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"can the poor be happy?" he asked,

"No." she muttered, "not while there are robbers in the land, and the poor are taxed till they starve. Monseigneur is in love. Did I not see him talk with the great lady in green?" she added suddenly. "Ah, if Monseigneur would listen to a poor girl he too could be

"Peace!" he commanded, but he was

women stole my lover from me as the robbers stole my cow, and I was sick. I wasted away, but the good God who sent me Monseigneur put it to my heart to go to the wise woman who lives at 'The Cock with the Spurs of Gold'--"

"The Cock-?" "Tis a new tavern in the woods by the village yonder," she replied samestly, "and a wise woman lives there. For one piece of silver she brought me back my lover. They say she is a witch, but she is no witch, for with the help of the good God she ented my sickness and changed my lover's heart so that once again he was as he had been." "Tush!" Andre interrupted, impa-

should go to the wise woman, and she will make him happy. It is so, it is so," "Adieu, my child, adieu!"

young and the fair and he wins them not by sorcery, but by his sword."

"Yes, a soldier of France." all the nobles of France were as Monseigneur there would be no unhappy women, no robbers, and no poor."

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for he had made a woman happy. And as he rode through the woods he could | daughter who had remained. Had she hear her singing as she had sung when | lived she would to-night have been just he had seen her first on te sleek back | two years older than Denise; had there of her spotted cow. And all the way to been no treason, she and not Denise Paris that song of a peasant wench | would have been mistress of that cha softly caressed his spirit, for it clinked | teau now called De Beau Sejour. pily to the echoes of the soul as might have clinked the golden spurs the cock in the woods of Versailles, ad it was fresh with the eternal fresh-Ceams of youth.

CHAPTER IV.

a the history of France.

Andre was standing in the churchthe landscape that he knew so well main of wood. Ten leagues away in stricken home from which he took is title, and whose meagre patrimony dembered with the debts of his anestors and his own barely sufficed to avide a living for the widowed other to whom that morning he had 4 good-bye and whom the English in e Low Countries might decide he appld never see again.

let it was not of his mother that he is thinking still less of the enchantdiscovered—one Mademoiselle holles she had proved to be, "La etite d'Etiolles," as that gay Lothario Duc de Richelieu called her, the aughter of a Farmer-General, a bourosie notorious for her beauty, her and her friendship with the wits. deed he had forgotten the rose-pink mity in the azure phaeton entirely. he was striving to pluck up courto face Denise and receive her an-

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Twinkling lights began to shine in the great chateau; its towers and gables insolent in the majesty of their beauty, strong in the might of their antiquity, challenged and defied him in the dusk. That was the chateau of his Denise, the Marquise de Beau Sejour whom he, gallant fool, rich only in his "I too was in love," she answered, noble pedigree, dared to love and hoped to win, Denise the richest heiress in France. Yet it had not been hers so long; its broad seignories were a thing of yesterday for her. Fifteen years ago she, as he, had been only the child of a vicomte as poor if as noble as himself. And Beau Sejour lay not here, but ten leagues away, a mile from Nerac, where that church spire hung its

cross above the horizon. The soft gloom of the growing dusk imaged for Andre at that moment the sombre pall of tragedy which twelve years ago had fallen on the great chateau. An ancient house, a venerated name had been its owner's; were not their achievements written in the chronicles of France? was not their origin lost in the twilight of dim ages far, so far away? Capets and Valois "But it is true," she persisted. "And | and Bourbons that house had seen com-# Monseigneur is in distress, he, too, ing and going on the throne, honor and fame and wealth and high en deavor had been theirs, and then shame and doom, swift, unexpected, ir-"Monseigneur will not forget. "The reversible. The story of their downfall cock with the Spurs of Gold,' in the had been his first lesson learned in budding manhood of the harshness of was a pity she was not pretty, this | Such a simple story, too. The wife of | where no one knew, and disowned by her husband she had died miserably. dor of the great Louis Quatorze, had in despair or madness plunged into heir, from remorse or consciousness of in Poland, whither he had gone to

the dim distance lay Nerac, the pover- bride before this sudden swoop upward on the ruins of another to the

high places of France. Comte de Beau Sejour had been rewardson in the cruelty of fate, in the bleak, bitter tragedy of baffled and unfulfilled

