

LAFFITTE OF LOUISIANA

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CHAPTER XI.

Soon after midnight, with a south-sou'west wind that was all the "Black Petrel" could desire for a speedy filling of her sails, the ship started northward, to a safe retreat—the island known to Laro and his followers as the "Barra de Hierro."

The day was coming, gray and heavy looking, with a misty cloud bank in the east promising fog later on. Overhead, the pale dawn was extinguishing the stars above the sea that stretched, a dull green floor, in every direction.

Laffitte, asleep in his cabin, was aroused by a knocking upon the door; and, to his instant query, Garonne's voice replied, with a suggestion of satisfaction in its gruff tone, "She is after us, sir, sure enough."

"Where away?" demand Laffitte, when he had admitted the mate, and was making himself ready to go on deck. Laro was already there, for he could be heard shouting to his men. "Heave up the shot, Lopez!" he roared. "Heave them knee-high, I say; for that cursed Britisher shall swallow them by the whole sale if she comes meddling here!"

"Where away, I say?" Laffitte repeated, with a note of sternness, as Garonne, instead of answering, had paused in the doorway, and was looking intently over his shoulder at something in the main cabin.

"Three points on the starboard bow, sir," the mate now hastened to say, with an apologetic gesture. "She is not yet to be made out clearly; but the lookout reports her as very like the man-of-war we left in Fort Royal last night."

When Laffitte came from his room he found Garonne, who had left him a few minutes before, still standing in the outer cabin, and looking around keenly, as if something were amiss.

Laffitte questioned him, and he re-

Both men were silent for a while, as they watched the stranger drawing nearer. Then there came a noticeable softening of Laro's face as he turned suddenly to Laffitte, and laying a hand on his shoulder, said, in a tone which caused the dark eyes to turn from the approaching ship and rest wonderingly upon the speaker, "Jean, lad, do not remember the old days, when we first met at Le Chien Heureux, where I taught thee to sing 'As tides that flow—as winds that blow?' Madre de Dios—but thou wert a boy to make any man's heart hold thee close, as mine has done all these years. And I wonder—aye, oft do I wonder, has my love of thee brought thee to lasting evil? I have been rough with thee, lad, at times; aye, surely I have of late. But my love for thee is the same this day as it has ever been. Never doubt that, Jean, my lad, whatever befalls!"

Startled at the manifestation of such a mood in Laro, Laffitte looked at him with a silence due to amazement.

"I had a strange dream last night, Jean," continued Laro, in a tone curiously unlike his usual one; "a dream I feel is meant as a warning. I have Indian blood in my veins, and so you can better understand the dream, and what it means to me, for it comes only to those of my race whose end is near. But I have no fear, and care nothing as to how my end comes—whether it be by shot, shell, or the sword."

He stood more erect as he said this, and spoke with an air of braggadoceo.

"But somehow it has stirred old times to light, Jean—this dream of mine," he added, relapsing into the odd softness of look and voice.

"Rouse yourself, Laro—what has come to you?" said Laffitte sharply; for he was beginning to wonder if this were anything more than a new phase of maudlin excitement.

thought of it, and give your mind to more important matters, for if we are to reach the Barra de Hierro this night we must put aside such unsubstantial things as dreams, and keep a lookout for the Englishman."

The stranger was surely drawing nearer, and the past twenty minutes had brought her close enough to be made out distinctly. She was, beyond doubt, a man-of-war, and presumably the same that had been the brigantine's neighbor in Fort Royal harbor.

"Have you the gun in prime order, Lopez?" asked Laffitte, who now came and stood beside the old gunner. "Ah, that you have, I see," he added with a smile, after glancing at it, now divested of its tarpaulin covering, "and I look to you for its proper handling, should occasion arise."

Lopez, who stood with his assistants clustered around him, replied with a grin, "Never you fear, my captain, but that the gun and myself will give a proper account of ourselves."

