# The Helmet of Navarre

A STORY OF LOVE AND ADVENTURE BY BERTHA RUNKLE

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CHAPTER XXX.

Occupied in wrangling with the Mables, with the soldiers over politos and the armies I awaited in a shedy corner of the court the condusion of formalities. I had just seclared that King Henry would be Paris within a week, and was on he point of getting my crown cracked for it, when, as if for the very purapproached rapidly, eyes straight in fore the potent name of Mayenne bars tront of him, heeding us no whit; all the loungers turned to stare pessing us without a glance. But the at the table some high officials, perall d'Auvray bespoke him.

M. de Lorraine! Any news?" He started and turned to us in half-absent surprise as if he had not known of our presence, nor, indeed, guite realized it now. He was both sale and rumpled, like one who has not closed an eye all night.

No. monsieur, unless His Grace has information. We have heard

"And the woman?" "Sticks to it mademoiselle told her Dever a word."

Lucas stood still, his eyes travel- paper. tog dully over the group of us, as he expected somewhere to find At the same time he was not the least thinking of us. He lookd straight at me for a full minute before he awoke to my identity.

"Yes. M. de Lorraine," I said with all the respectfulness I could muster, which may not have been much. Considering our parting, I was ready for any violence. But after the first mement of startlement he regarded me in a singularly lack-lustre way, while he inquired without apparent resentment how I came there. With M. le Duc de St. Quentin, I grinned at him. 'We and M. de

Mayenne are friends now. I could not rouse him even to cursocity, it seemed. But he turned abruptly to the men with more life than he had yet shown. "You've not told this fellow?"

"We understand our orders, monsteur," d'Auvray answered, a bit huffed Now this was eminently the place

for me to hold my tongue, but of course I could not. "They had no need to tell me, M. de Lorraine. I know quite well what

the trouble is. I know rather more about it than you do yourself." He confronted me now with all the fire I could ask. "What mean you, whelp?"

"I mean mademoiselle. What else should I mean?"

"What do you know?" "Everything." "Her whereabout?"

"Her whereabouts." He had his hand to his knife by this I abated somewhat of my drawl

to may, still airily: "Go ask M. de St. Quentin. He's here He'll be so glad to see you.

"Certes. He's closeted now with M. Mayenne. They're thicker than prothers. Go see for yourself, M .-

"Where is mademoiselle?" "Bafe. She's to marry the Comte de Mar to-morrow."

He stared at me for one moment, weighing whether this could be true; then without further parley he shot rato the house. "Is that true?" d'Auvray demand-

Their tongues loosened now, they Gooded me with questions concerning mademoiselle, which I answered war-By as I could, heartily repenting me by this of baiting Lucas. No good could come of it. He might even marn Mayenne from his bargain, upset all our triumph. I hardly heard what soldiers said to me; I was almost servous enough, wild enough, to dash apetairs after him. But that was no help. I stayed where I was, fevered with anxiety.

At the end of five minutes he came out of the house again, and without a giance at us went straight through who gate with the step and air of a was no easier in my mind, though eaw him gone.

Soon on his steps came a lackey to order M. de St. Quentin's horses and two musketeers to mount and ride with him. On reaching the door with the nags I discovered I was not to be of the party; our second steed must carry gear of mademoiselle's and her handwoman, a hard-faced peasant, sient as a stone. Though the men guizzed her, asking if she were glad get to her mistress again, whether had known all this time the lady's whereabouts, she answered no single word, but busied herself seeing the horse loaded to her notion. Presently, in the guidance of Pierre, mon-

"You stay, Felix, and go to the Bastille for your master. Then you will wait at the St. Denis gate for Vigo with horses.

"Is all right, monsieur?" I had to ask as I held his stirrup. "Is all right? Lucas"-

His face had been a little clouded as he came down the stairs, and now it darkened more, but he answered: "Quite right, Achates, M. de Maycans stands to his word. Lucas avail-

He stood a moment frowning. Then his countenance cleared up. "My faith! I have enough to gladden me without fretting that Lucas is alive. Fare you well, Felix. You are like to reach St. Denis as soon as I. My son's horse will not lag." He sprang to the saddle with a smiling salute to his guardians, and

the little train clattered off. Pierre came to my elbow with an open paper - the order signed and sealed for M. de Mar's release. "Here, my young cockerel, you and

d'Auvray are to take this to the Bastille, and it will be strange if your master does not walk free again. His Grace bids you tell M. de Mar he

remembers Wednesday night under-

"And I remember Tuesday night in the council-room, Pierre," I was beginning, but he cut me short. Even now that I was in favor he risked ne mention of his disobedience. He packed me off with d'Auvray on the instant; I had no chance to ask him whether he suspected us yesterday. Sometimes I have thought he did, but I am bound to say he gave us no look

