Hearts Courageous

By... HALLIE ERMINIE RIVES

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man's name was Jarrat, and he wore the uniform of a captain in his majesty's horse.

To relate that Captain Jarrat had carried his handsome face and domineering bearing aboard the ship on the day of sailing, with a letter from Lord Stormont, British ambassador in Paris, hidden in his breast pocket, is to go back a bit. Jarrat was close mouthed. As far as the other passengers were concerned he was a British officer returning to the Virginias. To a nice eye he would have betrayed an overintimate curiosity as to a certain passenger.

The second day out he accosted the skipper, Master Jabez Elves, and wished him fair weather and a good day with an insinuating accent which betokened a bent for conversation. But Master Elves replied only with a nautical grunt.

Jarrat tried a direct inquiry.

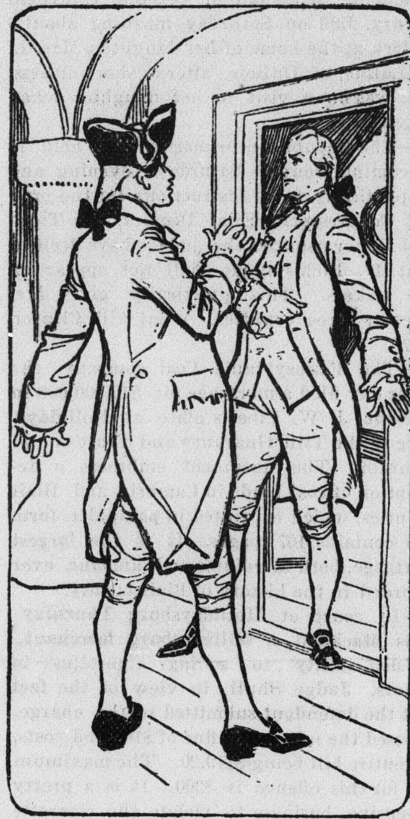
"Where is the Marquis de la Trouerie?"

"Sick," replied the skipper. "In his cabin," and rolled away.

"Ah!" smirked Jarrat. "Our French gentleman is a poor sailor."

But as the days went by it became certain that the distinguished passenger was ill of a less passing malady than mal de mer.

On an evening the captain pushed open a narrow cabin door at the end



"You cannot see him."

of a passage, but before he could enter a young man sprang up and barred the way.

"I would see the Marquis de la Trouerie," said Jarrat.

"You cannot see him, monsieur." The young man's tone was very firm.

"Who are you?"

"The marquis' secretary, monsieur."

Jarrat took a gold crown from his pocket and offered it to the other with the easy effrontery of one perfectly certain of his ground. Every underling, it was his belief, had his price, from lackeys to prime ministers. It is a theory which on the whole works not badly.

The man before him, however, was of another sort. He put the coin back. "You cannot see the marquis, monsieur," he repeated.

"Cannot, you whelp!" said Jarrat, with his tongue on his lip and in the soft tone which with him covered a white boil of rage. A copper lantern, pierced with holes, threw yellow beams down the passage, and in this glare the young man on the threshold saw his face, evilly beautiful and distorted. The coin rattled on the floor.

The young Frenchman stooped to pick up a gold piece. "Monsieur has dropped his crown," he said, holding it out.

Jarrat took it and thrust it into his pocket. "It was too small a douceur," he said easily, "eh, master secretary?"

Most of those on the ship did not know, so insular were the prejudices of the Anglo-Saxon, that the Marquis de la Trouerie was a personage in his own country. Even Caron de Beaumarchais, son of a watchmaker, that airy, naive, fantastic charlatan who at the age of twenty-four had washed his hands at his father's shop, changed his clothes and gone to court to give the four daughters of Louis XV. lessons on the harp—even he was less welcome at the Tuileries or less a favorite of the young Queen Marie Antoinette than this same nobleman now aboard the Two Sisters.

It is perhaps not to be wondered at that the passengers knew little of such things and doubtless for the most part cared less. Two Annapolis merchants, loyal since the nonimportation agreements had pinched their pockets; a brace of London factors looking for likely agencies; a Virginian fresh from study in the Middle Temple, bound for the woolsack at Lancaster; a British quartermaster journeying to Boston—what should such a company know of Gallic pedigrees or the chatter of the French court?

