

## FONTENAY,

THE SWORDSMAN.  
A MILITARY NOVEL.

BY FORTUNE DU BOISGOBEY.

(Translated by H. L. Williams.)

### CHAPTER XXII.—Continued.

"I do not understand other things." There fell a silence. The dry hand of Fouché nervously toyed with the Sphinx's head terminating his chair-arm, and nothing benevolent shone in the look he darted at the captain.

"It is clear," he said, suddenly assuming an indifferent mien, "that we shall never come to an understanding, and I will not detain you farther."

Fontenay did not wait to be twice told. He rose and was retiring when Fouché added.

"Still bear in mind that I offered you a fine opening for you to distinguish yourself. Do not blame any but yourself should your military career be blighted—your military career and your marriage."

"My marriage!" echoed the West Indian.

"What does this mean?"

"Oh, do not assume ignorance," returned Fouché in his unemphatic voice, colorless as his eyes; "you perfectly well know to what I allude. Her majesty the Empress wishes your welfare and projected to marry you to the daughter of the late General de Gavre. It would be a very suitable match, if the Emperor granted his assent. You also know that the young lady is a Spaniard on the mother's side and that the villain who ought to be arrested is, in plain words, her uncle. The Emperor does not know this, and on learning it, I doubt that he will persist in interesting himself in the niece of such a one."

"It is not Mlle de Gavre's fault if this scoundrel, a distant relative, not her uncle, hates the Emperor and endeavors to kill him. He also hates her and has stolen her property."

"Oh, I do not suspect her of being in accord with him. I only want you to remark that she is of his family, and that you, who aspire to marry her, would seal all mouths of the malevolent if you succeeded in handing this Blas de Montalvan over to us. You see that I know his name. You refuse this in telling me it is impossible. Let us speak no more about it. I will arrest him without your having a hand in it. Go, captain! I depend on you no longer and I hope that your refusal to serve me will not injure you in your career."

Fontenay strode forth without speaking a single word. What had he to reply to these sugared threats? He was not regretful for preferring his honor to Fouché's favor but proud to think that his betrothed, if present, would have approved his rejection of the most powerful police minister's shameful propositions.

But he was not entirely at ease on the consequences of this refusal, disdainfully expressed. Fouché was the Empress' declared enemy, and he would not be scrupulous in trying to injure her by slandering to the Emperor an officer whom she patronized. He was fully capable of accusing him of connivance with the Spanish fanatic to whom Mlle. de Gavre had the misfortune of kinship. Absurd though the accusation was, it might find credence if skillfully presented.

The American could do nothing better than anticipate Fouché by informing the good Josephine of what had occurred, and George de Prégny, as soon as they met.

### CHAPTER XXIII.

TRULY THE LIFE-GUARD.

Prégny's appointment in the Palais Royal gardens was for five p. m. and it was now past four. If he arrived before his friend, Fontenay would only have to stroll about under the arcades until they met. So he proceeded there direct. He was too deeply engrossed in thought on leaving the police ministry to notice that a well-dressed man, standing before a second-hand book stall in the open street, began to follow him at a distance along the Seine river side, for the Carrousel bridge did not then exist and Fontenay had to go up-stream as far as the royal bridge to cross over on the right bank. This compulsory circuit brought dark closing in, when he reached the Palais by the wooden arcades preceding the Galerie d'Orléans much later constructed.

These wooden galleries were a curiosity, with their booths of planks forming three rows of shops and two covered walks. In the days of the Terror and still under the Directory, it was called "the Tartar's Camp," an odd title but well-befitting it, as nomads and temporary structures only were seen—a mob-seeking adventures.

It was not an edifying place, and the creole hastened through it to reach the better famed stone galleries, where he hoped to find Prégny. A mixed throng blocked the way here, with many officers of the army, amusing themselves between two campaigns with only the puritans to reproach them for it. As the new-comer had only been a soldier four months, he knew none of these, and not one addressed him. He restlessly went all around the gardens without perceiving his friend.

By way of compensation, however, as he returned through the gardens, he ran up against Vergoney, who grasped his hand warmly and vociferated:

"What, here you are! I began to fear you had died in Spain like so many other good fellows."

"Happy to say, I was never better in my life," answered Fontenay.

"Come to divert yourself a little? that chimes in nicely with the tune I was setting myself, for I never felt more jolly. We will finish the winter merrily as I wrote you from Astorga in January before quitting Spain. I hope you received my letter."

"I did, and you can imagine the pleasure it gave me."

"Oh, I do not forget my friends! but we have no time to lose if we mean to enjoy the pleasures of Paris, for as you know, the Emperor is going on a campaign again next month."

