

**FONTENAY,  
THE SWORDSMAN.**

CHAPTER IV.—Continued.  
A couple of hours before dawn. It is a long 'route' and we shall not get in before dark."

"I understand, lieutenant. The horses will be ready. Your bed is made in the store-house, next the stables. I forced the old cat to light me a lantern to let us see where we are till daylight. It is the safest plan; in this devil's own country it is no good sleeping without a candle burning."

Tournesol disappeared after making the military salute. Don Inigo had not opened his mouth. He very clearly comprehended French, even with Tournesol's Gascon accent, but he would not speak it, from national pride. As soon as the soldier had withdrawn, he resumed in Spanish as before.

"Senor, I have not concealed my sentiments from you, but I beg to think that you do not suspect me of wishing to profit by your sleep to cut your throat, as that soldier seems to believe. I am a nobleman, and a noble does not commit murder. You may depart when you like, and you will arrive without mishap at your Emperor's headquarters. In a day or so, you will attack the valiant defenders of Spain; if you escape the disaster awaiting you at Somo Sierra—when you are fleeing before my victorious countrymen—then come and crave a shelter. I will not refuse it to you."

This was genuine Spanish bravado, and the creole smiled on hearing this vanquished noble speak of clemency when the French army was marching upon his capital without meeting serious resistance. The insurgents—as the Emperor Napoleon styled the Spanish in his proclamations—commanded by a young and hot-headed general, had been hurled back at Burgos by Lassalle's light infantry, and no reason existed to believe that the time was near when a heavier force would be necessary to overpower them. But still there was grandeur in the marquis' arrogant speech, and the lieutenant bowed to the man whose patriotism excused his boastfulness.

He did not expect to extract any further information in regard to the Spanish heiress. He politely took leave of him, and went to the stables to rejoin Tournesol, who was snoring when he entered.

The amorous American had some trouble to court slumber, though becoming accustomed to sleep in straw since he crossed the Bidassoa River. The shreds and patches of history ran through his head. He thought of the legendary lovers of Teruel, illustrious in Spain and unknown elsewhere. He did not doubt that their descendant had inherited their virtues with the treasures of her forefathers, and he yearned to reconquer for her the disappeared fortune of which the *Tio* had appropriated the securities in the casket of Mlle. de Gavre, stolen at Malmaison.

Don Inigo had not been willing to tell the name of this fantastic and unscrupulous relative, but it would be known in Teruel.

Unfortunately for Paul, a newcomer into Aragon, he did not know precisely where that town was, and if he had known it, he was not in a position to divine whether the hazards of the campaign would lead him thither or not.

He dreamed that Napoleon commanded him to take a battery of the enemy's, and taking it with its guns, he forced the "uncle," who defended it, to yield up his secret. This dream, however prophetic, did not prevent him enjoying a sleep which lasted till peep of day.

However fiercely a youth of twenty may love, nature never loses her rights.

Fontenay was aroused by Tournesol, who always slept with one eye open, and who had already saddled the horses, which had reposed after being groomed.

Before sunrise the officer and his orderly were on the way.

Neither the marquis nor his housekeeper had appeared.

CHAPTER V.  
THE POLISH LANCER.

It was a long stage, eighteen Spanish leagues, full measure, over a wild and arid country in cold and foggy weather; but at the end was a battlefield, and Fontenay would have trudged on foot rather than miss it.

The less enthusiastic Tournesol had not lost any of his high spirits. He sang all sorts of songs—of the sea, of the camp, and in dialect—and every time he was spoken to replied with a jest.

About noon they halted at a miserable hamlet, Rocaguillas, where they found nothing to eat except one *tortilla*, an omelette fried in rancid oil, and nothing to drink except black wine tasting of goatskin but it unloosed Paul's tongue.

He questioned Tournesol on his campaign with the Thirteenth Cuirassiers, and the old trooper did not require pressing to draw the portraits of his superiors. In the first place, Col. Daigremont, who never charged without humming a jocular song which his men repeated in chorus; and the Gascon came by gradation to speak of Commandant Carénac, whom Fontenay had partially forgotten since the incident in Malmaison Park.

