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## The Bloomfield Times.

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### THE PRETTY FOUNDLING.

A Story of the Reign of Louis XVI.

BY F. DELACY.

“ONE cup more, comrades and then boot and saddle. Hallo, landlord! another bottle of your Frontignac, and send the pretty bar-maid with it; do you hear?”

Such were the exclamations of a sergeant of the queen's dragoons, as he sat with some of his companions at a little table within a vine-trellised arbor at a door of the “Bunch of Grapes,” a small inn of the village of St. Luce. Half a dozen of them they were—hard-riding, fighting men, powdered and mustached, plunged in heavy jack-boots and flanked by enormous sabres. Their horses were picketed at a little distance.

Near them, at another table, were three or four men in the garb of peasants. Of this group, two young men eyed the soldiers curiously and admiringly; a third sat listlessly with his head resting on his hands and his elbows resting on the table; while the fourth man—a man passed the middle age—seemed chiding his companion for his despondency.

Sergeant Bras de Fer seconded his call for refreshments by hammering vigorously on the table with his fist, and in a few moments a very pretty girl of some sixteen years, with a keen black eye, a red lip, a small ankle, and a neat dress admirably adjusted to her symmetrical figure, made her appearance with a bottle on a small tray, and set it before the sergeant, dropping a slight courtesy as she did so.

The sergeant looked at the girl before he applied himself to the bottle, an unusual thing for Sergeant Cassar Bras de Fer, whose worship of Bacchus generally preceded his devotion to Venus.

“By the soul of my father!” said he, this girl is handsome enough for a colonel's lady. What's your name, my dear?”

“Marie,” replied the young girl bridling up.

“Old Boniface's daughter, eh?”

The girl looked down and shook her head.

“My dear! you ought to be a duchess. But high born or low born, Marie, you must give an old soldier one kiss to sweeten the cup he is about to drain to your bright eyes.”

With these words the sergeant rose and offered to salute the rustic beauty, but the latter, with the color mounting to her face, dealt the soldier so vigorous a slap that she left a full impression of her little hand upon his weather-beaten cheek. Then turning, she regained the house at a bound.

“Sacredieu!” cried the sergeant, as he sat down again, sulkily. “What a tigress! That clip made me see more stars than ever the astronomer royal discovered through his telescope. It served me right though, so here's her health—all the same as if she had been more kind to me.”

The young man at the other table, whose mournful apathy we have noted, had not remained an indifferent spectator of this scene. When Marie made her appearance, his eyes kindled, and his glance was riveted upon her beautiful but somewhat angry countenance. When she repulsed and punished the soldier's familiarity, a smile parted his lips; and when she vanished into the inn, he rose, immediately followed and rejoined her.

“Dear Marie,” said he, “you cannot refuse me one word.”

“What would you have, Gaspar?” replied the girl, rather impatiently.

“I love you—love you distractedly. The last time I spoke of my passion, you fled from me—”

“Hush, hush!” said Marie. “It is useless for you to persecute me thus. I told you that your feelings were not reciprocated. If you do not forbear this language, we must cease to be friends.”

“O, Marie, do not deprive me of all hope! Let me hope that my patient, respectful attentions will finally produce a favorable result.”

“Never, Gaspar Morlain. My heart is untouched by love. If I could feel otherwise, you would be the object of my affect-

ions. When I love, it must be above and not beneath myself.”

“I know that I am only a peasant,” answered Gaspar, bitterly; “but what are you?—an orphan whose parentage is unknown, the adopted child of an innkeeper.”

“My parentage may not always be unknown,” replied Marie. “Perhaps my parents are yet living—perhaps they may acknowledge and claim me—yes! I may live to shine in another sphere, to take my rank among the titled and the great. Something in my heart tells me I was not destined always to move in this low sphere.”

“You have beauty, grace, and accomplishments enough for any rank, Marie,” replied the peasant, sadly; “and it may be that your heart—your instincts, have not deceived you. And yet the time may come when you will think of poor Gaspar, who was your friend—your lover, whom you will never see again.”

“Never see you again, Gaspar?” exclaimed Marie, in a gentle tone, “why what do you mean by that? You are not surely going to leave St. Luce?”

“This is no place for me,” replied the young man, sorrowfully. “I have indulged in dreams here that never can be realized. It is better I should change the scene.”

“You will think better of this idle purpose,” answered Marie.

Gaspar shook his head sadly, timidly raised the hand the beautiful young girl abandoned, to his lips, and without trusting himself with a word more, left the little inn.

