

LAZARRE

BY MARY HARTWELL CATHERWOOD

Tom Hall
his mark

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BOOK II—WANDERING—Continued. VII.

They spoke of fruit and cattle. Neither dared mention the name of any human companion associated with the past.

I took opportunity to ask Count de Chaumont if her lands were recovered. A baffled look troubled his face.

"The emperor will see her tonight," he answered. "It is impossible to say what can be done until the emperor sees her."

"Is there any truth in the story that he will marry her to the officer who holds her estate?"

The count frowned.

"No—no! That's impossible."

"Will the officer sell his rights if Madame de Ferrier's are not acknowledged?"

"I have thought of that. And I want to consult the marquis."

When he had a chance to draw the marquis aside, I could speak to Madame de Ferrier without being overheard; though my time might be short. She stood between the curtains, and the man in uniform had left his place to me.

"Well, I am here," I said.

"And I am glad," she answered.

"I am here because I love you."

She held a fold of the curtain in her hand and looked down at it; then up at me.

"You must not say that again."

"Why?"

"You know why."

"I do not."

"Remember who you are."

"I am your lover."

She looked quickly around the burning drawing-room, and leaped cautiously nearer.

"You are my sovereign."

"I believe that, Eagle. But it does not follow that I shall ever reign."

"Are you safe here? Napoleon Bonaparte has spies."

"But he has regard also for old aristocrats like the Marquis du Plessy."

"Yet remember what he did to the Duke d'Angoulême. A Bourbon prince is not allowed in France."

"How many people consider me a Bourbon prince? I told you why I am here. Fortune has wonderfully helped me since I came to France. Lazarre, the dauphin from the Indian camps, brazenly asks you to marry him, Eagle!"

Her face blanched white, but she laughed.

"No de Ferrier ever took a base advantage of royal favor. Don't you think this is a strange conversation in a drawing-room of the Empire? I hated myself for being here—until you came in."

"Eagle, have you forgotten our supper on the island?"

"Yes, sire." She scarcely breathed the word.

"My unannounced title is Lazarre. And I suppose you have forgotten the fog and the mountain, too?"

"Yes."

"Lazarre?"

"Yes, Lazarre."

"You love me? You shall love me!"

"As a de Ferrier should; no farther!"

Her lifted chin expressed a strength I could not combat. The slight, dark-haired girl drew me as if my spirit were a stream, and she the ocean into which it must flow. Darkness like that of St. Pelagie dropped over the brilliant room. I was nothing after all but a palpitating boy, venturing because he must venture. Light seemed to strike through her blood, however, endowing her with a splendid gall.

"I am going," I determined that moment, "to Mittau."

The adorable curve of her eyelids, unlike any other eyelids I ever saw, was lost to me, for her eyes flew wide open.

"To—"

She looked around and hesitated to pronounce the name of the Count of Provence.

"Yes. I am going to find some one who belongs to me."

"You have the marquis for a friend."

"And I have also Skenedonk, and our tribe, for my friends. But there is no one who understands that a man must have some love."

"Consult Marquis du Plessy about going to Mittau. It may not be wise. And a war is threatened on the frontier."

"I will consult him, of course. But I am going."

"Lazarre, there were ladies on the ship who cursed and swore, and men who were drunk the greater part of the voyage. I was brought up in the old-fashioned way by the St. Michaels, so I know nothing of present customs. But it seems to me our times are rude and wicked. And you, just awake to the world, have yet the innocence of that little boy who sank into the strange and long slumber. If you changed I think I could not bear it!"

"I will not change."

A stir which must have been widening through the house as a ripple widens on a lake, struck us, and turned our faces with all others to a man who stood in front of the chimney. He was not large in person, but as an individual his presence was massive—penetrating. I could have topped him by head and

shoulders; yet without mastery. He took snuff as he slightly bowed in every direction, shut the lid with a snap, and fidgeted as if impatient to be gone. He had a mouth of wonderful beauty and expression, and his eyes were more alive than the eyes of any other man in the assembly. I felt his gigantic force as his head dipped forward and he glanced about under his brows.

"There is the emperor," De Chaumont told Eagle; and I thought he made indignant haste to return and hale her away before Napoleon.

The greatest soldier in Europe passed from one person to another with the air of doing his duty and getting rid of it. Presently he raised his voice, speaking to Madame de Ferrier so that all in the room might hear.

"Madame, I am pleased to see that you wear leno. I do not like those English muslins, sold at the price of their weight in gold, and which do not look half as well as beautiful white leno. Wear leno, cambric, or silk, ladies, and then my manufactures will flourish."

