

The CASINOLIES

BY ARTHUR HENRY VESSEY

CHAPTER XIV.—Continued.

I took refuge in silence. I closed my eyes wearily.

"Before I bid you good night, sir, I think it right that you should know that your mother and sister are in this hotel. At the risk that you think me impertinent I dare to hope that your meeting with them tomorrow may be free from any embarrassment or unhappiness."

He bowed stiffly and left the room. I stared after him wearily.

The dispatch he had left gorgeous and brave with its royal crest and embossing lay passively in my hand.

"And now a new dilemma confronted me. I was supposed to be under the influence of an opiate; they would not scruple to take from me the dispatch. To allow that might give them such information as would make their conspiracy, whatever it might be, more effective. To resist would tell them that I had been feigning.

"I must hide the papers. But where? It was a large little chamber; my heart sank as I looked there.

I leaped out of bed. Again I threw open the shutters. I could hear Capt. Forbes speaking sternly; if he could but hold them for a minute!

In the garden below the marble basin of a disused fountain at once caught my eyes.

I tore the corner of the envelope, inserted my penknife to weight the packet, leaped over the balcony and dropped it.

It fell squarely into the basin among the leaves and moss.

To regain the room was the work of an instant.

I heard Captain Forbes wish them a cold good night, and Madame de Varrier answered him mockingly. Then the bedroom door was opened and Starva shuffled into the room.

"Who was that man?" I demanded languidly, and regarded him with listless eyes, my hand to my forehead.

He shrugged his shoulders, disdainful to answer.

"He has left some papers here by mistake."

"Perhaps," I muttered indifferently, and pretended to sleep.

I heard him moving about the room for some time. Madame de Varrier and he whispered together. I felt so little concerned as to the result of this search that I actually fell asleep. The strain of the evening had exhausted me. No doubt the search was extended to me personally; I believe I was vaguely conscious of it.

CHAPTER XV.

The Castle of Happiness.

"You sleep soundly, my friend," Dr. Starva was looking down at me with grim intention.

It was not yet dawn. His immense figure seemed even more huge than it was in this uncertain light. It appeared to threaten, to menace me. And yet I welcomed him, exhorted him, at least he had not made their escape. I looked up at him with cool assurance.

"A light conscience gives deep slumber. Do we start at you?"

"Yes. Your coffee is waiting for you in the salon."

I dressed rapidly. A certain depression would have been natural. The night is the time of soliloquy; the morning came clear thought and prudence. But not so with me. It is true that I detested Dr. Starva. His methods were too gross; his eyes were too closely set together; his mouth too cruel and sensual. I could have wished him out of the game. And yet I believed that was a match for him.

But this woman who tempted and fascinated and whose treachery repelled! This woman who lied and prayed in the same breath!

As I thought of her I was as ashamed, furious and eager as a child who wants to think how eager. I had pledged myself to the cold Diana of my dreams. For her I ran these risks; for her I might be disgraced as a felon. It was her gratitude I coveted; her forgiveness I craved.

And yet for the moment I was seeking the same and the glamour of the other woman—the warm, mysterious creature of diverse moods, whose fantastic chateau held out a promise, not of happiness, indeed, but of the joy of doing.

So as I dressed my spirits were buoyant. The little garden behind half hidden in the mist that came from the lake, was fresh and charming in the morning dew. Patches of flowers, here in purple and purple and blue, opened their eyes to the dawn. I followed mechanically the gravelled paths, geometric and straight, threading the sparkling lawns.

I looked eagerly at the water, the battered fountain choked with refuse, could see no trace of the long, white envelope. It was completely concealed by the leaves.

I found it impossible to reach the little packet from its hiding place. My hostess and her cousin kept too careful an eye on me for that. But it was a solemnly secure hiding place; and frankly I was not sorry to leave the proof of my complicity behind me.



But I Was Not Blind to the
"You really believe that the tireless journey will repay you?"

"Since I am resolved to hear your secrets."

"Oh, snare!" she smiled at me ruefully. "I think I prefer an insincere compliment to an awkward truth."

"Madam, it is not I who made the condition."

"Ah, you are a very cautious friend, monsieur."