There now came a shout from aloft, the lookout announcing that the approaching vessel was the Englishman and that she seemed to be preparing for action.

"Curse the wind—why won't it hold with us?" muttered Garonne, standing near the group about the gun, and Laffitte noted the gleam of hatred that, for the second, made Ehwah's face fenshish as he glanced at the speaker.

"Wind or no wind," returned Lopez, in a growl, "we are taking our own course, and if yonder gentlemen trouble us, their own fault it will be if burnt fingers they get for meddling."

"Stand by to take in the stunsails!" the voice of Laro broke in. The captain seemed to have recovered fully from his recent mood, and to have forgotten the dream that inspired it.

"Lively, you dogs!" he shouted. "Lively, there, and if that craft wants to overhaul us, let her make the trial."

The "Black Petrel" now changed her course, and the other vessel did the same, this indicating that she intended to give chase, but the brigantine was by far the better sailer, and, had Laro chosen to run southward, he might have escaped.

This, however, would have carried the "Black Petrel" away from her proposed destination, a thing that Laffitte, no less than Laro, scorned to permit, especially as the pursuer was of a nation hated by both of them. They were therefore of one mind in the determination not to submit to personal inconvenience on account of the Englishman.

The latter drew still closer as the day wore on, when a little after noon, the fog bank, which had been promised at sunrise, rolled in over the sea, enveloping pursuer and pursued as in the folds of a heavy blanket.

Laffitte was for keeping straight to their course, but Laro, with sulky persistence, claimed that their better plan would be to anchor. He knew that early the next morning—should the fog lift by sunset—he could reckon upon reaching the channel flowing inward to the Barra de Hierro, and, although its bars and reefs, while familiar to himself and his men, guarded a course the stranger could not follow in safety, he did not care to risk pointing out the way to his island retreat. (To be continued.)

Germany Has a Perfect System for the Collection of Debts.

Writing from Bamberg, Consul W. Bardel calls attention to a German way of doing things.

"The most influential and most important credit agency," he says, "is an association called the Verein Creditreform. This association is composed of the best element of bankers, manufacturers, merchants and tradespeople in over 400 cities in Germany, 175 in Austria-Hungary, 75 in the Netherlands and with branches in every large city of Europe. While these work entirely independent each in its own district, they exchange their experiences in a systematic and honest way.

"The object is to look after delinquent debtors, to inquire carefully into the solidity of business houses and to give verbal or written reports on their standing. A responsible secretary is constantly in charge of each office. His pay depends upon the amount of fees paid by the members. The associations issue cards of introduction for the use of traveling salesmen which enable them to obtain fairly correct reports on the trade they have to visit in any place, no matter how remote from home."

Finger Bowl Unnecessary.

"So you had a good time in the city, Hiram?"

"Oh, bang up, Martha. Why, cousin took me out to dinner and it was great."

"I hope you knew how to conduct yourself properly, Hiram!"

"Oh, yes; but at the tail end of the dinner the waiter brought me a glass bowl full of water."

"Of course, Hiram!"

"But, Martha, I had drunk so much by that time that I couldn't drink a mouthful more!"—Yonkers Statesman.

That One Was Enough.

They had been married six long months and the honeymoon had evidently disappeared for keeps.

"I've only had one wish ungratified since our wedding day," she said.

"And what is that?" he asked in a tone redolent with indifference.

"That I were single again," she replied.

The Soft Inpeachment.

Widow—Do you know that my daughter has set eyes upon you?

Gentleman (flattered)—Has she, really?

Widow—Certainly; only to-day she was saying "That's the sort of a gentleman I should like for my papa."

The Haunted Hall

A ROUMANIAN TALE

By HELENE VACARESCO
Lady-in-Waiting at the Roumanian Court

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"Sultana, you and your brother will have to sleep here and guard the corn," said the young girl's mother.

It was after sunset, and the peasants had all returned to their homes in the neighboring village. The evening was beautiful, and the eastern sky, lit up by delicate clouds shading from the palest pink to violet, made an exquisite picture.

