Simon Newcomb.

A Chat With the World's Greatest Astronomer.

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WASHINGTON, D. C., Oct. 1.—I spent an evening this week with the most eminent of the world's astronomers. Prof. Simon Newcomb is to the scientists of Europe a far more interesting man than the president of the United States. The leading foreign universities have conferred honorary degrees upon him, the greatest of the world's scientific societies have presented him with gold medals for his astronomical work, and his books are used in the chief universities of England and Germany. There is today not an astronomer living who does not base his calculations upon Newcomb's tables of the movements of the planets and the moon, and there is not a ship that sails the seas that is not guided by his measurements of the solar system.

It is indeed difficult to give in common words a conception of Prof. Newcomb's work. It might almost be said that he has weighed the planets, has held his stop watch on the motions of the moon, and through his mathematical genius has given us a set of instantaneous photographs of the greater heavenly bodies as they speed on their courses through the regions of space. Think of the most difficult algebraic calculation you have ever attempted, imagine it to be a thousand times harder than it is, then take tens upon tens of thousands of such calculations worked over and over again until absolute accuracy is assured, and you have a small part of the details of the work of Prof. Newcomb. Think again. Suppose you had to travel the world over to get the records of astronomers for hundreds of years back to form the basis for such calculations, that you had to work them over yourself to see if they were correct, and then to recompute and recalculate them, according to a new set of conditions as to the heavenly bodies, which you yourself had discovered, and you have another part of the labor this man has done.

Much of his work was performed during the leisure he had while acting as computer and superintendent of the Nautical Almanac, which for years has formed the chief guide of the shipping of the world, and the calculations for which require enormous labor. He is, in fact, the Hercules of mathematical astronomy.

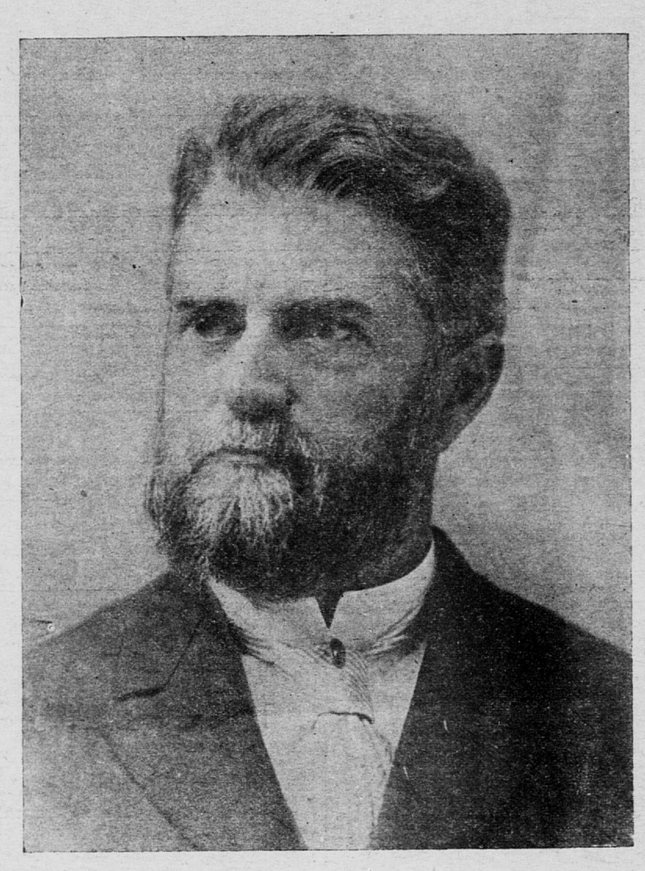
Prof. Newcomb's astronomical successes have also extended beyond his generalizations and deductions based upon the observations of others. He has traveled from one end of the globe almost to the other to get the best views of the stars. Now he is in the Saskatchewan region of British America watching an eclipse of the sun, now you find him at Gibraltar noting the motions of the moon, and now his telescope is pointed toward the skies at the Cape of Good Hope.

PROF. NEWCOMB AT HOME.

Prof. Newcomb lives here at Washington in a three-story red brick house on P street, just off of Sixteenth, in what is one of the most fashionable parts of the city. He has a fine library on the first floor, the walls of his workshop, from floor to ceiling, being filled with books. In his collection there are many rare mathematical works. Among others, he showed me a Euclid, which was printed ten years before America was discovered. The diagrams and initials are beautifully made, and the ink, notwithstanding its 400 years, is as black as that of the newspaper in which this letter will be printed.

