

THE FAMILY JEWELS.

TRANSLATED FROM THE GERMAN OF L. SCHUCKEL: G

CHAPTER VI.

Scarcely a quarter of an hour later Valentine entered the courtyard. Everything seemed wrapped in the most peaceful repose, just as when she had left the house with Max.

Valentine heard the rustle of a leaf being turned—was it possible she was calmly reading at such a moment? "Perhaps she was reading her English Bible," was Valentine's scornful thought.

"You up—and dressed? What is the matter, Valentine?" "I might ask you the same question—I hear voices outside; it seems they are trying to get into the house; let us see what it means—if you do not already know," she added significantly as she walked boldly ahead holding aloft her lamp in her right hand, while Miss Ellen followed slowly.

When they reached the lower hall they heard a thumping at the door leading forward as if to open it, but Valentine caught her and holding her with a strength she never dreamed she possessed, said in a peculiar whisper: "Come to the salon door and we can see who they are."

In the salon Valentine placed her lamp upon the table, drew back the shutters and pressed her face against the pane.

With a half-suppressed cry of fright she started back as she beheld Gaston's face peering into the room. She sprang back as if stung by an adder.

"It is Gaston!" exclaimed Miss Ellen, who stood beside her, "and there are some people with him—shall we open the door?"

"Certainly open it," said Valentine firmly; "better do that than have those fellows break it open, as it seems they mean to do."

Miss Ellen obeyed; Gaston entered followed by several men in sooty clothes, some armed with revolvers, the rest with stout clubs; their blackened faces and hands at once proclaimed them for laborers.

"What are you doing here, Valentine?" exclaimed Gaston angrily, turning to where the girl stood with a defiant look in her beautiful eyes. "Who told you—Miss Ellen you did not keep your word!"

"Good heavens, Gaston! have you become a leader of banditti?" interrupted Valentine scornfully. "Else what is the meaning of your presence here at this hour, and with these creatures?"

"We came on an errand which does not in the least concern you—go up stairs, Valentine, I beg of you—pray go!" he urged.

"Hush, your loud talking will awaken your father," interrupted Gaston in an angry whisper, "and we desire him as little as we do you—it is better he knows nothing of this."

"Then you have really come to rob us?" "Nonsense! No, we come to prove our loyalty to our country by ridding it of one of its foes."

"Then you don't come to plunder but murder?" "Valentine, I beg you to moderate your words; you are so excited you know not what you say. You cannot prevent us from doing our duty to France!"

"You want to tempt these honest fellows to do the horrible deed with your fine phrases!" she exclaimed with a cutting scorn.

With an impatient gesture he motioned her aside and the forge men pressed forward without ceremony, starting after Miss Ellen who had taken up her lamp as if about to retire; Gaston followed as she silently led the way through the dining room across the hall to the door of Max's chamber. Here Gaston knocked—no answer; again he knocked and shook the latch; still no answer came from within, and the door was barred on the inside.

Valentine, who had followed the eager crowd, came up as Gaston whispered: "We must force the door!" moving aside to make room for one of the men who drew forth a short iron rod.

"Hold! It is not necessary for you to break the door—you can get into the room from the court—the window is open—so are the shutters," she added tauntingly.

"The window and shutters open?" exclaimed several stalwart Vulcans whom Gaston had admitted in the hall door.

"Then some of you enter that way!" exclaimed Gaston—"or"—here he turned hastily to Valentine—"has the bird flown and have we to thank you for this trick?" he almost hissed the words in his rage.

"You have to thank the watchfulness and caution of him you seek. It seems, Mons. de Ribeaupierre, this sort of man is not to be outwitted by—you!" she retorted contemptuously.

"Break open the door!" he cried with a fearful curse; "we will see if she tells the truth!"

The man stooped to insert his iron, when the door suddenly opened and the men Gaston had sent into the courtyard stood in the doorway.

"He has escaped—gone to the devil! the cunning fox of a Prussian! What treason!" cried the sooty horde in the greatest excitement with menacing gestures, as if they longed to wreak their vengeance upon the inmates of the Ferme. They ran through the little room like blood hounds scenting their prey.

Fortunately at this moment the farm servants, who had been aroused by the tumult, rushed into the hall; at the same time a heavy foot-step was heard above and Mons. d'Avelon appeared on the staircase. Halting on the second step from below he looked angrily around upon the strange scene, upon the sooty, hideous looking figures surrounding his brave daughter who stood defiantly in their midst, while Miss Ellen cowered tremblingly at her side. The next instant he recognized Gaston; with a hasty expletive he approached that gentleman:

"What the devil are you doing here!—what do these fellows want?—they are your men. What do you mean by alarming my household in the dead of the night?"—"speak!" he demanded, his eyes flashing angrily as he laid his arm protectively over Valentine's shoulder as she sprang to his side. He felt her tremble fearfully; she had given way to her terror now that her natural protector was near.