Tournesol loudly trumpeted this leader

risen from the ranks and lauded his exploits. At Eylan, in the preceding year Carénac, then a captain, had with one sibre stroke cleft to the chin the head of a handsome Russian colonel of the *Chevaliers Gardes*. Carénac had fought a score of duels and had never missed killing or previously wounding his adversary.

Our good Tournesol did not suspect that his lieutenant, of such fresh creation, had come to blows with this ex-fencing-master and that they were likely to meet again as both were serving in Spain.

Fontenay let him prate away; finally he asked him what effect was produced in him when he went under fire.

"Why, lieutenant," simply answered Tournesol, "when one hears the bulldogs growl, it takes one up short, and when the grape shot hurtles over, one ducks his head; but up it is held again as soon as the colonel shouts: 'Heads up, cuirassiers! that's only dust!' We charge and when we dash upon the enemy, we chop away like deaf coppersmiths hammering; it is only at the first slash that there's any wavering; after that the work goes on of itself."

"That is the idea I formed of battle," muttered the creole.

"And, mark you, lieutenant, when the Emperor is on the ground it puts heart into you. One would hack his way through ten squares of infantry without stopping to take breath. The Emperor will be there to-morrow if it gets hot work and I have a suspicion it will be warm. Everytime it is to be hammer-and-tongs, I have twinges in my left thigh, in the place where I was lanced by a Uhlan in the battle of Jena in 1806."

This prognostic was no more to be relied upon than Calchas' oracles, and besides, having been wounded only in the cheek, Fontenay could not consult any such *weatherman*.

"I hope there will be fighting," he remarked. "That Spanish peer, dressed like Figaro, prophesied last evening that we would be crushed at Somo Sierra. It appears to be a formidable position planted with cannon."

"Pooh! the Emperor will make but one bite of it. He has carried many others defended by better soldiers. It will be work for one charge of horse!"

"I do so hope I may have a part in it," sighed the West Indian. "I do not yet belong to any regiment, and I suppose that the imperial staff officers never quit his person."

"Just the other way—I imagine that he will want to test you under fire to see how you bear yourself."

"That is all I wish! The idea warms me up—for it is so cold! This wind that blows upon our faces is icy—"

"It came over the mountains where those beggars await us. They must shiver there and no joke," said Tournesol to console himself.

Since they left Rocaguillas, the country changed in aspect. They had arrived on the foremost foot-hills of the Sierra, and a scarcely perceptible road began the rough ascent of that wild Cordillera, which rises like a stonewall between the two Castiles.

Nobody showed himself upon the rocks bordering the sides unless it were some goat herds afar, and a few peasants who darted hateful glances at them as they passed by. They did not answer when Fontenay questioned them in Spanish, and Tournesol would have willingly flogged them with his sword to teach them politeness.

"Upon my word, lieutenant," he gayly said your power to speak the gibberish of these scowling ruffians gains you no great things! You may be very lucky to know it, but if I were you I should pretend not to know a word of it."

"Why so?" inquired Paul, much astonished.

"Because in that case they would not fight shy of jabbering away before you, and you would learn lots of things. Suppose, for instance, that we stopped for a night's rest at one of their filthy taverns—what they call a *venta* I suppose, because there's no *venta* lation, ha, ha! and the blackguards sure to be there, should plot to cut our throats while we sleep—they would not be careful about plain talk; we should be warned and might be fore-armed."

"You have a good idea there," approved the American, struck by the soundness of the reasoning. "I will bear it in mind."

The chances were that the occasion for utilizing this wise suggestion would not keep them waiting in a region prolific with ambushes.

The dialogue ceased there. They had marched since morning with only one hour's rest, and the horses were as wearied as their riders. They descried a miserable hamlet ahead, near a small rivulet at the mouth of a gloomy gorge.

"We shall never reach the Emperor's headquarters this evening," observed the creole. "Let us pull up there and camp till daylight. We shall find somebody to speak to as I see smoke from the chimney."

"Some of our stragglers who have lit a fire, lieutenant. The natives warn themselves with charcoal in a saucepan."

"Yes, in braseros—braziers—we shall be all the better for the innovation—so let us gallop to arrive sooner."

