

# At Swords' Points;

OR,  
A SOLDIER OF THE RHINE.

By ST. GEORGE RATHBORNE

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### CHAPTER XXII.

#### Just Before the Explosion.

It was the British surgeon, Sir Noel. At sight of this man Paul felt a wave of relief sweep over him. Of course the sudden and unannounced arrival of Sir Noel upon the scene gave the major still another setback.

It seemed as though he were fated never to get those words of command beyond the portals of his lips. And he knew Sir Noel, too, knew that the foreign surgeon was in high favor with the commandant, even as he had been with Marshal MacMahon before the latter's state of health compelled him to relinquish the command to a successor.

What business had this Englishman here anyhow—no one had invited him, and it was none of his affair that the military authorities of the French stronghold on the Moselle chose to make an arrest.

Was Sir Noel alone? Paul could not hear the expected swish of garments such as might betray the coming of those who represented the gentler sex; but this was to be wondered at in the least, since the German guns kept up a pretty constant growling away off beyond the forts, and the explosion of shells grew more and more frequent in the streets, occasioning considerable excitement among the crowds.

At the same time some intuitive sense told him she was coming, this girl in whom his whole soul was wrapped up. Hildegard did not understand fully what message the white-faced nun brought Sir Noel in the hospital, but she caught a name, Paul's, and understood that he was in danger of his life, and had sent for the bluff, obliging Englishman to come to the rescue without delay.

When she saw him start forth perhaps she feared, poor girl, that the man she loved had been maimed by one of the exploding bombs and lay upon the street with shattered limbs, his life passing away.

Indeed, at such a time it was easy enough to imagine anything in the way of horrors. Unable to withstand the eager desire to be of some assistance to Paul in his hour of need, she had started after them.

Nothing had as yet occurred to change her ideas as to what had happened. So that when she reached the open doorway and glanced into the lighted room with eyes filled with expectations of seeing horrors, the first object upon which they rested was Paul, standing there apparently in a fair state of health, the shock to her nerves was severe indeed.

Doubtless the presence of the soldiers would explain the situation clearly enough, especially when she saw the bellicose attitude of the major. Sir Noel had partly lost his breath in his dash from the hospital and the succeeding hasty climb of a flight of stairs. Doubtless he managed to gather enough breath to address the major and ask what it all meant, and the gentlemanly character of his request again touched the major in his weak spot, politeness.

He begged to assure monsieur that he was only present in the discharge of duty, having received information of the most positive kind that the stage was shelter for a nest of German spies, who had long been sending information as to the weakness of the brave defenders of Metz in the line of provisions—sending these traitorous reports by some secret underground wire or the use of carrier pigeons trained for the purpose.

"Of course, they will have a hearing." The major cast a furtive glance at the One Who Must Be Obeyed, and the quick signal which the countess made gave him his clue.

"Certainly, monsieur. In the morning, if they are able, they shall appear before the military drum head court, convened for just such purposes as this by our commander, and the truth will either liberate or send them to the Court of Execution."

Paul noted that there was a clause in his declaration, which somehow he could not avoid emphasizing, a clause of considerable importance, since he believed the major's design was that they should never live to reach the prison.

"Sir Noel, step this way, please," he said. It was at this critical juncture that a movement at the doorway drew the attention of the countess, and she became aware for the first time of Hildegard's presence.

The sight sent the hot blood leaping in bounds through her veins—nothing must be allowed to stand in the way now—the presence of this German beauty who had won what she had said in vain to possess, was a premonition of coming disaster, unless she could push the major into the breach.

Meanwhile Paul confided to the Englishman his suspicions as to the fact he supposed had been mapped out for him while on the way to prison. Once Sir Noel grasped the idea the

danger was far less threatening than before, for he could possibly invent some way of defeating the evil designs of the plotters. Hildegard now knew all. She had recognized the disguised countess with contempt and scorn in her eyes, and the presence of the stalwart soldiers told the rest.

But when she saw Beatrix, looking so lovely, with the startled look upon her face, the tears of distress in her beautiful eyes, Hildegard almost wished she had been more discreet and remained at her duties in the hospital, for it was absurd to realize that the mention of Paul's name had acted so upon her heart as to bring her in great haste to this apartment to find that he had doubtless been enjoying a delightful tete-a-tete with this rival little beauty at the time the soldiers came.

This bold American had won her love—in her maidenly eyes he was everything that could be deemed manly, and in dreams at least he had told her the charming things which his eyes betrayed whenever they met—as she bound up his wounds after the duel with Conrad she had been thrilled when their hands chanced to come in contact, and ever since then a delicious hope had found lodgment in her heart that they might be nearer and dearer than friends.

This was now apparently scuttled forever, and she must summon the pride which belonged to her by birth, in order to conceal the intense misery the death of her hopes caused.

Well, the major had received his little curtain lecture, and was primed up for the boiling point.

When he left the countess and turned upon the others who formed part of the dramatic personae connected with this closing scene in the play, Rhinelanders knew they must look out for squalls, for the major was galled to action and meant to enter upon the warpath.

Paul saw this and nerved himself for the encounter. The Lombardic major, having wheeled with military precision, bore down upon Paul, who awaited his approach, supported by the doctor.

It was a moment of considerable suspense. Much would depend upon what the major was about to say, and hence Paul eagerly awaited for him to speak, hoping to discover a peg upon which to hang their expectations.

It was to Sir Noel he addressed himself. "Monsieur, already the execution of my duty has been delayed too long. Whatever protest you may desire to make, it must be presented to the higher officials. I am sent to make the arrest, and wish it distinctly understood that already both of these gentlemen are prisoners of war."

Sir Noel recognized the fact that a point had been made in the case, but he was too smart to betray the slightest uneasiness, since that would be aiding in the enemy.

