

Jacqueline of Golden River

By VICTOR ROUSSEAU

CHAPTER XV—Continued.

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And so I went on and on through the darkness and with each step toward the chateau my resolution grew.

My elbow grated against the tunnel wall. I stopped suddenly toward the center and ran against the wall opposite. The light of the stars was clear in front of me and the cold wind blew upon my face, and I squeezed through into the darkness of the night.

Which I had entered on the same afternoon during the course of my journey toward the chateau.

The little river gurgled at my feet and in front of me I saw a candle flickering in the recess of a bay window.

I would not parley with him. I would shoot him down in his tracks.

As I stepped nearer my feet dislodged a pebble, which rolled with a splash into the bed of the stream.

The man started at my sound, and I saw before me the pale, melancholy features of Philippe Lacroix.

CHAPTER XVI.

Louis d'Espernay.

He uttered an oath and took two steps backward, but I saw that he was unarmed and that he realized his helplessness. He hung his hands above his head and stood motionless, surprised and terror twisting his features into a grimacing grin.

"I have something of importance to say to you, monsieur," he began.

"I can believe that," I answered. "If I had not seen you in the light of the moon, I would not have believed it."

"By God, I did not mean to swear to you, monsieur—listen, monsieur, one moment only," he stammered. "Lower your pistol. You see that I am unarmed."

I lowered it. "Well, say what you have to say," I said to him.

"Lacroix is a devil!" he burst out, with no pretended passion. "I want you to help me, M. Hewlett, and I can help you in a way you do not dream of. M. Hewlett, how much do you think this seignior is worth?"

"Some half a million dollars, perhaps," I answered.

He came close to me and hissed into my ear: "Monsieur, there is more gold in these rocks than anywhere in the world! Look here! Here!"

He stooped down and began tossing pebbles at my feet. But they were pebbles of pure gold and each one of them was as large as the first joint of my thumb. And I had misjudged his courage, I think, for I was avarice and not fear that made him tremble.

"It is everywhere, monsieur!" cried Lacroix. "In this stream, in these hills, too. You can find a morsel of earth anywhere and it will show color when it is washed. We found this place together—"

"You and Lacroix?"

"No! I and—"

He broke off suddenly and eyed me with furtive cunning.

"Yes, yes, monsieur, Lacroix and I. And we two worked here together, with nothing but our pickaxe and shovels and mortars and pestles. Lacroix and I. There was nobody else. It is the richest gold deposit in the world, M. Hewlett, and neither Raoul nor Jean Petit knew the secret."

Lacroix and I. One day I had dug out upon this place save by a miracle of chance, such as brought you here, God put this treasure in these hills, and he did not mean it to be found."

"Do you see what this means?" I shouted. "It means a glorious life!" he cried. "All the wealth in the world—"

"No, it means death!" I answered. "It means that if Lacroix succeeds in killing me he will kill you too. Do you suppose that he will share his blood with you?"

"No, M. Hewlett," answered Lacroix quietly. "That is precisely what I want to say to you. You are a big like Lacroix. I can trust you. Come with me, monsieur. I don't know how you got into the wrong passage, but it is simple—straight ahead. Come with me! I will precede you."

I followed him into the darkness, and very soon heard the sound of the cañon again. And then once more I was standing at the tunnel entrance, under a brilliant moon and the chateau was before me.

I strode steadily across the snow and opened the door in the dark wing, entered the hall and ascended the stairway, took the turn to the right and passed through the little hall. I heard Lacroix's harsh voice within and if I stopped outside it was not in indecision but because I meant to make sure of my man this time.

"I want you, Jacqueline!" I heard him say in a voice which betrayed a throbbing passion. "And I am going to have you. I always have my way. I am not like that weak fool Hewlett."

"It was I sent him away, not you," she cried. "Do you think he was afraid of you?"

Lacroix looked at her in admiration.

"You are a splendid woman, Jacqueline!" he said. "I like the way you defy me by heaven, I do! But you are quite at my mercy. And you are going to yield! You will yield your will to mine!"

"Never!" she cried. "I will fling myself into the lake before that shall happen. Ah, monsieur—her voice took on a pleading tone—"Why will you not take all I have and let us go? We are two helpless people; we shall never betray our secrets. Why must you have me too?"

"Because I love you, Jacqueline," he cried, and now I heard an undertone of passion which I had not suspected in him.

He caught her in his arms. She uttered a little gasping cry and struggled wildly and ineffectually in his grasp.

"I am quite, cold, for I knew that to be the last of his villainies. I entered the room and walked up to the table, my pistol raised, aiming at his head, and I felt my own heart beat steadily and the will to kill rose dominant above every hesitation."

Lacroix spun round. He saw me, and he smiled his sonorous smile. He did not flinch, although he must have seen that my hand was as steady as a rock.

"What, you again, monsieur?" he asked mockingly. "You have come back? You are always coming back, aren't you?"

"I have come back to kill you, Lacroix," I answered, and pulled the trigger six times.

And each time I heard nothing but the click of the hammer.

Then, with his hands below, Simon was upon me, dashing his fists into my face and bearing me down. My puny struggles were as ineffective as though I had been fighting ten men. He held me on the floor and was kneeling on my chest, and in a trice the other two men came dashing along the hall.

