

The Children of LaRue.

BY ROBERTA B. NELSON.

A great many years ago there lived in France a king, Louis XIV., who was but five years old. Of course he was too young to rule over all his people, so his mother, Anne of Austria, reigned in his stead, and whenever she did not know just how to manage affairs, she sent for her prime minister, Mazarin, to advise her.

Cardinal Mazarin was a very shrewd man, and soon became very powerful at court. On occasions of special importance, the Paris Parliament would assemble and hold a "lit de justice" (so-called because the seat of the king was under a canopy like that of a four-post bedstead), and to these meetings the little king was brought by his mother.

Anne of Austria wanted the members of the Parliament to think that they were assisting her to manage the kingdom, but, in reality, it was Mazarin who ruled them all—king, queen-mother, and Parliament. At last the Parliament awoke to this fact, and determined to suppress Mazarin but the Queen upheld her prime minister, so there was much bitterness between the court and the Parliament.

The king, Louis XIV., was ten years old when things came to a crisis. There were three men in the Parliament who were especially bitter against the court, and gave much trouble, so the court determined to send them into exile. On August 26th, 1648, these men were to be arrested and sent out of the country. The captain of the guards, Comminges, was ordered to arrest them. He caught one of them and sent him out of France; he then ordered his lieutenant, LaRue, to capture Charton, the second man, while he himself went after the third, Broussel.

Charton was a friend of LaRue's, and the soldier greatly disliked the task of arresting him, but LaRue was an honest, upright man and loyal to his king, so that he had no thought of letting Charton escape. In his pocket was the warrant for the arrest of Charton, and it bore the king's seal. Now it so happened that LaRue, having some hours to wait before the time set for the arrest, took a nap in his little home in the city. His wife was busy about her work, and their two children, Pierre and Fleurette, were playing on the floor. Each child had a doll, not like the beautiful dolls of these days, but ugly clumsy things, made of rags. Pierre called his doll the Duke, and always dressed it like a soldier; many a sham battle did the brave Duke fight, and he invariably won. Fleurette's doll, Celine, was fearfully and wonderfully made, but Fleurette loved her dearly, and was seldom parted from her.

On this eventful day Duke had fought at least seven battles, and Pierre was growing a little tired of them, so he put the Duke away and looked about for some paper on which to draw, for Pierre had quite a talent for drawing. Protruding from his father's pocket, Pierre discovered a paper; his father had often given him paper from his pocket, so Pierre had no idea that it would do any harm for him to take this; he drew it out very carefully, so as not to wake his sleeping father. Then he went back to his sister. "Look, Fleurette," he said, "I've found a nice big piece of paper; it was in father's pocket." Just at that moment some playmates passed the house, and Pierre ran out to join them, first putting the paper carefully away with his toys, that he might have it when he wanted to draw.

By and by LaRue awoke, and, surprised to find he had slept so long, hurried out to get his soldiers together and go to arrest Charton. In company with his men he went to the house of Charton, and, just at the door, he put his hand in his pocket for the warrant—it was gone! He thought he must have lost it on the way, and went back to look for it, leaving his soldiers to guard the house, but Charton had seen the men approaching, and now, taking advantage of the delay, he slipped out of the back door, which opened right on the river bank, and had one of the bargemen take him down the river—thus Charton escaped.

LaRue searched the streets, and his own home, in vain, for neither of the children was in the house when he returned, and his wife had seen nothing of the warrant. The distracted lieutenant then rejoined his soldiers and determined to capture Charton without a warrant, if possible, but when they searched the house Charton was already far away. Then LaRue had to report his failure to his captain, Comminges.

Comminges was furious. "You helped him to escape," he cried. "Traitor! Traitor! You did not want to arrest him in the first place, and now you have let him go. But you shall suffer for this, you traitor!"

And thus it came about that poor LaRue was tried by court-martial and sentenced to be drummed out of the army, then exiled and imprisoned for life in a fortress.

The former minister, Richelieu, would have had him beheaded, but Mazarin pursued a different policy. The

friends of LaRue appealed to the prime-minister, but he had but one answer: "Let him prove that the warrant was not in his possession when he went to arrest Charton."

