

Fontenay, the Swordsman.
(Continued from Page 1.)

"The revolt has begun. All the people are afoot. At every corner stands a dozen. I saw them as I came along, and they only refrained from cutting me down because they have the order not to attack until the command. You ordered me to stay in barracks but I stood on sentry duty before the door and I saw it was only time to go after you. If the governor does not have the general tattoo beat instanter, we are all done for, captain."

"I shall run to the commandant! I hope he will receive me and listen! I am sure to find him scrawling reports. I know what will happen in that case; he will not raise his eyes and he will wave me away not to disturb him in his work."

"Better to see Captain Zolnycki, who is on guard at the main gate with his Polishers."

"You are right. Run and tell him I send you, as I have gone to warn the governor. Zolnycki will do all that is needful to prevent our posts being surprised, and I will join him presently. Oh, do not forget to tell him that the confectioner has left his store."

Fontenay thought of the unfortunate young widow left in Angel's house, to be wished to leave time to flee or conceal herself before a French patrol swooped on the pastry-cook's.

"I just met the sweetmeat man," growled Tournesol, "and I am quite sure that he was not buying sugar, for he was concealing his face in his cloak; but I recognized him all the same, and I know where he is. I saw him sneak into that ugly, shiny square tower like a porcelain stove, called St. Martin's Tower."

"San Martin's Tower!" ejaculated Fontenay; "the Arab tower rising above one of the town gates?"

"Yes, captain," answered the orderly. "I climbed up in it once. There's a splendid view when you get on top."

"Are you sure our Angel went in there?"

"Sure as I am that his brother Spaniard who gave you the stab in your Rue Saint Nicaise, is a villain. Angel stole in, to hide himself. The door was open and he did not shut it behind him. I would give something to know what mischief he is up to, there!"

"Does this tower belong to a church?" suddenly inquired the captain.

"It is the belfry of Saint Martin's Church. There are nine churches in this hole of a Teruel, which is no bigger than my hand."

"I understand matters now. In a belfry there are bells—"

"In that one, there's a whopper! what one would call the big bell of Teruel, and when it booms it would be heard a deuce of a way off!"

"It is to sound the general alarm—the tocsin—the signal they are waiting for, and Angel is to ring it out!"

"That's very likely! Oh, the scoundrel!"

"He must not ring it. Come!"

"I see! we are to put the rope round his neck?"

"This is more urgent than to go to the governor's. The Spaniards will not stir till the bell rings!"

"It shall not, captain! though I have to cut the rope with my sabre!"

"Not so much talk! let us march!"

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE GREAT BELL OF ST. MARTIN'S.

Tournesol, knowing the road, took the precedence; the captain locked step with him, and in following his orderly, he could verify his unexaggerated statement that the entire population were out and about. Ordinarily, after dark, the streets were deserted and the houses closed. On this evening, groups were seen in the dark corners and whispering was heard behind the slightly open doors.

Not one French soldier showed himself. Those not returned into barracks were feasting in the wine store. The garrison was so far from numerous that the insurgents could swallow those stragglers at a mouthful. But it was probable that they would not attack before the signal.

It was imperative to outstrip them by swiftness, and, luckily, St. Martin's was not far.

On arriving over the Saragossa road, one can see this bell tower a league off; it is a minaret, as it was built by the Arabs, who after overrunning Aragon, made a mosque of this church. Since the French occupation, the building had been closed by military order from being too near the outer wall, but, unfortunately, the entrance to the belfry had not also been closed. The oggee archway which it overhung had been walled up, however, so that, on the rampart side, the town was safe from an unforeseen assault as the assailants would have to scale the wall and they would not have ladders.

As Tournesol had stated, Fontenay found the tower door open, and he walked in without hesitation.

"Captain," said the cuirassier, "there are two hundred steps to mount; the bell is at the top and the stairs are not wide. Let me show the way."

"Do so, but let us lose no time. If the alarm commences while we are climbing, those rogues will come to capture the tower and we will be caught like rats in a trap."

Tournesol drew his sword before step-

ping into the staircase well, and his captain did the same, for it was not to be supposed Don Angel would let himself be taken without resistance.

The ascent was arduous and they made it in shadow.

Up to half-way, the tower had no air-holes, and even in broad day they would not have seen clearly.

They hastened, as a moment's delay might ruin all, and at every instant Fontenay fancied he heard the first boom of the alarm peal over his head.