D'Auvray and I walked straight across Paris to the many-towered Bastille. It seemed a little way. Beflew open; a sentry on guard in the court led us into a small room all stone, floor, walls, ceiling, where sat haps the governor of the prison himself. He was an old campaigner, grizzled and weather-beaten, his right sleeve hanging empty. An interesting figure, no doubt, but I paid him scant attention, for at his side stood Lucas. "I come on M. de Mayenne's busi-

ness," he was expostulating, vehem-"Any news here?" he made Norman ent, yet civil. "I suppose he did not think it necessary to write the order, since you know me. "The regulations, M. de Lorraine"

-The officer broke off to demand of our escort, "Well, what now?" I went straight up to him, not waiting permission, and held out my

"An order, if it please you, monsieur, for the Count de Mar's release. Lucas's hand went out to snatch and crumple it; then his clenched fist dropped to his side. It seemed as if his eyes would blacken the paper with their fire.

"Just that-the requisition for M. de Mar's release," the officer told him, looking up from it. "All perfectly regular and in order. In five minutes, M. de Lorraine, the Comte de Mar shall be before you. You may have all the conversation you wish. Lucas's face was as blank as the

"I am a soldier, and a soldier's orders must be obeyed," the officer went on to explain, evidently not caring to offend the general's nephew. "Without the written order I could not admit your brother of Guise. But now you can have all the conversation you desire with M. de Mar." Lucas's face did not change save to

scowl at the very name of his brother Guise. He said curtly, "No, I must get back to His Grace," and, barely bowing, went from the room. "Now, I don't make that out," the keeper muttered in his beard. That Lucas should be in one moment cured

of his urgent need of seeing the Comte de Mar was too much for him, but no riddle to me. I knew he had come to stab M. Etienne in his cell. It was his last chance and he had missed it. I feared him no longer, for I believed in Mayenne's faith. My master once released, Lucas could not hurt

What was as much to the point, the officer had no doubt of Mayenne's good faith. He went with his paper into an inner room, where we caught sight through the door of big books with a clerk or two behind them, and in a moment appeared again with a

"Since the young gentleman's a count I'll do turnkey's office myself," he said, his grim old battlement of

This was our day; from Mayenne down everybody went out of his way to please us. I was suddenly emboldened by his manner.

"Monsieur, perhaps it is preposterous to ask, but might I go with you?" He looked at me a moment, surpris-

"Well, after all, why not? You too. Sir Musketeer an you like. So the three of us, he and d'Auvray and I, went to rescue the Comte

corridor, row after row of heavy barred doors. The deeper we penetrated St. Denis, when, waving his hand in the mighty pile the fonder I grew of farewell, he turned his steps with the my friend Mayenne, by whose com- pious consciousness of duty done. laisance none of these doors would Only I looked back to see it; monshut on me. We climbed at last a sieur had forgotten his existence. steep turret stair winding about a huge fir trunk, lighted by slits of windows in the four-foot wall, and at to a door at the end, the bolts of which, invisible to me in the gloom, the veteran drew back with familiar

The cell was small, with one high window through which I could naught but the sky. For all furniture it contained a pallet, a stool, a bench that might serve as table. M. Etienne stood at the window, his arm crooked around the iron bars, gazing out over the roofs of Paris.

He wheeled about at the door's "I go to trial, monsieur?" he asked quickly, not seeing me behind the

"No. M. le Comte. The charge is cancelled. I come to set you free. I dashed in past the officer, anatch-

ing my lord's hand to kiss. "It's true, monsieur! You're free. It's all settled with Mayenne. Monsieur's seen him; he sets you free. He said, 'In recognizance of Wednesday

Incredulous joy flashed over his face, to give way to belief without

"Now I know she's married." "Nothing of the sort!" I fairly shouted at him, dancing up and down my eagerness. "She's to marry M. le Comte. She's at St. Denis with monsieur. She's to marry you, It's all arranged. Mayenne consents the king have but one life. That is forfeit, be -everybody. It's all settled. She marries you."

