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and some other lines will
SCOTT
 ONTARIO.

THE STROLLERS

By **FREDERIC S. ISHAM,**
 Author of "Under the Rose"

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CHAPTER XVII.

TO the scattering of the antirenters by the rescue party that memorable night at the manor the land baron undoubtedly owed his safety. Beyond reach of personal violence in a neighboring town, without his own domains, from which he was practically exiled, he had sought redress in the courts, only to find his hands tied, with no convincing clew to the perpetrators of these outrages. On the patron lay the burden of proof, and he found it more difficult than he had anticipated to establish satisfactorily any kind of a case, for alibis blocked his progress at every turn.

At war with his neighbors and with little taste for the monotony of a northern winter he bethought him of his native city, determined to leave the locality and at a distance wait for the turmoil to subside. His brief dream of the rehabilitation of the commonwealth brought only memories stirring him to restlessness. He made inquiries about the strollers, but to no purpose. The theatrical band had come and gone like gypsies.

Saying nothing to any one except Scroggins, to whom he entrusted a load of litigation, he at length quietly departed in the regular stage until he reached a point where two strap rails proclaimed the new method of conveyance. Wedged in the small compartment of a little car directly behind a smoking monster, with an enormous chimney, fed with cord wood, he was borne over the land, and another puffing marvel of different construction carried him over the water. Reaching the Crescent City some time before the strollers, his progress expedited by a locomotive that ran full twenty miles an hour, the land baron found among the latest floating population, comprised of all sorts and conditions, the Marquis de Ligne. The blood of the patrons flowed sluggishly through the land baron's veins, but his French extraction danced in every fiber of his being. After learning the more important and not altogether discreditable circumstances about the land baron's ancestors—for if every gentleman were whipped for godlessness how many striped backs would there be?—the marquis, who declined intimacy with Tom, Dick and Harry and their honest butchers, bakers and candlestick makers of forefathers, permitted an acquaintance that accorded with his views governing social intercourse.

"This is a genuine pleasure, M. le Marquis," observed the land baron suavely when the two found themselves seated in a card room with brandy and soda before them. "To meet a nobleman of the old school is indeed welcome in these days when New Orleans harbors the refugees of the world, for, strive as we will, outsiders are creeping in and corrupting our best circles."
 Muttering something about "bourgeois-epicure" the nobleman partook of the liquid consolation before him, which seemed to brighten his spirits. "If my doctor could see me now! Dolts! Quacks!"
 "It's a good joke on them," said Mauville ironically.
 "Isn't it? They forbid me touching stimulants. Said they would be fatal! Impostors! Frauds! They haven't killed me yet."
 "I have been north to look after certain properties left me by a distant relative, peace to his ashes!" observed Mauville.
 "My dear sir, I congratulate you!" exclaimed the nobleman enthusiastically.
 "Thanks! But I came near joining the ranks of the well born angels. But for an accident I should now be a cherub of quality."
 "And how, monsieur, did you escape such a felicitous fate?"
 The land baron's face clouded. "Through a stranger, a Frenchman, a silent, taciturn fellow, more or less an adventurer, I take it. He called himself Saint-Prosper!"
 "Saint-Prosper!"
 The marquis gazed at Mauville with amazement and incredulity.
 "This Saint-Prosper you met was a soldier—Ernest Saint-Prosper?"
 "Yes, he was a soldier. Served in Africa, I believe. You knew him?"
 "Knew him! He was my ward, the rascal!" cried the other violently. "He was, but now—ingrate!—traitor!—better if he were dead!"
 "You speak bitterly, M. le Marquis!" said the patron curiously.
 "Bitterly! After his conduct he is no longer anything to me! He is dead to me—dead!"
 "How did he deviate from the line of duty?" asked Mauville, with increasing interest and an eagerness his light manner did not disguise. "A sin of omission or commission?"
 "Eh? What?" mumbled the old nobleman, staring at his questioner and on a sudden becoming taciturn. "A family affair!" he added finally, with dignity. "Not worth repeating! But what was he doing there?"
 "He had joined a strolling band of players," said the other, concealing his disappointment as best he might at his companion's evasive reply.
 "A Saint-Prosper become an actor!" shouted the marquis, his anger again

breaking forth. "Has he not already dragged an honored name in the dust? A stroller! A player!" The marquis fairly gasped at the enormity of the offense. For a moment he was speechless and then asked feebly, "What caused him to take such a humiliating step?"