But no sound rang forth, and nothing stirred.

No doubt Angel had received the order to give the signal at a fixed moment, for instance, an hour after sunset, and there he was counting the minutes, for the sun had disappeared some little time; maybe counting the seconds.

So did the captain, who fretted at not advancing more speedily.

As they rose, however, the stairs became less gloomy.

All the upper part of the tower is open, as in stone lacework, and, right-time though it was, a little light filtered through apertures which make the structure a marvel of lightness. They were approaching the loft of the great bell, where no doubt Don Blas' lieutenant was stationed. If there, he did not reveal his presence, as the stillness was more profound than ever.

It was necessary to fall on him unawares and Tournesol was very heedful not to strike the steps either with the paked sword grasped in his right hand or the steel scabbard hanging from his belt.

Soon he stopped and pressed himself against the wall to make room for his captain who had followed him and softly drew himself up until beside him, shoulder to shoulder.

The stairs ended here, and they were standing in it, only head and body out. They stared into the dimly lighted chamber without seeing anything. Gradually their eyes grew accustomed to the twilight and they finally discerned Angel standing in the middle of the spacious square, with his arms stretched bolt upright. He was in his shirt-sleeves, having thrown down his cloak and removed his coat to be more free in movements. So bell-ringers make ready for their work, and it was not difficult to divine he was about to imitate them in all respects.

All of a sudden the clock of another church rang for eight o'clock. Angel hung upon the rope which he held, bent his knees to pull with his weight in addition, rose on being carried up by a weight superior to his own, and pulled again to have the same result happen to him.

The bell was already in swing, but it was so heavy that Angel's first efforts were not sufficient to give it the full play. The hammer had not struck the bronze shell, but two or three more tugs would unchain the alarm awaited by the Spaniards.

Tournesol bounded forward with uplifted sabre, but in the darkness he did not see the discarded clothes, and stumbling on the heap, the cloak wound itself like a reptile round his feet and threw him toward the wall. Luckily his captain had closely followed him, and leaping over him as he nearly measured his length, he dealt a furious sweep at the rope. But, falling short, the blade cleft the skull of the bell-ringer, who released the rope and dropped in a mass.

"He is dead," cried Tournesol, rising from under him and the cloak. "He will ring no more bells. The bell will remain dumb and the citizens of Teruel will have to go to bed!"

"Hark," whispered Fontenay solemnly.

A deep sonorous clang vibrated over their heads. The swordsman had struck too late. The big bell was on the swing and could not be stopped now. They would have to wait for the impulsion it had received to die away progressively, and Don Angel had put so much vigor into it that the vibrations would continue after his death—his knell. The alarm was ringing out by itself, calling the Spaniards to massacre.

Fate was against the French.

Fontenay regretted now having tried to do so much alone on his orderly's cues and thought only of repairing his fault by running to alarm his comrades.

Better late than never! he rushed into the staircase well, shouting for Tournesol to follow. Spurred by the vibrations, at longer and longer intervals, but not yet inaudible, they ran down the stairs very much more rapidly than they had ascended. On reaching the bottom, they heard nothing. Left to itself, the bell had gradually returned to its place of rest, and rang no more.

The question was, had the conspirators taken as the signal agreed upon, this so quickly interrupted appeal of the bronze annunciator? The street ending at the tower was deserted; and no uproar indicated that the revolt had broken forth; but in the distance gun-shots were to be heard—isolated at first but subsequently repeated frequently.

"That comes from the direction of the gate guarded by the Poles!" exclaimed Tournesol. "They were not taken by surprise for they return the fire and if they are not attacked in the rear they will hold their own. That rascally candy-maker! I wish I had not missed my cut at him."

"Let us run!" shouted Fontenay.

"There's no time to warn the command-

ant. We must go where the fighting is."

This was a petty application of the noted principle: "March toward the cannonading!" for only small arms were heard up to the present.

But would the captain and his man arrive at the main gate without being attacked on the way? At the first tap of the bell, the Spanish had issued from the dwellings where they had been hiding, and they awaited the repeated strokes to fall on the French gate-guards in the rear. But as the ringing had almost instantly ceased, they wavered, in fear of an error. They were clustered in the gloomy streets listening for the alarm. The distant rattling of the fusillade might have determined them into rushing thither, but they knew their outside friends reckoned on entering unawares, and this firing proved that the surprise had failed, for the French were defending themselves. Many of the rioters were armed solely with knives, useful for slaying soldiers routed, but insufficient to charge them on their guard and energetically resisting.

