

moves or makes a single sound. If they were formed of the solid rock they could not remain more silent.

Captain Tom watches the thin wall being battered down; he sees a dozen Germans in the glare of their lanterns; but these men do not as yet suspect their danger. Just back of them can be noticed a company of Uhlans, brought into this place for an emergency, as they are esteemed the most determined fighters among the host that surrounds Paris.

It is a strange spectacle, especially when one considers that this thing actually occurs at a point inside the walls of the French metropolis.

Captain Tom is close beside the officer who has been left in charge. He knows that the other is a dashing soldier, and has his orders, hence this silence does not surprise him.

Colonel Duprez awaits the moment when the German engineers have knocked away enough of the wall to widen the breach and allow the passage of several men at the same time.

When this has been done he gives the signal—it is one single word:

'Now!'

The Franco-tireurs, those tigers of the battle, who know not the meaning of the word fear, leap forward, as if shot from a cannon.

They spring through the opening; they are upon the astounded engineers before the stolid Germans can imagine what is the matter; some shots are fired, then the French soldiers rush down upon their inveterate foes, the Uhlans.

Now comes the tug of war. A volley stretches a number of the Franco-tireurs low, but over their bodies sweep others; on they rush, coming in contact with the Uhlans. There is a distinct concussion, fierce yells, shots, and all the awful sounds of a terrible battle.

How strange it seems, such a desperate engagement under ground, and in the catacombs at that, living men engaged in deadly work here in the tomb of millions.

The Uhlans fight like brave men, but one by one they are cut down. Their leader is a large, handsome man. Captain Tom believes he has seen him before somewhere, for surely his face is familiar.

When all seems hopeless this man is noticed to give some signal—perhaps a soldier is waiting back in the darkness to carry it on.

An instant later the Uhlans captain goes down with half a dozen Franco-tireurs at his throat. If these fierce fighters allow him to live it will only be because they respect bravery even in a hated enemy. These free fighters take few prisoners in battle, for with them it is death.

'Forward!' shrieks the little colonel, who fancies he has a chance ahead to achieve immortal renown.

If his men can rush along this tunnel, perhaps they may create consternation at Châtillon, providing it extends so far. Who knows but what it may be the turning point in the whole siege, and looking back men will speak with pride of the valiant Jules Duprez, colonel of the Franco-tireurs, who by a bold stroke brought consternation into the ranks of the foe, and drove the first nail into the German coffin.

He leads his men on through the rude tunnel which these unlucky German engineers have spent long weeks in boring. Lights are carried by many, others stumble along as best they can, but all are animated by the one mad desire to burst into the enemy's works and strike a blow that must create consternation, perhaps by spiking the great Krupp siege guns that nightly send their iron hail into the devoted city.

They make fine progress, and each soldier's heart burns with the desire to create havoc in the midst of the foe.

Without any warning the lights are all suddenly extinguished, and each man is thrown down by a strange concussion of air—a great wave seems to rush through the tunnel, accompanied by a frightful roaring sound. It is as if the earth were groaning.

Can it be one of those terrible convulsions of nature—an earthquake?

All is still, then the voice of the little colonel is heard in the loud command:

'Lights!'

Men pick themselves up, some more or less bruised by the fall; matches are produced, and one after another the lanterns, such as remain whole, are once more made illuminating agents.

The colonel has already guessed the truth, for his keen sense of smell detects burned powder in the tunnel.

'Comrades, we have lost the game; they have exploded a mine—our passage is blocked. Nevertheless, we will go on and ascertain the worst. Forward!'

It is just as he supposed—an explosion has taken place, and the tunnel rendered a ruin. Soon their passage is blocked by masses of rocks; the powder smoke almost stifles them. There is nothing for it but to turn back. They are terribly disappointed, but at any rate break even with their German foes—indeed, the advantage would appear to be on their side, since they have not only frustrated the crafty design of the

enemy, but taken prisoner the engineers and those of the Uhlans left alive.

Captain Tom is with them, desiring to witness and participate in the affair. He was thrown down with the rest, but has received no injury.

When he comes out of the catacombs he has an idea in his head, which he desires to put into practice. His first inquiry is for the Uhlans captain—is he dead or alive?

To his satisfaction, he learns that the brave man has not been killed. With other prisoners, he was at once dispatched to the prison known as La Roquette. Some ambulances had been in waiting, which bore the wounded to a hotel, now used as a hospital. As one was left over the captured Prussians, as far as possible, were stowed away in it and driven to prison.

Accompanied by the faithful Mickey McGray, he saunters along, noting here and there the damage already done by the bombardment. France has lost much of her gay humour of late; upon the faces of her citizens can be seen an ominous expression, as though they are worried over the outcome. From a matter of pride it has now grown to be a serious business, and many haggard faces attest this fact.