The party of dragoons had risen from the table, and were tightening their saddle-girths, preparatory to mounting. Gaspar went directly to the sergeant.

“Sergeant,” said he, “I want to speak a word to you.”

“Be brief, then, my good fellow,” replied the soldier, “for in half an hour I must report to Capt. Fontaine, who is now paying his respects to the Baroness de Montfort, at her chateau hard by, where our company has halted.”

“Is your troop full, sergeant?”

“Have you an idea of serving?”

“I have.”

“You are a well-built fellow,” said the sergeant, running his keen eye up and down the person of the countryman. “Can you ride?”

“There isn't a horse within twenty miles that can unseat me.”

“Good! We want such men. It is a great favor to serve in the queen's dragoons; but I like you, and a word from me to the captain will do the business. I suppose all you care about, is riding a fine horse, and playing the beau in country quarters.”

“Not so, sergeant; I thirst for active service. The more dangerous the better.”

“Good again! you're a lad after my own heart. Harkye!” continued the sergeant, speaking in a lower tone, “we are like enough to have sharp work on hand ere long. The rascally lower classes are getting mutinous, just because they have to pay taxes and live without bread—the beasts! Our good Louis XVI is for temporizing with the rascals, but the queen, whose name we bear—God bless her! the idol of the army,—is for sharper measures, and the queen will carry the day, be sure of it. She is concentrating her troops at Versailles; and when the word is given to bleed these rascally Parisians, we shall have the post of honor; our sabres will not rust in our scabbards, be sure of it.”

“Then, sergeant, I am yours.”

“Your hand on it, my boy,” replied Bras de Fer. “As luck would have it, here's a mount for you—a wild devil of a Limousin, which we have orders to break in for the colonel's use—but not a dragoon of us has been able to keep his back. If you can ride him to the Chateau de Montfort, the captain will accept you sure.”

“I ask nothing better.”

While they were saddling and bridling the wild Limousin, Gaspar exchanged a few words with the friend whom we have briefly noticed as being his companion at the table.

“So you have enlisted in the company of cut-throats,” said the latter, sarcastically.

“In the hope of having my own throat cut,” said Gaspar.

“And all because a conceited girl didn't fancy you. Well, you are wise, Gaspar. Disappointed love has made you a tool of the aristocracy; and when we meet again, I may be in the ranks of the people with a pike in my hands, and the first stroke of your sabre may be at the head of your old companion.”

“You know me better than that, Guillaume,” replied the young peasant, re-

proachfully. “We, at least, can never be enemies. And I conjure you by our old friendship, if anything happens to her—to Marie,—you will let me know it at Versailles, where I understand, our regiment is to be quartered. Promise me this.”

“I promise it,” said Guillaume, sulkily, “though the best thing you can do is to forget her entirely.”

“Forget her!” cried the young man, with a sigh, “ah! you little know the impossibility which you counsel.”

Guillaume shrugged his shoulders with a sarcastic smile.

“Come, my boy,” said the sergeant, “your horse is ready.”

Gaspar vaulted into the saddle. A furious contest ensued between the horse and rider, but the fiery charger found he had met his match at last. After a protracted struggle, Gaspar conquered his fierce spirit, and before the file reached Chateau de Montfort, the animal knew his rider and obeyed him. The triumph won him the respect of his new companions, and saved him from the jeers and indignities usually visited upon the raw recruit. Gaspar had fairly won his way into the queen's dragoons.

An affair so trifling as the loss of a linch-pin often produces important results. If mail axles and boxes had been invented at the period of which we write, the off-hind-wheel of the Baroness de Montfort's carriage would not have been off in two senses, and that distinguished lady would not have been compelled to seek refuge in the “Bunch of Grapes;” while the accident was being repaired. She would not have been deeply interested in the elegant manners and beauty of Marie, and would not have had an interview with our friend Guillaume, who was supposed to know more about the pretty maid of the inn than any of the habitual frequenters of the establishment, Bonneville, the innkeeper, refusing to communicate any intelligence respecting his adopted daughter.

The old Baroness de Montfort was one of the proudest aristocrats in France. Her family could be traced beyond the flood, and a very old picture, preserved in her collection, presented Noah going into the ark, carrying a bundle under his arm, labelled, “papers of importance belonging to the De Montfort family.” She regarded commoners as being of a different and inferior species, and regarded it as a condescension even to look at a peasant. But she was as curious as she was proud, and now stooped so low as to speak to our friend Guillaume.