This, of course, LaRue could not do; he was wild with grief at the humiliation about to be inflicted upon him, for to be drummed out of the army was the most humiliating thing that could happen to a soldier; then it nearly drove him mad to think of a life-long banishment and imprisonment, and the separation from his wife and little children. His wife shared his great distress, but the children were so young that they did not know what was about to occur, and, by ill-luck, Pierre did not happen to think of drawing; if he had, he would have brought out the missing paper. Both he and Fleurette knew that their father was soon to leave them, and they learned the word "exile" without understanding its meaning.

When the fated day came LaRue was led out before the assembled army, while the general in command read the sentence of the court-martial to him, and added: "You are unworthy to bear arms in her Majesty's service; in the name of France, I degrade you." Then a non-commissioned officer stepped forth, caught up LaRue's sword, broke it and threw the pieces at his feet; struck off his cap, and led him, bare-headed, to the front of the troops.

The poor lieutenant was frantic with grief and shame, but his cries of "Spare me! I am innocent!" were drowned by the roll of the drums. Around and around in front of the troops, poor LaRue was led, bare-headed and shame-faced, and all the while the drums were mercilessly drumming him out of the army. It was a sad and heart-rending sight, and it was fortunate that the poor wife and little ones were not there to witness it. Poor little Pierre was so proud of that brave old sword which now lay broken in the dust!

LaRue was to be conducted out of France, but since the uprising of the people against the court at the time of Broussel's arrest, it was deemed best to keep all of the soldiers within the city, and none could be spared to escort LaRue into exile. For the present, then, he was confined in a prison in Paris, but his family were allowed to visit him. The two children always carried their dolls with them when they visited the prison, and one day, LaRue, noticing their devotion to these playthings, said, jestingly, "Pierre would you be willing to let the Duke go away in my place?"

Pierre hugged his treasure close, but answered bravely, "Yes, my father."

"The Duke is as good a soldier as I am," the father said, with a bitter remembrance of his degradation before the army; "perhaps, if the king were to see him, he would make the exchange."

Pierre took the jest seriously. "And if the king were to let the Duke go, would you stay at home with us?"

"Yes, gladly," sighed LaRue.

That night after the children had been put to bed Fleurette heard Pierre sobbing; she crept up to him, put her little arms about his neck and her face to his, "What is it, Pierre?" she whispered.

"I was thinking about the Duke," sobbed the boy, "he has to go into exile, and it will be so hard to part with him."

"Don't let him go," said Fleurette.

"Oh, but he is to go in father's place, you know, that is, if the king is willing; how can I get to show him to the king, Fleurette?"

For some time the children planned how to bring this about, and then, the following day, they went, taking the beloved Duke with them, to the great iron gates of the king's palace. They knew it to be the young king's custom to spend a part of each day in the grounds, and this day they were not disappointed in seeing him. He happened to come quite near to the gates where the two little ones were standing with their faces pressed close to the iron railing.

Pierre called out, "If you please, sire," and the little king came up to them. "If you please, sire," Pierre began, "here is the Duke, and he would like to go into exile in my father's place, and, oh, do please let him go; he is a good soldier, he is, indeed!"

It was an heroic sacrifice Pierre was making; he was the son of a brave soldier; he held the Duke towards the king, but Louis XIV., being ten years old, was quite beyond dolls; he had real soldiers of his own. So he only remarked scornfully:

"He looks to me like a very poor soldier," and with that walked away.

Fleurette began to cry, and tears came also into Pierre's eyes; they turned sorrowfully homeward; they had come a long distance, had lost their way twice, and had been almost trampled under foot in the streets, and now they had gained nothing, but the bitterest thing of all was that the king had said their dear Duke looked like a poor soldier.

"I think he must have meant that the Duke's clothes were poor," said Fleurette, consolingly; "don't cry, Pierre, we will make him some nice new clothes, and then he will be a fine soldier."