Smitten with a sudden pity, a sharp

been obliterated. But not even a wronged king had dared to remove the tombs with which that church was eloquent of the glories that had once been theirs. Yes, they lay there of right, but she, little Marie, cradled in splendor, who had prattled of "Dieu Le Ven- a promise, less-" geur," she, the daughter of a wanton and a traitor, lay here in the rain, and | rupted. the sheep and the goats browsed over her, and the sabots of those once her serfs and tenants made an insulting path over her grave. And up there another reigned in her place.

A traitor! Yes, his daughter deserved her fate. There should be no mercy

"What seek you, Monsieur le Vicom-

He started at the question. It was the Chevalier de St. Amant, boyish, in-"I was finding a lesson," Andre replied quietly.

"In a tombstone?" Andre explained. The Chevalier seemed impressed, for he went down on his knees and peered for some minutes at the weather-beaten stone "Poor child!" he muttered. "Poor

Andre was thinking the Chevalier was better than he had supposed, but his next action jarred harshly. Standing carelessly on the stone he gathered his cloak about him. "Ah, well," he remarked, with his dare-devil lightness, "it is perhaps more fortunate for you or me that little Marie is where

"For you or me?" Andre questioned peering into his young face. "The Marquise awaits you, Vicomte," he twitched his thumb towards the chateau, "perhaps you will understand better when you have seen her," and with a careless tip of his saucy hat he strode away.

seize that cloak and speak to him very straightly. "Pah!" he muttered, "It will do later. Perhaps it will not be necessary at all."

For one minute Andre burned

But it was with increased misgiving that he rode up to the chateau. Denise received him in the great hall, unconsciously reproducing the picture which was burnt into Andre's memory, for she stood with a certain sweet stateliness by the sculptured chimney-piece and a huge hound lay at her feet. Above her head the emblazoned scutcheon of the old house still adorned the noble carving-indeed you could not have destroyed the one without destroying the other-and the glad firelight which threw such subtly entrancing shadows on the dress and girlish figure of the young Marquise seemed to point with tongues of flame to that sublime motto, "Dieu Le Vengeur!" above her head.

Andre bowed and halted. Ambition passion, and hope conspired to choke him for the moment. How fair and no ble she was! yes, surpassingly fair and

Denise said nothing. She stared at the buckle of her slipper. "I have come for my answer," he said, in a low voice.

She met his pleading eyes fearlessly. "The answer is 'No,' " she replied, and her voice, too, was low, as if she could not trust it.

"No?" he repeated, half stunned. She simply bowed her head. "You mean it? Oh, Denise, you cannot mean it?"

"I have reflected and I mean it." "For always?"

"Yes." Andre stepped nearer. "I do not remind you, Denise," he said, speaking with a composure won by a mighty mastery of himself, "that I love you, that I have loved you since I could love any woman. If you would not believe it before I was taken prisoner, when I spoke in the woods of Versailles, you would not believe it now. Nor do I remind you that twelve months ago you spoke very differently. A lover and a gentleman does not speak of things when the answer has been 'No.' But I do ask you, before you say 'No,' always to remember that it was th

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that the answer should be 'Yes'"

yours even longer," she answered. asked, with a touch of passion, "do they make a promise, good faith, honor, less

"There was no promise," she inter-He bowed calmly. The gesture was

"And your reason, Denise?" "I said I would give you an answer, did not undertake to give reasons." "Certainly. May I plead, however, that perhaps, remembering the past, what you and I have been to each other since childhood, I have some right to ask?"

better than speech.