A diplomat might have found in the presence of the marquis something to ponder. For at that time strange things were stirring. Louis XVI., young, enthusiastic, unaccustomed, was learning for the first how exceeding difficult it is to be a king. M. Turgot, his grim old minister of finance, logical, pitiless, cold as a dog's nose, was pulling one way; Beaumarchais, brilliant as a chameleon, fascinating, egotist, intimate of a French queen, was pulling another.

And what was the bone of contention? Whether France should give her treasure to the secret aid of the American colonies. With such counsels in the air England slept, like a surly bulldog, with one eye open. She watched at home, and her astute ambassador, Lord Stormont, kept a hawk's eye upon the Tuileries.

So, in itself, there was an interest for those who knew, attaching to the sudden journeying to America of this man, so near to the French counsels, at once a noble, a courtier and a republican. And this interest was intensified for Jarrat, who, mindful of the letter he carried of confidential import, hugged the reflection that he knew the reason for it.

Jarrat, like many another schemer, made the error of undervaluing the intellectuality of an opponent. He had small idea that the marquis' young secretary was observant in his turn. It was nevertheless the fact. But M. Armand, who had scented him very early, kept his cabin, and no one aboard—the ship carried no leech—saw his master.

Four days after the episode of the gold crown Jarrat tried the skipper again.

Master Elves chewed a bitter cud and wore a habitual droop to his eye. Now the courtesy came as thickly as cold weather treacle.

"The Marquis de la Trouerie," he answered, "ain't on the ship."

Jarrat stepped back heavily. "Not on the ship, fiend plague me! He *is* on the ship."

"Maybap ye know better nor I," answered Master Elves shortly.

Jarrat burst out laughing. He felt a sudden contempt for this clumsy subterfuge.

"A brave conclusion!" he cried. "And how long is it to last? Is the noble gentleman to lie shamming Abraham in his cabin till we sight the Virginia capes? Awhile ago he was sick, guarded from all our pining eyes by his argus eyed clerk. Now, behold, he is not even aboard! Oh, an accomplished nobleman!"

The skipper squinted out to sea, and a drawn pucker came to his lips.

"See here," said Jarrat, his tone taking edge. "I have business with this gentleman, and I'll not be put off. This is the eighth day out, and he hasn't shown his nose out of his cabin. 'Tis my opinion he's no more sick than I am."

"No more is he," said Master Elves.

"What then?"

"Just this: I want to see the marquis, and I mean to see the marquis. D'ye hear that, you lumpfin? 'Twill be better for you. I can tell you, if you fetch me to him at once!"

The skipper's moment had arrived.

"Fetch ye to him!" he roared, with something between an oath and a chuckle. "The man ye're after died two days ago and was sent to the fishes last night! Fetch ye to him! Haw, haw!"

With this parting shot he went off spitting furiously.

"Dead!" exclaimed Jarrat, with sagging jaw, staring after him. "Dead!" he said again, and then stood, vacant eyed, his face the dead color of chagrin in which calculation has had no time to slip.

With the passengers the young secretary, M. Armand, had his way to make, and this he accomplished with abundant good nature. Him they first snubbed, then tolerated, then liked.

The young Virginian, Breckinridge Cary, sought him openly and more than once drew his arm through his own as he walked the deck. The Virginian was beyond question of the quality, and certain footing had made for him social squeamishness unnecessary. As for the secretary, he went his way with imperturbable good humor. Even storm could not dampen his spirits.

For reasons that have been stated the news of the demise of the marquis, whom the passengers had not known to regret, made little sensation on the Two Sisters. Next day a bark was sighted out from Norfolk, and there was a budget of new world news and a bunch of Virginia Gazettes to furnish matter for talk. A fortnight later the incident, however full of moment it may have been to Paris, was well nigh forgotten. They had not all of them Jarrat's reasons for remembering.

But as days wore on and calm succeeded storm Jarrat, who thought much, studied M. Armand with a lazy interest that in time, as shall be seen, gave birth to a plan. He gave the secretary no cause to remember their first meeting at the little cabin door and schooled his tone to an insinuating friendliness. He even condescended to game with him and to question him amiably touching politics in France, and more than one of these inquiries turned cunningly, as on a pivot, upon the young man's late master.