Jaqueline was beating with her little fists upon Lacroix's broad back, but he did not even feel the blow.

I heard old Charles Duchaine's piping cries of fear, and then somebody held me by the throat and I was swimming in black water.

"Bring a rope, Raoul!" I heard Simon call.

Half conscious, I knew that I was being lifted. "I felt the rope tighten upon my wrists and limbs; presently

"I saw before me the features of Philippe Lacroix."

I opened my aching eyes to find myself strung like a chicken to two legs of the table and Lacroix was standing over me, perfectly calm.

"Ah, Paul Hewlett, you are a very poor conspirator indeed," he said. "To try to shoot a man with anything but your pistol. Do you remember how affectionately I put my arm round you when you were sitting in that chair writing your ridiculous check? It was then that I took the liberty of extracting the two cartridges. But I did think you would have sense enough to examine your pistol and reload before you returned."

"He picked up a scrap of newspaper from the table and held it before my eyes, deliberately turning up the oil lamp wick that I might read it. I recognized it at once. It was the clipping from the newspaper, descriptive of the murdered man, who was before me."

"You dropped this, my friend, when you piloted out your pocketbook," said Simon. "You are a very poor conspirator, Paul Hewlett. Well?"

"Well?" I repeated mechanically. "What kills him?" he asked.

He shook the paper before my eyes and then he struck me across the face with it.

"Who killed Louis d'Espernay?" he yelled, and Jacqueline screamed in fear.

"I did," I answered after a moment.

CHAPTER XVII.

The Little Dagger.

Lacroix staggered back against the wall and stood there, scowling like a devil. It was evident that my answer had been totally unexpected.

"Did you know this man?" cried Lacroix fiercely to Jacqueline.

"Yes," she replied.

"You lied to shield yourself?"

"No, to shield him," she cried. "Because he was my only friend when I was helpless in a strange city. You did not steal my money, did you, Paul?"

She added, turning swiftly upon me. "No, you have paid me. We were keeping it for me."

"For me?" he yelled. "You lied to shield him?"

I writhed in my bonds. I pulled the heavy table after me as I cried impotently to crawl toward him, sending the chairs flying and all the papers whirling through the air. I cursed Lacroix as blasphemously as he was cursing Jacqueline.

And at the door was the pale face of Philippe Lacroix, who, sending the chairs flying and all the papers whirling through the air. I cursed Lacroix as blasphemously as he was cursing Jacqueline.

There followed a long silence, while Lacroix strode furiously about the room. At last he stopped; he seemed to have made up his mind.

I saw Lacroix looking at me. I would not meet her gaze, but at last her persistence compelled me. Then I saw her glance toward the wall.

The two broadwands hung there within arm's reach, and the broken mirror lay head toward the wall.

There followed a long silence, while Lacroix strode furiously about the room. At last he stopped; he seemed to have made up his mind.

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IMPROVED UNIFORM INTERNATIONAL SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSON

By REV. P. B. FRETWATER, D. D., Teacher of English Bible in the Moody Bible Institute of Chicago, Ill. (Copyright, 1913, Western Newspaper Union)

LESSON FOR JULY 27

CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP.

LESSON TEXT—PHIL. 4:10-20. GOLDEN TEXT—"If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all unrighteousness."

ADDITIONAL MATERIAL—Psalm 133:1-3; Matt. 23:1-12; John 13:34-35; 1 Cor. 12:13; Rom. 12:1-2; 1 John 1:9-10.

PRIMARY TOPIC—Loving Jesus and His People (Acts 2:42-47; 1 John 1:9-10).

JUNIOR TOPIC—Keeping company with God's people (Acts 2:42-47; 1 John 1:9-10).

EXTRACURRICULAR TOPIC—Christian friendship (John 13:34-35; 1 John 1:9-10).

SENIOR AND ADULT TOPIC—Basis and benefits of Christian fellowship.

The Epistle to the Philippians furnishes us with a beautiful example of fellowship between Paul and the church at Philippi. This church on several occasions sent Paul money for his support. The particular ministry of this sort at the hands of Epaphroditus while Paul was a prisoner at Rome was the occasion for this epistle. His words of thanksgiving for this gift is the text of our lesson.

1. Paul's Expression of Appreciation (v. 1).

The Philippians had on several occasions expressed their sympathy and love for Paul by their gifts, but considerable time had elapsed since any gifts had reached him. When their church again notified him, he was made to greatly rejoice. He recognized that the Lord was ministering to him through these people, therefore he rejoiced in the Lord. This was a very tactful way of saying "I thank you."

This gift was gladly received because he was in need and also because it assured him that his old friends still loved him.

11. Paul's Manly Independence (v. 11-13).

Though sincerely appreciating the gift, he would have them know: 1. He was independent of circumstances (v. 11). Through discipline of the Lord he had learned to be content with his lot. He knew that all things work together for good (Rom. 8:28).

2. He was independent of the moment as was the Father, independent of the moment as was the Father, independent of the moment as was the Father.

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19. He was independent of the moment as was the Father, independent of the moment as was the Father, independent of the moment as was the Father.

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