The guerilleros had commenced too soon by taking the first clang of San Martin's bell for the alarm.

The inhabitants, more wary folk, waited for them to force the gate and enter the town before rising. They allowed Fontenay and Tournesol to pass, who did not linger to disperse them, and they joined the Poles without hindrance.

These stout fellows were so few in number that they had much difficulty in preventing the foe seizing the gate, and Captain Zolnycki esteemed himself very happy to see two such redoubtable sabres strike in so timely.

The struggle was sharp but short, for the irregulars were not armed to cope with men whose lancer's experience made them formidable with the bayonet, and the three or four swordsmen who scattered the knives like ears of wheat under the scythe.

The dense night seemed to quench the gun-fire. Though the attempt was thwarted, the situation was not brilliant. The French had only three hundred to defend a town with its entire population hostile, while all indicated that the place would be blockaded by the numerous irregulars in the outskirts.

"Turn about is fair play," sadly exclaimed Zolnycki. "We are to be besieged in the same way that the Spanish were three months ago at Saragossa, and we may end like them with the obligation to surrender—with the difference that we will not be shown mercy. We'll be massacred."

"We'll not capitulate!" cried the American.

"I hope not, but if we are not relieved in a fortnight, they will storm Teruel. I fear nobody will come to deliver us. Suchet is marching up Valencia, taking with him all disposable troops, except the Saragossa garrison. We are left to ourselves, brother, and on ourselves we must rely."

This dialogue was interrupted by the arrival of the colonel in command of the place, a brave officer who was capable of taking vigorous measures, although fond of writing despatches. He had foreseen the outbreak without conferring with his subordinates, and had his plan ready for the crisis.

After hearing Zolnycki and Fontenay, he stated that the feeble garrison were concentrating in a monastery near the outer wall, strongly fortified. Already the wounded were installed in it, as well as provisions and ammunition so that resistance could be protracted. It was the wisest course, in the impossibility of defending the town at all points from the deficiency of soldiers.

They had the whole night to carry out the plan conformable to General Suchet's instructions left with the colonel, for the repulsed guerillas did not renew the attack.

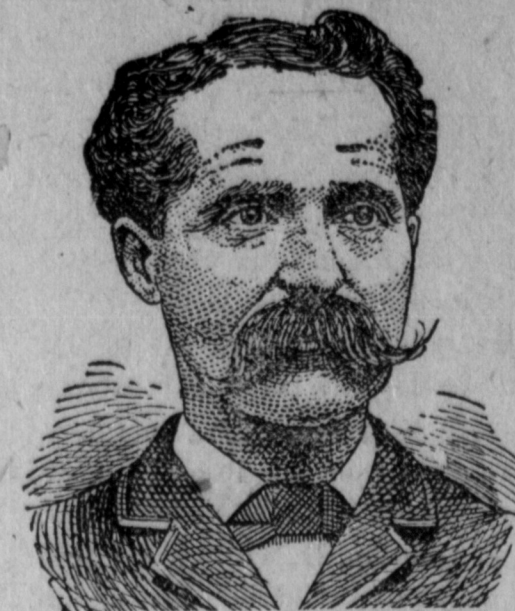
Informed by the West Indian of the adventure in St. Martin's bell-tower, the colonel declared house to house searches should be commenced next day and all shot who had concealed weapons. Detachments were sent to watch the threatened gate who kept up long-ranged firing with the external foes to mask the contemplated giving up of the post when they should retire upon the convent.

The colonel had five or six trusty officers, French and Polish, one an engineer captain as steady as experienced. This choice band sufficed for the needs of the defense, and each received at once the orders concerning him.

Fontenay was charged to go immediately to the monastery to commence preparations for holding out, and he hastened to obey, all the more willingly as he would have to pass the late Don Angel's confectionery. On his account, the establishment had such ill-fame that the soldiers would surely search it next day, and the chances were that they would discover a store of weapons, for Angel, half beheaded by Fontenay so opportunely was certainly the chief of the town-rioters.

Fontenay was obstinately bent on saving the life of the indomitable woman who had so rebelliously received him. Though his worst enemy's daughter, he admired her courage and he would be pained to let her run the risk of being shot; she resembled her cousin too closely.

The only means to shield her from the impending doom was to urge her to put herself in security before the search began.



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