"I generally try to look before I leap," I returned with composure. "I was not unwilling that she think it curiously that prompted me to accept the extraordinary invitation given with so little heed to convention. She had hinted that we were to be of mutual use, to each other; but of this I was skeptical. I accepted the invitation precisely in the spirit in which it was given. It would be a great deal to say the least, to be a guest that one might have the opportunity to play the detective. But she and I had placed ourselves beyond the pale of convention. An armed truce—that was the other. An armed truce—that was the word that described our relations, and she had suggested that word.

Dr. Starva entered.

"The voice is said gruffly. "The carriage is waiting."

It was very early, scarcely past five. The night porter, drowsy-eyed and sulky, took us down on the elevator and gave us to the carriage. I was confessing I breathed more freely when the hotel was some miles behind us and we had seen neither Helena Brett nor Captain Forbes.

An Madame de Varrier had warned me, the journey itself was long and dreary; nor did Madame de Varrier and her companion exert themselves much to relieve my monotony.

It was almost dark when she pointed out to me the placid face of her chateau. For the last hour the horses had been strutting up a dusty road winding about the mountainside. Forests

Cool Glance That Measured.

American, madam, are not indifferent to its glamour. But too often the romance of medievalism suggests dishonor."

She looked at me startled, then shrugged her shoulders. "One must take the world as one finds it," she said indifferently.

We were making the last steep ascent to the village. We crossed the dusty road, the driver crunched his long whip; we passed under a dilapidated arch; we were rattling over the cobblestones of a winding street.

It was too dark for me to see much of the quaint beauty of this picturesque village. I caught a glimpse of the timbered Rathaus, its gilt clock proudly conspicuous on the square tower, and of the fountain in front of it, its basin radiant with early flowers. There were little shops dimly lighted; their wares heaped about the doors and windows.

As we passed, women and children dropped delighted courtesies and men took pipe from broadly grinning mouths and doffed their hats. Evidently Madame de Varrier was loved by this simple folk.

"You seem to be very welcome," I said smiling, surprised that the villagers should have greeted her so cordially. "You are the Lady Bountiful to these simple people, I suppose."

She smiled faintly.

"I have been here for two summers. I am the envy of the year in their stupid lives. I try to bring them a little pleasure. When I leave I like to think that they remember me with love."

"Then I should not have said that the glamour of romance is always associated with dishonor," I ventured boldly.

"I can see no glamour in this obscure village," she replied, yawning.

"But the chateau is a part of the village," I persisted, "and these women and children who are so devoted to you."

"Monsieur!" she cried passionately. "You weary me with senseless questions."

I smiled quietly. I wished Madame

at her were on either side. From far below came the impetuous murmur of a stream. High above the forests of pine trees there were herds of cattle. We could hear the faint bleats of the cow-bells. Only rarely had there been any view, but the clear and pure atmosphere told me that the altitude must be considerable. But this Syrian scene suggested nothing of the horrors of a few days ago. The mountains were purple and pink in the dusk, were too far away.

Suddenly there was a turn in the road. Now we had an uninterrupted view of the chateau across a green valley. In this vague light its towers and turrets seemed as unreal and unearthly as a fairy fabric.

At the base of its white walls a tiny village, crouching close to the chateau for protection, found a precarious foothold on the steep hillside. There was a maze of red-tiled roofs, high-gabled and sloping, the tops of each, each pierced by numbers of quaint dormer windows.

A wild river, fed by the turbulent streams of the mountain snow, swung itself in headlong rage down the sloping valley, straight for the chateau, as if to sweep it from its base. Reaching the castle, it spent its fury on the rocks, then, as if loathed of its base, made an abrupt half circle about the base and continued its stormy career, seeking a less powerful foe.

"At last," breathed Madame de Varrier. "Well, my friend, does this promise diversion for us?"

"The village and the castle breathe the spirit of romance," I cried with animation.

"Ah, romance! What if I say to you," she whispered, "that your day of romance has come?"

I glanced toward Dr. Starva whose shaggy beard was nodding. "Even we

do not know definitely that it depended on her playing the part of Circe or Lady Bountiful, whether she armed truce was to continue, or whether there was to be open warfare.

