



# THE MAIDS OF PARADISE

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"Maids-at-Arms," etc.

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(Continued from last week)  
SYNOPSIS.

**CHAPTER I**—Scarlett, an American soldier of fortune in the employ of the French Imperial Police at the outbreak of the Franco-Prussian war, is ordered to arrest John Buckhurst, a leader of the Communists, who is suspected of having stolen the French crown jewels. While searching for Buckhurst, Scarlett is ordered to arrest Countess de Vassart and her group of socialists and escort them to the Belgian border.

**CHAPTER II**—Scarlett finds Sylvia Elven of the Odeon disguised as a peasant and carries her to La Trappe, where the Countess and her friends are assembled.

**CHAPTER III**—All are arrested. The Countess saves Scarlett from a fatal fall from the roof of the house. He denounces Buckhurst as the leader of the Reds and the Countess conducts him to where Buckhurst is secreted.

For answer she stepped across the hall and laid one hand against the blank wall. Then, reaching upward, she drew from between the ponderous blocks little strips of steel, colored like mortar, dropping them to the stone floor, where they rang out. When she had flung away the last one, she stepped back and set her frail shoulder to the wall; instantly a mass of stone swung silently on an unseen pivot, a yellow light streamed out, and there was a tiny chamber, illuminated by a lamp, and a man just rising from his chair.

### CHAPTER IV.

#### Prisoners.

"This is Monsieur Scarlett, of the Imperial Military Police," said the Countess, in a clear voice, ending with that slightly rising inflection which demands an answer.

"Mr. Buckhurst," I said, "I am an Inspector of Military Police, and I cannot begin to tell you what a pleasure this meeting is to me."

I stepped forward and placed him formally under arrest, touching him slightly on the shoulder. He did not move a muscle, yet, beneath the thin cloth of his coat I could divine a frame of iron. "You have not asked me why I arrest you," I suggested.

"and, monsieur, I must ask you to step back from that table—quick!—don't move!—not one finger!"

For a second he looked into the barrel of my pistol with concentrated composure, then glanced at the table-drawer which he had jerked open. A revolver lay shining among the litter of glass tubes and papers in the drawer.

The Countess, too, saw the revolver and turned an astonished face to my prisoner.

"Who brought you here?" asked Buckhurst quietly of me.

"I did," said the Countess, her voice almost breaking.

Delmont dragged the young Countess to the shelter of an elm; Sylvia Elven and Tavernier followed; Buckhurst ran to the carriage and leaped in.

"No resistance!" bellowed Delmont, as Bazard snatched up the pistol I had taken from Buckhurst. But the invalid had already fired at a horse-man, and had gone down under the merciless hoofs with a lance through his face.

My first impulse was to shoot Buckhurst, and I started for him. I ran past Bazard's trampled body and fired at an Uhlan who had seized the horses which were attached to the carriage where Buckhurst sat.

Again I ran around the wagon, through a clump of syringa bushes, and up the stone steps to the terrace, and after me galloped one of those incomparable Cossack riders—an Uhlan, lance in rest, setting his wiry little horse to the stone steps with a loud "Hourra!"

It was too steep a grade for the gallant horse. I flung my pistol in the animal's face and the poor brute reared straight up and fell backward, rolling over and over with his unfortunate rider, and falling with a tremendous splash into the pool below.

"In God's name stop that!" roared Delmont from below. "Give up, Scarlett! They mean us no harm!"

"Come down, Hussar!" called an officer. "We respect your uniform."

"Will you parley?" I asked, listening intently for the gallop of my promised gendarmes. If I could only gain time and save Buckhurst.

"Foulez-vous fous rendre? Out on non?" shouted the officer, in his terrible French.

"Eh bien, . . . non!" I cried, and ran for the chateau. As I gained the doorway they shot at me, but I only fled the faster, springing up the stairway. Here I stood, saber in hand, ready to stop the first man.

Up the stairs rushed three Uhlan sabers shining in the dim light from the window behind me; I laid my forefinger flat on the blade of my saber and shortened my arm for a thrust—then there came a blinding flash, a roar, and I was down, trying to rise, until a clinched fist struck me in the face and I fell flat on my back.

leaning over me; a third came up, holding a basin. There was an odor of carbolic in the air.

The man with the basin made a horrid grimace when he caught my eye; his face was a curious golden yellow, his eyes jet black, and at first I took him for a fever phantom.

Then my bewildered eyes fastened on his scarlet fez, pulled down over his left ear, the sky-blue Zouave jacket, with its bright-yellow arabesque, the canvas breeches, leggings laced close over the thin shins and ankles of an Arab. And I knew him for a soldier of African rifleman, one of those brave children of the desert whom we called "Turcos," and whose faith in the greatness of France had never faltered since the first blue battalion of Africa was formed under the eagles of the First Empire.

"Hullo, Mustapha!" I said, faintly; "what are they doing to me now?"

The Turco's golden-bronze visage relaxed; he saluted me.

"Macache sabir," he said; "they picked a bullet from your spine, my inspector."

An officer in the uniform of a staff surgeon came around the table where I was lying.