Prof. Newcomb does the most of his work in his library. He works with his family about him, and many of his most difficult calculations have been made while his wife and daughters were chatting together in the same room. He has, you know, now retired from his labors for the government, but at sixty-two he is intellectually as able as he has ever been, and he tells me that the work he has laid out before him will keep him busy for ten years to come. Just at present he is completing his tables of the planets, upon which he has been busy for a number of years.

I found Prof. Newcomb exceedingly modest. In fact, had it not been for the assistance I got from his wife and his daughter, Mrs. Anita Newcomb-McGee, who were present during our conversation, I doubt whether he would have said anything about himself or his work. As it was, he deprecated all allusion to himself, was anxious to give others credit, and would not acknowledge that he had done anything wonderful, nor that his works had entitled him to the thanks of the world. The information I got came in piecemeal in response to many direct questions. I have taken the liberty of rearranging it as it is given in the following interview:



SIMON NEWCOMB.

I first asked Prof. Newcomb whether his mathematical ability was a matter of inheritance. He replied:

"I don't know. I have studied my ancestors somewhat to see, but have failed to find aiy of them who, during the past two centuries, have been college graduates. One of my grandfathers was a stone cutter by trade, but he owned a copy of Euclid, and tradition credits him with unusual learning. My father was a school teacher."

"You were born in Nova Scotia, were you not?"

"Yes," replied Prof. Newcomb, "but my family came first to New England along about 1660, and it was just before the revolution that the family moved to Canada. It was there that I spent my boyhood, and there I lived until I came to the United States to seek my fortune."

"Do you remember, professor, when you first realized that you had more than ordinary ability as a mathematician?"

"I do not know that I can," was the reply. "I began to study arithmetic when I was five years old, and at six, I am told, I was very fond of doing sums. At twelve I was studying algebra, and about that time I began to teach. I remember that I was thirteen when I first took up Euclid. There was a copy of it among my father's works. It was, I think, the one which belonged to my grandfather. I took it down one day and got interested in it. I there got my first idea of a mathematical demonstration. The book delighted me. It opened a new world of thought, and I remember I explained it to my brother by demonstrating some of the principal theorems, drawing the diagrams with a pencil on the ends of the logs of a pile of wood. There was not much chance for a boy in Nova Scotia, however. The people were very poor and nearly every family made its own clothes. The men and boys sawed lumber and cut wood, and the women and girls sheared the sheep and wove the wool into homespun cloth. There were but few books, and until I was twenty-one I had never seen a college professor."

"You can hardly imagine how simple the people are there," broke in Mrs. Newcomb, with a laugh. "We have visited Nova Scotia and found that the reputation of Prof. Newcomb has gone about among the people with whom he used to live. I remember hearing one woman say: 'I hear Mr. Newcomb spends all his time lookin' at the stars, and that he really gets paid money for it, too.'"

"How did you happen to come to the United States, professor?" said I.

"I came to seek my fortune," was the reply. "I began as a country school teacher on the eastern shores of Maryland. The people there were more advanced than those among whom I had lived in Canada, but not much. I taught reading, writing and arithmetic for a year or so, and then through the kindness of Joseph Henry I was appointed one of the commuters of the Nautical Almanac, and thus began the real work of my life."

A TEACHER'S FAMOUS FRIENDS.

"How did you become acquainted with Prof. Henry?" I asked.

"It was through a mathematical calculation. It was, I think, some algebraic problem. It was new, and I thought it might be worth publication. I sent it to him, and asked him to tell me if he thought it worth publishing. He submitted it to one of his friends, who was a mathematician, and this man said that while it was original, it was hardly of value for publication. Prof. Henry wrote me a kind letter regarding it. When I next went to Washington I called upon him, and later on he secured me the appointment. The Nautical Almanac was then published at Cambridge, and while at work there I was able to attend the Lawrence Scientific school, and for the first time had access to the best books upon scientific subjects. Later on I was appointed professor in the navy, the office of the almanac was moved here, and I was assigned to duty in the naval observatory at Washington."

METHODS OF WORK.

During the talk I asked Prof. Newcomb to tell me something of his habits of work.

He replied: "I don't know that I have any peculiar methods of working. I have several rules; one is to go to bed early and stay there as long as I can, another is to eat well and to take plenty of time to it, and a third rule is to get in as much time for amusement as I can. What I have left after this I use for my work."