I wondered if he would remember the face of the man pushed against his wheel and called an assassin, when the Marquis du Plessy named me to him as the citizen Lazarre.

"You are a lucky man, Citizen Lazarre, to gain the marquis for your friend. I have been trying a number of years to make him mine."

"All Frenchmen are the friends of Napoleon," the marquis said to me.

I spoke directly to the sovereign, thereby violating etiquette, my friend told me afterward, laughing; and Bonaparte was a stickler for precedent.

"But all Frenchmen," I could not help reminding the man in power, "are not faithful friends."

He gave me a sharp look as he passed on, and repeated what I afterward learned was one of his favorite maxims: "A faithful friend is the true image."

VIII.

"MUST you go to Mittau?" the Marquis du Plessy said when I told him what I intended to do. "It is a long, expensive post journey, and part of the way you may not be able to post. Riga, on the gulf beyond Mittau, is a fine old town of pointed gables and high stone houses. But when I was in Mittau I found it a mere winter camp of Russian nobles. The houses are low, one-story structures. There is but one castle, and in that his Royal Highness the Count of Provence holds mimic court."

We were riding to Versailles, and our horses almost touched sides as my friend put his hand on my shoulder.

"Don't go, Lazarre. You will not be welcome there."

"I must go, whether I am welcome or not."

"But I may not last until you come back."

"You will last two months. Can't I post to Mittau and back in two months?"

"God knows."

I looked at him drooping forward in the saddle, and said:

"If you need me I will stay, and think no more about seeing those of my own blood."

"I do need you; but you shall not stay. You shall go to Mittau in my own post-carriage. It will bring you back sooner."

But his post-carriage I could not accept. The venture to Mittau, its wear and tear and waste, were my own; and I promised to return with all speed. I could have undertaken the road afoot, driven by the necessity I felt.

"The Duchess of Angoulême is a good girl," said the marquis, following the line of my thoughts. "She has devoted herself to her uncle and her husband. When the late czar withdrew his pension, and turned the whole mimic court out of Mittau, she went with her uncle, and even waded the snow with him when they fell into straits. Diamonds given to her by her grandmother, the Empress Maria Theresa, she sold for his support. But the new czar reinstated them; and though they live less pretentiously at Mittau in these days, they still have their priest and almoner, the Duke of Guiche, and other courtiers hanging upon them. My boy, can you make a court-bow and walk backwards? You must practice before going into Russia."

"Wouldn't it be better," I said, "for those who know how, to practice the accomplishment before me?"

"Imagine the Count of Provence stepping down from playing royalty to do that!" my friend laughed.

"I don't know why he shouldn't, since he knows I am alive. He has sent money every year for my support."

"An established custom, Lazarre, gains strength every day it is continued. You see how hard it is to overturn an existing system, because men have to undo the work they have been doing perhaps for a thousand years. Time gives enormous stability. Monsieur, the Count of Provence, has been practicing royalty since word went out that his nephew had died in the Temple. It will be no easy matter to convince him you are fit to play king in his stead."

"This did not disturb me, however. I thought more of my sister. And I thought of vast stretches across the center of Europe. The Indian stirred in me, as it always did stir, when the woman I wanted was withdrawn from me. I could not tell my friend, or any man, about Madame de Ferrier. This story of my life is not to be printed until I

am gone from the world. Otherwise the things set down so freely would remain buried in myself.

Some beggars started from hovels, running like dogs, holding diseased and crooked-eyed children up for alms, and pleading for God's sake that we would have pity on them. When they disappeared with their coin I asked the marquis if there had always been wretchedness in France.

"There is always wretchedness everywhere," he answered. "Napoleon can turn the world upside down, but he cannot cure the disease of hereditary poverty. I never rode to Versailles without encountering these people."

When we entered the Place d'Armes fronting the palace, desolation worse than that of the beggars faced us. That vast noble pile, unattended and sacked, symbolized the vanished monarchy of France. Doors stood wide. The court was strewn with litter and filth; and grass started rank between the stones where the proudest courtiers in the world had tried. I tried to enter the queen's rooms, but sat on the steps leading to them, holding my head in my hands. It was as impossible as it had been to enter the temple.

The fountains which once made a concert of mist around their lake basin, sat-sfying like music, the marquis said, were dried, and the fountains broken. Millions had been spent upon this domain of kings, and nothing but the summer's natural verdure was left to unown stretches. The foot shrank from sending echoes through empty palace apartments, and from treading the weedy margins of canal and lake.