"He is playing the hero of a romance," said the land baron moodily. "I confess he has excellent taste, though. The figure of a Juno, eyes like stars on an August night, features proud as Diana, the voice of a siren—in a word, picture to yourself your fairest conquest, M. le Marquis, and you will have a worthy counterpart of this rose of the wilderness."
 "My fairest conquest!" piped the listener. With lackluster eyes he remained motionless, like a traveler in the desert who gazes upon a mirage. "You have described her well. The features of Diana! It was at a revival of Vanbrugh's 'Relapse' I first met her, dressed after the fashion of the Countess of Ossory. Who would not worship before the figures of Lely?"
 He half closed his eyes, as though gazing in fancy upon the glossy draperies and rosy flesh of those voluptuous court beauties.

The wooing, begun in the wings, ended in an ivy covered villa, a retired nook, solitary walks by day, nightingales and moonshine by night. It was a pleasing romance while it lasted, but joy palls on one. Nature abhors sameness. The heart is like Mother Earth—ever varying. I wearied of this surfeit of paradise and left her!"
 "A mere incident in an eventful life," said his companion thoughtfully.
 "Yes, only an incident," repeated the marquis. "Only an incident. I had almost forgotten it, but your conversation about players and your description of the actress brought it to mind. It had quite passed away, it had quite passed away. But the cards, M. Mauville, the cards!"

CHAPTER XVIII.

FOR several days after rehearsals were over the strollers were free to amuse themselves as they pleased. Their engagement at the theater did not begin for about a week, and meanwhile they managed to combine recreation with labor in nearly equal proportions. Assiduously they devoted themselves to a round of drives and rambles through pastures and woodland to Carrolton; along the shell road to Lake Pontchartrain; to Biloxi, the first settlement of the French, and to the battle grounds once known as the plains of Chalmette, where volunteer soldiers were now encamped awaiting orders to go to the front in the Mexican campaign. For those who craved greater excitement the three race courses—the Louisiana, the Metairie and the Carrolton—were a stimulating diversion.

Within sight of the Metairie were old dueling grounds, under the oaks, where, it is related, on one Sunday in 1839 ten duels occurred; where the contestants frequently fought on horseback with sabers, and where the cowards, says a chronicler, became so accustomed to seeing honor satisfied in this manner that they paid little attention to these meetings, pursuing their own humble duties indifferent to the follies of fashionable society. The fencing schools flourished. What memories cluster around that odd, strange master of the blade, Spedella, a melancholy enigma of a man, whose art embodied much of the finest shading and phrasing peculiar to himself, from whom even many of Bonaparte's discarded veterans were not above acquiring new technique and temperance!

Shortly after the players' arrival began the celebrated Leduc matches, attracting noted men and women from all over the south. The hotels were crowded, the lodging houses filled, while many of the large homes hospitably opened their doors to visiting friends. The afternoons found the city almost deserted. The bartenders discontentedly smoked in solitude, the legion of waiters in the hotels and resorts became reduced to a thinly scattered array, while even the street vendors had "folded their tents" and silently strolled to the races. On one such memorable occasion most of the members of the Barnes company repaired to the Metairie.

