wine is to be doctored. Surely, as it comes from the bottle it will be pure, for Linda means to drink in company with him.

Thus he decides that the drug must already have been dropped into the goblet intended for him, or else her white fingers will manipulate it as she pours out the wine.

Keen though his eyes are he fails to detect any such action on her part, and yet when she passes the amber goblet toward him, he is quite certain the thing has been accomplished.

Now comes the trying moment. He knows it may be death to him to swallow the contents of that glass, but in what way will he avoid it. With such a beautiful temptress smiling in his face, it were almost impossible for the ordinary man to resist the decree of fate—the would be strongly urged to seize his glass, drink it against his own, and swallow the decoction prepared by her fair hands.

Men have gone to their death with their eyes wide open before now, when the blow has been struck by a woman they loved, and history will continue to repeat itself many times ere this hoary old world of ours gives way to the ravages of decay, and drops back to the cold, cheerless order of a moon.

In this instance one thing saves Captain Tom—he is not in love with the fair Alsatian, no matter what the state of her feelings toward him may be. Thus he is able to control his actions and work out the plan for his own salvation.

As he takes the glass she offers him his hand touches hers, and it seems as though a flash of electricity must have passed through his whole system, such is the strange feeling which he experiences.

Not by a single sign does he betray the

fact that he is aware of the danger menacing him. He takes the fatal goblet—the rich odour of the wine reaches his nostrils—it gives him the idea he has been hunting for.

"Pardon, mam'selle, but unless I mistake, you have respect for a vow, however lightly taken."

He says this gravely. The Alsatian turns pale. Is he about to refuse to drink?

Merci, monsieur, you have not forgotten all our native wines—you have not become a fastidious since we have road past the *café chantant* on the Champs Elysees, stopping to taste the best port Monsieur Jacques can put before his guests in these troublous times?

The American laughs lightly.

"Oh, mam'selle, it is not so bad as that. I have not forgotten the wines you Parisians drink like water, but once upon a time I made a solemn vow that never again would I taste this particular vintage unless it had that peculiar piquancy which a little grated nutmeg alone can give."

Linda utters an exclamation—her face at once loses its frown—she is again smiling.

"I fear you may think me foolish, but an old bachelor like myself sometimes falls into the evil practice of indulging these idle fancies—no doubt they are self—"

"Say no more, Monsieur Tom. Why should you apologise for such a simple thing? It is I who should beg pardon for not anticipating your wants. Have the goodness to excuse me for a moment and I will see whether they have such a thing in the house."

He is about to murmur, "With pleasure," but thinking the words too significant, merely bows and smiles. The fair Linda sweeps out of the room, only too anxious to obey a bachelor's whim.

Ah! the coast is clear. Captain Tom has been reclining indolently in his easy-chair, but he speedily loses that look of apathy. Hardly has the rustle of feminine garments passed beyond his range of hearing than he bends forward, takes the glass that he has deposited upon the tray, smells of its contents, holds it up so that the light shines through the rich wine held within, and then shakes his head, as if baffled in the attempt to discover the identity of the drug it contains. In addition to several other accomplishments, Captain Tom is interested in the strange elements of the science of poison and he fancied it might be easy to discover the nature of the scheming Alsatian's drug.

He does not mean to stop there. Danger lurks in that amber goblet, and cannot be dilodged any too soon. Already he has seen the opportunity. There is an open fire-place in the room, where a fire, made down for the night, smoulders. He turns toward it, glass in hand, bends down, empties the wine in among the ashes, and then rises with a grim smile of satisfaction.

Taking out a snowy pocket-handkerchief he ruthlessly thrusts it into the goblet, which he instantly cleans with the neatness and despatch of a high toned waiter at the Hotel de Louvre.

Still he has not done.

The glass must be filled again just as the fair Alsatian left it. Captain Tom's hand is as steady as a rock while he allows the ruby liquid to seep until a certain imaginary line upon the goblet is reached.

Then he sets the bottle down with a grimace at its lightened condition, and inwardly hopes Linda will not have her attention called to the lower line of its contents.

He is careful to place things just as they were, and then leans back in his chair with a sigh of satisfaction. Fortune has smiled upon him. It was not so very difficult a matter after all.

Thus a short interval passes, and then, attracted by a rustle of the curtains in the quarter where Myra had vanished, the American looks up to see that sweet face among the folds of the portiere. One finger is pressed upon her lips, indicating silence; she shakes her head, blows him a kiss, and is gone.

Captain Tom feels strangely agitated. There is a volcano within his veins that threaten a speedy eruption. Somehow the presence of the girl whom he has so singularly met on several occasions always thrills him in this way. His thoughts are interrupted, for he hears Linda coming. She enters the room, breathing hard, as though it has been something of an effort to reach the culinary department of the sacred convent.

Still her face is marked by triumph, and she holds aloft a nutmeg grater as a victor might the spoils of conquest.

"Ah, Captain Tom, cruel tyrant, see what I have done to humour your caprice—redimension my checks by the exertion until I look only fit for the kitchen."

The bachelor thus brought to the bar, vehemently protests, and declares that he never saw her look more charming, which compliment from the man she loves has the effect of making her eyes sparkle, though she rattles on:

"You're like the rest of your sex, monseigneur—gay deceivers all. You have learned

in Paris to flatter. Do not shake your head and look displeased. I am not a silly girl, but one accustomed to reading men."

All this while she has been accepting the nutmeg into his wine, until the surface is covered with the floating dust, at which stage Tom firmly but gently clasps her wrist.

"Enough mam'selle. A spoon, if you please, and then we will drink to our meeting again, when this cruel war is over."

"I shall never forget that it is because of your regard for me, Captain Tom, that I am indebted for my life. But for that those Parisians who are shut up like rats in a trap, would before this hour have taken me to the Prison La Roquette, and perhaps to the guillotine in front."

Her dark eyes are fastened upon his while she thus speaks, and the man of nerve who has hunted tigers in the jungles of India, feels more uneasy under this glance than he ever remembers has been his lot when facing a striped Bengal devil among the tall grasses beyond his bungalow.

"This woman is dangerous, whether she hates or loves; her dazzling beauty renders her doubly so; she has a keen mind, and when battling for some object which has become sacred in her eyes, whether country or lover, will not allow any scruples to stand in the way to success. With her 'all's fair in love or war.'"

Captain Tom idly stirs the contents of his glass, but his mind is astray; he puzzles over the meaning of this scene, and resolves to make a desperate attempt to solve it.

He is afraid of no danger, and once he has made up his mind nothing of an ordinary nature can cause him to change it.

The time has come; he removes the spoon and raises his glass.

"Mam'selle, you and I, by the fortunes of war, chance to be on opposite sides, but that should not make us foes, any more than it prevents us from each toasting the cause dear to our hearts. Here, then, is to the Right; may it succeed no matter on which side it lies."

"I can drink to that toast, Monsieur Tom," the fair Alsatian cries immediately.

"They drain their tiny glasses."

"I pity you, monsieur," she laughs, evidently noting the grim look which he cannot keep from showing upon his face as he quaffs the villainous compound; and Tom is game to the backbone, and at once boldly declares:

"Ah, that was nectar fit for the gods; and all the more delightful because it has been brewed by such lovely fingers. I don't wonder some of the ancient worthies we read about thought it a privilege, when about to commit suicide, to have the fatal glass handed to them by one they loved. I should imagine, as you must perceive, mam'selle, that it—what the deuce was I about to say—well, it doesn't matter anyway, for really I must be going. You see, the fellows in the works on Mont Valerien will be out of

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