"I should not have brought you here, Lazarre," said my friend.

"I had to come, monsieur."

We walked through meadow and park to the little palaces called Grand and Petit Trianon, where the intimate life of the royal family had been lived. I looked well at their outer guise, but could not explore them.

The groom held our horses in the street that leads up to the Place d'Armes, and as we sauntered back, I kicked old leaves which had fallen autumn after autumn and banked the path.

I rushed over me again!

I felt my arms go above my head as they did when I sank into the depths of recollection.

"Lazarre! Are you in a fit?" The Marquis du Plessy seized me.

"I remember! I remember! I was kicking the leaves—I was walking with my father and mother—somewhere—somewhere—and something threatened us!"

"It was in the garden of the Tuilleries," said the Marquis du Plessy sternly. "The mob threatened you, and you were going before the National Assembly! I walked behind. I was there to help defend the king."

We stood still until the paroxysmal reading in my head ceased. Then I sat on the grassy roadside trying to smile at the marquis, and shrugging an apology for my weakness. The beauty of the arched trees disappeared, and when next I recognized the world we were moving slowly toward Paris in a heavy carriage, and I was smitten with the conviction that my friend had not eaten the dinner he ordered in the town of Versailles.

I felt ashamed of the weakness which came like an eclipse, and withdrew leaving me in my strength. It ceased to visit me within that year, and has never troubled me at all in later days. Yet, inconsistently, I look back as to the glamour of youth; and though it worked me hurt and shame, I half regret that it is gone.

The more I saw of the Marquis du Plessy the more my slow tenacious heart took hold on him. We went about everywhere together. I think it was his hope to wed me to his company and to Paris, and shove the Mittau venture into an indefinite future; yet he spared no pains in obtaining for me my passports to Courland.

At this time, with cautious, half-reluctant hand, he raised the veil from a phase of life which astonished and revolted me. The painted semblances of women who inhabited a world of sensation had no effect upon me.

"You are wonderfully fresh, Lazarre," the marquis said. "If you were not so big and male I would call you mademoiselle! Did they never sin in the American backwoods?"

Then he took me in his arms like a mother and kissed me, saying, "Dear son and sire, I am worse than your great-grandfather!"

Yet my zest for the gaiety of the old city grew as much as he desired. The golden dome of the Invalides became my bubble of Paris, floating under a sunny sky.

Whenever I went to the hotel which De Chaumont had hired near the Tuilleries, Mme de Ferrier received me kindly, having always with her Mlle. de Chaumont or Miss Chantry, so that we never had a word in private. I thought she might have shown a little feeling in her rebuff, and pondered on her point of view regarding secret rank. De Chaumont, on the other hand, was beneath her in everything but wealth. How might she regard stooping to him?

Miss Chantry was divided between enforced deference and a Saxon necessity

to tell me I would not last. I saw she considered me one of the upstarts of the Empire, singularly favored above her brother, but under my fiery name the French savage she had known in America.

Eagle brought Paul to me, and he toddled across the floor, looked at me wisely, and then climbed my knee.

Doctor Chantry had been living in Paris a life above his dreams of luxury. When occasionally I met my secretary he was about to drive out; or he was returning from De Chaumont's hotel. And there I caught my poor master reciting poems to Annabel, who laughed and yawned, and made faces behind her fan. I am afraid he drew on the marquis' oldest wines, finding indulgence in the house; and he sent extravagant bills to me for gloves and lawn cravats. It was fortunate that De Chaumont took him during my absence. He moved his belongings with positive rapture. The marquis and I both thought it prudent not to publish my journey.

Doctor Chantry went simpering, and abashing himself before the French noble with the complete subservience of a Saxon when a Saxon does become subservient.

"The fool is laughable," said the Marquis du Plessy. "Get rid of him, Lazarre. He is fit for nothing but hanging upon some one who will feed him."

"He is my master," I answered. "I am a fool myself."

"You will come back from Mittau convinced of that, my boy. The wise course is to join yourself to events, and let them draw your chariot. My dislikes say I have temporized with fate. It is true I am not so righteous as to smell to heaven. But two or three facts have been deeply impressed on me. There is nothing more aggressive than the virtue of an ugly, untempered woman; or the determination of a young man to set every wrong thing in the world right. He cannot wait, and take mellow interest in what goes on around him, but must leap into the ring. You could live here with me indefinitely, while the nation has Bonaparte like the measles. When the disease has run its course—we may be able to bring evidence which will make it unnecessary for the Count of Provence to hasten here that France may have a king."