Below the grand stand, brilliant with color, strutted the dandies attending to their bets; above, they played a winning or losing game with the fair sex. Intrigue and love-making were the order of the hour, and these daughters of the south beguiled time—and mortals—in a heyday of pleasure. In that mixed gathering burly cotton planters from the country rubbed elbows with aristocratic creoles, whose attire was distinguishable by enormous ruffles and light boots of cloth. The professional follower of these events, the impertunate tout, also mingled with the crowd, plainly in evidence by the pronounced character of his dress, the size of his diamond studs or cravat pin and the massive dimensions of his finger rings. No paltry, scrubby track cadger was this resplendent gentleman, but a picturesque rogue, with impudence as pronounced as his jewels. Surrounded by a bevy of admirers,

Susan, sprightly and sparkling, was an example of that "frillery one of her sex is made up under, a pasticcio of gauzes, pins and ribbons that go to compound that multifarious thing, a well dressed woman." Ever ready with a quick retort, she bestowed her favors generously, to the evident discomfort of a young officer in her retinue whom she had met several days before and who ever since had coveted a full harvest of smiles, liking not a little the first sample he had gathered. However, it was not Susan's way to intrust herself fully to any one. It was all very interesting to play one against another, to intercept angry gleams, to hold in check clashing suitors—this was exciting and diverting—but she exercised care not to transgress those bounds where she ceased to be mistress of the situation. Perhaps her limits in coquetry were further set than most women would have ventured to place them, but without this temerity and daring the pastime would have lost its charm for her. She might play with edged tools, but she also knew how to use them.

Near her was seated Kate, indolent as of yore, now watching her sister with an indignant, enigmatic expression, anon permitting a scornful glance to stray toward Adonis, who, for his part, had eyes only for his companion, a distinct change from country boldness, tavern demoiselles and dainty venches with their rough hands and rosy cheeks. This lady's hands were like milk, her cheeks ivory, and Adonis in bestowing his attentions upon her had a twofold purpose—to return tit for tat for Kate's daunting ways and to gratify his own ever fleeting fancy.

In a box, half the length of the grand stand removed, some distance back and to the left of Susan's gay party, Constance, Mrs. Adams and the soldier were also observers of this scene of animation. Since the manager's successful flight from the landlord and the constables the relations of the young girl and Saint-Prosper had undergone little change. At first, it is true, with the memory of the wild ride to the river fresh in her mind and the more or less disturbing recollections of that strange, dark night, a certain reticence had marked her manner toward the soldier, but as time went by this touch of reserve wore off and was succeeded by her usual frankness or gaiety. In her eyes appeared at times a new thoughtfulness, but for no longer period than the quick passing of a summer cloud over a sunny meadow. This half light of brief conjecture or vague retrospection only mellowed the depths of her gaze, and Barnes alone noted and wondered.

But today no partial shadows lay under the black, shading lashes. The exhilarating scene, the rapidly succeeding events, the turbulence and flutter around her, were calculated to dispel the most pronounced abstraction. Beneath a protecting parasol—for the sunlight shot below the roof at the back and touched that part of the grand stand—a faint glow warmed her cheeks, while her eyes shone with the gladness of the moment. Many of the dandies, regarding her with marked persistency, asked who she was, and none knew until finally Editor-Rhymester Straws was appealed to. Straws, informed on all matters, was able to satisfy his questioners.

"She is an actress," said Straws. "So we are told. We shall find out next week. She is a beauty. We can tell that now."
 Standing near the rhymester, story writer and journalist was a tall young man dressed in creole fashion. He followed the glances of Straws' questioners, and a pallor overspread his dark complexion as he looked at the object of their attention.

"The stroller!" he exclaimed half audibly. "Her counterpart doesn't exist."
 He stepped back where he could see her more plainly. In that sea of faces her features alone shone before him clearly, insistently.
 "Do you know her, Mr. Mauville?" asked the rhymester, observing that steadfast glance.
 "Know her?" repeated the land baron, starting. "Oh, I've seen her act."
 Without definite purpose the patron, who had listened with scant attention to the poet, began to move slowly toward the actress, and at that moment

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the eyes of the soldier, turning to the saddling paddock, where the horses were being led out, fell upon the figure drawing near, recognizing in him the heir to the manor, Edward Mauville. Construing in his approach a deliberate intention, a flush of quick anger overspread Saint-Prosper's face, and he



"You are blocking my way, monsieur," glanced at the girl by his side. But her manner assured him she had not observed the land baron, for at that moment she was looking in the opposite direction, endeavoring to discover Barnes or the others of the company in the immense throng.