This statement of Prof. Newcomb as to amusement, however, should be taken with a grain of salt, for what may be amusement to him would be hard work to many other men. For instance, not long ago he referred to astronomy as his profession and political economy as his relaxation. He has written some very important works on political economy. In 1865 he published a book entitled "A Critical Examination of Our Financial Policy;" in 1877 his "A, B, C of Finance" had a large sale, and his book on "Political Economy," published in 1886, is used in some of the schools. He has written other school books of various kinds, and a year does not pass that he does not give one or more scientific addresses. Mrs. Newcomb says that at times in his life he has worked very hard. Said she: "When he was computing the changes of the moon he would often keep on until he was tired out, when he would say, 'I must have a nap before I can do anything more. Wake me in fifteen minutes!' He would then lay his head down on the table and go to sleep. Sometimes he has slept that way with his head on my shoulder, going back to his calculations after a few moment's rest."

As a rule, however, Prof. Newcomb is very careful of his habits. He goes to bed regularly, and when his hour for retiring comes he excuses himself, no matter who may be calling upon him. For years his nights were spent at the observatory, and he has had to adopt the most rigid rules to preserve his health.

IN PARIS IN COMMUNE DAYS.

When Prof. Newcomb was a very young man he discovered that the calculations of the astronomers as to the movements of the heavenly bodies were based upon wrong premises, and could not be accurate. In order for any good work to be done the researches and work of years would have to be gone over and made right. This work was so enormous that any one else would not have dared to attempt it. Prof. Newcomb not only attempted, but carried it out. He was in Europe engaged in examining the records of the great observatories at the time of the Franco-Prussian war, and at its close went to Paris to make his calculations there. He entered the city just at the end of the siege, Mrs. Newcomb being the first English woman to come into Paris after the capitulation. Then the horrors of the commune came on, and for six weeks Prof. Newcomb figured away in the observatory. Part of the time the windows were rattling with the fire of the musketry outside, and in going to the observatory he had to pass the barricades in the streets. Think of figuring amid such surroundings. Think, also, of the power of concentration of mind needed to do the figuring required. The observations he used for his work were those of the astronomers running back through a period of 200 years. He had to go over their calculations to see if they were correct. He had to see if the clock they used was right, by estimating from the position of the stars what the time must have been to a second, for a clock five minutes out of the way would have made all of his work useless. As an example of his skill in such work he was not long ago looking over an eclipse observed somewhere in the northern Pacific about 100 years ago by some Russian astronomers, when he said: "That must be wrong. Their watches must have misled them," and upon figuring he found that they had made the mistake of a day in the date of their observations.

When I asked Prof. Newcomb as to the danger of his work in Paris at the time of the commune, he said it had been much overestimated, and that he was not at all molested there during his labors.

I asked him if he enjoyed mathematical calculation.

He replied: "Did I not, I should never have made it my life work."

SOMETHING ABOUT TELESCOPES.

Prof. Newcomb probably knows as much about telescopes as any man on earth. It was he who superintended the construction and mounting of the great telescope of our naval observatory in 1873. This telescope had a diameter of twenty-six inches, and it was for some years the largest telescope of the world. Later on the Russian government wanted a telescope. Arrangements were pending toward the making a contract for its construction in Europe, when the Russian commissioners sent to the United States to get the advice of Prof. Newcomb. He replied that the best telescope maker living was in the United States, and the result was that the commissioners came here, and Mr. Newcomb introduced them to Alvan Clark. He supervised the contract and the making of the great telescope which they then ordered. For his services in this work the czar sent Prof. Newcomb a magnificent jasper vase on a pedestal of black marble. The vase now stands in the parlor of Prof. Newcomb's home, and he seems more proud of it than of his monument in the adjoining library, consisting of volumes upon volumes of books and tables of which he is the author.

It was Prof. Newcomb who superintended the mounting of the Lick telescope, and he will, I am told, make an address at the coming celebration of the putting up of the Yerkes telescope during the present month.

GOOD TELESCOPE MAKERS.

I asked Prof. Newcomb whether the United States could keep its reputation as the maker of the best telescopes, now that Clark had died.

He replied: "Who can tell? It may be that we shall turn out as good instruments as in the past. Brashear, of Pittsburg, is making as fine glasses as any Clark has made, and there are now other places where good lenses are ground. There are now also some good telescope makers in Europe."

"What are the qualities needed in a good telescope maker?" I asked.

