# The Helmet of Navarre

BY BERTHA RUNKLE. GROSSET & DUNLAP Publishers: New York.

(Continued.)

"Twenty pistoles were a fair price for the packet. But monsieur forgets the wear and tear on my conscience incurred for him. I must be reimbursed for that."

"Conscience, quotha!"

"Certainly, monsieur. I am in my way as honest a man as you in yours. I have never been false to the hand that fed me. If, therefore, I divert to you a certain packet which of rights goes elsewhere, my sin must be made worth my while. My conscience will sting me sorely, but with the aid of a glass and a lass I may contrive to forget the pain.

Mirth, my love, and Folly dear,
Baggages, you're welcome here!

I fix the injury to my conscience at thirty pistoles, M. le Comte. Fifty in all will bring the packet to your hand."

It had been a pleasure to M. le Comte to fling a tankard in the fellow's face. But the steadfast determination to win the papers for Monsier, and, possibly, respect for Peyrot's weapon, withheld him.

"Very well, then. In the cabaret of the Bonne Femme at eleven. You may do as you like about appearing; I shall be there with my fifty pistoles."

"What guaranty have I that you will deal fairly with me?"

"The word of a St. Quentin."

"Sufficient, of course."

The scamp rose with a bow.

"Well, I have not the word of a gentleman to offer you, but I give you the opinion of Jean Peyrot, sometime Father Ambrosius, that he and the packet will be there. This has been a delightful call, monsieur, and I am loath to let you go. But it is time I was free to look for that packet."

M. Etienne's eyes went over to the chest.

"I wish you all success in your arduous search."

"It is like to be, in truth a long and weary search," Peyrot sighed. "My ignorance of the perpetrators of the outrage makes my task difficult indeed. But rest assured, monsieur, that I shall question every man in Paris, if need be. I shall leave no stone unturned."

M. Ttienne still pensively regarded the chest.

"If you leave no key unturned, 'twill be more to the purpose."

"You appear yet to nurse the belief that I have the packet. But as a matter of fact, monsieur, I have not."

I studied his grave face, and could not for the life of me make out whether he were lying. M. Etienne said merely:

"Come Felix."

"You'll drink a glass before you go?" Peyrot cried hospitably, running to fill a goblet muddy with his last pouring. But M. Etienne drew back.

"Well, I don't blame you. I wouldn't drink it myself if I were a count," Peyrot said, setting the draught to his own lips. "After this noon I shall drink it no more all summer. I shall live like a king.

Kiss me, Folly; hug me, Mirth:
Life without you's nothing worth!

Monsieur, can I lend you a hat?"

"You have boasted," M. Etienne went on, "that your side was up and mine down. Did you not reflect that soon my side may be up and yours down, you would hardly be at such pains to deny that you ever bared blade against the Duke of St. Quentin."

"I have made my declaration in the presence of two witnesses, far too honorable to falsify, that I knew nothing of the attack on the duke," Peyrot repeated with apparent satisfaction. "But of course it is possible that by scouring Paris I might get on the scent of your packet. Twenty pistoles though. That is not much."

M. Etienne stood silent, drumming tattoos on the table, not pleased with the turn of the matter, not seeing how to better it. Had we been sure of our suspicions we would have charged him, pistol or no pistol, trusting that our quickness would prevent his shooting, or that the powder would miss fire, or that the ball would fly wide, or that we should be hit in no vital part; trusting, in short, that God was with us and would in some fashion save us. But we could not be sure that the packet was with Peyrot. What we had heard him lock in the chest might have been these very pistols that he had afterward taken out again. Three men had fled from M. de Mirabeau's alley; we had no means of knowing whether this Peyrot where he who ran as we came up, he whom I had encountered, or he who had engaged M. Etienne. And did we know, that would not tell us which of the three stabbed and plundered Huguet. Peyrot might have the packet, or he might know who had it, or he might be in honest ignorance of its existence. If he had it, it were a crying shame to pay out honest money for what we might take by force; to buy your own goods from a thief were a sin. But suppose he did it not? If we could seize upon him, disarm him, bind him, threaten him, rack him, would he—granted he knew—reveal its whereabouts? Writ large in his face was every manner of roguery, but not one iota of cowardice. He might very well hold us baffled, hour on hour, while the papers went to Mayenne. Even should he tell, we had the business to begin again from the very beginning, with some other knave mayhap worse than this.

Plainly the game was in Peyrot's hands; we could play only to his lead.

"If you will put the packet into my hands, seal unbroken, this day at eleven, I engage to meet you with twenty pistoles," M. Etienne said.

I had already opened the door and was holding it for my master to pass, when Peyrot picked up from the floor and held out to him a battered and dirty toque, with its draggled feather hanging forlornly over the side. Chafed as he was, M. Etienne could not deny a laugh to the rascal's impudence.