Accordingly, as soon as they reached home, they begged their mother to make a new suit of clothes for the Duke, and she did so, little dreaming what was in their minds. Pierre cut a new wooden sword for the soldier, and Fleurette made him a paper cap. All this took a whole day, but the following day they started once more to see the king, but before they had gone far a gust of wind carried away the Duke's cap. Pierre was in despair. "He cannot go without a cap," he cried.

"Come home, and I will make another," said Fleurette.

Pierre, in looking for some paper, found the one he had taken from his father's pocket, and brought it to Fleurette; it was large, stiff, and bore the king's seal; it made a fine cap and there was even a piece of it left which Fleurette kept in her possession.

While Pierre was arranging the new cap on the Duke, Fleurette hurriedly dressed Celine, and carried her in her arms when she and Pierre again started, but Pierre did not notice that until Fleurette said, "Pierre, I have brought Celine, too, because the Duke will be so lonely if he goes away from us all; he would like to have Celine with him."

Fleurette was making her sacrifice. Seeing an expression of doubt on Pierre's face, she added, "Celine is very nicely dressed, Pierre; I hope the king will let her go, too." Then little Fleurette cried a little, very softly, but she had made up her mind to part with her treasure if the Duke went away.

On this afternoon the young king was again in the gardens, and with him were his mother and several ladies of the court; the prime minister, Mazarin, was also present.

Louis XIV. caught sight of the two eager little faces pressed close to the great gates. "There are those two children again," he said to his mother, "they have the oddest doll, which they seem to what to give me."

"We will have them brought in," said the queen, kindly, and, accordingly, the gates were opened and the children brought to the queen-mother. They were very much frightened at finding themselves before the court, but Pierre managed to stammer out his story, "Our father is in prison," he said, "and he has to go away, somewhere into exile, he calls it, and he said that he would like to stay at home with us if the king would let my soldier, the Duke, go away in his place."

"No doubt he would," some one answered, and they all laughed.

Pierre, not understanding the ridicule, and fearing another failure, hastened to say, "But, indeed, the Duke is a very good soldier, my father says he is as good a soldier as he is himself."

"Very likely, if your father is in prison," said Louis XIV., cruelly.

But Anne of Austria was touched by the child's innocence. "Who is your father?" she asked.

"The Lieutenant LaRue," said the cardinal, caught just at this moment Mazarin, the cardinal, caught sight of the king's seal on the paper cap of the Duke; he took it off hastily.

"What is this? How came you by it?" he demanded, sternly. The children were too terrified by his harsh manner to reply, and poor little Fleurette clung fast to Pierre. To their amazement, Mazarin tore outside of the new cap, thus laying it out flat. "Where is the rest of this paper?" he asked, more mildly.

Then little Fleurette held out her dear doll, Celine, and the cardinal had extended his hand to take it, when Fleurette suddenly drew it back, gave it one agonized kiss, and then thrust it into the cardinal's hand.

That little act of devotion won all hearts to Fleurette; for one brief second she had forgotten her fear of the court in the agony of giving up Celine. Even the great cardinal minister smiled as he took the doll, and, behold, Celine's new petticoat was made of the remaining portion of the king's warrant for the arrest of Charton!

Finally the children overcame their terror sufficiently to tell how Pierre had taken the paper from his father's pocket while he lay asleep, and had put it away with his toys.

This explanation proved LaRue's story to be true, proved that he had not connived at the escape of the conspirator, but was a true and loyal soldier, so he was soon set free, and the children of LaRue did not have to send the Duke and Celine into exile.—The Interior.

Parson Calvert.

BY MARY H. M. ODOM.

The sun was flinging shafts of gold through the great beech trees in the old "quarter." The stream rippled on beneath them singing the same sweet musical strain it had warbled in our childish days. Great golden bars of light fell across the doorway of "Uncle Dick's" cabin; the war was over; the great and thrilling wave of freedom had swept across our land and the old-time slave rode soft on its foamy crest. But the negro is not migratory and is loath to leave the "Old Plantation." "Uncle Dick" and his wife "Aunt Clary" would scarcely have enjoyed their new found freedom had they

been compelled

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