

# THE STORY OF L'AIGLON

A Translation of THE GREAT FRENCH ROMANCE

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(Continued from last week)

## CHAPTER VIII. A LESSON.

When Prince Metternich brusquely dismissed the spy after having received his report, he laid out a course to be followed during Otto's sojourn in the chateau. He had arranged that Otto should be presented to the Duke of Reichstadt, had impressed upon him the necessity of gaining the duke's good graces, to watch all his actions and to give warning in time of the execution of the plot.

Otto had no trouble in following these instructions. The duke, who was by nature very amiable, received pleasantly the advances of the spy and soon admitted him to the number of his intimate friends. The pseudo Count de Falkenstein, while serving the purposes of his master, had other projects for himself. The beauty of Colette had made a deep impression upon his corrupt being, and he thought that his intimacy with the duke might give him an opportunity to approach her and execute a plan of seduction which he contemplated. But Colette remained within the cottage of Silvere or in the garden where the old soldier cultivated his roses. To waylay her when she was taking her daily walk was out of the question. The presence of the servants rendered such a course not only difficult, but impracticable. Besides, Silvere was watchful. He never quitted his adopted daughter, and at an appeal from her he would have hastened to her assistance, and then, in case of his waylaying her, how could he explain his presence in this part of the park to the old soldier, who would have immediately punished any affront to his adopted daughter?

One night Colette, tired of her voluntary seclusion, resolved to take a walk in the park. It was the night of the fete mentioned in a preceding chapter. Not knowing what might happen, she wished to visit for the last time the park and the solitary wood where, one beautiful spring morning she had kissed the hand of

the duke in her enthusiastic devotion. But devotion was not all. A sentiment of a more tender nature had taken possession of her heart. That pity which every woman feels for the unfortunate had been succeeded by a new sensation, both melancholy and sweet. She had suffered a wound which had brought to her heart for the first time both joy and fear.

Seated on the white marble bench, the young girl, absorbed in her reflections, seemed oblivious to all about her, as if her soul had already taken leave of the disappointments and miseries of life. A shadow coming between her and the rays of the setting sun, filtering through the branches of the trees, caused her to raise her head. A few steps before her, his arms crossed upon his breast, stood the stranger whom she had met in taking leave of the duke just as she had appointed the hour and place of intended interview. She had also recognized him as the man who had been hanging about Silvere's cottage. At the same time a light broke in upon her mind.

Where had she seen this man? Passing recent events rapidly in review, she suddenly remembered—it was the traveler who had been watching her and her traveling companions and on whose account they thought it necessary on their arrival at Strassburg to depart in the early morning and cross the Rhine. These recollections brought a feeling

of repulsion against this disagreeable creature, and her countenance contracted, her black eyes flashed; in short, her visage bespoke the tempest which was in her heart. The young man, perceiving the effect his presence had produced and wishing to change so unfavorable a reception, advanced and addressed her:

"This is a beautiful evening, mademoiselle, to be isolated from the world and to dream of love. What a delightful place! How the trees surround and screen us! May I sit down by you awhile—that is, unless you may be expecting some one?"

This unpleasant meeting broke in upon Colette's dreams. She arose to give up her place, but this was not what the intruder wished.

"You are not afraid of me?" he asked.

Colette, who had moved away, suddenly stopped. A few days before a young man had been there who had noticed her blushes, the beating of her heart and had feelingly asked the cause. His voice was soft and tender. This man who had asked the same question made her tremble with anger. What a difference!

The crafty wretch who sat before her on the bench deserved a lesson, and she was the woman to give it to him.

"Pardon me," said she. "You have asked if I am afraid of you. Fear is a sentiment of which I am ignorant, for until now no man or woman has dared to insult me. From this moment that ignorance ceases. I have received an affront, and I have but one feeling in my heart—profound contempt. But before quitting this wood, which you consider such a fit place to dream of love, I would like to know who you are and by what right you are following me about. I am not aware that I have done anything to encourage you. I would advise you in future to leave me unmolested. Now as to your identity. You carry a sword, a mark of honor. You are therefore a gentleman, but your conduct causes me to doubt it. Are you a spy? Monsieur, I am your

humble servant."

And Colette, disdainful, haughty, passed before his excellency Count Otto de Falkenstein and without further noticing him departed from the wood.

## CHAPTER IX. ON THE ROAD TO THE THRONE.

At 10 o'clock in the morning on the 5th of May Metternich summoned Count Otto de Falkenstein to his cabinet to make final arrangements to thwart the plot which was to be carried out that evening and to strike a blow at the meeting of the conspirators. The spy hastened to his master, and for the first time the diplomat departed from the haughty men with which he had treated his subordinate.