"Dear mother, sleep here," replied Sultana, in an awed whisper, "we know the corn must be guarded, and that the Ziganes (Bohemians) are rapacious and daring, but everyone in the village says that yonder place is haunted. My brothers need have no fear, for the spirits of the dead only show themselves to young girls when, when—"

"When they are pretty," quickly put in her mother. "Have you ever been curious enough to look at yourself in the fountain, or the well? If so, you may have seen frowning at you a very brown small face. You are always frowning, Sultana, and no spirits will show themselves to you. You are not pretty enough."

"Yet Constantin told me—"

"Constantin is in love with you, and covets the house and cattle; he has every reason to declare you are pretty," muttered the old woman between her teeth.

"Well, good night, child, I have no time to spare. You must be tired, so lie down on the straw and rest. In half an hour the moon will rise and keep you company." With these words Sultana's mother lifted a bundle of straw which had fallen from the last wagon, pushed it towards the girl and then took the path that led to the village.

As her footsteps died away, Sultana looked round for her brothers, and, not seeing them, she walked a little way, finally finding them fast asleep near a hedge. Something like pity for her toiling race moved her heart; but peas-



HE IMPLORED HER TO TOUCH HIS BLOOD-STAINED HANDS.

ant girls rarely stop to analyze their feelings and prefer dreams to the reality of thought.

The vast plain stretched around her like a silver sea in the twilight and the gleaming village lights on the hill seemed to be the only sentinels to whose care this vast stretch of land was confided. The ruins of an old castle rose at the foot of the hill, and towards this place Sultana wound her way, wondering to herself if it were really haunted; and if it were really possible that the legends she had so often heard were true.

"How unlikely," she muttered to herself, as she pushed back the yellow muslin handkerchief on her head, and let the night air fan her curly black hair, and caress her small, delicate face. As she stood there, gazing at what had perhaps in ages past been a house of revelry and grandeur, the moon rose. Sultana remembered a story she had heard in her childhood, that the moon burned to ashes all the young girls she met on the plain when she first rose. Thinking of this, she slowly returned to her bed of straw, laid herself down and was soon asleep.

All at once she awoke bewildered and troubled, and saw standing a few paces from her the shadowy form of a woman, who seemed to be beckoning her towards the ruins. At the same moment she became aware that soft, invisible music was playing around her.

She rose quickly and, running to the ruins, found to her great surprise a door she had never noticed before. Opening it, she discovered some steps which led into what had been in ages past an immense banquet hall. At a long table gorgeously decorated with silver candelabra and laden with exquisite fruit and flowers sat about a hundred lords and ladies. That this was a bridal party Sultana understood at once. It also struck her that she was invisible to all the company, with the exception of a handsome youth, who wore a white satin costume and a long, dark green velvet cloak.

Never in her wildest imagination had Sultana seen a face so distinguished and handsome as this youth's who seemed to watch her with imploring eyes. A beautiful woman sat opposite him. Her rich dress was also white and glistening with diamonds. Thrown over the back of her chair was a brown mantle, similar to that worn by the youth. The music had stopped on her entering the hall and a deep silence ensued. Sultana's eyes followed the young man's movements, and with a pang of disappointment and jealousy

she discovered that he was the bridegroom and the lady opposite his bride. Yet he took no notice of her and his gaze was fixed on Sultana with a look full of love and reverence. Sultana trembled with expectation and excitement. Would he not speak to her or bid the servants question her as to her intrusion and desires?