He was about to drive in both spurs when a short whistling sound passed close to his ear; a detonation followed, repeated by the mountain echoes.

"They fired on us," remarked Tournesol, rising in his stirrups to look.

He saw nothing but a boy perched on a boulder a hundred paces from the road—a boy in tatters who had not the strength to handle a musket.

"I heard the bullet whiz past," said Fontenay; the music was new to me."

"You will get used to it, lieutenant. If I lay hold of the brigand who tried to murder you—"

"On horseback you would never catch him in the rocks where he is hiding. Forward at full speed! I do not want to give him time to try again!"

The two forced their steeds into the charging gallop which carried them with slackened bridle into the village; as Tournesol had conjectured, it was filled with French soldiers of all branches of the service. Many were clustered round a flaming pile of wood built out of the doors and window frames wrenched from the houses. Some were stewing in kettles joints of a goat killed with the bayonet. Others were already asleep, stretched upon the bare ground. Not one moved to make room for the officer.

The picture was saddening, and Fontenay—who dreamt of battles in the sunshine with cannon thundering and trumpets blaring—saw war at the outset under the gloomiest aspect. It was the seamy side of glory.

All these wretched men were cripples left behind on the road, who had dragged themselves here "for a warm," or marauders who had run away from their regiments to seek provisions in the country with very little to find.

"Is this an army?" the young officer questioned himself.

But he remembered that close to this bivouac of famished prowlers, the Emperor was at the head of those valorous soldiers who had conquered the half of Europe; he would see him in another day and would arrive in the very time to take part in a certain victory.

He alighted. Tournesol unbridled the horses without unsaddling, for his officer intended starting again before nightfall, and he gave them some barley which he had been supplied with before quitting Don Inigo's mansion.

A soldier, better disciplined than the others, rose to allow the newcomer to approach the fire. He wore the uniform of the Polish lancers called into Spain by Napoleon with the *Vistula* Legion, two fine foot regiments, all chafing to march on the enemy. His nationality could be told by his long flaxen moustache; he spoke French fairly well.

"Lieutenant," he said lifting his hand to his *schapaca*, "would you like me to drive all these feather-bed soldiers away with the flat of my saber?"

"Thank you, my brave fellow responded Fontenay, "when I feel like sitting by the fire I shall make them stand aside. How the mischief do you come to be among such a crew?"

"My horse broke his leg as we left Cereso, the village behind us, and all I could do was to get as far as this. Here I am dismounted and I never will be able to join my troop, which is on service beside the Emperor, before the general action."

"So you believe there will be fighting to-morrow?"

"That is a sure thing. The road is blocked by intrenchments supplied with artillery. It is rush through or draw back, and Napoleon never recedes! This position of Somo Sierra is the Thermopylae of Spain."

The American had not in the least expected to hear a Polish soldier evoke this classical allusion, and the other, who read his amazement on his face, pursued by way of elucidation:

"I was a student in Wilna University when called to serve your Emperor, who I earnestly hope, will liberate Poland. I am ready to die for him and I should never comfort myself for losing so fine an occasion to charge under his eyes. Oh, lieutenant, if I only had a horse!"

"I am sorry that I have no spare one."

But Fontenay perceived that the Polisher eyed the other, Tournesol's, with desire, and he inquired:

"Are we still far from Somo Sierra?"

"A league at most—three-quarters of an hour's walk."

"Well, if you are fit for the walk my orderly can turn his horse over to you for the charge. You and I will ride upon the enemy, knee-to-knee."

"I will try. It may not be possible. I have a letter to be given to the Emperor and I do not know but he may retain me by him. But come all the same. It shall not be said I left a brave gentleman in difficulties if I can help him out."

"Thank you, lieutenant; I would give my life for you whenever you want it."

"That is too much," said the West Indian, laughing. "Now I can lie down without supper—fatigue has spoiled my appetite."

"Then allow me to make your bed," merrily replied the Polisher.

Spurning the sleepers extended in rows before the fire, he cleared a space for the officer who laid himself down on the hard ground without other covering than his cloak. The evicted tenants growled like kicked dogs, but the lancer held them in respect and they rolled over to fall asleep again a little farther off.

Tournesol had watched the colloquy between the soldier out of the tail of his

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