

# A Belgian

By PAULINE BRADFORD MACKIE

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What did he expect to do with his arm. Run to the hospital with it to have it sewed on?

Beaujon pursued his search, chuckling.

The east grew rosy and a sweet, cool breeze blew against him. The day promised to be fine and clear. He was glad of that.

Jean always liked to lie flat on his back in an open field, staring up at the sky with eyes that were as blue. Mme. Valles was a German, and her eyes were like her sons.

She wept because her sister had boys in the German army. Her own husband was a Belgian, and her sympathy must go with him; and Jean, her son—was he not fighting the Germans as well as his father?

But women took life hard.

He was sorry for women. He thought again of that fellow running off with his own arm before he collapsed. There was a saying in the Bible, "As one whom his mother comforteth." The fellow had probably started to run home to his mother. She must be proud of her big booty.

He chuckled again.

He had forgotten that word which had impressed him so strongly—that word which would help him. He knew it was important, but he had forgotten it again.

He hummed a tune—a little, old, Alsatian tune—as he continued his search; the men whose faces he looked at made no impression on him; he only knew they were not Jean.

The sun flashed on the bayonets and sabers lying about; it was pretty as a sparkling sea.

He bent over a body. Some instinct made him rise and whirl about on his heel.

He was face to face with one of the Germans. The German was on foot. Each man was but a mirror of the other, so identical were their expressions; each had believed himself alone searching for a friend. They stared at each other; they turned; they ran in opposite directions as if pursued by demons.

The fight was out of both of them. Beaujon dropped his rifle as he ran. Horror was on his heels. He stumbled and fell and lay as if dead, then reached slyly for his rifle.

As his hand gripped it he realized that it must be another man's, for he had dropped his own.

He sat up and looked over the field. The enemy had disappeared. He turned his head, and there beside him lay Jean. It was Jean's rifle he held. He knew by the smile on Jean's face that the lad was dead.

Only dead men were happy like that; that is, the right sort of dead

men, not the kind who struggled to get back to life.

Jean's blue eyes looked straight up into the sky.

Beaujon touched the boy's face. It was still warm. Then he knew that pale star which blinked at him and went out was a signal from Jean. He wished he could lie down beside him, but he had promised to return.

He had been promoted for bravery, this Beaujon. Who was the fellow—Beaujon, Beaujon, Beaujon. But he had promised to get back to him. He must find Beaujon again.

He lifted Jean on his back and started homeward. It was strange that he was carrying Jean's rifle instead of his own.

It was a message that he must fight for them both. He was grim but exultant as he strode on. Where he had killed one man before, now he would kill two; it would be double the number always, double for Jean.

The ground was uncertain and he stumbled; then he realized he was trampling over the dead with his boots on. He laid Jean down and took off his boots, then lifted his friend again and went on in his stocking-feet.

When he came into the city again no one offered to help him, for Beaujon was a giant in strength and he bore Jean as though he had been a girl.

He climbed the road and turned into a small hotel.

Mme. Valles sat at the table with the one guest left in the hotel; she was having an extra cup of coffee with her and they were talking about the war.

Beaujon's figure filled the doorway



and his shadow fell across the two women.

Mme. Valles raised her hands. She was going to cry out, but somehow she did not. Instead she managed to get to a door; it opened into her bedroom.

"Put him here, Maurice. Can you get a doctor?"

Beaujon laid Jean down on his mother's bed. He patted Mme. Valles' cheek so softly in his pity.

"No. Jean does not need a doctor, Mama Valles."

He went out, closing the door on the two. There was a stranger in the dining room, and he remembered Mme. Valles did not like curious eyes.

He sat down in the first chair he reached, exhausted.

The guest in the hotel was an American—Miss Dewey. She had expected to join friends in Berlin. She kept saying to herself that she had never expected this war when she went abroad.

When she saw Beaujon's pallor she ran to the kitchen and called Marie, the young girl who assisted Mme. Valles as a kind of underhousekeeper, to bring hot coffee at once.

"They have brought home Mme. Valles' son dead," she exclaimed, "and I think the man who brought him is ill. He looks so white."

"Yes, mademoiselle," answered Marie. Her hand shook so she kept pouring the coffee into the saucer instead of the cup.

"Here," said Miss Dewey, "I will attend to that." She seized the coffee pot and poured the coffee with a steady hand. "Now you bring a basin of warm water to wash his feet. They are bleeding and his stockings are cut in shreds."