So a month passed, pleasantly for some, irksomely for most. Jarrat watched the secretary boldly. The secretary in his own way watched Jarrat. And so it stood on the serene day when M. Armand leaned upon the rail and looked out across the shadowless waste where the track of the blazing sun stretched in a molten dazzle like a quivering spear of God's.

Presently he felt a light touch on his arm and, turning, saw the Virginian.

"Dreaming?" asked Cary. "Of what?"

"Of your golden land, monsieur."

The other smiled, then sighed and leaned beside him. "A golden land, in sooth. I would it had no storms, but a sweet sun dawning ever for it. Troubled, indeed, it was when I left it—more troubled now as I return." He paused awhile.

"I love the land," he said. "I know not if even France can be so lovely. Is it so? And do you love it?"

The young Frenchman's face grew earnest.

"When I was born," he replied, "France was good, monsieur—I think it was the best land in the world, as today it is the most beautiful. But Louis XV. was young then. Since have come a Pompadour and a Du Barry. So it is that the good in France has been hidden underneath many other things. It is true that the ministers of the crown have sold titles of honor—places in the courts. Justice, the thing for which your colony is now crying to England—this has been impossible to the poor, the low. The rich buy it. Paris laughs and does not care! There the wits lampoon the dignitaries, the young bishops sneer at God and the abbes are become elegant to kiss the hands of painted countesses. But the poor, the oppressed, the people, monsieur, what of them?"

He let his gaze wander. A dreamy light was in his eyes.

"Ah, monsieur, they have watched. They have been waiting. They are ignorant. They were never taught. But all this time one man—the exiled, the glorious — he has been writing. He has taught that the unnoble are not field beasts, that they are men; that the noble and the peasant are all one; that the poor must not be trodden on."

"Voltaire," Cary said in a low voice.

"France," Armand went on, "has been reading this one. The smith and the plowman talk of what he has said in the rows and at the forge. It is not only the poor, the low, monsieur. Nobles who wear coroneted swords also think these things. They, loving liberty, would give their lives for their king. There is in Paris a club"—

He paused abruptly. When he began again it was in a voice tinged with sadness.

"Louis XV. is dead. Louis XVI. reigns."

Cary's glance flashed into his.

"Louis XVI. is young and ambitious. He hates England. An there were war here 'twould advantage him to aid t'e colonies."

"Monsieur," declared the other, "it might ruin him. Listen! His own people are worse foes to the king of France than England, monsieur. And aiding the colonies here is putting a two edged sword into their hands! Even now they have the wish to redeem France. But they know not how. They have never seen such a thing. Power is all around them, and it seems as if it must last forever. So it is, monsieur, that these nobles—these of better blood—who love first of all their France—I could tell names—a Mirabeau, a Lafayette—they would have their king aid America. They have joined hands with men of lower birth like Beaumarchais and made courtiers of them to the same end."

"But," reflected Cary, puzzled, "you say to help our colonies might ruin Louis. Why, then, would these nobles push the plan? Have they such hate of England?"

"No, no. Not because they hate England as Louis does, but because they love France better than Louis, and to save her they must even risk to ruin him. There is more than one French king at stake—there is a dynasty! These are not the middle ages, monsieur. In these days the peoples are awaking. France, if she lives, must open her eyes. These men I tell you of would jolt her wide awake. They would have her smiths and her plowmen stop their toil to listen across the seas—to hear the guns of a people who would not be oppressed, to see royal mercenaries driven into the sea just by people like them. Then their murmur would be a roar. They would say, 'So can we do also!' Then the corrupt court would stand terror stricken. And then at last there would be an end of the selling of titles, of the elegant bishops and the painted countesses. France would put on purity again, and her king and her nobles would rule justly, and poverty would not stalk everywhere. These nobles of which I speak are loyal, monsieur. They love first France and then their king."

"Gentlemen," rose Jarrat's voice, "the hogpen is just below. Will you come aft where the lookout is more agreeable and join me in a game of loo?"