"I cannot rob monsieur," he said.

"M. le Comte need have no scruple. I shall buy me better out of his fifty pistoles."

But M. Etienne was out in the passage, I following, banging the door after me. We went down the stairs in time to Peyrot's lusty carolling:

Mirth I'll keep, though riches fly,
While Folly's sure to linger by!

"Think you we'll get the packet?" I asked.

"Aye. I think he wants his fifty pistoles. Mordieu! it's galling to let this dog set the terms."

"Monsieur," I cried, "perhaps he'll not stir at once. I'll run home for Vigo and his men, and we'll make the rascal disgorge."

"Now, you are more zealous than honest, boy."

I was silent, abashed, and he added:

"I had not been afraid to try conclusions with him, pistols or not, were I sure that he had the packet. I believe he has, yet there is the chance that, after all, in this one particular he speaks truth. I cannot take any chances; I must get those papers for Monsieur."

"Yes, we could not have done otherwise M. Etienne. But, monsieur, will you dare go to this inn? M. le Comte is a man in jeopardy; he may not keep rendezvous of the enemy's choosing."

"I might not keep one of Lucas's choosing. Though," he added, with a smile, "nathless, I think I should. But it is not likely this fellow knows of the warrant against me. Paris is a big place; news does not travel all over town as quickly as at St. Quentin. I think friend Peyrot has more to gain by playing fair than playing false, and appointing the cabaret of the Bonne Femme has a very open, pleasing sound. Did he mean to brain me he would scarce have set that place."

"It was not Peyrot alone I meant. But monsieur is so well known. In the streets or at the dinnerhour, some one may see you who knows Mayenne is after you."

"Oh, of that I must take my chance," he made answer, no whit troubled by the warning. "I go home now for the ransom and I will e'en be at the pains to doff this gear for something darker."

"Monsieur," I pleaded, "why not stay at home to get your dues of sleep? Vigo will bring the gold; he and I will put the matter through."

"I ask not your advice," he cried haughtily; then with instant softening: "Nay, this is my affair, Felix. I have taken it upon myself to recover Monsieur his papers. I must carry it through myself to the very omega."

I said no more, partly because it would have done no good, partly because, in spite of the strange word, I understood how he felt.

"Perhaps you should go home and sleep he suggested tenderly.

"Nay, cried I. "I had a cat-nap in the lane; I'm game to see it through."

"Then," he commanded. "you may stay hereabouts and watch that door. For I have some curiosity to know whether he will need to fare forth after the treasure. If he do as I guess, he will spend the next few hours as you counsel me, making up arrears of sleep, and you'll not see him till a quarter or so before eleven. But whenever he comes out, follow him. Keep your safe distance and dog him if you can."

"And if I lose him?"

"Come back home. Station yourself now where he won't notice you. That arch there should serve."

We had been standing at the street corner, sheltered by a balcony over our heads from the view of Peyrot's window.

"Monsieur," I said, "I do wish you would bring Vigo back with you."

"Felix," he laughed, "you are the most courtier, I ever saw."

I crossed the street as he told me, glancing up at the third story of the house of the Gilded Shears. No watcher was visible. From the archway, which was entrance to a court of tall houses, I could well command Peyrot's door, myself in deep shadow M. Etienne nodded to me and walked off whistling staring full in the face every one he met.

I would fain have occupied myself as we guessed the knave Peyrot to be doing, and shut mine aching eyes in sleep. But I was sternly determined to be faithful to my trust, and though for my greater comfort—cold enough comfort it was—I sat me down on the paving stones, yet I kept my eyelids propped open, my eyes on Peyrot's door. I was helped in carrying out my virtuous resolve by the fact that the court was populous and my carcass in the entrance was much in the way of the busy passers-by, so that full half of them swore at me, and the half of that half kicked me. The hard part was that I could not fight them because of keeping my eyes on Peyrot's door.

He delayed so long and so long that I feared with shamed misgiving I must have let him slip, when at length, on the very stroke of eleven, he sauntered forth. He past my lair at a smart pace. I followed at goodly distance, but never once did he glance around. He led the way straight to the sign of the Bonne Femme.

I entered two minutes after him, passing from the cabaret, where my men were not, to the dining hall, where, to my relief, they were. At two huge fireplaces savoury soups bubbled ,juicy rabbits simmered, fat capons roasted; the smell brought the tears to my eyes. A concourse of people was about; gentles and burghers seated at table, or passing in and out; waiters running back and forth from the fires, drawers from the cabaret. I paused to scan the throng, jostled by one and another, before I descried my master and my knave. M. Etienne, the prompter at the rendezvous, had, like a philosopher, ordered dinner, but he had deserted it now and stood with Peyrot, their backs to the company, their elbows on the deep window-ledge, their heads close together. I came up suddenly to Peyrot's side, making him jump.