She placed her fan on the shelf of the chimney with sharp decision. The solent, though his tone was strangely | firelight flashed in her grey eyes. "I marry a man who does not love me."

words?" he questioned quickly. "You are a noble, Andre," she an- the motto "Dieu Le Vengeur!" swered; "the courtesy of a noble and a gentleman requires that when he demands a woman's hand in marriage he should profess to love her. For the but a woman finds the proof not in to think. He had always prided himwords but in deeds. You are a brave self on his knowledge of women; he soldier, but you do not love me. That | had imagined he knew Denise as well

things not fit for a girl to speak of to a man who has done her the henor to ask life of his and her class. He had gone spared both myself and you unneces. to swear that from this day onwards sary pain. Plainly then and briefly, no other woman, be she beautiful as when I take a husband I do not choose | the dawn, as enchanting as Circe, could to share what he professes is his love ever occupy five minutes of his with any other woman. That is my thoughts. And he meant it. Those reason and my answer in one."

ately, "it is not true." "You would deny it?" she cried, pas- devotion, a passion which gripped and sion too leaping into her voice. "Is satisfied body, soul, and spirit; she was that letter to the Comtesse des For- that without which life seemed un ges, one of my friends-my friends, meaning, empty, poor, despicable. But

handed it to him with hot scorn.

he said, somewhat lamely. twelve months ago, too, I suppose? The to expect than the love of a husband. right arm of her husband the Comte brave, loyal, faithful? It was unreasondes Forges is healed, but the wound- able, for men were men and women my God! the wound in his heart and were women. Yet here was a woman mine, that you can never heal. And she who did. is not alone. Does not Paris ring with the gallantries of the Vicomte de Ner- was the adamantine resolution in his act for aught I know there may be a breast, all the stronger because she | We wish to inform you that dozen husbands in England who have had scorned and defied him. Yet he lost their sword arm because Andre would win her in his way, not hers. de Nerac professed to love their Yes, he would conquer her against herwives." She checked herself and was self. For him life now meant simply calm again. "I thank you for the honor Denise-the heart and the soul and the

"Vicomte, I am your servant." behind her, but Andre intercepted her. "No," he said, "you do not leave me that he was young and a soldier, that yet. I, too, have something to say and there was war and a prize to be won.

walked back to her place by the fire- dreamed of as possible. And victory place. She was trembling now, and she would complete the change. So as he no longer looked him in the face. "As to the past," he said in a low voice, "I say nothing, for I deserve your reproaches. I have been foolish. wicked, unworthy of you. But there is which he was rudely awakened. no noble to-day at Versailles of whom the same could not be said. Men are men, and I have never concealed from you what I have been. But such things

they never will, and every women

"What then is?" she asked proudly. "I am poor, you are rich, but that is not the reason, either. Do not think I would dishonor you by supposing that I believed that, though some whom you call your friends say it is. No, the reason is that while I have been away, a prisoner, defenceless, silent, some one -" he paused, "some one has been poisoning your mind, some one who

hopes to take the place-" "Take care-" she interrupted. "You speak of the gossip of Paris. I will not tell you what the gossip of he said, freezingly "but before I take Paris and Versailles says, for you will hear it and more fitly from other lips than mine. But I say, that poisoner will

answer to me." She was about to speak, but check-

ed herself. cause I love you and I love no one else. You do not believe it. You ask for deeds, not words. In the future you shall have them. And second, because you, Denise, love me, yes, love me." "Have done, have done with this

mockery!" she cried. "Tell me," was his answer, "on your word of honor, that it is not so, tell me that you do not love me and never will, tell me that you love another and on my word as a gentleman I will never speak of love to you again."

Dead silence. Andre waited quietly. "I refuse," she said, slowly, picking the words, "to be questioned in this manner. But as you insist, I repeat-I do not love you.