“The girl, Marie,” said the duchess, “is you say, not the daughter of M. Bonneville?”

“No, madame; only the adopted daughter.”

“How long has she been here?”

“From her earliest infancy, madame.”

“Have you any reason to suppose that her parents were above the lower order in rank, my good man?”

“Yes, madame.”

“State your reasons.”

“Sixteen years ago, madame—Marie is now sixteen—observe the coincidence—a lady, a great lady, madame, no other than the Countess de Rosefont, came here from Paris very privately, and took lodgings at this inn.”

“The Countess de Rosefont! I knew her well. About that time, she left Paris, and it was said, France, for reasons that were never divulged. Some said, they were political, but others, who knew best, that she had married beneath her rank some low fellow of a physician, or merchant or something of that sort, and was compelled to go to the West Indies to conceal her disgrace.”

“Well, madame, when she left, I was secretly a witness to an interview she had with the landlady. In parting, she said to her: ‘I leave in your hands a sacred deposit, guard it till I come to reclaim it. The money I deposit with you will amply repay your trouble.’”

“Go on, my good man,” cried the baroness, eagerly.

“A few days afterwards, madame, little Marie made her appearance in the arms of the landlady.”

“I see it all,” cried the baroness.

“Marie is the daughter of my old friend, the Countess de Rosefont, heiress of an immense fortune. The husband of the countess is dead, and she is now on the eve of returning to France. She must not find her daughter in this low inn, in the capacity of a servant. Do you think Bonneville knows anything of this affair?”

“I think not, madame. Mrs. Bonneville, now in heaven I trust, ruled him with a

rod of iron, and managed everything in her own way in her own house. I am quite sure she passed off Marie on him as a foundling.”

“That will do, my good man. You can go now, and pray be discreet, and don't say a word of this to any living soul, until the hour arrives when I decide to make it public. And here are a couple of louis for your trouble.”

The baroness now sought an interview with Bonneville, and told him she was very much interested in his daughter, and offered to take her to Paris with her, and give her a situation in her own household. Bonneville, who was very much attached to Marie, at first refused to listen to the project, and when he imparted it to the young girl herself, he found to his poignant disappointment, that she was as eager to quit his roof, under such brilliant auspices, as he was to retain her. Therefore, with a sorrowful heart, he was compelled to assent to the proposal of the baroness, and Marie was directed to convey the intelligence to that lady.

When she entered the baroness' room the latter rose and took both her hands.

“My dear girl,” she said, “I am so delighted that you are willing to come and live with a poor old woman.”

“Willing, madame?” replied Marie, blushing, “I am overpowered at the honor.”

“I am deeply your debtor, my dear,” said the old baroness. “And don't think I design to make a servant of you. Not at all, my dear; you shall be my companion. You shall change this sordid dress for the garb of a lady. You shall queen it in satin and brocades. That is beautiful hair of yours, but, without powder, perfectly odious. You have too high a color; but late hours and dissipation will soon give you a more genteel complexion that patches will render perfectly dazzling. And who knows I may get you presented at court?”

Powder, patches, brocade, the court! Marie was ready to fall down and worship the benevolent old fairy who promised her those splendors. Without a sigh, she bade adieu to the humble old roof that had sheltered her infancy and girlhood, the good old man who had been a father to her, and Guillaume, who had always given her the very best, though not always the most palatable advice, and entered the gilded carriage that was to carry her to Paris—dear Paris—the capital of fairy land.

The Baroness de Montfort was as good as her word. All the adornments and accomplishments that money could command were lavished on her young protegee. She dressed, powdered and patched like a duchess. A willing and ready pupil, she soon learned to dance with a grace that would have made a sensation in a royal ball-room. Then it was that the baroness presented her to a select circle of her male and female friends, to whom she imparted in confidence the secret of Marie's birth. The Dowager Duchess de Longueville thought her perfectly enchanting; the old Countess de Vautrieu admired her; the baroness' nephew, made up his mind to sacrifice himself, and to marry the young heiress.

Meanwhile, Guillaume had, according to his promise, acquainted his young friend, Gaspar, with the change in Marie's fortune, and enlarging on her pride and ingratitude, urged him more strongly than ever to forget her. But the young dragoon was too deeply in love for that. Whenever he could obtain leave of absence he posted to Paris, and hovered about the hotel of the baroness, in the hope of getting a glimpse of his early and only love. But he was disappointed. Once he saw her at a carriage window, and dared to bow to her—he, a common dragoon, and she a lady of the land. She did not even know him, either because his uniform had disguised him, or change of circumstances had changed her heart. So he went back to the barracks more sorrowful than ever.