"Good heavens! don't make such a fuss about it, Mons. d'Avelon," expostulated Gaston, forcing himself to speak calmly. "I don't think it is very difficult to surmise what brought my brave men here at this hour; they are not a band of thieves that their presence need alarm you. They came uninvited 'tis true, but I assure you they will retire peacefully. I beg you now return to your homes, my friends," he added, turning to his frowning followers.

"You see we come too late—the enemy has escaped and is long ere this in safety; it would be sheer folly to attempt to pursue him in such weather; even Etienne's blood-hound would be of little avail. Our opportunity has passed, and we have nothing further here. Go now, my good fellows, and do not disturb Mons. d'Avelon or his family any longer. Do not forget to call Raoul and Gillon, who are guarding the road. To-morrow we will speak of compensation for your trouble and disappointment, and we will see how many bottles of wine are necessary to recompense you—now go!"

The result of Gaston's words convinced one of the rather slavish discipline among his sooty corps. They grumbled and gesticulated menacingly, it is true, but they started off jesting rudely after a little wrangling with the half-clad crowd of servants who followed them to the terrace.

After they had left the Ferme, singing rude snatches of patriotic airs, and laughing loudly, Mons. d'Avelon drew Gaston into the dining room, where Miss Ellen had fled some moments before. He placed the lamp he had taken from Valentine's trembling hand upon the table, and turning to Gaston exclaimed:

"And now let us have an account of these singular proceedings."

"Merci!" sighed Gaston sinking wearily into a chair, "cannot you see through the whole scheme? You were lodging a Prussian officer—which fact came to the knowledge of my workmen—God knows how—and it raised quite a patriotic commotion; they determined to march to the Ferme des Auges, surround the house and seize the Prussian. Had they captured him I verily believe he would never have seen another day—"

"And you dared countenance this shameful scheme?" interrupted Mons. de Avelon angrily, "dared encourage them to the disgraceful attack upon a gentleman who, with utter trustfulness, thought himself secure beneath my roof—under the protection of the laws of hospitality which even the savages respect? You dared to lead your vile band in order to assist them with your knowledge of my household arrangements? You should—"

"Good God!" interrupted Gaston shrugging his shoulders deprecatingly, "how hastily you condemn me. Hear me first: I heard of the plot; one of the men who possesses more discretion than the rest came to Givres and told me that they were smouldering the furnace fires because none of their number would remain back to attend to them; he also told me that several had already gone to guard the road to Void, in order to cut off the German's escape should he manage to escape from the Ferme. Under these circumstances could you expect me to stay quietly at home? Could I leave the madly excited creatures to themselves? Indifferent to what might happen here—to you—to Valentine, in such a midnight invasion? You would have thought very strangely of me I think had I done so! No, I concluded to join them and did all in my power to calm—and prevent them from doing any harm—who can tell what might have happened had I not been here!"

Valentine looked at him with the most contemptuous disdain in her face as her father exclaimed roughly:

"To the devil with your fine speeches! Had you not sufficient control over the wretches who are in your service, and who depend on you for their daily bread, to keep them from such an infamous undertaking?"

"No," returned Gaston shortly. "Hm, then we may thank heaven that Herr Von Daveland suspected treachery and escaped in time! Had your fellows succeeded in executing their design it would have placed me, as master of the house, in a by no means enviable position toward the Herr Prussians in Void—I might have prepared myself for rather a hasty flight."

"Very likely!" returned Gaston coolly, "but heaven deserves little credit for his escape—the German's warning did not come from that quarter," he added venomously.

"What do you mean by such words?—who did it?"

"If there is anyone to thank it is Valentine."

"Yes, it certainly was Valentine," interrupted that young lady sarcastically. "Mons. de Ribeaupierre speaks the truth there. It was I who warned him, and saw that the stranger reached his friends in spite of Mons. de Ribeaupierre's valiant guards."

"But how in the name of heaven did you learn—"

"That the road to Void was guarded!" exclaimed Gaston interrupting Mons. d'Avelon.

"I suspected a plot early in the evening," returned Valentine dryly.

Gaston looked at her searchingly as he said in an offensive tone:

"You acted as his guide yourself—you were in the rain some time for your hair is still wet."

"Very likely!" she returned contemptuously.

Gaston turned his searching eyes from her to Miss Ellen, who had heard the foregoing conversation with surprised bewilderment.

"This is very remarkable—very!" exclaimed d'Avelon staring at each in turn; then to his daughter: "Your suspicions could not have told you that danger threatened our guest?" he added sharply.

"And yet, my dear father, the best proof of it is that I warned him in time."

"And that you went alone with him, at midnight, through the rain—alone with a stranger, the enemy of your country!" added Gaston scornfully.

"Pray let our country rest in peace, Mons. de Ribeaupierre, for it is of very little moment in this matter. And concerning my conduct I decline to hear your criticisms upon it, and, moreover, from henceforth I want it distinctly understood that you are deprived of any imaginary right, you have presumed upon, to criticize my behavior."

"You are very candid," he hissed. "I am glad you understand me."