Murmuring some excuse to his unconscious companion and cutting short the wily old lady's reminiscences of the first public trotting race in 1818, the soldier left the box and, moving with some difficulty through the crowd, met Mauville in the aisle near the stairway. The latter's face expressed surprise, not altogether of an agreeable nature, at the encounter, but he immediately regained his composure.

"Ah, M. Saint-Prosper," he observed easily. "I little thought to see you here."

"Nor I you!" said the other bluntly. The patron gazed in seeming carelessness from the soldier to the young girl. Saint-Prosper's presence in New Orleans could be accounted for. He had followed her from the Shadengo valley across the continent. The drive begun at the country inn, he looking down from the dormer window to witness the start, had been a long one, very different from his own brief flight, with its wretched end. These thoughts coursed rapidly through the land baron's brain; her appearance rekindled the ashes of the past; the fire in his breast flamed from his eyes, but otherwise he made no display of feeling. He glanced out upon the many faces below them, bowing to one woman and smiling at another.

"Oh, I couldn't stand a winter in the north," resumed the patron, turning once more to the soldier, "although the barn burners promised to make it warm for me!"
 Offering no reply to this sally, Saint-Prosper's gaze continued to rest coldly and expectantly upon the other. Goaded by that arbitrary regard, an implied barrier between him and the young girl, the land baron sought to press forward. His glittering eyes met the other's. The glances they exchanged were like the thrust and parry of swords. Without wishing to address the actress, and thereby risk a public rebuff, it was nevertheless impossible for the hot blooded southerner to submit to peremptory restraint. Who had made the soldier his task master? He read Saint-Prosper's purpose and was not slow to retaliate.

"If I am not mistaken, yonder is our divinity of the lane," said the patron softly. "Permit me." And he strove to pass.
 The soldier did not move.
 "You are blocking my way, monsieur," continued the other sharply.
 "Not if it lies the other way."
 "This way or that way, how does it concern you?" retorted the land baron.
 "If you seek further to annoy a lady whom you have already sufficiently wronged it is any man's concern."
 "Especially if he has followed her across the country," sneered Mauville. "Besides, since when have actresses become so chary of their favors?" In his anger the land baron threw out intimations he would have challenged from other lips. "Has the stage then become a holy convent?"
 "You stamped yourself a scoundrel some time ago," said the soldier slowly, as though weighing each word, "and now show yourself a coward when you malign a young girl without father, brother—"
 "Or lover," interrupted the land baron. "Perhaps, however, you were only traveling to see the country."
 "Have you anything further with me?" interjected Saint-Prosper curtly.
 The patron's blood coursed, burning, through his veins. The other's contemptuous manner stung him more fiercely than language.
 "Yes," he said meaningly, his eyes challenging Saint-Prosper's. "Have you been at Spedella's fencing rooms? Are you in practice?"
 Saint-Prosper hesitated a moment, and the land baron's face fell. Was it possible the other would refuse to meet him? But he would not let him off easily. There were ways to force, and suddenly the words of the marquis recurring to him, he surveyed the soldier disdainfully.

"Gad, you must come of a family of cowards and traitors! But you shall fight or—the public becomes arbiter!" And he half raised his arm threateningly.
 The soldier's tanned cheek was now as pale as a moment before it had been flushed. His mouth set resolutely, as though fighting back some weakness. With lowering brows and darkening glance he regarded the land baron.

"I was thinking," he said at length, with an effort, "that if I killed you people would want to know the reason."