"There are many things," replied Prof. Newcomb. "I sometimes think that the successful man in this, as in some other professions, is born, not made. He must have the most delicate perceptions and must be accurate in his calculations. There are parts of a lens which must not vary the one-hundredth thousandth—I might almost say the one-millionth—of an inch in thickness. The glass must be of the purest quality, and it must be ground just so. Mr. Clark was a genius in such matters. He began life as a portrait painter and made small telescopes for amusement. He soon began to grind lenses for a livelihood, and it was found that his lenses were the best that were made. He went on until in this branch he surpassed every one else."

"But, professor, is it easy to tell whether a telescope is correctly made?"

"Yes; all you have to do is to look through it at the stars. If they are clear points of light, the glass is good; otherwise not."

"Does the difference in the size of the diameter make much difference in the power of the instrument?"

"Yes, the greater the diameter the higher the power."

"What astronomical work are you now engaged upon?" I asked.

"I am going over my tables of the planets. I shall finish my work of their revision within a few weeks."

"It seems to me professor, that you have done enough to take a rest for the remainder of your life. How long do you expect to continue working?"

"I cannot tell," was Prof. Newcomb's reply. "I shall keep on until I stop. I enjoy my work and I hope to do a great deal more of it."

ORIGINAL WORK IN ASTRONOMY.

"Is there much original work now being done in astronomy?"

"Yes, indeed. Good work is being done all over the world. There are more good astronomers now than before. One of the great troubles I found in making my computations for the National Almanac years ago was that I had to do all the work myself. Now there are many men who can make such computations. In my recent work I have been helped by my assistants at the observatory. Indeed they should have part of the credit for much that I have done."

"Do you think that we shall ever know much more than we now do about the stars?" I asked.

"Yes, we are learning more right along."

"Is there any good reason to think that the stars are inhabited?"

"That is a question," was the reply. "There is no proof that some of them may not be. There are some of the planets, such as Mars, which we are led to believe have all the conditions which would make life upon them possible. Whether there are beings upon them we do not know, and if there are we do not know if such beings are like ourselves."

—Frank G. Carpenter.

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No. 146½ Parlor Suit was $32.50. Now $21.00
No. 310 Suit, 3 pieces, was $15.00. Now $7.75
No. 311 Suit, 3 pieces, was $18.50. Now $10.75
Solid Oak Chiffoniers $5.75
White Iron Bedsteads $3.75
Cane Seat Dining Chair..... $0.65
No. 8 Cook Stove..... $6.75
Extra Super Carpets $0.35
No. 2 Couch was $8.00, Now..... $5.00
Cane Seat Rockers $1.25
Open Wash Stands $1.10
Odd Bed Room Suit Commodes.. $2.75
Hardwood Beds $1.25
Kitchen Tables $1.00
Tapestry Carpets $0.39
No. 503 Suit, 3 pieces, was $32.50. Now $17.50

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Water Works Sold.

MILWAUKEE, Wis., Oct. 2.—Deputy United States Marshal R. B. Pratt today completed the sale of the Beaver Dam water works. The works were bid in by W. G. Maxcy, of Oshkosh, for Wm. W. Hord, Charles F. Street and H. J. Bickford, of New York, the reorganization committee of the bondholders. The amount realized was $70,000. It is probable the reorganization committee will carry out their work in reorganizing the company and selling the works.

Million in Gold.

NEW YORK, Oct. 2.—The $1,000,000 gold received from the Deutsche Bank of Berlin by the National City bank of this city yesterday was today sent to the subtreasury for examination. La Tourine, of the French line, which arrived this morning, brought over $1,000,000 in gold for the Hanover National bank. This consignment will also be sent to the subtreasury for examination.

THE CHEVALIER D'AURIAC

By S. LEVETT YEATS,

Author of "The Honour of Savelli."

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CHAPTER XIV.

Under the Limes.

It mattered little to me if I rode a portion of my way back with de Belin, and so I turned Couronne's head as he wished. Before setting off, however, he gave some rapid and whispered orders to Vallon, emphasizing them with a loud "Quick, mind you, and do not fail."

"It is not likely, monsieur," answered Vallon, and then set off.

The crowd was as great as ever, and we were compelled to go slowly. Looking for a moment to my right as we went forward, I saw Vallon making as much haste as he could in the delivery of his message, and I wished to myself that my own stout-hearted knave were with me; one blade such as his was worth a half-dozen hired swords.