"Well, well," he said, rubbing his hands with satisfaction, "this is the night, this 5th of May, that we are going to put an end to the hopes of those fools who think they are to give us a second edition of the empire, a revised and corrected edition. It is time to clip the wings of the young Eaglet that Europe has placed in my charge. I have sent for you to consider the matter. Have you any news?"

"Monsieur," replied Otto. "I think I can reassure you beyond your best hopes. I bring you news which will show you that I have followed your instructions to the letter. After having been presented, as your excellency arranged, to the Duke of Reichstadt I

gained his confidence and won his friendship easily. This morning the duke sent for me to come to his apartments and after impressing upon me the necessity of discretion made me promise to accompany him tonight on a journey which he proposes to make from the chateau. Now I am in the plot, what do you think, monsieur?"

"I am satisfied with you," replied the prince. "You have played a difficult role. I must admit that from the first you have divined just what it was necessary for us to know. Although a subordinate, you have left experienced diplomats far behind. While they have been waiting a providential solution to a problem which they could not solve themselves you have been successful. When the cells of Spielberg shall close upon these accursed Frenchmen, when tranquillity shall have been restored and when my imperial charge, disbanded and disgusted with all these conspiracies, shall have returned to his obedience and a just appreciation that what he desires is impossible, I will recompense you royally. But before ending this interview, if you have any favor to ask, speak, for I am in a mood to grant your request."

"Monsieur," replied Otto, "the encomium you have given me is quite recompense enough for my services, and the request which I am about to make will be a new proof of my devotion to your interests. At the park gate, at a cottage occupied by the chief gardener, you have an enemy who is a conspirator. Your excellency said that you have Spielberg in which to place the French generals. Let a third be opened to receive this other conspirator forever."

"His name?" Metternich demanded.

"Silvere," responded the spy.

And he departed, gloating upon his revenge, for the old soldier once in prison, his ward would not be long in falling into the clutches of one whom she had mortally offended.

It was 5 o'clock at night, and the moon had risen, its soft, pale light illumining the valley where the old ruined abbey seemed to be sleeping under its mantle of moss. At the entrance of the pass which led to it rode two horsemen, side by side, silently, absorbed each in his own thought. They were the Duke de Reichstadt and the Count Otto de Falkenstein.

The spy felt that he had reached a decisive hour. He was about to play his trump card. Up to this time, in his machinations, luck had favored him, but now, at the last moment, he trembled lest some unforeseen happening might interfere with his success. He thought of the promises of Metternich and the recompense which awaited him, but his knowledge of men and the contempt he felt for them rendered him perplexed and agitated. After all, what faith could be placed in the chancellor? The disdain which Metternich had always manifested for him, his sudden change of humor, the profound aversion which had often been manifested under his icy politeness, almost insulting—all these things cast a shadow over him at the moment when he was about to gather the fruit of so much pains.

One thought especially distressed him—he was a spy, one of those vile instruments of whom the great make use, but whom they throw over as soon as they are through with them. The more he listened to such thoughts the more uneasy he became. What he feared above all things was his complicity in that vile action in entering the duke's apartments. The chancellor of Austria, the prince of the Holy Empire, had been his accomplice. For one hour this man had been on his own level, when he had looked upon the mask of one who for so many years had made Europe tremble. Reichstadt rode on, his head aloft, breathing the balmy evening air, his thoughts of an entirely different nature. He blessed the hour which he had so long expected and which was now about to arrive. This uniform of an Austrian officer, the livery of a slave, he would soon cast off. When he placed his foot in the stirrup at the moment of quitting the imperial prison, where he had passed his melancholy youth, that white sepulcher in which he had lived for 20 years, he had cast an adieu with all the hatred he felt in his heart.

And tomorrow, that tomorrow which he had so long awaited, the son of the Eagle, with spread wings, would soar into space in the presence of battles. In his heart sang the bugle of armies. He saw immense plains covered with soldiers, who were shouting their acclamations, with drums beating and banners displayed. He saw masses of troops advancing in the burning sun, the flash of steel, and heard from afar the sound of cannon. Dreaming, insensible to all that was about him, the son of Napoleon passed over the road, led on by destiny. A hand seizing his bridle rein recalled him from his dream. Silvere spoke to him. He had reached his destination.

CHAPTER X. AN EXPLANATION.