Andre bowed. "One word more, Denise, if you please," he said, "one word and I leave your presence for ever." She drew herself up. "Yes," she said, "leave me for ever." But for all that she, as he, seemed spellbound to the

Andre deliberately drew from his pocket the letter that she had thrown in his teeth and faced her. "Thank you," he said, very calmly. "Now that I know you mean what you said, I, too, know what I must do." He walked

"Give me that letter," she said with a swift flash of command. "It belongs

"Pardon," he answered, quietly, "yesterday the Comte des Forges was killed by a friend of his whose honor he had betrayed. The letter belongs to the lady to whom it was written, the lady who will be the Vicomtesse de Nerac."

A faint cry escaped from Denise's lips. For the moment she leaned faint against the chimney-piece, white and

Andre looked at her, but he made no effort to offer her either sympathy or help. Then he walked back, Denise watching him, and flung the letter into the fire. Denise started, but she said nothing, though her great grey eyes twenty years have passed. Your Cuti- | were eloquent with half a dozen ques-

> "The letter has served its purpose," Andre said, "Adieu, Marquise!" "What does this-this trickery

mean?" she demanded, hotly. "You must forgive one who loves you," was the calm reply, "for love laughs at tricks. The Comte des Forges is alive and well: he has a wound in his shoulder which is and a scratch

"Then-then-" she cried and stop-Andre bowed most courteously. "You refused to believe me, Mademoiselle: returned the compliment and refused to believe you-and I proved it by a lover's trick, if you choose to call it such. That is all, but it is enough." "Ah!" She crumpled up the fan in

speechless indignation. "No, Denise," he said softly. "I shall not trouble you now or soon, but-" he had caught her hand-"you shall yet be mine, I swear it. You think you do not love me, but you shall be convinced-you shall."

He kissed her fingers with a tender refuse," she said, very distinctly, "to reverence. "Adieu, Marquise! I go to my duty and revenge," he said, and he "Then you do not believe my left her there under the spell of his feet, and the flames of fire pointing to

CHAPTER V.

Andre rode at a walking pace down honor you have done me I thank you, the slope to the village, for he wanted as himself. She was of his class, love-"No, it is not enough for me," he an- ly, high-spirited, proud, patriotic, and best of all a true woman. Hence it was "Very well." She took a step for a sore and surprising blow to his ward. "I had no desire to discuss pride to discover that she should reject his love because he had lived the her hand in marriage, and I would have to the chateau to confess everything, others, the shattered idols of a vanish A flush darkened his sallow cheek. ed past, had simply satisfied vanity, "It is not true," he protested passion- ambition, a physical craving. But Denise he really loved. She inspired a mon Dieu! - yours, or is it not?" She | why could not she see this-the difference between a fleeting desire and "It was written twelve months ago," the sincere homage of manhood to an ideal, between the gallant and the "And the duel which it caused is lover? What more had a wife a right

But he would-must-win her. That | + you have done me, but-" she offered spirit of Denise-the conquest of a him the stateliest, coldest curtesy, woman's will. The hot pulses of health and strength, of manhood, his noble She would have escaped by the door | blood and ambition throbbed responsive to the resolution. He thanked God you, Marquise, will be pleased to hear | Yet he also felt that this love meant something new, that it had transformed Their eyes met and then Denise him into something that he had never rode the fierce thoughts tumbled over each other in a foam of passion, in the sublime intoxication of a vision of new heaven and a new earth-from

He had halted for the moment at the door of the village inn. In the dingy parlor sat the Chevalier, one leg thrown over the table, a beaker in his do not destroy love. They cannot and hand resting on his thigh, while his other hand was stroking the chin of

> Andre kicked the door open. "Am disturbing you?" he said, pitching his hat off as if the parlor were his own. "Not in the least," the Chevalier replied without stirring, though the girl began to giggle with an affectation of alarmed modesty. "My wine is just | done"; he drained off the glass, "I will leave Toinette to you, Vicomte, for," he put on his hat, "it is time I returned to the chateau."

This studied insolence was exactly what Andre required. "I thank you," your place, you and I, Monsieur le Chevalier, will have a word first."