It was my intention to leave de Belin at his hotel, and make my way as quickly as possible to my lodging, and thence, taking the risk of the king's warning, go straight to the Rue Varenne and urge madame to instant flight. My house of cards had come down, a fluttering heap, as the first story was raised, and to my mind there was nothing for it but a sharp spur and a loose rein. I wished, too, for a moment of leisure to examine Coiffier's gift. I had little doubt that it conveyed a message or a warning, and the sooner I got at its contents the better.

In the meantime Belin rode by my side whistling a march to himself, whilst a couple of lackeys immediately behind us shouted themselves hoarse with an insistent "Way—way for monsieur le comte!"

This cry of theirs was being constantly echoed by a Capuchin, who, mounted on a mule, with his hood drawn over his face, so as to show little but his eyes and a portion of a gray beard, kept alternately flinging an "Ave!" and a "Way! way!" to the crowd, the while he stuck close to our heels, having evidently made up his mind to follow the old saw—the stronger the company the freer the road.

I know not why it was, but the jingling notes of the tune my friend whistled irritated me beyond measure, and at last, at the corner of the Rue Perrault, I could stand it no longer and reining in held out my hand.

"I must say good-bye here, Belin. We will meet again, and meet in better times, I trust, for me. In the meanwhile let me thank you, my friend—the rest of my business lies in my own hand."

He laughed and said: "Not yet good-bye; and as for your business, there is some of it in Coiffier's wooden ball. I would open that here before you decide to leave me."

"Morbleu! You all seem determined to speak to me in riddles. Why can you not say plainly what you mean—and, besides, this is no place to read."

"It is as good as any other. See here, d'Auriac! I slipped out of the king's cabinet as he spoke to you, told madame how your affair was progressing; she herself had something to communicate to you; the matter was pressing, and as things stood she could not tell you there. As for your being treated like a pawn, I give you my word it was beyond me to help that; but if you come with me you will learn many things within the hour. In the meantime open the ball, man! It was a lucky thing Coiffier was there."

Without any further hesitation I drew forth Coiffier's gift. It was, as I have said, a hollow wooden globe, and was made in two parts, which could be joined together, or separated by a turn of the wrist. I held it in my hands for a moment or so, and then opened it, and had just pulled forth the paper it contained, when by ill chance as it seemed the Capuchin, who was urging his mule past us, brushed violently against my horse, with the result that the paper slipped from between my fingers and fluttered to earth. Couronne after her first start was steady enough, but the monk's ill-conditioned mule kicked and plunged, bringing him apparently heavily to the ground. He fell exactly over the paper, and lay there for a moment, face downward, resting on one elbow. I sprang down as much to get the paper as to assist him, but as I did so he scrambled to his feet with a "Hundred pardons, monsieur, for my clumsiness," and then hastily turned and hurried after his mule, which was already many yards ahead, behaving after its kind, and whose speed was not diminished by the sticks, stones and oaths flung at him, and there was a roar of laughter—a mob will laugh or hiss at the merest trifles—as the lank figure of the Capuchin sped along in pursuit of his beast and vanished after him down a side street.

Belin himself joined in the merriment and I picked up the paper, muddy and much soiled. Smoothing it out against the flap of my saddle I made out the words: "Tonight, under the limes in the Tuileries—at Compline." There was no doubt about the writing, and thrusting the precious scrap into my breast pocket I remounted. As I did so de Belin said, "Well, have you changed your plans?"

"Partly; but I think I shall go back to my lodging."

"Do nothing of the kind as yet. I have asked Pantin to meet us at the Two Ecus, your own ordinary—Vallon has gone to call him; you can give him any orders there. You owe me as much as to yield to me in this."

It would have been ungracious not to have agreed, and I told Lisois I would go with him.

"Hasten, then! The road is clearer now, thanks to the Capuchin, or rather to his mule. By the way, did you see the monk's face?"

"No!"

"A pity! I tried to, but failed in the attempt. His voice was familiar to me, and he seemed wonderfully active for an old man."

"You are suspicion itself, Belin."

"I have slept with the dogs and risen with the fleas. Harkee, Hubert! And you, Pierre! If you see that Capuchin again let me know at once; keep your eyes open. If you can persuade him to speak to me, it will be worth five crowns apiece to you."

"Monsieur's wishes shall be obeyed," said both men in a breath, and now, finding the road free enough, we set off at a canter, and kept the pace up until almost at the door of the Ewo Ecus.

As we pulled up at the ordinary and dismounted, Belin exclaimed, "Now for our supper. I am of those who can only fight under a full belt, and I would advise you, d'Auriac, you who will have fighting to do very soon perhaps, to follow my advice and make the best use you can of your knife."

