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Saturday is always a busy day with us, particularly at this season of the year, when **Men and Boys** are looking for **New Summer Suits.**

Tomorrow, Saturday, we offer good things at bargain prices. It will pay you to see.

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At $5.00, $6.00 and 8.00—excellent values.

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At $10, $12 and $15--worth fully 25 p. c. more

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At 90c. to $5---in large variety.

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For ages 3 to 16 years. In all styles and large variety of patterns.

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40 and 42 King Street.

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THE

HELMET OF NAVARRE

BY BERTHA RUNKLE.

GROSSET & DUNLAP Publishe.s: New York.

(Continued.)

"I'll get this off my hands at once," he went on, with the effect of talking to himself rather than to us. "It shall go straight off to Lemaitre. You'd better go to bed, both of you. My faith, you've made a night of it!"

"Won't you take me for your messenger, Monsieur? You need a trusty one."

"A kindly offer, Etienne. But you have earned your rest. And you, true as you are, are yet not the only staunch servant I have, God be thanked. Gilles will take this straightway from my hand to Lemaitre's."

He had inclosed the packet in a clean wrapper, but now, a thought striking him, he took it out again.

"I'd best break off the royal seal, lest it be spied among the president's papers. I'll scratch out my initial, too. The cipher tells nothing."

"He is not likely to leave it about, Monsieur."

"No, but this time we'll provide for every chance. We'll take all the precautions ingenuity can devise or patience execute."

He crshed the seal in his fingers, and took the knife-point to scrape the wax away. It slipped and severed the cords. Of its own accord the stiff paper of the flap unfolded.

"The cipher seems as determined to show itself to me again as if I were in danger of forgetting it," Monsieur said idly. "The truth is— "

He stopped in the middle of a word, snatching up the packet, slapping it wide open, tearing it sheet from sheet. Each was absolutely blank!

XXIV.

THE FLORENTINES

M. Etienne, forgetting his manners, snatched the papers from his father's hand, turning them about and about, not able to believe his senses. A man hurled over a cliff, plunging in one moment from flowery lawns into a turbulent sea, might feel as he did.

"But the seal!" he stammered.

"The seal was genuine," Monsieur answered, startled as he. "How your fellow could have the king's signet—"

"See," M. Etienne cried, scratching at the fragments. "This is it. Dunce that I am not to have guessed it! Look, there is a layer of paper embedded in the wax. Look; he cut the seal out, smeared hot wax on the false packet, pressed in the seal, and curled the new wax over the edge. It was cleverly done; the seal is but little thicker, little larger than before. It did not look tampered with. Would you have suspected it, Monsieur?" he demanded piteously.

"I had no thought of it. But this Peyrot—it may not yet be too late—"

"I will go back," M. Etienne cried, darting to the door. But Monsieur laid forcible hands on him.

"Not you, Etienne. You were hurt yesterday; you have not closed your eyes for twenty-four hours. I don't want a dead son. I blame you not for the failure; not another man of us all would have come so near success."

"Dolt! I should have known he could not deal honestly," M. Etienne cried. "I should have known he would trick me. But I did not think to doubt the crest. I should have opened it there in the inn, but it was Lemaitre's sealed packet. However, Peyrot sat down to my dinner: I can be back before he has finished his three kinds of wine."

"Stop, Etienne," Monsieur commanded. "I forbid you. You are gray with fatigue. Vigo shall go."

M. Etienne turned on him in fiery protest; then the blaze in his eyes flickered out, and he made obedient salute.

"So be it. Let him go. I am no use; I bungle everything I touch. But he may accomplish something."

He flung himself down on the bench in the corner, burying his face in his hands, weary, chagrined, disheartened. A statuemaker might have copied him for a figure of Defeat.

"Go find Vigo," Monsier bade me, "and then get you to bed.

I obeyed both orders with all alacrity. I too smarted, but mine was the private's disappointment, not the general's who had planned the campaign. The credit of the rescue was none of mine; no more was the blame of failure. I need not rack myself with questioning. Had I in this or that done differently, should I not have triumphed? I had done only what I was told. Yet I was part of the expedition; I could not but share the grief. If I did not wet my pillow with my tears, it was because I could not keep awake long enough. Whatever my sorrows, speedily they slipped from me.

I roused with a start from deep, dreamless sleep, and then wondered whether, after all, I had waked. Here, to be sure, was Marcel's bed, on which I had lain down; there was the high gable-window, through which the western sun now poured. There was the wardrobe open, with Marcel's Sunday suit hanging on the peg; here were the two stools, the little image of the Virgin on the wall. But here was also something else, so out of place in the chamber of a page that I pinched myself to make sure it was real. At my elbow on the pallet lay a box of some fine foreign wood, beautifully grained by God and polished by grateful man. It was about as large as my lord's despatch box, bound at the edges with shining brass and having long brass hinges wrought in a design of leaves and flowers. Beside the box were set three shallow trays, lined with blue velvet, and filled full of goldsmith's work—glittering chains, linked or twisted, bracelets in the form of yellow snakes with green eyes, buckles with ivory teeth, glove-clasps thick with pearls, ear-rings and finger-rings with precious stones.