But he said nothing, and Sultana was beginning to feel weary of the unchanging spectacle and the silence of the dazzling company, when suddenly the strains of music were again heard, wild, weird music, which seemed as if it would rend the violins. At the same moment a strong smell of roses pervaded the room and the guests all rose with animated and uneasy gestures, pushing their chairs aside. The bridegroom was the first to rise. He lifted his glass and seemed about to drink when suddenly he threw it violently to the ground, and, seizing a knife, flung it into the bosom of his bride. The girl fell back with a scream, and horror-stricken Sultana watched her life blood oozing down her white satin gown. In haste the youth rushed across the table, smeared his hands in the warm blood and to Sultana's terror approached her with a humble and beseeching air, showing her by his gestures that he was begging of her to touch his blood-stained hands with hers. Sultana, almost beside herself with fright, tried to rush out of the hall, but all the assembly gathered round her, and, falling on their knees, showed by signs that they were imploring her to fulfill the young man's request.

When Sultana returned to her mother's house at dawn the old woman stood aghast at her scared face. "The full moon has done you some harm after all. How your hands burn. You must come to bed at once." For some days Sultana remained unconscious; then delirium seized her. She raved continually about the unknown youth and the scene which had taken place in the haunted castle.

"She has gone mad," said the neighbors to each other, "as one by one they came to inquire and saw the poor girl throwing her arms over her head or hiding her face in her hands and crying bitterly."

Yet Sultana recovered. She never attended to what was uppermost in her thoughts. Soon after she had regained her usual health she resolved to question an old witch, who was supposed to be well versed in magic of all kinds. Having entered her miserable little hut, which was filled with all kinds of curious looking objects, she sat down on a low stool before the fire and said: "I am told you possess powers unusual to most people. I have, therefore, come to ask you to tell me all you know about the haunted castle lying at the foot of our village. If you do not know its history, can you not by your magic spells find it out?"

The old witch answered: "I know its history and will tell it you. Three hundred years ago the son of a mighty hoyard (Roumanian chief) who inhabited the castle fell in love with a beautiful peasant girl. His parents, of course, opposed the marriage and betrothed the unhappy youth to the daughter of another hoyard, who was immensely wealthy and powerful. The poor peasant girl poisoned herself before the marriage took place. On the very eve of the ceremony the youth entreated his fiancée to release him from his engagement. She was a bad and heartless woman, who laughed in his face, and taunted him, telling him that she was quite content to possess his riches without possessing his heart. And then at a large dinner given in honor of the bride—"

"Stop! I know the rest; he stabbed her."

"I see you have heard the tale before," said the witch. "Do you also know that the wretched souls of these people who died so long ago return by night and haunt the castle hall, where they are bound to go through the terrible scene continually until some living girl, who resembles the girl the youth loved, will consent to touch the young man's blood-stained hands? This is the only means of lifting his heavy curse and frightful punishment. It is likely to last forever, as he will never find a human being capable of such a sacrifice, as the instant she touches his blood-stained hands she must die."

A week after this conversation had taken place, Sultana was found dead in the hall of the ruined castle and carried tenderly by her people to her home. All who saw her were struck by the peaceful and happy look on her face, and a few days later, at her funeral, the astonished peasants noticed the presence of a tall and extremely handsome youth, wrapped in a long black cloak, who spoke to no one, but lingered by the grave after all the others had left.

The priest, whose cottage overlooked the cemetery, related that he saw the mysterious youth lie down on the freshly filled grave and slowly sink into the earth that covered Sultana.

Underground River Connects Lakes.

News of the discovery of a big underground river at Nelles Corners, Haldimand county, Ont., has been received. While men were drilling for natural gas they struck the river 500 feet down in the ground. The discovery was made when the drill suddenly dropped a distance of 30 feet. When drawn out it was wet. The rush of water could be heard when the men put their ears to the hole. Water was pumped out, and with it came some fish. Residents of the district believe it is a great channel connecting Lake Erie with Ontario. Its discovery is believed to explain why all the wells around there went dry. No one could say which way the river is running. Considerable excitement prevails as the result of the discovery.

SCIENCE AND THE MEDIUMS

Facts Once Held to Be Miracles, But Conceded by Modern Thought.