I laughed out some reply, and then turning to mine host ordered refreshment for both man and beast, and directed that our supper should be served in a private room.

"And observe," cut in Belin, "if Maitre Pantin arrives let him be shown up to us at once."

"Monsieur."

Before we went in de Belin asked his men if they had seen any more of the monk, and received an answer in the negative. Bidding them remember his orders on the subject, he linked his arm in mine and we went within.

"You seem in a way about the monk," I said.

"My dear friend, I cannot get it out of my head that I have seen him before, and I don't like a riddle like that to be unsolved."

"This comes of your court intrigues, de Belin. You were not wont to be so."

"Other times, other manners," he answered a little grimly; and we sat at out table.

How well do I remember that small room in the Two Ecus, with the dark oak wainscoting, the furniture that age had polished, the open window, showing the yellow sunset between the high-roofed and many-gabled houses, the red Frontignan, sparkling like rubies in our long-necked glasses, and the deft service of Susette, the landlord's daughter, whose pretty lips pouted with disappointment because no notice was taken of her good looks by the two cavaliers who supped together, whose faces were so grave, and whose speech was in tones so low as to be heard only by each other. At last we were left to ourselves, and Belin, who had been explaining many things to me that I knew not before, suddenly rose and began to pace the room, saying: "You take the position now, d'Auriac. If not, let me put the points again before you briefly. There are men like Sully, Villeroi, Forget and I myself who understand and grasp the king's views, and know that if he has his way France will be the greatest country on earth. On the other hand, Henry is bound by ties of much service rendered to him by men like Sancy, who disgraces his name by plundering the state, and Zamet, who cannot disgrace himself by anything he does. These men, and such as they, exhaust our resources, if they do nothing else, and serve the cause of the great nobles, such as Epernon, Turenne, Tremouille, and, above all, Biron, whose ambition knows no bounds, and who, I am certain, will never be still unless his head is on a crown-piece or else on the block."

"But what has that to do with me?"

"Listen. Great as the king is, he has one failing—you know what it is—and it is on this the Sancys and Birons play. To carry out his own designs it is necessary that Henry should be saved from himself. The Italian embassy is with us, and whilst d'Ossat and the cardinal performed the ostensible object of their mission they effected another and secret object, and that was the arrangement of the king's marriage with Marie de Medici."

"The king's marriage!"

"Yes."

"But the queen still lives."

"And long may she live, but not as queen."

"Ah!"

"Exactly—you begin to see now. If we can make this move we get the support of the quirinal, and more, the help of the Florentine coffers. We will paralyze the great conspiracy which Biron heads—rather a league than a conspiracy. We can dispense with the expensive services of Sancy, of Ornano and of Zamet, and then Henry will be free to carry out his great designs."

"If, however, Biron is as strong as you say."

"Permit me—we are providing for that. He has been kept close to the king. Sully, as master general of the ordnance, has ordered the guns at Dijon to be sent to Paris, with a view of replacing them with new ones. None are going, and by the time the king's betrothal is announced Burgundy will be as much Henry's as it is the marshal's now."

"But he will believe nothing against Biron."

"Other people have nursed vipers before, but the king is not himself now. He can think of but one thing. See here, d'Auriac, I have helped you for two reasons. One because I love France, and the other because I love you. Henry has ordered the marriage of Madame de Bidache with d'Ayen to be celebrated tomorrow. He gave that order today to put an end to the importunities of the marshal in regard to de Gomeron. I know this, and madame knows it, too. In plain language, you must play a bold stroke for the woman you love—take her away tonight."

"That was partly arranged—we are to go to Switzerland."

"You will never reach the frontier. Look—there is my castle of Mourmeton in Champagne. It is old and half in ruins. See—here is my signet. Take it, show it to Gringel, the old forester there; he will take you to a hiding place. Stay there until the affair blows over, and then to Switzerland or elsewhere if you will; in the meantime I pledge you the faith of de Belin that no stone will be left unturned to effect your pardon."

I took the ring he gave me and slipped it on, and then our hands met in a hearty clasp that expressed more than words. It was at this moment that Susette announced Pantin, and the little notary came in, with his quick, short step.

"I am late, messieurs, I know," he said, "but I was not at home when Vallon arrived, or else I had been here sooner."

"You are in ample time for what we want, Pantin," I said, though there is no time to waste. I am leaving Paris tonight, and will not return to the Rue des Deux Mondes, but start from here. My business concerns the safety and honor of Mme. de la Bidache, and when I say that I know I can rely on you. Is it not so?"