We turned at an abrupt angle from the village as if by magic. We were entering a mere passageway wide enough for the carriage. It was flanked on either side by the houses of the village. Suddenly we were a court-yard large enough to permit a squadron of cavalry to perform its evolutions. A low wall inclosed it. We drove up at the doorway. I was welcomed by Madame de Varrier with exaggerated fervor. We were at her Castle of Happiness.

They looked on me as if a puppet to move only when they pulled the strings. I saw, too, that I had not left in the hotel at Vitznaus the character of Dr. Mortimer Brett.

But Mrs. McKinney was past I determined to know. For as the reason of this deception. I was determined to put an end to this farce.

CHAPTER XVI.

The Death-Mask Again.

One does not expect to find in Switzerland grace and charm in architecture. There are no historic chateaux of Alteshrone, and the simple impression of sheer strength. It was primitive and savage and bare of pretense to beauty as its founder's must have been.

A rather squat tower of immense solidity, the roof steeply sloping, the windows narrow and few, it would have been commonplace and ugly in any other country. But here, on this smaller semicircular tower placed at each angle of the larger one. The effect of this triangular-shaped tower, with its three supporting towers, was that of a solid, unyielding structure. It prepared one for an inferior unique and interesting.

We passed beneath the arched doorway, severe and bare of ornament, into the great hall. The left was the grand stairway, the balustrade of oak massive and dark with age, but admirably carved. At the end of the hall, on the right, a fire of logs was blazing brightly. The hooded mantle, Gothic in design, was also of oak and blackened with the smoke of centuries. A stand of banners stood near the fireplace, but not in the hall. The staircase led to the upper floors. The length of the room above. Tapestries covered the bare walls and filled the spaces between the narrow windows that looked out on the courtyard. The furniture was of the period of the French Renaissance—covered for the most part with stamped leather of gold and dull red.

I could not repress a cry of delight as I entered. I had passed in a moment from the world of commonplace hotels and railway trains into an atmosphere of charm and beauty. For no matter how intricately the connoisseurs in America may gush about their exquisite and beautiful things, he cannot shut out the scream of the railroad train; he cannot transcend across the bridge of medievalism that clings to castle walls. One thing to see the Cluny with a gilt book; it is quite another to find one's self in the Castle of Happiness.

"I like the Castle of Happiness," I said, as Madame de Varrier, pleased at the pleasure I showed.

"It promises its adventures," I replied meaningly.

"I told you that your hour of romance has come. But remember that in these prosaic days a gift of the gods given only to children and to poor old women and lovers, and to the very bold and the very daring. Monsieur, you must have some gift, monsieur, of the nature of all of these. The sincere trust of the child, you must possess. The post's knowledge, the delighted power of make-believe, your father and a lover's ardor, these, too, are gifts of the gods. And last of all, the daring of the hero."

She had whispered these rather comprehensive attributes as I walked across the hall to the staircase, following the servant with my bag.

"A rather large bill, madam," I suggested humorously.

"Oh, but I am serious, very serious. I assure you that it is not sentimental that I am serious."

"I am afraid I must contradict you. The darling of the hero, for instance, even one so optimistic as yourself could scarcely expect that of me."

"I have already," she protested earnestly, "I have already told you that I intend to believe you a coward. Do you believe it yourself? You know you do not. The task I am to give you does not depend on my belief, but on your own. It requires a certain amount of bravery, and a clever brain. But I believe in you. You will not disappoint me. We die in half an hour."

Dr. Starva had stood with his back to the door, his hands on his hips, scowling, as I ascended the stairs.

"You will find, as I have said, that madam is an admirable host. But if the guest is to be quite happy he must also be a generous and a noble man, and when they are offered."

It was not the words so much as the tone that menaced. It emphasized the conviction I already felt. Dr. Starva did not seem to be coming to the case. As I reached the top of the stairs, Madame de Varrier addressed him almost fiercely. I was not blind to his sulken contempt, though evidently the woman was the ruling party here.

FO BE CONTINUED.

Do your work and your worth will take care of itself.

Illinois State News

Recent Happenings of Interest in the Various Cities and Towns.

CHICAGO CENTER OF STORM.—

Five Persons Killed, Many Injured, and Much Property Damaged.