The patron laughed. "How solicitous you are for my welfare and mine! Do you then measure skill only by inches? If so, I confess you would stand a fair chance of dispatching me. But your address? The St. Charles, I presume."

The soldier nodded curtly, and, having accomplished his purpose, Mauville had turned to leave when loud voices in a front box near the right aisle attracted general attention from those occupying that part of the grand stand. The young officer who had accompanied Susan to the races was angrily confronting a thickset man, the latest recruit to her corps of willing captives. The lad had assumed the arduous task of guarding the object of his fancy from all comers simply because she had been kind. And why should she not have been? He was only a boy. She was old enough to be—well, an adviser. When, after a brief but pointed altercation, he flung himself away with a last reproachful look in the direction of his enslaver, Susan looked hurt. That was her reward for being nice to a child!

"A fractious young cub!" said the thickest man complacently.
 "Well, I like cubs better than bears!" retorted Susan pointedly.

Not long, however, could the interest of the spectators be diverted from the amusement of the day, and soon all eyes were drawn once more to the track, where the horses' hoofs resounded with exciting patter as they struggled toward the wire, urged by the stimulating voices of the jockeys.

"How did you enjoy it, my dear?" asked Barnes, suddenly reappearing at Constance's box. "A grand heat, that, though I did bet on the wrong horse! But don't wait for us, Saint-Prosper. Mrs. Adams and I will take our time getting through the crowd. I will see you at the hotel, my dear," he added as the soldier and Constance moved away with the desultory fag end of the procession. On either side of the road waved the mournful cypress, draped by the hoary tithandsia, and from the somber depths of foliage came the chirp of the tree crickets and the note of the swamp owl. Faint music, in measured rhythm, a roll to disconnected wood sound, was wafted from a distant plantation.

"Wait," said Constance.
 He drew in the horses, and silently they listened. Or was he listening? His glance seemed bent so moodily, almost, on space she concluded he was not. She stole a sidelong look at him.

"A penny for your thoughts," she said gaily.
 He started. "I was thinking how soon I might leave New Orleans."
 "Leave New Orleans?" she repeated in surprise. "But I thought you intended staying here. Why have you changed your mind?"

Did he detect a subtle accent of regret in her voice? A deep flush mounted to his brow. He bent over her suddenly, eagerly.
 "Would it matter—if I went?"
 She drew back at the abruptness of his words.

"How unfair to answer one question with another!" she said lightly.
 A pause fell between them. Perhaps she, too, felt the sudden repulse of her own answer and the ensuing constraint. Perhaps some compunction moved her to add in a voice not entirely steady:
 "And so you think—of going back to France?"
 "To France?" he repeated quickly.
 "No," and stopped.

Looking up, a half questioning light in her eyes took flight to his until suddenly arrested by the hard, set expression of his features. Abruptly chilled by she knew not what, her lashes fell. The horses champed their bits and tugged at the reins, impatient of the prolonged pause.
 "Let us go," she said in a low, constrained voice.

At her words he turned, the harshness dropping from his face like a discarded mask, the lines of determination wavering.
 "Let us go," she said again without looking up.
 He made no motion to obey until the sound of a vehicle behind them seemed to break the spell, and mechanically he touched the horses with the whip.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

The "Second Samson."
 Richard Joy, who died May 18, 1742, at the age of sixty-seven and is buried in the St. Peter's churchyard, Isle of Thanet, Kent, England, was known throughout Europe as the "Kentish Hercules," or the "Second Samson." When but a youth of seventeen years he was invited to London by the king to give an exhibition in remarkable feats of strength. Among the feats of his more mature years were those of breaking with his hands and feet a rope with a tensile strength of thirty-five hundredweight and the lifting of 2,200 pounds. The following is a copy of his epitaph:
 Herculean hero, famed for strength,
 At last lies here, his breadth and length,
 See how the mighty man is fallen!
 To death the strong and weak are all one.
 The same judgment doth befall
 Goliath great and David small.

Antiquity of Masks.
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