"It is, monsieur."

"Well, then, should any one ask for me say I have gone you know not where. You do not know as a matter of fact. If Jacques, my servant, returns, bid him go straight to M. le Compte. He will get orders from him."

"I understand perfectly, monsieur."

"There is yet another thing. Hasten to Maitre Palin and bid him await me now outside the Porte St. Denis with two spare horses, he will understand what I mean. And now, my friend, adieu. This will pay what I owe you"—and I thrust a half dozen pistoles into his hand.

But he resolutely refused. "No—no—Monsieur le Chevalier."

"But Dame Annette?" interposed Belin.

"Um!" said the notary scratching his chin—"that is another matter. I had for the moment forgotten I was a married man. Very well, monsieur, I will take the money, not that I need it, but for the sake of peace; and now there is little time to lose. I go to do all you have asked me to, and rest assured, messieurs, it will be faithfully done."

"I have no doubt of that, Pantin."

"We had better make a start, too," I said, and Belin shouted for the horses. We stayed for moment or so after the notary's departure, during which time Belin urged me to take Vallon and a couple of men with me to my tryst; but fearing no complications, I refused, saying that this was a matter that were best done with one hand. Belin would have come himself, but that his friendship with me being known, it was necessary for him to avoid all suspicion of his being in the affair.

"I shall go to the Louvre," he said, "and engage d'Ayen at play. Pimental and others will be there and, if I mistake not, M. le Baron will have a sore head for his wedding," and he chuckled here.

Then I settled the score with mine host, and mounting our horses we rode back the way we came. It was at the Magasins that we wished each other good-bye, and with a last grip of the hand, and a last warning to hasten to Mourmeton, Belin turned towards the Louvre, whilst I went on towards the Tuileries, keeping the northern road and not the more frequented street along the river face. I chose this way, because, although it was a little longer, yet there was still a half hour for my appointment, and it would not do for me to arrive too early, as by hanging about at the trysting place I might attract attention, and perhaps ruin the game. As I rode on I caught myself wondering if I could play the same hand that Sully, Villeroi and de Belin were throwing to. I knew they were honest men—their positions removed them from such temptations as might assail even a great noble—and that they were loyally trying to serve their country and their king. If such service, however good its object, meant, as it clearly did, that one must be up to the elbows in intrigue, then I thanked God that I belonged to no party, and inwardly resolved that, whether I won or lost my hazard, the court would see me no more, and as for the king—pardieu! It is not good to know a hero too well.

There was a strong moon, and the night was as clear as crystal. One side of the street was in shadow, illumined here and there by the dim light of a few lanterns set high up in niches in the old and moss-grown walls of the buildings. The houses here were old even for this part of Paris, and with their sloping roofs and many gables rose in irregular outlines on either side—outlines, however, so softened by the moonlight, in which they seemed to quiver, that it was as if some fantastic creation of fairyland had been set down here—a phantom city that would melt into nothingness with the warm rays of the morning sun.

Away in the distance it still seemed as if I could hear the hum of the city behind me, but here all was quiet and still, and the iron-shod hoofs of Couronne rang out with a strange clearness into the night. Occasionally I met a passer on the road, but he or she, whoever they were, took care to give me a wide berth, and once a woman who had opened her door to look out for some reason or other hurried in and shut it with a little cry of alarm as I passed.

I had now come to the gardens of the Tuileries, and putting Couronne at the wall, which was just being raised around them, found myself within a quarter of a mile of our place of meeting. The turf was soft and level here, and I let Couronne go at a half gallop, keeping in the checkered shade of the huge trees, which whispered strange things to each other in the breeze. At this moment it seemed as if I heard the smothered neigh of a horse. I knew the sound well, for often had my old Norman tried to serve me in this way through the scarf by which his jaws were bound together when we lay in ambuscade. With a touch of my hand I stayed my beast and stopped to listen. Beyond me stretched the avenue, at the end of which stood the great lime trees. I could see nothing but the ghostly line of trunks lit up here by the moon, there standing out black against the night, or fading away into a lacework of leaves and branches, and the sullen creaking of the boughs overhead. "It must be her horse or Palin's," I said aloud to myself; and then the compline came to me clear and sweet from the spire of St. Germain.

I lifted my hat for an instant with a silent prayer to God for help, and then shook up Couronne. Ere the last notes of the bells had gone I was under the limes. At first I could see nothing; there was no one there, and my heart grew cold at the thought that some danger had overtaken my dear one.

