

THE QUEEN'S PAGE

By Cornelia Baker | (Copyright 1905. By the Bobbs-Merrill Company.)

CHAPTER III.—THE OBJECT OF THE VISIT.

PETRONILLA was awakened by a flash of light across her eyes, which caused her suddenly to sit up in bed. There stood her brother holding a light; and with him was Jules holding a tray which he placed in her lap.

"Hist!" he whispered; "there are those who have the eyes of a lynx and the cunning of a fox, and a lady of our acquaintance is not yet gone to her room." Pedro carelessly had left the door open and Aunt Catalina's heels could be heard clicking on the stone floor of the hall. In less time than it takes to tell it Jules had closed the door noiselessly, and, snatching up a fur rug, had thrown it across the crack beneath.

"And now," he said triumphantly, "we can talk as much as we like, for these walls are too thick to allow the sound of our voices to get beyond them. And do not allow your conscience to trouble you regarding your mother. She saw us as we were bringing the tray and she turned away her eyes and said nothing."

Petronilla enjoyed the meal, which was a rich one for a small girl at that hour of the night, but she had never been ill in her life and had no fear of indigestion.

Old Jules, who seemed to be very happy and somewhat excited, kept up a running stream of talk. "Ah, it has been a great evening, a grand occasion!" he cried, rubbing his hands together joyously. "Olympie and I waited at table just as if there had been a score of servants in the kitchen. 'Allow me, Senora, to compliment you upon your cook,' said Monsieur de Beaurepas, not knowing that it was the cook who was at that very moment pouring his wine. But I know how to be grave and dignified, I should hope; and not the flicker of an eyelash betrayed me, tho I was ready to burst with laughter. And monsieur goes on: 'I am told that the young Dauphiness of France, Catherine de Medici, has brought new notions and new dishes from her own country; perhaps your chef is from Paris and has learned some of them.'

"My cook is a Frenchman," said the senora, with a twinkle in her eyes, "but he came to Bearn before the death of Louis the Twelfth. Consequently he knows nothing of France under the present reign."

"Then it can be nothing but inspiration, pure inspiration," said monsieur, helping himself to some more of the pastry. Pretty soon he asked, "Pray, Senora, what do you call these brown, crisp and delicious little cakes?"

"The senora looked helpless at this question, for she did not know, and I said very low, and very respectfully, 'If Monsieur will permit, I can give him the information he desires.' Then he lifted his goblet against the light with the air of one who appreciates good wine and said, 'Go on, my good man.'

"The cakes which are so fortunate as to please Monsieur are called feuillantines," I said. "The cook learned to make them in France in his youth, but never had made them since until inspired to do so by the presence of Monsieur in the chateau."

"Never in my life have I made so neat a speech, and Monsieur de Beaurepas was pleased, for he said, 'When I take my leave, I shall not forget a douceur for the cook and also one for yourself.'"

"But you can not take both, you know, Jules," said Pedro, who had opinions of his own about what was upright and strictly honorable. "There is only one of you, you see."

"You talk like a baby!" cried the old man. "Did I not make two of myself this night? Did I not produce a most delightful repast as cook, and did I not serve it neatly and expertly as waiter? Indeed, I think the douceur should be quadrupled."

"But you have not told me why Monsieur de Beaurepas is here," said Petronilla, putting a stop to the argument. "I suppose he came for some other purpose than to pay compliments to Jules."

"I was waiting for you to ask that question," said her brother, "and I was going to make you guess. Now tell me, who do you think is coming to live with us for a whole year, perhaps more?"

"Somebody to teach us?" she asked, her countenance falling.

"Certainly not; we have that and too much of it from Brother Francois."

"Monsieur de Beaurepas?"

"No, indeed; I should not wonder if a good many people will die, because he has left them to come here. But it is some one from the court."

"Not the Queen of Navarre!" cried his sister, in her excitement dropping one of the celebrated feuillantines.

"Now that is foolish; but I could not expect you to guess, for it is some one of whom you never have heard. It is the young Marquis de Tallanges."

"But why is he coming here?"

"For his health."

"But why must he do that, when Monsieur de Beaurepas can cure everything?" asked Petronilla logically.