"Yes, mademoiselle," answered Marie. "Please tell me—where is Jean?"

"His mother has him in her room. She has shut the door. Hurry with that basin, Marie." Miss Dewey went back to Beaujon. "Try to take a little of this coffee. It will do you good."

Beaujon lifted his heavy eyes to her face. "Thank you."

Marie came hurrying in with towels and a basin of water and, kneeling down, peeled off the ragged stockings with tender fingers. She was young and dark and richly colored.

Suddenly she pressed Beaujon's bare feet to her bosom, sobbing, while she murmured: "My Jean, my Jean!"

She was to have married Jean Valles in the autumn.

Beaujon's brows contracted with pity. "Poor Marie!" he said. "Poor Marie!" His mind seemed entirely clear again.

The coffee helped him. He watched her as she sat back on her heels, letting his feet drop into her lap and looking up pitifully at him.

"Now, I shall have no husband." He saw her poor, little, drooping mouth, the woe in her eyes.

It was more than grief for Jean. It was desolation come upon her. The issues of life were cut off. She would have no husband, no children. Why was she left a woman?

This was what war did for women! Beaujon spoke with difficulty, for his throat was tired. "Marie, if I live I will return and be your husband."

When she saw the kindness on his face she bent forward and laid her face against his breast, sobbing. He patted her shoulder until she grew quiet. Then he said: "Now, I must be going."

Miss Dewey was crying, too. She ran out to get him another cup of coffee. "What a good man," she thought.

Marie knelt and dried his feet and put a pair of clean stockings on him. They were Papa Valles', as were also the boots, she brought. Papa Valles had gone to the war, too; and he was a big man like Beaujon, not slight like Jean. Jean was so pretty—like a girl. Her tears fell more gently.

Beaujon pulled on the boots. He rose and shook hands with Miss Dewey. "Good-by," he said. "When you return to your own country remember us."

She stood on the steps of the hotel, while Marie followed him to the road.

"Wait," he said; "I was forgetting something."

He thrust his hand into his pocket and drew forth a big key and gave it to Marie. "It is the key to my shop if I do not come back all is yours."

She took it as a child might. "Yes," she kept her eyes fixed wistfully on Beaujon's face.

"Good-by," he said, and bent to kiss her cheek; then suddenly drew her into his arms and kissed her mouth. "Good-by, my wife!"

The blood coursed freely through his veins once more. That kiss—so fresh, so sweet—had revived him. It was as though Marie had become a stranger with whom he had fallen in love at first sight.

Their love sprang new born from this moment; it had no past. He went off down the road with a swinging step, his shoulders squared. The good God meant well by man. His hand must be over this somehow—yes—over it all.

"Where is his shop, Marie?" asked Miss Dewey.

"The fourth one down on that side, mademoiselle," answered Marie.

"Oh, that beautiful lace shop!" Miss Dewey exclaimed. "There are some wonderful rose-pieces in the window. I noticed them the first day I was in town. So he is a lace-maker?"

"Yes, mademoiselle."

Beaujon reached the top of the road. He turned and waved his cap. Then he disappeared down the hill.

"He is gone," said Marie. She clasped her hands on her breast. "Think, mademoiselle, how one hour can bring me two sorrows. It is war!"

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# AT THE FRONTIER

By Perley Poore Sheehan

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"Well, he can keep on following us," said Miss Dracon. "There's no law against it, I suppose—not over here."

The tea, the music, even the clothes she wore, were all well calculated to soothe a feminine heart—especially one that could not have been more than twenty years old; but, as she gazed out over the terrace of Armonville, with an elaborate pretense of recognizing no one in the fashionable throng, there was a dangerous sparkle in Miss Dracon's eye.

Her mother, a personification of American dollars and well preserved youth, looked at her with an indulgent smile.

"His title is perfectly good," she purred. "I looked it up—in the Almanach de Gotha, where only royal and—"

"Look out! He's coming over."

It had required no very keen vision on the part of Prince Frederick von Hohenstaufen to see the Dracons, mother and daughter. An omniscient head waiter, in the first place, with an eye to a ten-franc tip, had placed them at a table where all might see. And, in the second place, they were not the sort of people who escape observation. Great wealth, sagaciously used, stamps its possessors with an imprint as unmistakable as the sterling mark on solid plate.

Prince Frederick was likewise noticeable, but otherwise.