"Madame!" I called out, "It is I—d'Auriac."

Then a figure in a gray mantle stepped out from the shadow of the trees, and I sprang from the saddle and held out my hand.

"I knew it was you, chevalier," she said, "but I wanted to make certain and waited until you spoke."

"I hope I have not kept you waiting?"

"Indeed, no. I had but just come across from the Louvre when you arrived."

"Then you did not come riding?"

"How could I? I have been in the Louvre and am expected to be at the coucher of Mme. Catherine in a half-hour—" and she laughed slightly. The thought of that smothered neigh flashed through my mind like lightning. "We must trust ourselves to Couronne," I said. "Palin will be at the Porte St. Denis. There is no time to waste—come."

Then it seemed that she hesitated, and flinging back her hood looked me full in the face. In the moonlight I saw her, white as marble, and she suddenly put out both her hands, saying:

"I trust you utterly, d'Auriac."

Man is not made of stone; and I loved this woman as my life. There was that in her voice, in the pitiful appeal of its tones that broke down all my false pride. I cannot say how it happened, but in a moment my arm was round her waist, and I drew her toward me—she nothing resisting.

"Claude, I love you. Give me the right to protect you."

What she said is for my ears alone; and then she lay still and passive in my arms, her head resting on my shoulder.

So for a time we stood in a silence, and then I kissed her.

"Come, dear," I said, "and with the morning we shall be safe."

Of her own accord she put her arms about my neck and pressed her lips to mine, and then I lifted my darling to Couronne's saddle bow.

Had I but taken de Belin's offer—if Jacques were but with me then!

My foot was in the stirrup, my hand on the reins, when there was a sudden flash, a loud report, and my poor horse fell forward, floundering in the agony of death.

I just managed to snatch Claude from the saddle and staggered back, and then with a rush a half-dozen men were on us. They were masked to a man, and made their attack in a perfect silence; but as my sword flashed out of my scabbard I recognized the tall figure of the Capuchin and thrust at him fiercely with a curse at my folly in coming alone.

Things like these take a short time in doing, and should take a shorter time in telling. I ran one man through the heart, and with a gasp he fell forward and twisted himself like a snake around my blade. Then some one flung a cloak over my head, I was overborne by numbers and thrown. Two or three men held me down; there was an iron grip at my throat, and a man's knee pressed heavily on my chest. I made a frantic effort to free myself; the covering slipped from my face, and I saw it was the Capuchin kneeling over me, a dagger in his hand. His mask had fallen from him, and his face was the face of Ravaillac.

I could not call out; I was held too tight; and the villain lifted his poniard to strike, when a voice, the voice of de Gomeron, said, "Hold! We will put him out another way."

"This is the quickest and surest," answered Ravaillac, but the reply was brief and stern.

"Carry out my orders—gag him and bring him with us."

"To Babette's?"

"To Babette's; there is the oubliette; quick, there is no time to lose."

"O, ho!" laughed Ravaillac, "that is good; M. le Chevalier will be able to drown his sorrows under the Seine; but he will take a long time to die."

"You villain," I gasped; but like lightning the gag was on me, and then I was blindfolded. I could see nothing of madame, though I tried my utmost to get a glimpse of her. Then I was bound hand and foot and lifted by a couple of men. After being carried a short space I was thrust into a litter, and as this was done I heard a faint cry from Claude; and I groaned in my heart, for I was powerless to help.

Once we were challenged by the watch and my captor gave answer boldly:

"M. de Gomeron of the Marshal's guards with prisoners for the Chatelet; let us pass in the king's name."

"Sacre nom d'un chien!" exclaimed one of my carriers, "he is heavy as lead."

"He will be light enough in a week or so," answered some one else; and then I heard the creaking of hinges, and the litter appeared to be borne within a yard and was left there. After a half hour or so I was dragged out and I heard a woman's voice:

"This way, my lambs; the gentleman's room is below, very far below, out of all drafts," and she laughed with the same pitiless note in her voice that I had heard once before, and I knew it was the murderess.

Down a winding stair we went, and I remained passive, but mentally counted the steps and the turns. There were eighteen steps and three turns, at each of which there was apparently a door, and then we stopped. There was a jingling of keys, the harsh grating noise of a bolt being drawn back, and Babette spoke again:

"Monsieur's apartment is ready—'tis the safest room in the Toison d'Or." Then I was flung in heavily as I was and the door bolted behind me.

(To be continued.)

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