I stared bedazzled from the display to him who stood as showman. This was a handsome lad, seemingly no older than I, though taller, with a shock of black hair, rough and curly, and dark, smooth face, very boyish and pleasant. He was dressed well, in bourgeois fashion; yet there was about him and his apparel something, I could not tell what, unfamiliar, different from us others.

He, meeting my eye, smiled in the friendliest way, like a child, and said, in Italian:

"Good day to you, my little gentleman."

I had still the uncertain feeling that I must be in a dream, for why should an Italian jeweller be displaying his treasures to me, a penniless page? But the dream was amusing; I was in no haste to wake.

I knew my Italian well enough, for Monsieur's confessor, the Father Francesco, who had followed him into exile, was Florentine; and as he always spoke his own tongue to Monsieur, and I was always at the duke's heels, I picked up a deal of it. After monsieur's going, the father, already a victim, poor man to the falling-sickness, of which he died, stayed behind with us, and I found a pricking pleasure in talking with him in the speech he loved, of Monsieur's Roman journey, of his exploits in the war of the Three Henrys. Therefore the words came easily to my lips to answer this lad from over the Alps:

"I give you good day, friend."

He looked somewhat surprised and more than pleased, breaking at once into voluble speech:

"The best greetings to you young sir. Now, what can I sell you this fine day? I have not been half a week in this big city of yours, yet already I have but one boxful of trinkets left. They are noble, open-handed customers, these gallants of Paris. I have not to show them my wares twice, I can tell you. They know what key will unlock their fair mistresses' hearts. And now, what can I sell you, my little gentleman, to buy your sweetheart's kisses?"

"Nay, I have no sweetheart," I said, "and if I had, she would not wear these gauds."

"She would if she could get them, then," he retorted. "Now, let me give you a bit of advice, my friend, for I see you are but young: buy this gold chain of me, or this ring with this little dove on it,—see, how cunningly wrought,—and you'll not lack long for a sweetheart."

His words huffed me a bit, for he spoke as if he were vastly my senior.

'I want no sweetheart," I returned with dignity, "to be bought with gold."

"Nay," he cried quickly, "but when your own valour and prowess have inflamed her with passion, and you should be willing to reward her devotion and set at rest her suspense by a suitable gift."

I looked at him uneasily, for I had a suspicion that he might be making fun of me. But his countenance was as guileless as a kitten's.

"Well, I tell you again I have no sweetheart and I want no sweetheart." I said; "I have no time to bother with girls."

At once he abandoned the subject, seeing that he was making naught by it.

"The messer is very much occupied" he asked with exceeding deference. "The messer has no leisure for trifling in boudoirs; he is occupied with great matters? Oh, that can I well believe, and I cry the messer's pardon. For when the mind is taken up with affairs of state, it is distasteful to listen even for a moment to light talk of maids and jewels."

Again I eyed him challengingly; but he, with face utterly unconscious, was sorting over his treasures. I made up my mind his queer talk was but the outlandish way of a foreigner. He looked at me again, serious and respectful.

"The messer must often be engaged in great risks, in perilous encounters. Is it not so? Then he will do well to carry ever over his heart the sacred image of our Lord."

He held up to my inspection a silver rosary from which depended a crucifix of ivory, the sad image of the dying Christ carved upon it. Even in Monseur's chapel, even in the church at St. Quentin, was nothing so masterfully wrought as thos figurine to be held in the palm of the hand. The tears started in my eyes to look at it, and I crossed myself in reverence. I bethought me how I had trampled on my crucifix; the stranger all unwittingly had struck a bull's-eye. I had committed grave offence against God, but perhaps if, putting gewgaws aside, I should give my all for this cross, he would call the account even. I knew nothing of the value of a carving such as this, but I remembered I was not moneyless, and I said, albeit somewhat shyly:

"I cannot take the rosary. But I should like well the crucifix. But then, I have only ten pistoles."

"Ten pistoles!" he repeated contemptuously. "Corpo di Bacco! The workmanship alone is worth twenty." Then, viewing my fallen visage, he added: "However, I have received fair treatment in this house, beshrew me but I have! I have made good sales to your young count. What sort of master is he, this M. le Comte de Mar?"

"Oh, there's nobody like him," I answered, "except, of course, M. le Duc."

"Ah, then you have two masters?" he inquired curiously, yet with a certain careless air. It struck me suddenly, overwhelmingly, that he was a spy, come here under the guise of an honest tradesman. But he should gain nothing from me.

(To be continued.)

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