"I want to see my sister, monsieur."

"And lose her and your own cause forever."

But he helped me to hire a strong traveling chase, and stock it with such comforts as it would bear. He also turned my property over to me, recommending that I should not take it into Russia. Half the jewels, at least, I considered the property of the princess in Mittau; but his precaution influenced me to leave three bags of coin in Doctor Chantry's care; for Doctor Chantry was the soul of thrift with his; and to send Skenedonk with the jewel-case to the marquis' bank. The cautious Oneida took counsel of himself and hid it in the chaise. He told me when we were three days out.

It is as true that you are driven to do some things as that you can never entirely free yourself from any life you have lived. That sunny existence in the Faubourg St. Germain, the morning and evening talks with a man who bound me to him as no other man has since bound me, were too dear to leave, even briefly, without wrenching pain. I dreamed nightly of robbers and disaster, of being ignominiously thrust out of Mittau, of seeing a woman whose face was a blur, and who moved backward from me when I called her my sister; of troops marching across and trampling me into the earth as straw. I groaned in spirit. Yet to Mittau I was spurred by the kind of force that seems to press from unseen distances and is as fatal as temperament.

When I paid my last visit at De Chaumont's hotel, and said I was going into the country, Eagle looked concerned, as a de Ferrier should; but she did not turn her head to follow my departure. The game of man and woman was in its most blinding state between us.

There was one, however, who watched me out of sight. The marquis was more agitated than I liked to see him. He took snuff with a constant click of the lid.

The hills of Champagne, green with vines, and white as with an underlay of chalk, rose behind us. We crossed the frontier, and German hills took their places, with a castle topping each. I was at the time of life when interest stretches eagerly toward every object; and though this journey cannot be set down in a journey as long as mine, the novelty—even the risks, mischances, and weariness of continual post travel, come back like an invigorating breath of salt water.

The usual route carried us eastward to Cracow, the old capital of Poland, scattered in ruined grandeur within its brick walls. Beyond it I remember a stronghold of the Middle Ages, called the Fortress of Landskron.

The peasants of this country, men in shirts and drawers of coarse linen, and women with braided hair hanging down under linen veils, stopped their carts as soon as a post-carriage rushed into sight, and bent almost to the earth. At post-houses the servants abased themselves to take me by the heel. In no other country was the spirit of man so broken. Poles of high birth are called the Frenchmen of the north, and we saw fair men and women in sumptuous

polonaises and long robes who appeared luxuriously in their traveling carriages. But stillness and solitude brooded on the land. From Cracow to Warsaw wide reaches of forest darkened the level. Any open circle was belted around the horizon with woods, pines, firs, beech, birch, and small oaks. Few cattle fed on the pastures, and stunted crops of grain ripened in the melancholy light.

From Cracow to Warsaw is a distance of one hundred and thirty leagues, if the postillon lied not, yet on that road we met but two carriages and not more than a dozen carts. Scattering wooden villages, each a line of hovels, appeared at long intervals.

Posthouses were kept by Jews, who fed us in the rooms where their families lived. Milk and eggs they had none to offer us; and their beds were piles of straw on the ground, seldom clean, never untenanted by fleas.

Beggars ran beside us on the wretched roads as neglected as themselves. Where our horses did not labor through sand, the marshy ground was paved with sticks and boughs, or the surface was built up with trunks of trees laid crosswise.

In spacious, ill-paved Warsaw, through which the great Vistula flows, we rested two days. I knelt with agonized thoughts, trying to pray in the Gothic cathedral. We walked past it into the old town, of high houses and narrow streets, like a part of Paris.

In Lithuania the roads were paths winding through forests full of stumps and roots. The carriage hardly squeezed along, and eight little horses attached to it in the Polish way had much ado to draw us. The postillons were young boys in coarse linen, hardy as cattle, who rode bareback league upon league.

Old bridges cracked and sagged when we crossed them. And here the forests rose scorched and black in spots, because the peasants, bound to pay their lords turpentine, fired pines and caught the heated ooze.

Within the proper boundary of Russia our way was no better. There we saw queer projections of boards around trees to keep bears from climbing after the hunters.

The Lithuanian peasants had few wants. Their carts were put together without nails. Their bridles and traces were made of bark. They had no tools but hatches. A sheepskin coat and round felt cap kept a man warm in cold weather. His shoes were made of bark, and his home of logs with pent-house roof.