"I know it." Preposterous as it seemed, he could not discredit my fervor. He followed us out of the cell and through the fortress in a radiant daze. He half believed himself dreaming, I think, and feared to speak lest his happiness should melt. I fancied even that he walked lightly and gingerly, as if the slightest unwary mevement might break the spell. Not till we were sotually in the open door of the court, face to face with freedom, did he rouse himself to acknowledge the thing real. With a joyous laugh he urned to the keeper: "M. de La Motte, you should am- ."Have you summened your se

ploy your leisure in writing down trenchant essay on the Ingratitude of Man. Here are you host of the biginn in Paris a pile more imposing than the Louvre itself. Your hospitality is so eager that you insist on entertaining me, so lavish that you lodge me for nothing, would keep me without a murmur till the end of my life. Yet I, ingrate that I am, de-

part without a thank you!" "They don't leave in such case that they can very well thank me, most of my guests," La Motte answered with a dry smile. "You are a fortunate man, M. de Mar." "M. le Comte, will you come quiet-

ly with me to the St. Denis gate?" d'Auvray asked him. "Or must I borrow a guard from M. de La Motte?" M. Etienne's whole face was smiling; not his lips alone, but his eyes. Even his skin and hair seemed to have taken on a brighter look. He glanced at d'Auvray in surprise at the absurd question. "I will come like a lamb, M.

We saluted La Motte and walked merrily out into the Place Bastille. I think I never felt so grand as when passed through the noble sally-port, the soldiers making no motion to inder us, but all saluting as if we owned the place. It had its advantage, this making friends with May-

The first thing my lord did, still in the shadow of the prison, was come to terms with d'Auvray. "See here, my friend, why must you put yourself to the fatigue of escort-

ing me to the gate?" "Orders, monsieur. The generalduke wants to know that you get into no mischief between here and the gate. You are banished, you understand, from Paris." "I' pledge you my word

make no attempt to elude my fate. I go straight to the gate. But with all politeless to you, Sir Musketeer, I a mere happening. Was I a babe to ly from not three feet off came the could dispense with your company.' "I am a soldier, and a soldier's orders must be obeyed," d'Auvray quoted the keeper's words, which seemed to have impressed him. "However, M. le Comte, if I had something to look at I could walk ten paces behind you and look at it." "Oh, if it a question of something to play with!" M. Etienne laughed.

and M. Etienne linked arms with me. the gendarmes, I fancy, when they

But I could not stand it "I'll go back and see, monsieur."
"No," Lucas said, striding back from the foot of the next flight, "Is that necessary? I thought we light settle our affairs without delay. We saw a glint in the gloom, menconfess myself impatient. Your sentiments for once

sieur's bared sword "You will go neither one of you. "It is understood you bring your spaniel with you. He will watch that I do not spring on you before you are ready," Lucas said with a fine sneer. "And who is to watch me?" "Oh, monsieur's chivalry is no-

torious. Precautions are unnecessary. It is your privilege, monsieur, to ap-"The spot is near at hand. Where

you slew Pontou is the fitting place "It is fitting for you to die in your own house," Lucas amended. Without further parley we turned into the Rue des Innocents on our

way to that of the Coupejarrets. Now, I had been on the watch from the first instant for foul play. I had suspected something wrong with the sword, but my lord, who knew, had accepted it. Then, when Lucas proposed no seconds, I had felt sure of a trap. But his inviting my presence at the place of our choice smelt like

M. Etienne remarked casually to

"Faith, there'll soon be as many ghosts in the house as you thought you saw there-Grammont, Pontou and now Lucas. What ails you, lad! Footsteps on your grave?"

But it was not thoughts of my grave caused the shudder, but of his. For of the three men of the lightning flash the third was not Lucas, but M. Etienne. What if the vision were, after all, the thing I had at first believed it-a portent? An appearance not of those who had died by steel, but of those who must. One, two, and now the third.

Next moment I almost laughed out in relief. It was not Pontou I had seen, but Louis Martin. And he was living. The vision was no omen, but shiver so?