"Yes, I was told so, but I do not know about this taking me along."

"I do not doubt it. You stand high on the active list. But lately he has been unapproachable. I advise your waiting a little before asking to follow him into Germany. But since I have you in my grip I will not release you. We will dine in a restaurant and you can go up into No. 154 with me."

"What's No. 154? I thought No. One was the only one you concerned yourself about?"

"Ha, ha? No. 154 is a gaming house—the bank that has luck against it. Yesterday I won three hundred napoleons in less than ten minutes, and I reckon on winning as much after dinner. You ought not to be sorry yourself to load your pockets to brighten your Parisian stay. Living is so dear!"

"I have never gambled," returned the creole, who had left Martinique too young to participate in the principal diversion of the idlers there.

"So much the better! novices always win. Come, dear boy? if only to bring me luck."

"It is my dearest wish—but I am waiting for George de Prégny, who made an appointment with me here."

"Prégny! Pshaw, you'll not see him this evening. I met him on the stairs in the Tuileries. He is going to the Empress' apartments to be consulted about a concert she will give. You know that there cannot be a concert without Prégny! it's his special field—and he will be detained a couple of hours, unless the entire evening. Nothing, therefore, prevents your accompanying me. You can look on if you do not care to play. It will interest you and when I 'win my pile' I will offer you a feast such as we have not had for a long time. The dinners were very bad on the other side of the Pyrenees."

"In my heart I know it!" returned Fontenay bitterly.

"Well, come, my dear friend. If the vein wins in my favor, as I hope, we will have some Clos-Vougeot wine of 1790 on the table at Very's, in half an hour, that I want you to taste."

Fontenay was inclined to refuse, but it pained him to disoblige a brother-officer and since he learned that George would be detained at the palace, he had no reason to continue in the galleries to be jostled. He followed Vergoney into No. 154, one of the four houses kept by the *Fermé des Jeux* at the Palais Royal, and the most frequented. The American had never entered one of these official gambling saloons and he was dazzled by the luxury of the rooms through which Vergoney guided him. The latter led him, as if at home, to the table for heavy play, where only gold was on the board, he did not understand how red or black won. As he did not desire to learn the game, he turned to studying the players.

They were of all ages and professions, young and aged, civilians and soldiers. The depressed countenances outnumbered the smiling ones for the company were repairing the previous day's losses.

In front of the two new-comers, sat one officer, however, who had a heap of gold coin before him and staked large sums with unparalleled intrepidity. His uniform was probably foreign, for Fontenay, not at all remembering it, had whisperingly to ask Vergoney to what corps the officer belonged, for his face struck him. This heavy player was not young, though he only wore captain's epaulettes, but if he had not obtained rapid promotion, he had great wealth, for he fingered thousand-franc banknotes with perfect coolness. His features, seemingly chopped out with an axe, did not twitch, and black eyes shone over his countenance, cut in two by thick black mustachios. The physiognomy expressed indomitable energy.

"That," replied Vergoney carelessly, "that's a Neapolitan of the new guards of King Murat. He had far better have stayed in his own country. He is raking in coin which would suit my pocket, and it enrages me to see him win them. I am going to play against him and if luck turns towards me, it will be an infinite pleasure to see him lose."

At this moment a player, whose funds were exhausted, rose near the captain who took his chair to engage more comfortably in his battle with the gaming corporation. Determined to remain a simple spectator of the combat, Fontenay stood behind his friend. He was well placed here to watch the foreign officer who had attracted his attention but who gave none to him or to Vergoney, so enwrapped was he in his pursuit.

The first dash was not favorable to France. Fontenay's comrade's fifteen

napoleons were gathered in by the *croupiers* who had to pay a hundred to the Italian, as he had staked upon black to the contrary of Vergoney's chosen color. This was a first warning, but the loser clung to red, instead of profiting by it. A formidable sequence of blacks fell upon him, like hail on a field of wheat, and speedily put him in distress, while the Neapolitan captain increased his store at every time. One of those *coups* came which madden an unlucky player and it exasperated the captain.

Black stood at the point of thirty-nine; Vergoney, on the red, might almost surely believe he would win. A queen of spades fell face up expressly to spite him, making forty—the worst of all the points, and the rake carried away his venture, the heaviest he had yet risked. Red had lost and the French gold would again go over to Italy.

"It's that face of a Calabrian brigand that spoils my luck," grumbled Vergoney, bringing his fist down on the table.