On a morning when land had long been promised and was eagerly looked for the young Frenchman, M. Armand, mounted to the deck. His face was weather burned, and the salt breath of the spume fell damp on his hair. The Virginian came and stood beside him, and both looked down upon the wretched legion of redemptioners crowding the lower deck, gazing dumbly up like cattle.

"A brave sight," submitted Cary, "to show the riches of the colonies."

His tone was not without bitterness, as the Frenchman perceived. "You would not have it so?"

"I? No. We have no need of some of the offscouring you see there. It will breed us the curse of crime. But what care the factors? 'Tis profit to them. And what cares the king? It means

"Dreaming?" asked Cary.

more tobacco, and tobacco stuffs his coffers."

"Yet some of these may be lifted by opportunity."

"Aye," answered Cary. "Bad as they are. Wooden hogs, fair sick for the lash, lumps from Cork or lack Latin sots shipped for schoolmasters. Their sons may be good citizens. New lands, new conditions. If this land be not saddled with another's ills, here these shall at least have hope. By their faces they leave not much to love behind them."

Before either spoke again a cry came up from where a knot of sloven redemptioners were gathered—a cry and a hoarse word in one. Down below, at one side, a woman leaned, hugging a shawl wrapped bundle to her breast.

She was a drab, but with a certain sullen beauty that is bred of Latin blood. Armand had seen her face more than once transfigured by that wondrous glory of mother love. He had that very day heard her crooning softly as she walked, noted the strange furtiveness with which she avoided the too curious gaze of her fellows, wondered what subtle grace nature had lent for mother eyes to those infant features.

Now one of the crew stood over her, plucking at the shawl. She was weeping passionately, loudly, without pretense of concealment.

"What a devil's that?" bawled the mate's voice from a rope ladder.

"The brat's dead," said the sailor. "Blow me tight, I've been watching her for two days. The lallop's been singing to it to pull the wool over our eyes."

"Dead, is it? Pitch it overboard, then." He kicked down a greasy rag of canvas.

As the man he commanded approached the woman she fell on her knees, shrinking in close against the bulwarks and speaking rapidly in some foreign tongue.

"What's that loblolly?" asked the mate.

"She says," translated one of the pitiful group around her, "that the land is so near and the water is cold. She wants to bury it in the ground."

"Split me," oathed the mate, "is that all? Over with it, Jerry!"

Again she spoke, volubly and with many groveling sobs.

"She says," said the redemptioner, "that if it could only be blessed. There is no priest aboard."

The mate, with his hands on the rail, laughed at this. "Do what I say, you down there!" he cried. "Will ye stand making mouths all day? Tie it in that canvas."

The man he had bidden approached the woman to take the cold little body from her, but she turned suddenly a fury and, holding it to her breast with one arm, fought him off, screaming.

He jumped back, with his hand clapped to his armpit. "The Jezebel's bit me!" he yelled.

There was a great laugh from the sailors, and the mate cursed luridly from above. "Are ye mollycoddles, then?" he shouted. As they hesitated he scrambled down hand over hand, damning them for landlubbers and clearly minded to do it himself.

The Frenchman's fingers, as he stood beside the Virginian, gripped the rail. "Swine!" he said under his breath. Then he leaned over and called clearly, "Keep your hand from that woman!"

The mate looked up, astonished, at the group, for the other passengers had gathered to witness what was going on.

"What's that?" he asked.

Armand repeated his words.

The mate's face turned a spongy purple, and he laughed in a way that was not good to hear. For answer he reached out a hand to the shawl and literally tore it away from the poor clay it covered.

At the instant he did so Armand vaulted the rail where he stood, caught a rope, swung to a stanchion and landed as lightly as a cat at the side of the burly ruffian. The act was so clean, so graceful and so quick that none of the passengers could have told exactly how it was done.

The mate turned and, seeing him at his elbow, struck with all his strength at the other's head.

The stroke was one to stun, but it never reached home. The young foreigner bent one side, not moving his feet, with a motion that would have spoken volumes to an athlete, and the mate's fist banged against the bulwark. While he staggered from this, Armand, seizing a rope's end as he circled, cut him across the face with such a slash that the blood ran from the gash.

Now ensued a strange combat. The mate, heavy and cumbrous, tried to reach the other with sledge hammer blows. The Frenchman, slight, wary, circling, retreating, slipped hither and thither. Three times in as many seconds that sibilant "swish" sang, and a red mark sprang out on the brutal face.