"He can cure everything and that is why he proposes to cure the young marquis, which he does by sending him here," interrupted Jules. "You must know that a great physician does not administer medicines with his own hands. He says to his patients, 'Take this, or that,' or 'Go there, or there,' and they obey him. As what the Marquis de Tallanges most needs is large doses of fresh air, pure and sweet from the mountains, he is ordered to come here to get it."

"It will not be pleasant for us to have a sick gentleman in the house; we shall have to be very quiet," grumbled Petronilla.

"But he is such a very young gentleman," said Jules. "He is but a year older than yourselves. You see, it is this way: the young marquis is the second heir who has been born to his house. His older brother was lampered and dosed until he died. When this one was born he was sent away to be reared by a lady in Nerac, who had been a governess in the family and who, being quite old, thought that the main object in life was to keep very warm. She kept him in a room where there always was a fire; she kept all the doors and windows

closed, all the cracks stopped and the walls hung with arras to shut out every breath of air. And the baby was muffled and wrapped from the tips of his toes to the top of his head. The boy lived with her until his parents died, then his grandmother, the old Marquise de Tallanges, took him away and sent for the good Monsieur de Beaurepas. 'What shall be done with him, doctor?' she asks. 'Send him to the mountains and let him stay out of doors as much as possible for a year,' says the doctor.

"Then Monsieur de Beaurepas wrote to Brother Francois and asked if he knew of any one hereabouts who would receive the young marquis, and Brother Francois advised him to come and consult Senora Velasco, who has plenty of room in her chateau and whose own children are pictures of health. He agreed to come, and I fancy he had a pretty large fee for it, too, and Brother Francois met him on the way and brought him here. It would appear that the House of Tallanges is very rich and that they will pay royally for all they receive. But, altho she is glad to lay by a little fortune for her children, it was the thought of being the means of curing a sickly child that moved the heart of the senora.

"The marquis is to have the suite of rooms facing the east for himself and his servant and his grandmother, when she cares to visit him."

"Those rooms!" cried Petronilla. "Why, they are almost bare!"

"All that will be remedied," replied old Jules, "for furniture and hangings will be sent within a very short time. And this arrangement will bring better times to this house and will put many a douceur into the pocket of old Jules."

"I suppose you will try to make the marquis believe there are two of you in order to double your money," remarked Pedro with a grin.

"Of course not," returned the old man in an injured tone. "You will harp for ever on what I said tonight. But if there was any harm in it, may Satan come with the wings of a bat and fly away with me!"

Their visitor left the castle at an early hour on the following morning. Jules accompanied him to the gate, outside of which stood Tomas, holding the doctor's horse.

Monsieur de Beaurepas took two shining pieces of silver from his pocket and dropped them into Jules' willing palm. "One is for yourself, my good man," he said, "and the other is for that very excellent cook."

"A thousand thanks, Monsieur," returned Jules with great gravity. "I shall spend mine for a pair of Sunday hose. The cook, being of a saving turn of mind, will put his by for a rainy day." He unbarred the gate and the visitor passed thru. Carefully closing it again, the old cook, as he walked toward the house, winked at a swallow that was flying overhead.

(To Be Continued.)

JUST ONCE AND NO MORE.

A sexton in a parish church not far from Dumfries, Scotland, says the Baptist Commonwealth, was busy digging a grave one day when a stranger thought he would have some fun with him.

He found it no easy matter to draw old John into conversation, however.

First he tried remarks on the weather, then expressed his admiration on the fine country side, but "Aye" and "No" were all the stranger could get out of him till he asked the question, "Do people die often here?"

John straightened his back for the first time, and, leaning on his spade, looked up in the stranger's face, and solemnly replied: "No; they only dee once."

WHEN THE SUN WAS DROWNED

A GREAT TRAGEDY THAT WORRIED PENNYVILLE TERRIBLY FOR A WHILE.

ONE February a great fog came down all over the Grand Duchy of Bratwurst, and nowhere was it thicker than over the town of Pennyville. The first day and the second day the people did not mind it very much. They merely tied lanterns to the horns of all the cows and put lamps into the chicken houses so the chickens could see to lay eggs, and did other things that would naturally be done by wise people.