And yet Martin, if not dead, was like to die. He was in duress as a Leaguer spy, to await King Henry's will. All who entered this house lay under a curse. We should none of us pass out again save to our tombs. We entered the well-remembered

little passage, the well-remembered court, where shards of glass still D'Auvray was provided with toys, strewed the pavement. Some one-



We passed through corridor after the soldier out of earsnot behind/wa. He followed till we were in the Rue

ing marched through the streets by the top turned down a dark passage a musketeer," M. Etienne explained as we started; "but I can't talk before him. Tell me, Felix, the story if you

would have me live. And I told him till we almost ran blindly into the tower of the St. Bende St. Quentin had recently passed

out, but that nothing had been seen of his equerry. No steeds were here "Well, then, we'll go have a glass. But if Vigo doesn't come soon, by my

faith, I'll walk to St. Denis!" But that promised glass was never drunk, nor were we to set out at once for St. Denis, for in the door of the wineshop we met Lucas. I had dismissed him from thought, as something out of the reckoning, dead and done with, powerless as

yesterday's broken sword. I thought him gone out of our lives when he went out of prison-gone forever, like last year's snow. And here within the hour we encountered him, a naked sword in his hand, a smile on his lips. He said, in the flower of his easy in-

"Tuesday I told you your hour had come. It is here. "At your service," quoth my lord. "Then it needs not to slap your

"You insult me safely, Lucas. You "You think so?"

Lucas held out the bare sword, hilt toward us. "Monsieur had a box for weapon yesterday, but as I prefer to fight in the established way I ventured to provide him with a sword. "Thoughtful of you, Lucas. Is this

the make of sword you elect to He was bending the blade to try its temper. Lucas unsheathed his own.

"M. de Mar may have his cheice."

M. de Mar prefessed himself satisfied with the blade given him.

Grammont left swinging. "We go in by your postern, Felix," my master said. "M. Lucas, I confess prefer that you go first.

ucas put his back to the wall. "Why go further, M. le Comte?" "Do you long for interruption?" "We were not noticed coming in. The street was quiet."

He crossed the court abruptly and went down the alley into the street. "Not a soul in sight," he said, coming back. "I think we shall not be Still, it is wise to use every care. We will fight, if you like,

He opened with his knife the fastened shutter and leaped lightly in. Monsieur followed. I, the last, was for closing the shutter, but he stop-

"No; leave it wide. I have no fancy for a walk in pitch darkness "Do we fight here?" Lucas asked, facing us in the wide, square hall,

"We can let in more light." "You seem anxious, my friend, to attention to your whereabouts. As I am host I designate the fighting ground. Upstairs, if you please." I suppose you insist on my walking first." Lucas sneered. "I request it, monsieur."

"With all the willingness in the world," his rogueship answered, setting foot straightway on the stair and mounting steadily, never turning to see how near we followed or what we did with our hands. His trust made me ashamed of our lack of it. almost believed we did him justice. Yet at heart I could not bring myself to credit him with any

We went up one flight, up two. We had left behind us the twilight of the lower story, had not reached dawn again at the top. We walked in black-ness. Suddenly I halted. "Monsieur !"

"What?"

"I heard a noise." "Of course you did. The place is full of rate." "It was no rat. It was footsteps. We all three held still "There, monsieur. Don't you hear?"
"Nothing, Felix; your teeth are

hattering. Cross yourself and come

fush! If we show ourselves there'll We kept still, all three leaning over the banister, peering down to where

the white tiles picked themselves out of the floor of the hall far beneath. We could see them better than we could see one another. All was silent. Not so much as a rustle came up from below. Suddenly Lucas made step or two as if to pass us. It Etienne wheeled about, raising his sword toward the spot where from his footfalls we supposed Lucas to be.

"You show an eagerness to get away from me, M. de Lorraine." "Not in the least," M. de Mar. This alarm is but Felix's poltroonry, yet it prompts me to go down and close

the shutter. "On the contrary, you will go up with me. Felix will close the shut-

They confronted each other, vague shapes in the darkness, each with drawn sword. Then Lucas raised his

Lucas first, they mounted the last flight of stairs and their footsteps passed along the corridor to the room at the back. I, as I was ordered, set my face down the stairs.

They might mock me as they liked, but I could not get it out of my head that I had heard steps below. Cautiously, with a thumping heart, I stole from stair to stair, pausing at the bottem of the flight. It must have been my silly fears. Resolved to choke them I planted my feet boldly on the next flight and descended, humming, to prove my ease, the rollicky tune of Peyrot's catch. Suddensoft singing:

Mirth, my love, and Folly dear-My knees knocked together and the breath fluttered in my throat. It seemed the darkness itself had given tongue. Then came a low laugh and the muttered words: "Here we are, M. de Lorraine. Are

you ready?" There was a stir of feet on the landing before me, behind the voice. The house, then, was full of Lucas's cutthroats, the first of them Peyrot. In the height of my terror I remembered M. Etienne's life too depended on my wits, and I kept them. I whispered, for whispering voices are hard to tell apart : "Not yet. The two of them are up

there. Keep quiet and I'll send the boy down. When you've finished him "As you say, monsieur. It is your

I turned, scarce able to believe my luck, and, not daring to run, walked upstairs again. Prick my ears as I might I heard no movement after me. Actually I had fooled Peyrot. I had gone down to meet my death and a tune had saved me.