At each swing of the fist a sort of groan went up from the huddled redemptioners, and at each cut they sucked in their breath with delight. It was a new, strange entertainment for them—to have a brain sick passenger descend from his clean deck to champion the cause of a scum.

The Virginian, looking down, was quivering visibly. As the passenger evaded a blow that would have crushed his ribs he could not forbear a shout: "Well done, by the Lord! But 'ware the clinch! 'Ware the clinch, monsieur!"

For the mate, though maddened out of himself, had shown a sudden gleam of purpose. He was forcing the secretary back into a corner between bulwark and stanchion, not striking, but his burly arms now stretched out widely. Even as Cary shouted the arms gripped Armand like a vise, and the stinging rope's end, useless now, fell to the deck.

Over the upper rail the passengers leaned, watching.

"A shame!" cried one. "That bloody brute will kill him out of hand!"

"'Tis the clerk! Pshaw!" said the quartermaster. "He sides with the rabble. Let the rabble care for him!"

The woman who had been the unwitting cause of this struggle crouched back of the first sullenly intent rows, waiting, hugging her bundle. The others watched, guessing well what the issue would be, most of them accepting it as they had accepted the unspeakable fare, the cursings and revilings of the crew, with that stolid acceptance which, multiplied by centuries of heredity, had brought them at last to this same condition.

The Virginian leaned down with vibrant hopelessness. He looked to see the secretary, vised and crackled in those arms, drop limp and senseless. As he looked he saw Armand's face, very white, turn up to him.

Then, like lightning, a wonderful thing happened. The young man's chin sank deep into the hollow of the other's shoulder; his arms went up about the muscles of the bulky back; lithe legs like wire went suddenly curling and twisting about the stocky ones. A moment of strained silence and a glaze of shocked surprise on the mate's slashed face, then—

Crack! The coil untwisted; the mate relaxed, tottered and fell to the deck.

There was at this time in France a curious science known as "La Savate."

A glaze of shocked surprise on the mate's slashed face.

The Japanese have it under another name. It was first taught in the thieving dens of Paris and was to some extent popularized by a clever rogue who earned freedom from the Bastille by teaching it to young officers of title. It was an art of leg fence, and by precisely the same twist and wring which a practiced swordsman uses to disarm an adversary, the blade in this case being bone and flesh, Armand had sent the mate's knee leaping from its socket.

To the majority of those who saw it this was perfectly incomprehensible. A gasp of wonder ran among the redemptioners, and they laughed loudly at the mate's groan. The secretary had lost none of his alertness, though he was breathing hard. He sprang at the stanchion, clearly intending to return to the upper deck by the way he had come.

But he was too late. The mate's sailors rushed upon him.

Cary, shaking with excitement, sent out a cry.

"By Harry!" he shouted to the passengers about him. "Shall we see him that fought so beat like a dog? Are we poltroons, all?"

He leaped the rail, but before he could reach the lower level aid came to Armand, so hard beset. The skipper dived into the circle on a run, an evil light in his eyes and a marline spike in his hand. He knocked the foremost senseless, and the rest scattered.

"Curse ye!" he bellowed. "Set on a passenger, ye dogfish! By the devil, I'll mizzen ye naked! Get to work and take this away!" he commanded, jerking a thumb at the mate who sat up, nursing his knee.

The woman, still holding the bundle, had pressed to the secretary's side and was pouring out a torrent of grateful incoherencies. Master Elves began cursing her with vigor, but Armand touched his arm.

"The babe is dead," he said. "Your mate would have cast it overboard. I ask for the mother a twelve hours' time. If we do not sight land by then I will ask no more."

But land was not to be seen that day. Next morning came—the secretary's fight had been in vain. Then there was another gathering to the forward rail of the upper deck.

This was to watch the young Frenchman sitting among the redemptioners, sewing a round shot carefully into the foot of a white silk bundle the size of a babe. The mother, now with empty arms, trailed her long hair and sat, red eyed, sodden with weeping, beside him. This done, he stitched over the silk neckerchief a clean canvas and last of all sewed to its top a tiny gold cross which he took from his pocket. The bundle, held now by willing hands, was laid on a little board whose end projected over the rail, and then Armand, with bared head, took his stand beside it, and they heard his voice repeating part of the Huguenot service for the dead.