Crowds there are upon the streets, for your true Parisian is nothing if not in-judicious, and a herver a shell has done damage scores of people gather to point out each detail, secure mementoes, talk of the siege and air their opinions.

Some keep up bravely. Ladies are even seen walking along clad in their seal-cloaks, viewing the sights as calmly as though this were a gala day instead of Paris in her death-throes.

Sad scenes greet the eyes also, and Captain Tom inwardly groans when he notes how many small coffins are being carried in the direction of the cemetery, whither his feet lead him. It is hard on the children of Paris; deprived of milk and the nourishing food which their systems require, they are stricken down by hundreds.

Horses being so scarce, as a general thing the little coffins are carried by hand.

Captain Tom mounts the Boulevard de Charonne, and enters the cemetery, desiring to get a view from the summit of the hill Charonne, on whose slope the famous Pere la Chaise is laid out.

Reaching the mortuary chapel on the crown, he sweeps the scene with interest. Far away can be noticed the points where the Prussian batteries are posted; occasionally a wreath of smoke is seen, after a certain time comes the distant hollow boom. Perhaps Issy or Valerien will reply, but no general engagement is on.

A bell is tolling mournfully. Below a number of men are digging a long trench and at the other end therein coffins are being piled three deep, to be covered by the cold earth.

Snow lies around. It is the most dismal period of the year at ordinary times in Paris.

Fancy the darkness that has fallen upon the great city after months of sieges, with her lines gradually contracting, and her food supply reaching the starvation point.

The end is not far away, and ever gallant Frenchmen must realize that there can be but one result, and that further resistance against fate is folly.

Captain Tom borrows a telescope and scans the distant hills, looks down upon Belleville, where the poor inhabitants are daily put to great tribulations in order to keep from freezing, and have cut down every tree on the boulevard; then he calls Mickey, and the two walk down the hill to the exit that will bring them to the gloomy Prison of La Roquette, in front of which stands the terrible guillotine, soon to do its work at the hands of the Commune.

It seems appropriate that the condemned in La Roquette should look from their cells upon the slope of the cemetery; perhaps it has been more through design than accident that this building has been placed next the grave-yard. At any rate, it saves time—prison, guillotine, grave, in quick rotation. Captain Tom shrugs his shoulders as he passes the instrument of death and mourns the prison estate.

CHAPTER X.

THE PRISONER OF LA ROQUETTE.

The prison looms up before him, its cold walls grim and remorseless. Over the door might well be written, 'He who enters here leaves hope behind,' for many have passed in never to emerge until the day of their execution arrives.

It is now under military rule, as is nearly everything in poor Paris, even the bake-shop having a guard to see that the daily rations of so many ounces of black bread are doled out to the hungry people as their names are called.

Captain Tom salutes the guard and demands to see the officer in charge. Ordinarily the soldier might ignore such a request, but there is something about the American that impresses him. Besides, he mentions the name of General Trochu, the governor of the city.

He calls to a companion, who glances at Tom, and moves off. In a few minutes an officer makes his appearance, with whom the American enters into conversation.

A little note which he carries on his person, signed by the general, gives him the entrance he desires, and the officer begs to know how he can serve the friend of Trochu.

'There were some Uhlans prisoners brought here a short time ago?' says Tom.

'We have received all sorts and conditions of men.'

'But these were captured in the catacombs under the walls of Paris. I myself had the good fortune to learn that German engineers had run a tunnel under the walls, meaning to turn the horde of vandals into the midst of the city; we surprised them, a number were slain, and some prisoners taken.'

'Oh, yes, I remember now. The thanks of all Paris are due you for your noble work. We might have been surprised and the city taken had their plan been carried out.'

'The Uhlans were brought here?' persists the Yankee soldier of fortune, paying little attention to the officer's suave flattery.

'That is so, monsieur.'

'The officer in charge was a large, fine-looking man—am I right?'

'His name is Captain Johann Strauss. I had met him before.'

'Indeed?' Captain Tom believes he is in a way to pick up what information he desires before seeking the presence of the Prussian, with whom he has determined to have an interview.

'Captain Strauss has been in La Roquette before—only last evening he was exchanged. Behold! with the coming of dawn he is once more a prisoner.'

'Brave men must be scarce in their ranks if they have to use one soldier so frequently. It is my desire to have a private interview with this Uhlans giant. Can I be accommodated?'

The officer twirls the piece of paper in his hand, and shrugs his padded shoulders. 'He twists each end of his waxed moustache and bows.'

'With this document we can refuse monsieur nothing in the line of reason. Be pleased to follow me.'

With that he leads the way along the corridor. Their boot-heels cause a peculiar clanking sound in that grim place, where all is so silent. Here and there sentries pace up and down, carrying each a chasse-pot at the shoulder. Every soldier salutes the officer in turn.

At length they pause before a cumbersome door.