In houses where travelers slept the candles were laths of deal, about five feet long, stuck into crevices of the wall or hung over tables. Our hosts carried them about, dropping unheeded sparks upon the straw beds.

In Grodno, a town of falling houses and ruined palaces, we rested again before turning directly north.

There my heart began to sink. We had spent four weeks on a comfortless road, working always toward the goal. It was nearly won. A speech of my friend the marquis struck itself out sharply in the northern light.

"You are not the only Fretender, my dear boy. Don't go to Mittau expecting to be hailed as a novelty. At least two peasants have started up claiming to be the prince who did not die in the Temple, and have been cast down again, complaining of the treatment of their dear sister! The Count d'Artois says he would rather saw wood for a living than be king after the English fashion. I would rather be the worthless old fellow I am than be king after the Mittau fashion; especially when his Majesty, Louis XVIII, sees you coming!"

way that the German guest-house spread itself commodiously. Yet its walls were the flimsiest slabs. I heard some animal scratching and whining in the next chamber. On the post-road, however, we had not always a wall betwixt ourselves and the dogs.

The palace in Mittau stood conspicuously upon an island in the river. As we approached, it looked not unlike a copy of Versailles. The pile was by no means brilliant with lights, as the court of a king might glitter, finding reflection upon the stream. We drove with a clatter upon the paving, and a sentinel chalked us.

I had thought of how I should obtain access to this secluded royal family, and Skenedonk was ready with the queen's jewel-case in his hands. Not on any account was he to let it go out of them until I took it and applied the key; but gaining audience with Madame d'Angoulême, he was to tell her that the bearer of that casket had traveled far to see her, and waited outside.

Under guard the Oneida had the great doors shut behind him. The wisdom of my plan looked less conspicuous as time went by. The palace loomed silent, without any cheer of courtiers. The horses shook their straps, and the position hung lazily by one leg, his figure distinct against the low horizon still lighted by after-glow. Some Mittau noises came across the Aa, the rumble of wheels, and a barking of dogs.

When apprehension began to pinch my heart of losing my servant and my whole fortune in the abode of honest royal people, and I felt myself but a poor out-cast come to seek a princess for my sister, a guard stood by the carriage, touching his cap and asked me to follow him.

We ascended the broad steps. He gave the password to a sentinel there, and held wide one leaf of the door. He took a candle; and otherwise dark corridors and ante-chambers, somber with heavy Russian furnishings, rugs hung against the walls, barbaric brazen vessels and curious vases, passed like a half-seen vision.

Then the guard delivered me to a gentleman in a blue coat, with a red collar, who belonged to the period of the Marquis du Plessy without being adorned by his whiteness and lace. The gentleman staring at me, strangely polite and full of suspicion, conducted me into a well-lighted room where Skenedonk waited by the farther door, holding the jewel-case as tenaciously as he would a scalp.

I entered the farther door. It closed behind me.

A girl stood in the center of this inner room, looking at me. I remember none of its fittings, except that there was abundant light, showing her clear blue eyes and fair hair, the transparency of her skin, and her high expression. She was all in black, except a floating muslin cape or fichu, making a beholder despite the finery of the Empire.

We must have examined each other even sternly, though I felt a sudden giving way and leaving in my breast. She was so high, so sincere! If I had been unfit to meet the eyes of that princess I must have shriveled before her.

From side to side her figure swayed, and another young girl, the only attendant in the room, stretched out both arms to catch her.

We put her on a couch, and she sat gasping, supported by the lady in waiting. Then the tears ran down her face, and I kissed the transparent hands, my own flesh and blood, I believed that hour as I believe to this.

"O Louis—Louis!"

The wonder of her knowledge and acceptance of me, without a claim being put forward, was around me like a cloud.

"You were so like my father as you stood there—I could see him again as he parted from us! What miracle has restored you? How did you find your way here? You are surely Louis?"

I sat down beside her, keeping one hand between mine.

"Madame, I believe as you believe, that I am Louis Charles, the dauphin of France. And I have come to you first, as my own flesh and blood, who must have more knowledge and recollection of things past than I myself can have. I have not long been waked out of the trance of life I formerly lived."

"I have wept more tears for the little brother—broken in intellect and exiled farther than we—than for my father and mother. They were at peace. But you, poor child, what hope was there for you? Was the person who had you in his charge kind to you? He must have been. You have grown to be such a man as I would have you!"

"Everybody has been kind to me, my sister."