Few understood the words, for they were French, but all grasped their meaning. The fresh cheeks of the girls were wet with tears. The toilers' seamed faces were pitiful. Even the crime smirched ones were softer. And the mother was satisfied. Had not her child been blessed? To her none but a priest could perform such a rite, and Armand, though wearing no cassock, was yet in some mysterious way a priest.

So are we all His ministers!

CHAPTER III.

THE Yorktown wharf was a fair sight to the passengers of the Two Sisters as the ship swung to her moorings. Beyond the yellow clay bank the shore glowed in a violet green dazzle of foliage, a flame of amethyst and pink, and over all the sun hung hazy, like some splendid dream rose, strewing its petals upon a bay of tinted glass.

The bank behind the wharf was a fringe of negroes, their vacant minded happiness shaking out laughter as wind shakes blossoms from a locust tree. The gay colored turbans bobbed like variegated poppies on a breezy day. The planking below was sprinkled with town folk, and on the road behind it several chariots were drawn up at some distance.

In advance of these and in the rear of the crowd, with Betsy Byrd in the saddle beside it, stood the Tillotson coach, framing in its window a face with a flicker of laughter over it like the wind on a May meadow. Anne was in close green and with her oak yellow hair looked a gold spear rising straight from its sheath. As early as noon one of the Tillotson blacks had ridden to Gladden Hall with the news that the ship had been sighted down the bay, and Anne had ordered the chariot forthwith. Betsy had a new peacock shawl coming in Master Elves' care and had made the pilgrimage from Williamsburg every day for a week.

"What a pity!" exclaimed Anne, who had been first to arrive. "Mr. Cary—Breckinridge Cary—came on the ship, but she lay in Hampton Roads last night, and he there found a packet for Philadelphia. So we shall not see him till the spring."

"I'm sorry," Betsy answered. "Frank saw him in London. What a lot there are here! There is Burnaby Rolph of Westham, here for more redemptioners no doubt. He bought a round dozen last ship. Why doesn't he leave that for his factor, like a gentleman, I wonder?"

Anne looked at the man she indicated—of medium height, with a sheep face, long in the tooth—and turned away with a little shudder. He stood with thick legs planted firmly, talking with a neighbor, his head turned over his shoulder, and as they looked he raised his sword hilt and struck savagely at a black who jostled him. "Poor servants who fall into Mr. Rolph's hands. I pity them," she said in a low voice.

"John the Baptist," she called to her mounted servant, "did you go down to inquire about Miss Betsy's chest, as I told you?"

"Yas'm, yas'm. Done been down dar twic't."

"Are you sure?"

"Yas'm, on meh honah!"

"Honor!" Anne said severely. "What do you know about honor, John the Baptist?"

The darky responded with a ragged grin. "I uster hab er heap er honah," he said vaguely, "but I got so 'strav'gant wid it I spec' I ain't got much lef' now."

"Look yonder, Anne," whispered Betsy. "Isn't that a genteel looking young man? What a lovely brown his hair is! He's looking this way. His coat has a foreign cut. I warrant he came on the ship. There is Master Brooke standing by him now."

Anne's eyes showed her a gray coat unslashed, plain hose and shoes with a neat steel buckle—a dress neither rich nor poor. There was no lace upon the hat, no paste knee buckles, no sword—none of the marks of distinction. But the face was open and the nut dark eyes frank and clear.

She had gazed but a moment when a familiar red coat shouldered its way through the press. She bit her lip and turned her head away, but Betsy was deep in chat with young Mr. Carlyle, kinsman to the Belvoir Fairfaxes, a youth lean as a rake, of a pale disposition, all hair and eyes.

The newcomer strode to the steps with assurance and touched Anne's fingers with his lips. "Still so cold, so far away? Still cherishing a frown for me?"

"I looked not to see you, Captain Jarrat."

"I am but just returned from London."

"On the Two Sisters?"

"Aye," he answered, with a slumbering flush on his face. "The moth returns to the lamp. A pretty conceit, is it not?"

(Continued next week.)