'When monsieur is ready to come out, knock twice on the door. You hear, guard?'

The soldier salutes. The heavy door is thrown open. Captain Tom strides in, and from the click at his back he knows he is locked in the cell.

Coming from the glare of the sun upon the snow without, his eyes are at first unable to distinguish anything save the fact that the cell is of good size and lighted by a single small window, across which run iron bars.

Gradually his eyes grow accustomed to the semi-gloom, and he discovers the tall form of the prisoner standing there surveying him.

The Prussian looks like a caged tiger. He has been overcome and made a prisoner when he endeavoured to fight to the death. His appearance is that of a desperate man, who cares little what becomes of him.

Captain Tom, while he stands there, makes up his mind that something besides threats will be necessary in order to make this man talk if he takes a notion to remain silent.

'I beg your pardon,' he says, in excellent German, 'but the sunlight on the snow has almost blinded me. You will excuse my rudeness.'

The other shows surprise, and when he speaks it is in a deep, musical voice.

'You speak German; you are not a Frenchman, then?' is what he says.

'I am a countryman of brave General Phil Sheridan, who rides with your leaders to see war as it is conducted in Europe.'

'An American?'

'Yes. You are Captain Johann Strauss?'

'Such is my name.'

'Recently exchanged?'

'Even that is so.'

'You must like La Roquette, to come back so soon, captain.'

The Uhlans giant laughs good-naturedly now.

'It is the fortune of war, that is all. At any rate it will only be for a short time.'

His meaning is significant. Paris is doomed, and when King William's army takes possession the doors of every dungeon that holds a Prussian or Bavarian prisoner must fly open as if by magic.

'You passed through the streets when captured here. I saw you, the people rushed to stare like so many spectators at a show; they marvelled at your size, for Frenchmen are not generally large. I heard many remarks made complimentary to your brave manner, and Captain Johann Strauss, I saw you turn red with anger, shake loose the hold upon your right arm, point your finger to a beautiful lady near by, and call out in German, denouncing her for proving a traitress to her country.'

The Uhlans giant is strangely affected; he presses his hand against his head, and his look is one that even a brave man might dislike to see upon the countenance of an adversary.

'That lady was Linda Dubois, a native of Alsace Lorraine, whose mother was a German. I am interested in her past. I have come here to exchange confidences with you, Johann Strauss. I can tell you something that will, I believe, give you much joy, but I desire, in return, to have the veil lifted from certain mysteries, if you are able to do it.'

His earnest manner holds the attention of the giant who bends down to look in his face, an expression of puzzled wonder marking his own countenance.

'You love Linda Dubois?' says Tom, briefly.

The other nods his beaming head eagerly.

'I would die for her. I had my adventure here. She has been the one bright star of my life. When I discovered her in Paris, and realised that she had deserted the country of her mother, my heart turned to fire. I cared not then how soon death found me out. You see my husband, perhaps you have come here to mock me, but, by heavens, you shall not go hence to tell that traitress, who loves you, it may be, that Johann Strauss writes because a noble woman took his heart as I twist your accused neck!'

He advances a step; his demeanour is terrible, and Captain Tom knows that in a personal encounter he would have his hands full to keep this mad giant from fulfilling his threat.

Still he does not snatch out his revolver; he has not come to that point when he dares not face a single unarmed man, no matter whether he be athlete or giant.

'Hear me, Captain Strauss! If, when I am done speaking, you still have the desire to twist my neck, I'll give you an opportunity to do it, if you can. Meanwhile let us be men, and reason together. I see no cause why we should be mortal enemies, nay, rather our circumstances should make us friends.'

The giant calms down, though he still glowers upon Captain Tom.

'One thing,' he snarls, 'are you her lover?'

Captain Tom does not hint that Linda has become infatuated with him. It would throw the German in a paroxysm of rage, and utterly spoil any chance of sacking him quiescent. He can truthfully reply in the negative.

'I have known the Ma'mselle Linda for some time. We have been good friends; I respect her for her good qualities, nothing more. She is brave, and devoted to the cause she loves, as was her mother.'

'Bah! why, then, came she to Paris, where our enemies are? Those women who love the Fatherland are over the Rhine,' cries the prisoner.

'Listen, Herr Strauss. That is the secret. Will you promise to answer any question I may ask, provided that I remove your suspicions?'

'I promise—if it does not concern the army.'

'It is a mere personal matter. You shall see. As to Linda Dubois, if you want to befriend me, tell me she was a traitress, he would laugh in your face. Hear me, madman! That beautiful girl loves her country's cause so well that for many weeks she has risked her life in Paris as a secret agent of Von Moltke.'

'A spy?' gasps Johann Strauss, eagerly.

'That is the plain American of it. To my knowledge, she has sent many messages beyond the walls to the besiegers, and when it was no longer possible to write

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