And now, one evening the elegant hotel of the Baroness de Montfort was in the wildest confusion. The long-expected Countess de Rosefont had actually arrived, and the Dowager Duchess de Longueville, who thought Marie perfectly enchanting, and the Countess de Vautrieu, who admired her, and Captain Fontaine, of the queen's dragoons, who had secretly resolved to marry her, were assembled in the *salon*, to meet the distinguished exile after her long absence. Marie was kept back for the proper moment.

After the warmest eulogiums and compliments, the baroness approached the subject nearest her heart.

“My dear countess,” she said with a mysterious smile, “you are among friends here, and can speak with the utmost con-

fidence. We all know of your visit to St. Luce, and your sojourn at the little inn, just before you sailed for the West Indies.”

“Well, madame,” cried the Countess de Rosefont.

“We all know,” continued the baroness, “about the ‘precious deposit’ you left with the landlady. It is here in my possession.”

“In your possession?” cried the countess.

“Yes,” cried the baroness; “behold!”

This was the preconcerted signal for the appearance of Marie. A door was thrown open, and she rushed into the countess' arms, crying: “Mother—dear mother!”

As soon as possible, the countess extricated herself from the embrace.

“What pleasantries is this?” she exclaimed.

“Pleasantries?” retorted the baroness, warmly. “Do you deny your own daughter?”

“My daughter?” cried the countess, in infinite disdain. “I never had a daughter! The deposit I left with the innkeeper's wife at St. Luce, was a collection of political papers which would have compromised me with the government. If you have those, I shall be obliged to you for restoring them; as for this young lady, I know nothing at all about her!”

“Then she's only a commoner after all!” said the Duchess de Longueville, in infinite disgust, “I always thought she had the air of one.”

“And to pass herself off as one of us! what shocking impudence!” exclaimed the Countess de Vautrieu.

“And to endeavor to entangle me into an alliance!” cried Captain Fontaine. “What infamy!”

“And to impose on my good-natured credulity!” shrieked the baroness, as soon as she could find a voice. “It was all a plan of imposture concocted by your low set at the tavern!” she added, addressing Marie. “But this roof shall not shelter you another night!”

Pride was the grand defect of Marie's character; but now, when the first agony of disappointment was over, it did her good service. Drying hastily her scalding tears, she returned the glance of the baroness with one as haughty and imperious as her own.

“Fear not, madame; nothing could tempt me to stay another night under your roof. I now see that low and sordid passions are not the heritage of the poor; and that nobler hearts beat beneath the coarse garments of the lowly, than the silks and satins of the higher born. Farewell, madame. I will not stoop to question the motives of your kindness; I thank you for it your insinuations and charges I repel with scorn!”

With the air of a duchess, the maid of the inn swept from the apartment. The lackeys in waiting were astonished to see her pass into the street in full dress; but no servant dared, in those days, to question the caprices of the great. It was not till she was alone in the darkness of the street—alone in that huge, heartless city, that her courage deserted her, and that she exclaimed aloud in the bitterness of her heart: “Ah! who in this wide world will protect me?”

“One who never will desert you!” replied a voice.

It was that of the faithful Gaspar, who, while his comrades slept, kept up his hopeless watch over the dwelling-place of Marie. This night his devotion was destined to be rewarded.

Taking Marie to a place of safety for the night, he obtained leave of absence, and the next day conducted her to her former home, where she was warmly welcomed by the old landlord, and where she soon learned to look back on the frivolities of city life with the contempt which they merited.

And now she for the first time learned the history of her parentage. It seems that Mrs. Bonneville had a young sister who had when quite young been betrayed, and who had died in giving birth to Marie. This child who had thus been thrown upon the care of her aunt, had been as carefully brought up as though her own child, and the secret of her mother's disgrace had been concealed from the daughter, and was now told her only to prove to her how vain and foolish it was to search for happiness out of the sphere in life to which she properly belonged.

Awakened thus rudely from her ambitious dreams, to find herself a foundling, on the ocean of life, her fall had been broken by the tender sympathy and love of Gaspar, who had proved so true under every trial, and the gratitude she owed him, shortly ripened into love. He therefore soon managed to leave the service and returned to the village when the young couple were married and the landlord relinquished to them the care of the inn.