"Could they look in that face and be unkind? All the thousand questions I have to ask must be deferred until the king sees you. I cannot wait for him to see you! Mademoiselle de Choisy, send a message at once to the king!"

The lady in waiting withdrew to the door, and the royal duchess quivered with eager anticipation.

"We have had pretended dauphins, but add insult to exile. You may not take the king unaware as you take me! He will have proofs as plain as his Latin verse. But you will find his majesty at that a father could be to us, Louis! I think there never was a man so un-

selfish!—except, indeed, my husband, whom you cannot see until he returns."

Again I kissed my sister's hand. We gazed at each other, our different breeding still making strangeness between us, across which I yearned, and she examined me.

Many a time since I have reproached myself for not improving those moments with the most candid and right-minded princess in Europe, by forestalling my enemies. I should have told her of my weakness instead of sunning my strength in the love of her. I should have made her see my actual position, and the natural antagonism of the king, who would not so readily see a strong personal resemblance when that was not emphasized by some mental stress, as she and three very different men had seen it.

Instead of making cause with her, however, I said over and over—"Marie-Therese! Marie-Therese!"—like a homesick boy come again to some familiar presence. "You are the only one of my family I have seen since waking; except Louis Philippe."

"Don't speak of that man, Louis! I detest the house of Orleans as a Christian should detest only sin! His father doomed ours to death!"

"But he is not to blame for what his father did."

"What do you mean by waking?"

"Coming to my senses."

"All that we shall hear about when the king sees you."

"I knew your picture on the snuffbox."

"What snuffbox?"

"The one in the queen's jewel-case."

"Where did you find that jewel-case?"

"Do you remember the Marquis du Plessy?"

"Yes. A lukewarm loyalist, if loyalist at all in these times."

"My best friend."

"I will say for him that he was not among the first emigres. If the first emigres had stayed at home and helped their king, they might have prevented the Terror."

"The Marquis du Plessy stayed after the Tuilleries was sacked. He found the queen's jewel-case, and saved it from confiscation to the state."

"Where did he find it? Did you recognize the faces?"

"Oh, instantly!"

The door opened, deferring any story, for that noble usher who had brought me to the presence of Marie-Therese stood there, ready to conduct us to the king.

My sister rose and I held her by the hand, she going confidently to return the dauphin to his family, and the dauphin going like a fool. Seeing Skenedonk standing by the door, I must stop and fit the key to the lock of the queen's casket, and throw the lid back to show her proofs given me by one who believed in me spite of myself. The snuff box and two bags of coin were gone, I saw with consternation, but the princess recognized so many things that she missed nothing, controlling herself as her touch moved from trinket to trinket that her mother had worn.

"Bring this before the king," she said. And we took it with us, the noble in blue coat and red collar carrying it.

"His majesty," Marie-Therese told me as we passed along a corridor, "tries to preserve the etiquette of a court in our exile. But we are paupers, Louis. And mocking our poverty, Bonaparte makes overtures to him to sell the right of the Bourbons to the throne of France!"

She had not yet adjusted her mind to the fact that Louis XVIII was no longer the one to be treated with by Bonaparte or any other potentate, and the pretender leading her smiled like the boy of twenty that he was.

"Napoleon can have no peace—while a Bourbon in the line of succession lives."

"Oh, remember the Duke d'Angoulême!" she whispered.

Then the door of a lofty but narrow cabinet, lighted with many candles, was opened, and I saw at the farther end a portly gentleman seated in an armchair.

A few gentlemen and two ladies in waiting, besides Mademoiselle de Choisy, attended.

Louis XVIII rose from his seat as my sister made a deep obeisance to him, and took her hand and kissed it. At once, moved by some singular maternal impulse, perhaps, for she was half a dozen years my senior, as a mother would whimsically decorate her child, Marie-Therese took the half circlet of gems from the casket, reached up, and set it on my head.

For an instant I was crowned in Mittau, with my mother's tiara.

I saw the king's features turn to granite, and a dark red stain show on his jaws like coloring on stone. The most benevolent men, and by all his traits he was one of the most benevolent, have their pitiless moments. He must have been prepared to combat a pretender before I entered the room. But outraged majesty would now take its full vengeance on me for the unconsidered act of the child he loved.

"First two peasants, Hervagault and Bruneau, neither of whom had the audacity to steal into the confidence of the tender princess in Europe with the tokens she must recognize, or to penetrate into the presence," spoke the king; "and now an escaped convict from St. Pelagie, a dandy from the Empire!"

(To Be Continued Next Sunday.)