As he made his way, with a queer mingling of eagerness and anxiety visible in his face, through the perfumed, well-dressed, gayly chatting swarm of Parisians and foreign notables who were enjoying themselves in the Bois that afternoon, he suffered badly by comparison, in spite of his youth.

So Miss Dracon thought.

His features were smug and homely, giving his clean-shaven face an expression she associated vaguely with grocers or groomers. His skin was fresh enough, but exposure to the sun had



made it red in spots instead of giving it the even tan possessed by most of the other men she knew.

And his clothes!

They also reminded Miss Dracon vaguely of grocers and groomers, dressed up.

"Ah, Mrs. Dracon; again! Permit me to salute you."

The prince had taken the tips of Mrs. Dracon's fingers and lifting them ever so slightly, was performing the acrobatic feat of bending forward from the hips without flexing the knees. He had touched the fingers with his lips.

"Ah, Miss Elizabeth!"

He repeated the salute.

"Sit down here with us, dear prince," said Mrs. Dracon. "Or, are you with friends? When did you leave America?"

The heir of Hohenstaufen dropped into the chair that a waiter had already pushed into position, gave one meaning look at Elizabeth Dracon, then turned once more to the older woman.

"As soon as I learned you had gone, then I left," he said.

Elizabeth bit her lip, while her mother smiled easily.

"A coincidence," said Mrs. Dracon. "A coincidence," conceded the prince, "but designed by me."

He looked from mother to daughter. Mrs. Dracon was listening intently, no doubt, although she had the air of one who is rather preoccupied with something else. The daughter's eyes met his with the suspicion of a challenge in them.

Hadn't they settled this, once and for all, that night the prince had pro-

posed to her over in Philadelphia?

"You see," he said, with an effort at lightness, "I got to thinking over what Miss Elizabeth said to me about international marriages. I don't see how it applies to us. I know that she is not crazy for a title—other than her own high-born name; and me, I'm not after—after money."

The red-coated band, responsive to a frenzied leader, was singing and banging through a Hungarian rhapsody, giving promise that it would still be safe to talk about private matters for a long time to come.

"Elizabeth told me that you had done her the honor—" Mrs. Dracon began.

"Perhaps I should have spoken first to you," said the prince, talking rapidly. "But I said, 'This is America, where there must not be too much formality.' Besides, I was crazy—crazy with love—as I have been ever since first I looked at her."

"No scene, please," cautioned Elizabeth steadily.

The band zinged louder. Her remark drew blood apparently.

"It is true that I have debts," the prince went on; "but they are the debts of my ancestors. I pay interest on them. No one expects more than that. They are like state debts—what you call national debt. A national debt is never paid. But why mention such things? It is you I love. You I followed again back to Europe."

"Will you have cream or lemon?" asked Elizabeth, suddenly remembering the tea things.

"So why—why—will you not have me?"

"Shall I go over it all once more?" asked Elizabeth, smiling but cruel. "I've seen enough of these international marriages to make me sick if I ever marry—which I doubt—I'll marry an American. I'll marry a man who can take care of me, just as though I didn't have a cent in the world; one who will work, accomplish something, be someone by his own efforts. Since you owe so much, by your own admission, why don't you work and—"

"Elizabeth!"

Mrs. Dracon was scandalized, as she often was by this ultra-modern daughter of hers; but the prince was listening, sober, intent.

"I can't work, the way you mean," said Prince Frederick with bated breath. "I'm a Hohenstaufen. I belong to the empire. If it were not for that, there is nothing in the world I wouldn't do to show you—show you how I love you. Even now, could I do so with honor, I'd blow out my brains—"

"I've dropped my fan," said Mrs. Dracon.

The prince recovered it for her with a little laugh just as the music, with a succession of rippling scales suggestive of a flight of butterflies, went up into the air and was silent.

Silent, also, for most of the time were Mrs. Dracon and her daughter as they drove home a little later through the high-arched allees of the Bois. They were stopping at the Bristol, would be moving on soon to one of the German spas, Wiesbaden most likely. And they were both willing to pretend that it was this approaching departure from Paris that kept them a little restrained, a little blue.

Finally Mrs. Dracon spoke.

"Don't you think you're a bit brutal with him, Beth? Young Germans have been known to kill themselves—"

"Oh, he'll show up again," said Elizabeth.

Paris was like a pond overstocked with goldfish—filled with the rich and idle from the four quarters of the world. Came the end of Grand Prix week, and it was as though some mighty hand had opened all the sluices of the pond. The goldfish scattered.