The Neapolitan raised his head and looked at him steadily. Fontenay, standing behind his friend, had his share of the glance darted by fortune's favorite. The bystanders so fully expected a quarrel that the game stopped for awhile. They did not doubt it at all when they saw the insulted man pocket his gains and leave his seat. The *croupiers*, sworn foes to riot, prepared to intervene. All were greatly astonished to see the foreign officer stride toward the door, without thinking in the least degree of calling Vergoney to account for what he must have heard from his speaking rather loudly. The Neapolitan was plainly leaving without risking a "revenge," as the gaming slang says.

A general burst of laughter arose, and Vergoney ejaculated:

"At last that vile bird of ill omen has flown! perhaps luck will return to me." Fontenay alone did not laugh. His eyes had at length met those of the stranger and that exchange of glances sufficed to awaken a sleeping memory in his mind—that of the sham valet of Palafox. It was a fleeting impression but vivid, and he did not falter a second before acting upon it. No one in the saloon paid any attention to him, and Vergoney was too deeply enthralled in his play to busy himself about what went on behind his chair. Fontenay could slip away without anyone noticing him, and he rushed out on the stairs where he hoped to overtake the man.

When he caught sight of him he was already at the foot of them; he must have gone down them four at a time. This was a strong proof that he had suddenly recognized Marshal Lannes' staff-officer and fled from him.

Fontenay leaped all the way with a supporting touch to the balustrade, and reached the lobby at the very moment when the suspicious player stepped out into the stone gallery. He rushed after him and saw him turn to the right but he was swallowed up in so closely packed a crowd that he had to mark time with his feet from inability to get forward. The man kept on toward the wooden galleries, without turning, clearing the throng of promenaders coming in the reverse way. Fontenay did not lose sight of him but however briskly he plied his elbows, he could not contrive to draw near him.

What would it be in the Tartar Camp, a labyrinth of temporary stalls! The man would there have every facility to disappear. To finish one way or another, Fontenay rushed, head down, into the mass. All he succeeded in reaping was insults and the hustled strollers returned his shoves. One of them, less enduring than the others, took him by the collar to stop him and when he had liberated himself, the object of the chase had vanished. The showy scarlet plume waving over his three cocked hat, no longer guided the captain. The track was lost; the chase a failure.

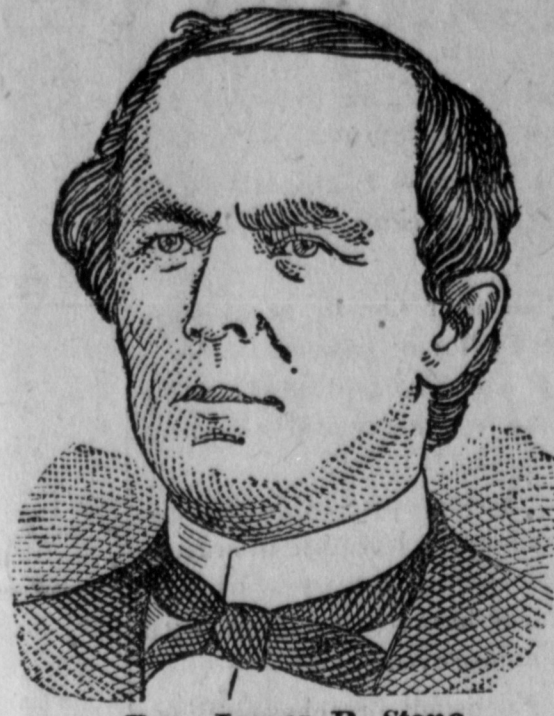
Once again the American had to acknowledge that he had no aptness for the craft of dogging his fellow-men.

In the Palais Royal he was distanced as had happened him in the streets of Madrid after his unhappy visit to the bank president.

While chafing at this fresh rebuff he reflected. He wondered if he might not be mistaken and if he had not confounded the terrible Tio with a genuine officer of the Neapolitan royal guards. However far Don Blas de Montalvan carried the talent of disguise, it was difficult to believe that he could metamorphose himself to the degree of quickly and perfectly assuming the appearance of a valet, a priest and a captain. He could not change his eyes, fiery and hard in gaze, but such are common in Italy as well as Spain and resemble one another.

Another reflection arose in Fontenay's mind. He had incurred the resentment of Fouché for refusing to play the spy, and yet on the first occasion, he had darted without prompting in the pursuit of an individual whom he was not certain he had recognized. It is true that this pursuit was disinterested on his part since the man had no personal enmity toward him and Fontenay's capture of him would not win him any reward. He had made a police-officer of himself, but *gratis*, and this idea saved his self-esteem.

He never suspected that a regular police-spy had followed him from the river side to the gaming establishment, and after awaiting for him at the door, was still at his heels, collecting the elements of a



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