Chicago.—Chicago was the geographical center of a terrific wind and rain storm which attacked northern Illinois, northwestern Indiana and the region of Wisconsin.

The heaviest toll of the storm was collected in Chicago when five persons were killed and fourteen injured. Over the territory within the boundaries affected buildings were destroyed, live stock killed, trees uprooted and minor lake craft beached. The death list in Chicago and a majority of the injuries were recorded on the streets of the total destruction of a building along a boarding house at 65 Perry street. The wind struck the house and carried it along for ten feet before it was crushed. In the ruins five lives were lost and eleven were injured, three seriously. The death was suffocated and crushed by the falling timbers.

WATER ROUTE IS APPROVED.

Business Men Indorse Scheme Which Will Aid Commerce.

Calro.—The report of the review board of the engine corps of the United States army favoring the plan of providing a continuous freight route from Pittsburg to Calro by the opening of canals and locks and the deepening of the lake between the two points to a nine foot stage, was presented at a meeting of the business men of nearly every town along the river. The plan was universally indorsed as the assemblage.

Sanitary District Fight On.

Chicago.—The opening issue in the legislative contest which will decide whether the sanitary district of Chicago is to extend the drainage canal through the city and have the right to develop power at Brandon's rodd has been fired.

The summer armistice by which peace was maintained, between the drainage board and the Economy Light & Power company, of Joliet, a private corporation, was broken by a broadside from John H. Garney, a Joliet lawyer. In a letter which he had written to the members of the legislature Mr. Garney attacks the sanitary district's bill which will be considered at an adjourned session October 1.

In answer to Mr. Garney's letter R. McCormick, president of the drainage board, issued a statement which also will be sent to the members of the legislature and other interested bodies.

Dog Joins Mistress in Death.

Chicago.—Mrs. Lena Mason, 35 years old, a widow, committed suicide by swallowing poison. Her pet dog, licked the poison-sprayed floor of the mistress and died at her side. The little friend behind a pathetic letter to her mother in which she mentioned a lover. The police are searching for a man named C. L. Delpeck.

A letter to the dead woman's mother was found. It was addressed to Mrs. Delpeck, 1121 North La Salle, Chicago. It read as follows:

"Dear Mother: When you read this I will be in another world. Forgive me for what I have done and blame me for what I have done. I am man I love that I have done this, but do not blame him. Good-by. Yours,—Lena."

Horses Killed by Bees.

Bloomington.—A horse—that was the fate of a valuable horse owned by J. W. Shores, farmer, near Lacon. While the horse was quietly grazing a swarm of bees, owned by Mr. Shores, settled on his back. He tried to shake the animal, and moved away. Instead the bees began to sting him. Inside of a minute the horse was driven crazy by the bees and ran amuck among the other animals, leaping out savagely with his heels and biting everything that came near him. For half an hour he ran about the field, finally driven to a water trough. Then paralysis came on gradually and in ten minutes more he was dead.

German Editors to Gather.

Peoria.—The second annual convention of the German-American Press Association of the Northwest and the German-American Press Association of Illinois will be held in Peoria for three days beginning September 20.

Plays with Gun; Shot.

Oak Ridge.—A playing with a shotgun in the home of a friend, then Charlie Crawford accidentally discharged the weapon and the lead entered the head of his twin brother, Jerry. The injury is quite serious, but amputation will not be necessary.

Would Not Pay the Fine.

Peoria.—On his failure to pay a fine imposed for bootlegging, Edward Phillips of Blandville, Ill., was sent to the house of correction. His sentence is indeterminate.

Charged With Operating "Blind Pig."

Kewanee.—Hilipote Delcourt, a Belgian, has been placed under arrest on a charge of operating a "blind pig" in his residence.

Peoria Brewers Before Mayor.

Peoria.—Mayor O'Connor's order to the local brewers to appear at the city hall and straighten up discrepancies that exist between the report of the Indiana Audit company and the claims of the brewers was well obeyed. Receipts to the amount of \$5,000 were shown, thus cutting down the shortage to about \$5,000.

Picks \$600 in Peaches.

Alto Pass.—Peach growers are reaping a rich harvest. One man sold a day's picking for \$600.