Spiritualism is the successor of the mediaeval occultism and of the older magic. To-day science, without accepting its manifestations, studies them; and in these troubled waters almost all the facts upon which the new metaphysics is founded have been fished up. Like magnetism, says Vance Thompson in Everybody's, it has drawn the attention of physicians to the phenomena of induced sleep and has given many of the data for the study of hypnosis and suggestion. The mediums, who believe, like the ancient pythoneesses, that they are possessed by foreign spirits, have served for the study of the change of personality and telepathy. And it has shown that the prodigies, diabolic and divine, recorded in all early religions were not so fabulous as the critical fancied.

At all events science admits that there is a force—call it psychic as Crookes does, neuric with Baretz, vital with Baraduc, or the odic force of Reichenbach—a force which can be measured and described, which leaves its mark on the photographic plates, which emanates from every living being, which acts at a distance, which saves or destroys. Plato knew it. Great wizards like Cardan made use of it. The charitans like Cagliostro blundered upon it. The scientists have the last word.

What definite facts has science acquired? The change of personality; that is classic now. The evidence for telepathy is indubitable. That may seem a bold statement; it is a commonplace for those who are in touch with the latest experiments of the metaphysic clinics. Only a few years ago—before Pasteur came—it would have been deemed sheer idiocy to talk of studying typhoid fever or cholera or erysipelas in a laboratory. Telepathy is an acquired certainty—as much as Harvey's theory of the circulation of the blood, which three academies of physicians declared impossible.

And the explanation of the strange phenomena: Are they hints and intimations from another world—the intervention of spirits of the dead, of angels or demons? This is the opinion held by almost all the sects of the occult, those who worship in the hundred and one little religions of mysticism. Science does not go quite so far. It declares:

1. There exist in nature certain unknown forces capable of acting of matter.

(This covers all the objective phenomena of metaphysics, such as the transport of bodies from one place to another, luminosity, etc.)

2. We possess other means of knowing than those of reason or the senses.

(This applies to the subjective phenomena of metaphysics, including telepathy, second sight, clairvoyance.)

GENESIS OF SALLY LUNN.

This Was a Toothsome Delicacy Popular a Century or More Ago.

How many of our readers know the excellences of a Sally Lunn? The world whirls round so fast that it is possible not one in a hundred could tell what a Sally Lunn is, says London Modern Society. The genesis of this toothsome delicacy is to be found in Edinburgh society a hundred years ago. It was before railways had made London the capital of Britain—in the days when Scotch peers and gentlemen had their town houses in Edinburgh and when Edinburgh could offer society second to none in distinction and chic.

It was when the new regiment of Fencibles, raised by Lord Breadalbane at the end of the eighteenth century, was turning the heads of Edinburgh belles that the custom of giving tea parties became the fashion. Prince Leopold, widower of Princess Charlotte of Wales, loitered in Edinburgh on his way south from a visit to Taymouth castle, and many of the principal hostesses of the city fought for the honor of entertaining him to tea. Miss Sarah Lowndes, "a lady of the first fashion," then invented the cake called afterward by her name, "Sally Lowndes," a name which slipped easily into the "Sally Lunn" known to this day to north country pastry cooks. Soon afterward Miss Sally married and a daughter of hers became the wife of Maj. Dallas-Yorke of Walmgate, Yorkshire, the mother of the present duchess of Portland. We have never inquired if the ducal tea tables at Welbeck or at Grosvenor square are furnished with the excellent and fluffy dainty so nearly linked with the ancestress of her grace.

Busy Young King.

Alfonso, the young king of Spain, leads a busy life, made up of work, and study, and sport—such a life as any young man might lead. And that is what has endeared him to his people. In no monarchy was the king's majesty more hedged about with ceremony. The young king has broken it all down. His ancestors gloomed behind the curtained windows of the palace. He has gone to the people. He is part of the national life. And his frank and boyish good fellowship has done more to make the monarchy safe than "all the king's horses and all the king's men."

Notorious Name.