When I reached the uppermost landing I rushed along the passage and into the room, flinging the door shut, looking and bolting it.

They had not begun to fight, but had busied themselves clearing the space of all obstacles. The table was pushed against the wall in the corner by the door; the chairs were heaped one on another at the end of the room. Both shutters were wide open. M. Etienne, bareheaded, in his shirt, stood at guard. Lucas was kneeling on the floor, picking up with scrupulous care some bits of a broken plate. He sprang to his feet at sight of me. "What is it?" cried M. Etienne. "Cutthroats. They'll be here in a

minute." Even as I spoke I heard tramping on the stairs below. My slam of the door had warned them that something

"Was that your delay?" M. Etienne shouted, springing at his foe. "I play to win!" Lucas answered, smiling.

The blades met; the men circled about and about. Lucas, though he preferred to murder, knew how to

We were doomed. With monsieur's sword for only weapon we could never hope to pass the gang. In another minute they would be here to batter the door down and end us. Our consolation lay in killing Lucas first. Yet as I watched I feared that M. Etienne, in the brief moments that remained to him, could not conquer him, so shrewd and strong was Lucas's fence. Must the scoundrel win? I started forward to play Pontou's trick. Lucas sought to murder us. Why not we him?

One flash from my lord's eyes and I retreated in despair. For I knew that did I touch Lucas M. Etienne would let fall his sword, let Lucas kill him. And the bravos were on the last flight.

Was there no escape? There were three doors in the room. One led to the passage, one to the closet, the third-I dashed through to find myself in a large empty chamber, a door wide open giving on the passage. Through it I could see the dusky figures of four men running up

I was across the room like an arrow and got the door shut and bolted before they could reach the landing. The next moment some one flung against it. It stood firm. Delaying only a moment to shake it, three of the four I could hear run to the further door, whence issued the noise of I, inside the wall, ran back too.

The combat still raged. Neither, that I could see, had gained the least advantage. Outside the murderers dashed themselves upon the door. I dragged at the heavy table, and

with a strength that amazed myself pushed and pulled it before the door. It would make the panels a little Was there no escape? None? I ran once more into the second cham-Its shutters were closed; I threw them open. There was no oth-

er door to the room, no hiding place. There was a chimney, but spanned a foot above the fireplace by two iron bars. The thinnest sweep that ever wielded broom could not have squee ed between them. In despair I ran to the window again. Top of the house as it was I thought I would sooner leap than be stabbed to death. I stuck my head out. It was the same window where I had stood when Grammont seized me. There, not ten feet way, eight at the most, but a little above me, was the casement of my garret in the

Amour de Dieu. Would it be pos-sible to jump and catch the sill. If I did I could scarce pull myself in.

the sign of the Amour de Dieu. And

there beside it stood a homespun fig-

I looked below me. There swung

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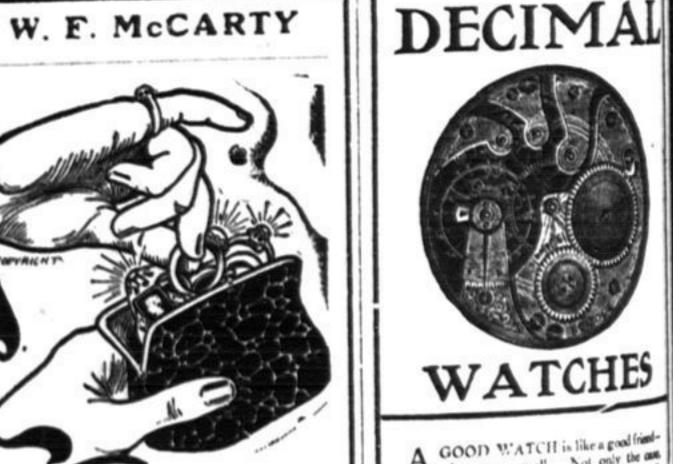
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no mistaking that bald pate. I yelled at the top of my lungs: He looked up, gaping at this voice

(Continued on Page 3.

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