Preceded by Silvere, the new arrivals entered the chapel, which was feebly lighted by lamps. Near the ruined steps formerly used for mounting to the altar, silent, enveloped in their cloaks, stood two men. At the entrance of the duke they quickly uncovered and displayed the figures of soldiers. Upon seeing him their faces lighted up, but their brows contracted the moment they perceived his companion. Reichstadt, perceiving the bad impression produced by his attendant, hastened to reassure them.

"Gentlemen," said he, "do not think that in a matter so important I would permit myself to act except circumspically. I know very well that the least indiscretion might cause the greatest trouble. It might cost you your heads and me perpetual imprisonment. But do not disturb yourselves. This

person who accompanies me has come here at my request, and if it seems like disregarding simple prudence to introduce a stranger to our secret meeting I must tell you that I have invited him expressly at the request of a young girl devoted to our cause. I refer to the adopted daughter of my old servant Silvere."

At the mention of Colette and learning that it was she who advised the duke the spy trembled. Why had this young girl, who had only reason to despise him, who the evening before had cruelly ridiculed him, why had she brought him into the midst of a plot which, thanks to him, would be thwarted? Here was a mystery.

The duke, who feared that the explanation that he had given might be received with reserve, and realizing that he might have acted hastily in honoring with his friendship a man who had given no proof that he deserved it, did not remark the terror of his companion. Leaving the spy in company with Silvere, the duke retired to a corner of the chapel and began to converse in a low voice with the two conspirators. Finally the interview was ended; everything appeared to have been arranged. Silvere had lighted a torch in order to guide the duke and his companions away, when one who was not expected made her appearance.

It was Colette.

What was the meaning of her appearance there at such an hour? Did she come to bid the duke farewell, or was she intending to attach herself to his fortunes? These questions suggested themselves to those present. Their suspense did not last long. Colette, pale and resolute, turned toward the generals, who regarded her with stupefaction.

"Gentlemen," she said, "your traveling companion has come to you to fulfill a sad duty. Your devotion has led you to engage in an enterprise worthy of your courage and energy. Faithful to your word given at the deathbed of the emperor, you have done your best for some years to return the son to the throne lost by the father. You have risked your heads and have acted even rashly in coming so near to Schonbrunn to rescue the captive Eaglet. But soldiers ignorant of small ways, lions who fight in the open field, your work is destined to disappointment. Your plan is known, and in an hour an army will come to take you and make you pay dearly for the terror you have caused in your project of restoration. Silvere, who is familiar with this place, will conduct you from the abbey, where your enemies had expected to find you. An asylum awaits you, where you may remain till the storm passes. The frontier is guarded. Your task is finished—mine commenced."

Turning toward Otto, who listened in a cold perspiration:

"Arrest that man! We have still an hour. It is sufficient for vengeance."

Silvere placed his hand on the shoulder of the spy and bound his hands.

The duke, with his hands to his head, dropped upon an oak bench, and the generals, impassive, waited for Colette to proceed.

"You remember, gentlemen," she said, "our departure from Paris, our rapid journey to Strassburg, the ingenious ruse by which we escaped the surveillance of the man who shadowed us. A few days after my arrival I had an interview with monsieur the duke to communicate your projects. Upon leaving him, and just as I had fixed the day and the hour for this interview, what was my surprise in perceiving, spying upon us, the same person who had followed us on our journey."

"Who was he, and what was he doing at the chateau?"

"I asked myself these two questions, which were subsequently answered. I met him twice again. Of my first meeting I will speak briefly, for I received a gross insult from him. I will therefore especially speak of my second meeting with him. It was at the fete given last night. Profoundly in the absence of the servants, who were attending upon the guests, I went to the apartments of the duke, whom I had seen occupied with his guests. I intended to give him the message which I had obtained a few days before at Vienna. I entered his room by a secret passage which Silvere showed me, and, approaching the desk where he kept his papers, I was about to lay upon it my letter when a noise of some one trying to force the door obliged me to conceal myself before having placed the letter. I held my breath and trembled. Judge of my surprise when by the pale light of the night lamp I saw Prince Metternich enter, accompanied by this man. Their presence in that part of the chateau puzzled me not a little, but at the first words they uttered I shuddered and grew faint. I steadied myself, for I wished to hear the verdict which would put an end to all our hopes. It was then I learned that this spy followed us from our departure from Paris. Disconcerted for a moment by our hasty flight, he regained his courage, for fortune threw me in his way. Desiring to know the cause of my presence at Schonbrunn, he approached me and the duke, learned our secret and hastened to carry it to his master. Concealed behind the hangings, powerless, suppressing my sobs, I felt as if in a nightmare. When, at break of day, the two men quitted the place, I had decided upon my course. I had condemned the spy and laid a snare for him. Blinded by his success, he fell headlong into it. If the throne is lost, vengeance is ours."