In the early part of the last century a firm of contractors named Jerry Bros. carried on business in Liverpool, and earned an unpleasant notoriety by putting up rapidly-built, showy but ill-constructed houses, so that their name eventually became general for such builders and such work in all parts of the world.



Garonne growled something under his breath.

plied that when entering the former's cabin he had seen the Indian, Ehwah, glide from that of Laro, and disappear hastily, as though not wishing to be observed.

Laffitte laughed lightly.

"If he was in there while you were knocking at my door, Garonne, he would scarcely, unless he has suddenly become deaf, fail to realize that he would surely be seen coming out. What cause for suspicion can lie in his coming here? You know well that he is in the habit of doing so, and that Captain Laro permits it."

Garonne growled something under his breath—doubtless, profanity; but this was suppressed, as Laffitte seldom failed to emphasize his disapproval of such language in his presence.

"Have you a positive reason for suspecting anything wrong from Ehwah's being here now?" he demanded sternly.

"Only that he has not been coming about here of late," said Garonne sulkily.

"Has he been forbidden to do so?" was Laffitte's next question, and Garonne admitted that he had not.

Then Laffitte, dismissing the subject, went above, followed by the mate, who, as the former had long known, was about the only man among his followers who had, in secret, but little liking for him.

The sun had lifted above the horizon, but its rays were dulled by the low-lying cloudiness stretching away across the zenith from end to end, as would a gray wall. To the southward the sky was clear, and defined against it like a phantom ship that seemed to be sailing toward the "Black Petrel" was a large craft, which, growing more and more distinct, appeared to have fresher wind than that now partially filling the brigantine's sails.

Laro, standing beside Laffitte, as they both watched her, muttered a curse.

"She is getting the benefit of what we have had and left, in the way of breeze. But we'll trust the devil to foul her hereabouts, and help us to better wind farther along, although I am of half a mind to let her catch us, if that be her intention, and then, if she tarries to ask impertinent questions, give her a good dose of iron."

"Better keep away and mind our own matters, unless she has the wish, and gets the chance, to interfere with us," replied Laffitte, moodily.

But Laro remained silent, his eyes fixed upon the deck.

"What is this dream which seems to have affected you so powerfully?" presently inquired Laffitte, thinking that perhaps it might be better to humor Laro than to show disrespect for his peculiar mood.

The broad brown hand went again to rest upon Laffitte's shoulder, and Laro looked off over the sea with eyes which seemed for the moment to have lost all interest in the approaching vessel.

"It was this, my lad: I sat at a table heaped with fruits and wines, and about me was such as makes the heart of man glad to be alive. But suddenly there came a flash of lightning, with an awful peal of thunder, and, looking out upon a portico near me, I saw a form clad like an Indian warrior riding a horse black as the gates of hell. Straight up the steps of the portico the steed galloped, and into the room, where it circled around the table, until the warrior drew his bow and let fly an arrow that struck my glass, and sent the wine, blood-red, pouring over me and my guests in a stream which grew, and grew, until it was a red river flowing over the table, and washing it away, and I awoke, shivering, to see Ehwah standing by my bunk, telling me that a craft was in sight which looked like the Englishman."

Laro's bearing, so changed and softened, no less than the dream he had related, made Laffitte feel at a loss what to say. He could not deny that the recital had affected him strangely, seeming to bring him into closer touch with Laro as the latter added, "I have always known that to dream of this Indian and his black horse means death to one of my family."

The pressure of his hand grew heavier upon Laffitte's shoulder, and he raised his eyes, now filled with a softer expression than the young man had ever seen them hold.

"Jean, my lad, if anything happens to me, you will always take care of Lazalle? Even though you have no love to give the girl, you will let no harm come to her?"

The sound of her name brought Laffitte to his proper senses, and the perplexed look vanished from his face as he exclaimed, "Mon dieu, Laro—what nonsense are you talking? You, to be so upset by a mere dream! Drop all