When, however, a third day and a fourth day passed and the fog remained as thick as ever, the mayor and the beadle consulted, and then they called in the schoolmaster and ordered him to look into his books and see what should be done in case of fog.

The schoolmaster could not find any books about fog except one that told ship captains what to do. So he explained to all the people what he had read, and advised each citizen to carry a red lantern in his left hand and a green lantern in his right hand to correspond to the starboard and port lights of ships.

"And," said the schoolmaster, "every one must go at half speed, and say 'Toot! Toot! Toot!' every little while, so there will be no collisions. And each person should have a weight on a rope, so that he can come to anchor if he should not be sure about the way."

"Thank goodness!" said all the people. "Now we will be safe until the fog lifts."

So each citizen got the lanterns and the anchor, and for two days the town was full of tooting, while a good many people were late for dinner because they came to anchor at street corners and did not dare to move again till they could attract other citizens by signaling, and thus learn their way.

Still the fog showed no signs of lifting, and so the mayor called a great meeting in the town square, and everybody was there. After the tooting had stopped, the mayor announced that the schoolmaster, the beadle and he had decided that the only way to get rid of the fog was to carry it away, and that all the citizens must get buckets at once and help.

Soon there was a great bucket brigade, and each man filled his pail with fog and then passed it from hand to hand till it reached the ocean, where it was dumped.

The people worked till they were tired, but the fog did not seem to grow less. They relieved each other and kept on, and thus they worked for hours and hours without stopping. At last, after they had dumped more than a hundred thousand buckets full of fog into the ocean, a wind began to blow, and gradually the fog began to get thin.

"Hurrah! Hurrah!" cried the schoolmaster. "We are getting rid of it. Work as fast as you can now, and we will soon have it all cleared away."

The people worked like mad, and at last there was no more fog at all. But it was pitch dark, because night had come on while they were working.

The wise people of Pennyville did not know this, and

everybody began to ask: "But where is the sun? Where is the sun?"

The mayor and the schoolmaster consulted, and then the schoolmaster slapped his forehead and said: "Horror! I know what has happened! Some careless person must have picked up the sun with his bucket and it has been dumped into the sea. Hurry! Hurry! Let us fish for it! Perhaps we can save it before it drowns!"

So all the people hastened to get rakes and fish lines and nets, and they waded into the sea and fished. For a long while they got nothing at all, but the mayor said: "Do not give up! Do not give up! Remember that our schoolmaster knows all about it, and you may yet catch the sun before it drowns."

All night long the people fished and fished, and the women stood on the shore calling:

"Here, sun! Here, nice, good sun! Do not stay in the water." They had a great fire burning, and around it they had towels and blankets getting good and hot, to dry and warm the sun when it was found.

All at once the beadle happened to look seaward. The next moment he dropped the fish-pole with which he had been angling, and he danced ashore waving his hat and shouting:

"There she is! There she is!"

The people looked where he pointed, and then they all stopped fishing and shouted with joy; for away in the east the sun was climbing out of the sea.

"Hurrah! Hurrah!" exclaimed everybody. "The sun is alive! The sun is alive!"

"Well," said the beadle to the schoolmaster, "you did not know so much about the sun as you made us believe. Evidently you did not know that the sun can swim." The schoolmaster laid his finger alongside of his nose, and looked at the beadle with a sneer.

"Of course I knew it," said he. "But I was afraid that its fins might have been injured when it was picked up in the bucket."

"Ah," said the mayor. "The beadle would never have thought of that. What should we do without our schoolmaster?"

"Alas! Alas!" cried all the women of Pennyville. "Suppose our schoolmaster should die! Then what would happen to us?"

"That is true," said the mayor, gloomily. "It is a dreadful thought."

He commenced to sob bitterly, and the beadle sobbed and the citizens all commenced to sob, too, and the schoolmaster cried more bitterly than all the rest.

But all at once the schoolmaster stopped crying and said:

"Never mind, never mind. I shall do my best not to die."

And all the people wiped their tears away, and cried: "Hurrah! Hurrah! We might have known that our schoolmaster would know what to do."



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