"A millimeter farther and that bullet would have cracked your spine. Remember that and keep off your feet. Ouf! The cannon are tuning up!"

As I lay there on my long, cushioned chair, burning with that insatiable thirst which, to thoroughly appreciate, one must be wounded, the door opened and a Turco soldier came into the room and advanced toward me on tiptoe.

I beckoned him, and the tall, bronzed fellow came up, smiling, showing his snowy, pointed teeth under a crisp beard.

"Water, Mustapha," I motioned with stiffened lips, and the good fellow unslung his blue water-bottle and set it to my burning mouth.

"Do you know, Madame la Comtesse?"

"I ought to," she said, faintly amused. "I was born in this room. It was to this house that I desired to come before—my exile."

After a silence I said, "I wish I could look out of the window."

She went to the window and folded up the varnished blinds.

"How dreadful the cannonade is growing," she said. "Wait! don't think of moving! I will push you close to the window, where you can see."

Lying there, watching the slow shadows crawling out over the sidewalk, I had been for some minutes thinking of my friend Mr. Buckhurst, when I heard the young Countess stirring in the room behind me.

"You are not going to be a cripple?" she said, as I turned my head.

"Oh no, indeed!" said I.

"Nor die!" she added, seriously.

"How could a man die with an angel straight from heaven to guard him? Pardon, I am only grateful, not impatient!"

"Are you English, Monsieur Scarlett?" she asked quietly.

was a Turco, his jacket in rags, his canvas breeches covered with mud.

Again the lieutenant came to the loop-hole and glanced out, then shook his head, motioning the soldiers back.

"It is too high and the arc of fire too limited," he said, shortly. "Detail four men to hold the stairs, ten men and a sergeant in the room below, and you'd better take your prisoners down there. Bayonet that Turco tiger if he shows his teeth again. March!"

As the prisoners fled out I turned once more and thought I recognized Salah Ben Ahmed in the disheveled, so disfigured and tattered the soldier appeared.

Under the windows the flat, high-pitched drums began to rattle; deep voices shouted; the whole street undulated with masses of gray-and-black uniforms, moving forward through the smoke. A superb regimental band began to play; the troops broke out into heavy cheering.

"Vorwärts! Vorwärts!" came the steady commands.

"The invasion has begun," I said. Her face was expressionless, save for the brightness of her eyes.

Suddenly a company of pioneers arrived on the double-quick, halted, fell out, and began to break down the locked doors of the houses on either side of the street. At the same time Prussian infantry came hurrying past, dragging behind them dozens of vehicles, long hay-wagons, gardeners' carts, heavy wheelbarrows, even a dingy private carriage, with tarnished lamps, rocking crazily on rusty springs.

The soldiers wheeled these wagons into a double line, forming a complete chain across the street, where the Turcos had commenced to dig their ditch and breastworks—a barricade high enough to check a charge, and cunningly arranged, too, for the wooden abatis could not be seen from the eastern end of the street, where a charge of French infantry or cavalry must enter Morsbronn if it entered at all.

"Something is going to happen," I said, as a group of smartly uniformed officers appeared on the roof of the opposite house and hastily scrambled to the ridgepole.

A colonel of infantry, splendidly mounted, drew bridle under our loop-hole and looked up at the officers on the roof across the way.

head against the solid stone, while the blank, throbbing seconds passed. The Countess stood there, shocked and breathless. I saw her sleeve in rage, and the snowy skin all bruised beneath.

What irony lurks in blind chance that I should owe this woman my life—this woman whose home I had come to confiscate, whose friends I had arrested, who herself was now my prisoner, destined to the shame of exile!

Perhaps she divined my thoughts—I do not know—but she turned her troubled eyes to the arched window, where a painted saint imbedded in golden glass knelt and beat his breast with two heavy stones.

"Madame," I said slowly, "your courage and your goodness to me have made my task a heavy one. Can I lighten it for you in any manner?"

She turned towards me, almost timidly. "Could I go to Morsbronn before I cross the frontier? I have a house there; there are a few things I would like to take—"

She stopped short, seeing, doubtless, the pain of refusal in my face. "But, after all, it does not matter. I suppose your orders are formal?"

"Yes, madame."

"Then it is a matter of honor?"

"A soldier is always on his honor; a soldier's daughter will understand that."

"I understand," she said.

We had stopped, by a mutual impulse, at the head of the stone stairway.

"Why do you shelter such a man as John Buckhurst?" I asked, abruptly.

She raised her eyes to me with perfect composure.

"Why do you ask?"

"Because I have come here from Paris to arrest him."

She bent her head thoughtfully and laid the tips of her fingers on the sculptured balustrade.

"To me," she said, "there's no such thing as a political crime."



She Filled My Cap With River Water.

Prussian captain shouted: "Stop that bell! Shoot every civilian in the house!"

On the battlements of the south wing a red radiance grew brighter; somebody had thrown wood into the iron basket of the ancient beacon, and set fire to it.

"That teaches me a lesson!" bawled the enraged Rittmeister, shaking his fist up at the brightening alarm signal.

CHAPTER V.  
The Innkeepers.  
When I became conscious again I was lying on a table. Two men were



"Look There!" She Cried in Terror.