At least there was hope, because the major had not proven a bully, who would hustle his prisoners away with all haste. Through his own pride of manner and speech the Frenchman might be unhorred in the jail—men as gallant as he have many times gone down before the rude pluck of adversity.

"Monsieur le major," said the Englishman slowly, "I would not wish to interfere with your duty as a soldier. I have every respect for your army and for you individually. But this man is my friend. I am his sponsor before the commandant, and you as a gentleman would not blame me if I endeavored to the best of my ability to free him from his wholly unwarranted detention. You know that he has been placed upon his sacred parole—you are not ignorant of the fact that he has been given the entire freedom of the city, and hence as much right to be in this particular spot as any Frenchman among you. I desire to make this point particularly plain in order that whatever happens you may not have cause to regret having done the wrong thing."

The major smiled and bowed. "What you say is very true, monsieur, but that liberty of which you speak expires whenever the person on parole breaks his given word of honor. We have abundant reason to believe this party has done this unpardonable thing of conspiring with certain spies, the enemies of our country, to betray our weakness to the Germans. I recognize the point your make, monsieur, but it does not swerve me one iota from the course mapped out for my observance. Unless you can produce something stronger your friend must return to his cell and stand before the drumhead court."

Hildegard had turned very white at these words, but she did not altogether lose hope. The impatient countess, who secretly feared Sir Noel, here uttered a sentence in a low tone, doubtless with the intention of hastening action in the prison.

"Immediately it shall be done," rejoined the major, once more raising his sword and half turning to address his men.

It is a tramp and remained to be played now was the time for its appearance. A word of command and the giant guards closed in around the prisoners. Sir Noel still stood by Paul, and even saw this significant move without showing the white feather.

He put his hand to his pocket and drew out a folded paper. The countess, seeing the action, felt that there was danger of defeat even though she could not guess the nature of the bolt that threatened.

How deliberately Sir Noel unfolded his paper. "Ah! monsieur le major," he said. The stout soldier, not daring to look toward the countess, turned his head. At sight of the paper his eyebrows went up in token of surprise.

Then he met the doctor's magnetic eye, and was obliged to pay attention—the influence of mind over matter is always paramount. "I have here a little document," pursued Sir Noel, waving the paper. "So I perceive, monsieur." "Which is signed by the commandant, with whose signature you are doubtless familiar." "Oh, very, monsieur."

"Will you kindly give me one minute. I am desirous of saving you from committing a folly that might wind up your military career in anything but a blaze of glory. I wish you to read this document, which perhaps has not its equal in all Metz at this moment."

"I am honored, monsieur," bowing and taking the paper, while the countess gazed nearer, the look of awful determination still upon her face.

Paul believed it wise to keep one eye on her, not knowing what a desperate woman might attempt when brought to bay.

And somehow he had a presentiment that while it looked as though this might be Aimee's game, there was a setback in store for her that would end in her overwhelming defeat.

At the major read the document she looked surprised, even puzzled. "May I ask what you find, M. le Major?" asked the Englishman, quietly.

"It is surprising—I have here a pass written in the commandant's own hand allowing the bearer, Sir Noel Travers, surgeon, with his companion, the liberator of the city of Metz, and commanding that under no conditions shall he be restrained or prevented from going or coming at will. It is astounding, very."

Paul breathed easier. He had heard the magic words and comprehended the nature of the miracles that had been wrought in his behalf, thanks to the coming of the Englishman.

"You have no reason to doubt the genuineness of the document, major?" pursued Sir Noel, with the convincing manner of a lawyer. "None at all—I would be willing to stake my life upon that," came the reply.

"Fool, fool, don't you see the trap?" cried the countess, firmly. But Sir Noel was appealing to all that was best in the major's composition—his pride as a soldier, and the subordination of all other feelings to duty toward a superior officer as laid down in the manual of arms.

"Then you can consider that this gentleman is the companion mentioned in the pass. By the authority vested in that document I claim for him the same rights I myself possess, and let any man arrest him at his peril. Monsieur le Major, tell me, is he free to go with me?"

The soldier's face was almost purple from the violence of his emotions, but with an effort he gasped: "There is no other resource—he is free."

(To be continued.)

### FAMOUS COOKS OF PARIS.

Genius in the Culinary Art as in Other Things.

In a recently published book on culinary art Dr. Lemaunier, a physician of Paris, gives several interesting items regarding well-known chefs. He mentions the melancholy death of Trompette, the celebrated cook to the Duke of Noailles, who, in a fit of ambition, deserted his aristocratic master for the luxurious but plebeian kitchen of Gambetta. He never forgave himself this base and sordid action, and died in a state of melancholy. After Trompette comes a long list of illustrious men who have raised French cookery to its well-deserved reputation.

The Maison Dorée gives \$15,000 a year to Casimir Moisson; the Baron de Mohrenheim had in his kitchen two brothers, the Favrets, who never separate; the Duchess of Alba, consins of Empress Eugenie, has for her chef George Bouzon, who was a great favorite of Napoleon III.

The cook of Nicholas II. gets \$45,000 a year; he is an Alsatian of the name of Krantz and enjoyed such privileges under Alexander II. that he was allowed to carry a sword, and what is more, to retain his French nationality. The cook of the King of the Hellenes took all his degrees in the university, but in 1858, carried away by his love of the art, he entered as cook in the Comte de Chambord's house, whence he passed into the kitchen of the Duchess of Parma, the mother of the Princess of Bulgaria; and now he caters for the palates of the royal family of Greece.

Chevalier, who learned his art at the Jockey Club, under the celebrated Jules Gouffe, began his career in the royal house of Sweden and is now with that of Roumania.

A maker of epigrams is one who seeks to clothe the wit of others in his own language. The result is sometimes called original.

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