"I'm not so sure whether your father—"

"My father will never undertake to accomplish what he knows to be impossible—he will not attempt to alter the sentiments that have dictated my resolution—it is irrevocable!"

"Now may the good Lord preserve us; this is the very worst feature of this wretched business!" cried Mons. d'Avelon. "Gaston, I wish the devil had flown away with you before you were seized with the miserable whim to lead your sooty scoundrels! But this is no time to talk about it; come, Gaston, I will see you off if you prefer to return to Givres."

"I do prefer to return home," exclaimed Gaston springing to his feet.

"Very well then! I will see that the doors are securely bolted, then we will try to calm our excited brains with another nap," said Mons. d'Avelon rising and dismissing his neighbor with rather a frosty good night.

While the old gentleman busied himself closing and securing the doors, Ellen approached Valentine and in a hasty whisper accompanied by a threatening glance, hissed:

"Do you mean to open the battle with me now that Gaston has gone? I warn you not to do so for I might not be as discreet as he, in vindicating myself for my share in this affair, which would make you regret what you have done. I warn you—do not demand any explanations, and above all beware of trying to compel me to justify myself before your father—you would regret it to the day of your death!"

And with a warning shake of her index finger she left the room with her usual cat-like tread.

Valentine looked after her in mute astonishment. What could she mean by her singular words? And what had made her so defiant instead of ashamed and humiliated for her vile complicity in Gaston's shameful plot?

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Notice is hereby given, that every one of you, that laying aside all business and excuses, you be and appear in your proper persons before our Judges of our Orphans' Court, to be holden at Beaver, on and for the county of Beaver, on the THIRD MONDAY OF MARCH next, (1873), to answer the bill or petition of Thos. J. Power, Jr., for the specific performance of a contract, entered into with Jas. M. Power, late of said county, deceased, for a lot or piece of ground situate in the borough of Rochester, in said county, and show cause, if any you have, why the same should not be made for the specific performance of the contract, in said petition mentioned, according to the true intent and meaning thereof, exhibited in said Court, and to do further and to receive what our said Court shall have considered in that behalf. Hereof fail not at your peril and the penalty that may ensue.

Witness the Honorable A. W. Acheson, Sheriff of our said Court at Beaver, this 29th day of January, 1873. JOHN C. HART, Clerk of C. C. feb-31

DISSOLUTION NOTICE. Notice is hereby given, that the partnership between J. M. McCreery and Mrs. J. K. Sanderson, under the firm of J. M. McCreery & Co., was dissolved on the 20th day of January, 1873. Mrs. J. K. Sanderson retiring, and her share in the said partnership is assigned to J. M. McCreery, who will continue the business of the old firm, Beaver, Pa. jan31-3w

EXECUTOR'S NOTICE. ESTATE OF GEORGE NEELY, Dec'd. Letters testamentary on the estate of George Neely, deceased, late of Economy township, Beaver County, Pa., having been granted to the undersigned, all persons having claims or demands against said estate are requested to present the same, and those indebted thereto to make payment to me. ROBERTA SHAW, Executrix. Petitioner, BEAVER COUNTY, Pa. or DANIEL NEELY, Beaver, Beaver County, Pa. jan17-6t

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RESOURCES. Loans and Discounts... \$196,365 12 Overdrafts... 2,968 40 U. S. Bonds to secure circulation... 120,000 00 U. S. Bonds and Securities on hand... 15,000 00 Due from National Banks... 2,119 86 Due from State Banks and Bankers... 1,058 79 Banking House... 14,374 54 Furniture and fixtures... 2,976 68 Current expenses... 2,298 63 Premiums... 173 21 Cash Items—Stamps... 1,433 21 Bills of other National Banks... 6,260 00 Fractional Currency, (including nickels) 70 39 Specie—Gold... 5,720 80 Legal Tender Notes... 38,120 00 \$388,546 79

LIABILITIES. Capital Stock... \$200,000 00 Surplus Fund... 22,281 88 U. S. Bonds... 3,219 34 Exchange... 3,566 87 Interest... 1,886 79 Profit and Loss... 340 31 National Bank circulation... 106,385 40 Dividends unpaid... 1,081 34 Individual Deposits... 88,920 83 Due to National Banks... 2,015 76 Due to State Banks and Bankers... 8,423 83 \$388,546 79

State of Pennsylvania, ss I, Edward Hoops, Cashier of Beaver County, do solemnly affirm that the above statement is true to the best of my knowledge and belief. EDWARD HOOPS, Cashier. Subscribed before me this 14th day of January, 1873. MILES TOWNSEND, N. P. Correct—Attest: R. E. HOOPES, R. B. EDGAR, Directors. jan17

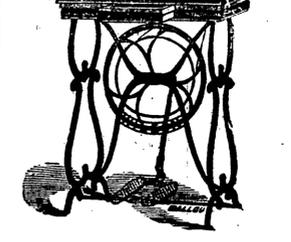
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