"As you please, my dear Vicomte, said the young man, swinging comfortably on to the table and peering at him from under his saucy plumes. "And I will tell you why. First be- "You will have much to say, I doubt not, for you must have said so little at the chateau. Run away, my child," he added to the wench, who was now staring at them both with genuine alarm in her coarse eyes, "run away." Andre closed the door. "You will not return to the chateau," he said quietly. "My dear Vicomte, you suffer from the strangest hallucinations, stupid

phantoms of the mind, if you-" "Perhaps," was the cold reply, "but the point of a sword is a reality which exercises any and every phantom." The Chevalier laughed softly.

"Yes," Andre continued. "I say it

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put an end to it for ever.

He gave her matted head a pat. It the world and the mystery of fate. wench, for she had a buxom figure. "A | the Marquis had run away with a lover, midier," he said lightly, "does not love a baseborn stranger gossip called him. wise women, Yvonne, he loves only the | The lover had deserted her, why and "Monseigneur is a soldier?" she ask- Her husband, a soldier and ambassa-"My lover too is a soldier, but not as ' treason, and had paid the traitor's pen-Monseigneur. Ah!" she whispered, "if alty on the scaffold. His only son and guilt, had perished by his own hand Andre left her there. His heart was | fight in the war. And here to-day at his my again though his purse was empty, feet a rough and stained tombston marked the neglected grave of the only

Denise's father for service to the state had been awarded the lands of the traitor; the old name for centuries noted in this soil had been annulled in less of spring and the immortal infancy; its blood was corrupted by the decree of the law, and by the King's will the new Marquis had carried to his new possessions the title of his old, that Beau Sejour yonder so The March sun was setting on the near to his own Nerac. The law and limlet of La Riviere, in the pleasant | the King so far as in them lay had deand of Touraine-Touraine the fit termined that the very name and memteme of so many noble chateaux, the ory of the ancient house should be cadle of so many of the proudest tra- | blotted out for ever. But blot out the ations and the most inspiring memor- chateau they could not. There it stood is of the romance of love and chivalry | haughty as of old, to tell to all what had once been, and the curious could still read here and there in its storied And of the hamlet, but it was not at | walls the arms and emblems, the scutcheons and shields of a family that he was looking, nor even up the | which had given nine Marshals to sope peyond, where the great Chateau | France, and in whose veins royal blood Beau Sejour shot its towers and had flowed. What did that matter now? anted turrets through its encircling To-day it belonged to Denise, once poor as he was, and destined to be his

> As Andre paced to and fro in the dusk the ghostly memories thickened. Twenty years ago as a boy he had ridden with his father to that chateau. He remmembered but two things, but he remembered them as vividly as yesterday. Over the chief gateway a splendid coat of arms had caught his boyish fancy and he had asked what the motto "Dieu Le Vengeur" might mean. "Why, father, there it is again," he had cried, for in the noble hall, above the famous sculptured chimney-piece, the first thing that caught the boy's eye was the scroll with those three words "Dieu Le Vengeur." And the second memory was of a little girl playing with a huge wolf-hound in the dancing firelight under that motto, a little girl with blue eyes and fair hair, innocent of the evil to come, playing in her hall which had seen kings and queens for guests. "Dieu Le Vengeur" she had repeated-"God will protect me," and they had all laughed. But had God portected her? Here was her grave at his feet. Andre now recalled his dying father's remark five years later. whom he had heard how his neighbor the ed with the treason-tainted marquisate. "That would have been yours, Andre, my son," he had said. And no one had understood, and he had died before he could explain, if explain he could. That, too, had been another bitter les-

anguish. Andre kneeled in the damp, tangled grass and peered at the tombstone which marked the humble resting-place of the dead, worse than dead, dishonored and infamous, "Marie Angelique Jeanne Gabrielle . . . " the rest was eaten away. But in the church close by lay the coffins of her ancestors, the crusaders and nobles. and marshals of France. The names had wish of your dead lather and of mine | for the poor Comte is always believing

"My father died five years ago, "Do the years alter their wish?" he

that some one is betraying his honor and Madame the Comtesse has a fickle heart. Yesterday I was his second, so

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