The Dracons lingered longer in Paris than they had expected—a matter of new gowns—and then floated on, with other goldfish, to the German resort. But still there was no sign of Prince Frederick von Hohenstaufen. It troubled them both a little secretly. He wasn't acting in accordance with form. Generally when an impoverished prince once fixes his attention on a dazzling bait like Elizabeth Dracon—handsome, educated, immeasurably rich in her own right—he becomes as a ravenous pike.

So they both thought. They were not without experience. But they said nothing about it. Not until one night.

It was the night that followed a hideous day. From early morning they had been crowded with strangers whom they feared and distrusted in the tiny, suffocating compartment of a third-class railway carriage. All day the train had crawled and stopped, then crawled again, like a wounded worm, while other trains rushed by with lordly authority. Soldiers, helmeted, brusque, impersonal, had jerked the door of the compartment open at times, had stared and talked among themselves, but had answered no questions.

Even more ignominious was the deepening night. It had begun to rain. Then, finally, as though the wounded worm was completely exhausted, the train came to a halt and moved no more. There was another hour of stifling misery, then once more the door was jerked open and there came the order in the clipped, military German of Prussia:

"All passengers get down!"

It was almost panic as the shuddering civilians—men, women and children, Dutch, Belgian, French, English, American—clambered out; but information somehow got about that here they were to remain until mobilization was complete, that there was a hotel in the neighborhood that was to be their temporary prison.

"And what is the name of the

place?" Elizabeth asked. "This is Hohenstaufen!"

A moment later she and her mother were leaning against each other for mutual support.

Very stiff and straight in a new uniform, surrounded by officers who were showing him obvious respect, they stood under the yellow shimmer of the station light some one whom they both had instantly recognized—Prince Fred-

rick himself. Almost at the same instant he saw them, started toward them.

"Ah, Mrs. Dracon; again! Permit me to salute you."

He took the tips of her fingers, bent forward from the hips without flexing his knees.

"Ah, Miss Elizabeth!"

He repeated the salute. But his ridiculously short hair was now concealed by a helmet which hadn't been displaced.

"I regret," he said, as he straightened up, "that you have been made to suffer. But while you are in Hohenstaufen you will, at least, be my guests."

"We want to get to Belgium—to London," said Elizabeth, by now on the verge of tears.

"We've lost our baggage—everything," said Mrs. Dracon.

They were speaking softly, as civilians and military passed and re-passed. The officers who had surrounded the prince had turned their backs, pretending not to notice.

"I am master here," said the prince quietly; "but not beyond the limits of the principality." He turned to Elizabeth. "Have you forgotten that I love you?"

"What then?"

"Marry me."

Elizabeth looked at him with unflinching eyes.

"You have us in your power—to compromise us, disgrace us, if you wish—"

A change of expression in the prince's face made her pause.

"I spoke to you once of shooting myself," he said; "but my life was not my own. I still have it—Gott set dank—to give for my country. As my wife, or even as my fiancée, you could have—"

"Mrs. Dracon," he resumed, "farewell. A military motor will be here in a few minutes, in charge of one of my orderlies, who will see that you and Miss Dracon are conducted in safety to the Belgian frontier. Elizabeth, if I never see you again—"

"Kiss me good-by," she whispered in panic.

A gray-painted motor, with two men in uniform on the front seat, slid off with them into the night. Prince Frederick von Hohenstaufen had not been there to see them go; but every now and then, as they stopped at garish towns and scattered posts where all was wakefulness and feverish activity, one of the men on the front seat showed a paper he carried, whereupon there would be a murmured "Recht!" and a salute.

"What is on that paper?" asked Elizabeth after one of these halts.

The orderly looked surprised.

"That the high-born young lady," he said, "is the promised bride of his highness, Prince Frederick."

They came into a sleepy Belgian frontier post at dawn. In an hour a train would be carrying them to Dieppe, with London and New York. It seemed to them, thoroughly exhausted though they were, just beyond.

Elizabeth demanded the paper that had brought them thus far in safety, and then, while her mother and the men who were there looked on, she wrote something on it with a borrowed pencil.

"Take this back to his highness," she said, "with our love and gratitude."

The orderly saluted. The gray motor snorted and was off again on its return to Germany. Not until it was at a safe distance did the orderly dare look at what the fair American had written.

At first he saw nothing, as the paper fluttered in his hand. He came to the words, "promised bride," and then he saw.

There had been written here the red word "Recht!"—and this had been signed with the name of Elizabeth Dracon.