"Oh, it's you, my little gentleman!" he exclaimed, smiling to show all his firm teeth, as white and even as a court beauty's. He looked in the best of humours, as was not wonderful, considering that he was engaged in fastening up in the breast of his doublet something hard and lumpy. M. Etienne held up a packet for me to see, before Peyrot's shielding body; it was tied with red cord and sealed with a spread falcon over the tiny letters, Je reviendrai. In the corner was written very small, St. Q. Smiling, he put it into the breast of his doublet.

"Monsieur," my scamp said to him with close lips that the room might not hear, "you are a gentleman. If there ever comes a day when You-know-who is down and you are up, I shall be pleased to serve you as well as I have served him."

"I hanker not for such service as you have given him," M. Etienne answered. Peyrot's eyes twinkled brighter than ever.

"I have said it. I will serve you as vigourously as I have served him. Bear me in mind, monsieur."

"Come, Felix," was all my lord's answer.

Peyrot sprang forward to detain us.

"Monsieur, will you not dine with me? Both of you, I beg. I will have every wine the cellar affords."

"No," said M. Etienne, carelessly, not deigning to anger; "but there is my dinner for you, an you like. I have paid for it, but I have other business than to eat it."

Bidding a waiter serve M. Peyrot, he walked from the room without other glance at him. A slight shade fell over the reckless scampish face; he was a moment vexed that we scorned him. Merely vexed, I think; shamed not at all; he knew not the feel of it. Even in the brief space I watched him, as I passed to the door, his visage cleared, and he sat him down contentedly to finish M. Etienne's veal broth.

My lord paced along rapidly and gladly, on fire to be before Monsieur with the packet. But one little cloud, transient as Peyrot's, passed across his lightsome countenance.

"I would that knave were of my rank," he said. "I had not left him without slapping a glove in his face."

That Peyrot had come off scot-free put me out of patience, too, but I regretted the gold we had given him more than the wounds we had not. The money, on the contrary, troubled M. Etienne no whit; what he had never toiled for he parted with lightly.

We came to our gates and went straight-way up the stairs to Monsieur's cabinet. He sprang to meet us at the door, snatching the packet from his son's eager hand.

"Well done, Etienne, my champion! An you brought me the crown of France I were not so pleased!"

The flush of joy at generous praise of good work kindled on M. Etienne's cheek; it were hard to say which of the two messieurs beamed the more delightedly on the other.

"My son, you have brought me back my honor," spoke Monsieur, more quietly, the exuberance of his delight abating, but leaving him none the less happy. "If you had sinned against me—which I do not admit, dear lad—it were more than made up for now."

"Ah Monsieur, I have often asked myself of late what I was born for. Now I know it was for this morning."

"For this and many more mornings, Etienne," Monsieur made gay answer, laying a hand on his son's shoulder. "Courage, comrade. We'll have our lady yet."

He smiled at him hearteningly and turned away to his writing-table. For all his sympathy, he was, as was natural, more interested in his papers than in Mlle. de Montluc.

(To be continued.)





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## TELEGRAPH EXTENSION

### James Kent Manager of the C. P. R. Telegraph Company Talks of Increasing Facilities

"The C. P. R. Telegraph," said James Kent this morning, "has made considerable progress in the work of increasing facilities to be carried on this year, having completed the erection of a new copper wire from Montreal to St. John, N. B. another from Montreal to Toronto, an iron wire from Toronto to Lindsay, and an extra copper wire from Montreal to Winnipeg, making a total of 2,316 miles of copper wire. An idea may be formed as to the large amount of new work being carried on this year from the fact that seventy large freight cars have been required for the carriage of material, in addition to those necessary to transport poles and cross arms, which require about eight hundred flat cars. We have now five hundred tons of iron wires expected to arrive shortly, and which will be strung as soon as possible. This will be used for the construction of new branch lines throughout the North-West."—Montreal Witness.

Stephen Stephens, of Lancaster Heights, had one rib fractured and his chin injured yesterday by a cedar pole falling on him from the top of a load. Mr. Stephens and another man were loading a team with cedar poles when the accident happened. In hoisting one to the top of the load it rolled off, crushing him to the earth and breaking the third rib on his left side, besides hurting his chin. He endured considerable suffering. Dr. Maclarland, of Fairville, who had been sent for, attended to his injuries.

Prof. J. C. McLennan, director of the physical laboratory, University of Toronto, will deliver a lecture on The Metric System of Weights and Measures in the board of trade rooms on Friday evening next at 8 o'clock.

Mrs. W. B. Deacon and Miss Lottie Deacon, of Shediac, who have just returned from Bermuda, are staying for a few days with their friend, Mrs. J. E. Toole, 46 Mecklenburg street.


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