CHAPTER XI. PUNISHMENT.

The duke, who thus far had listened to Colette without making any motion which bespoke his intentions, rose from his seat and, turning toward Otto, said: "You have heard the accusation of this young girl. It is a grave charge,

and for you to deny it would be useless. But I have something to say to you for myself. Under the auspices of the emperor, my grandfather, you have betrayed my confidence in order to destroy me. You have watched me secretly. You have done more. You have destroyed my faith in friendship, a crime for one who is noble and bears a sword."

On hearing these words Silvere departed from the shadow in which he had been standing and exclaimed: "He noble, monsieur! Oh, no! Listen. The other evening after sunset I was in my garden when I heard persons speaking. I am not especially curious, but a name they pronounced caught my attention. They were speaking of this spy. They were two valets speaking of their masters, and upon mentioning this man here one of them said he is no noble, no count, and the sword that he carries is like his nobility—a fraud. They also said that he was a criminal pardoned from jail when spies were needed."

Turning toward Otto, who in his rage was endeavoring to break his cords, he added, "What do you think of this, monsieur le count?"

The player who had lost this game upon which his life depended stepped toward his judges, but the duke arose again and, turning toward the generals, said:

"Do you think that death will be sufficient punishment for the man?"

The two soldiers nodded affirmatively. Colette, taking off the crape veil with which her splendid hair was covered, mounted the steps of the altar and covered the immense bronze crucifix. When she returned, Silvere said to the duke:

"Monsieur, if you desire it, I think we may put out of existence this unworthy creature without soiling our hands with his blood. Below this church is a dry subterranean crypt. The monks who formerly inhabited the monastery, following a custom common among certain houses of Spain and Italy, instead of burying their dead in holy earth placed them in the stalls of the subterranean chapel. It is a domain of the dead from which they are not likely to return. I alone know of this crypt, and I will bestow the secret upon you."

And, suiting the action to the word, the old soldier stooped and drew from beneath the steps of the altar a crowbar and by a slight pressure moved the stone. The slab removed, a yawning cavity appeared. Then, seizing a stout cord at his feet, he passed it under the shoulders of the spy. Otto, pale and trembling, saw that his last hour had come, but was silent. The duke then addressed him for the last time:

"If you have any request to make, any prayer, now is your time, for I regret to say, we have but little time to spare."

Otto merely shrugged his shoulders.

One of the generals made a sign with his hand to Silvere. Otto disappeared in the cavity, and the stone was put back in its place. It was time. In the distance was heard the roll of drums. Silvere had only time to embrace Colette, to press the hand of the prince, and, seizing a torch, which he lighted by a lamp, entered the secret passage, followed by the generals.

Some minutes later Metternich, accompanied by the general commanding the troops, entered the chapel and, to their great surprise, found the duke and Colette sitting on an old oak bench engaged in a conversation so interesting to them that they did not notice the interruption even when the chancellor advanced to speak to them.

(Continued next week)

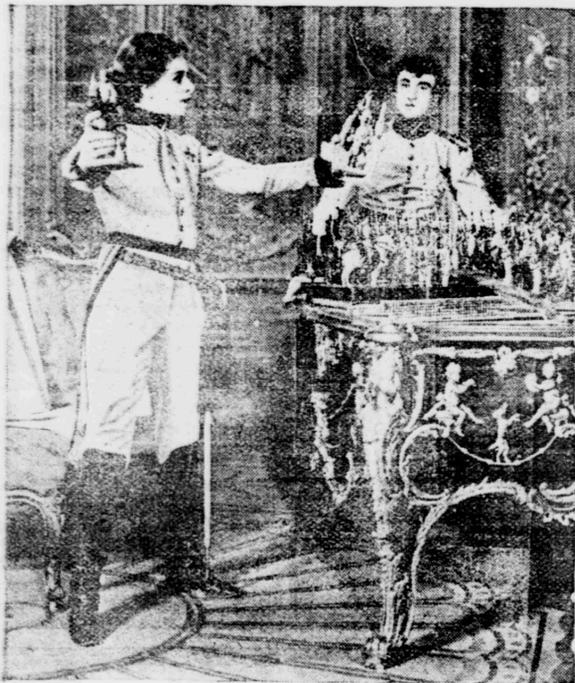


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MAUDE ADAMS AS THE DUKE IN "L'AIGLON."  
"THESE ARE THE SOLDIERS OF NAPOLEON'S SON."



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