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- THE GROCER -

THE STROLLERS

By FREDERIC S. ISHAM,

Author of "Under the Rose"

said Mauville moodily.

army?"

ord," remarked the patroon contem-

platively. "You should be pretty well

acquainted with the personnel of the

"It includes everybody nowadays,"

replied the diplomat. "But it seems to

the military college at Saumur; or was

it at the Ecole d'application d'etat-ma-

jor? Demmed scapegrace, if I am not

The count's company, of which he

with a profusion of gauzy curtains

hanging behind them. This house, the

present home of the Marquis de Ligne,

"Last night his temperature was very

member the Saint-Prosper family?"

men and had adjoining lands"

her own friends."

"Well, monsieur. General Saint-Pros-

"Surely the marquis did not pass his

time in the country?" observed Man

lady was there," added Francois softly

In spite of his ill humor the shadow

"So I've heard," commented the lis-

Francois' discreet eyes were down

"Yes, monsieur; the death of the lat-

"His son's disgrace," repeated the

port of the military board of inquiry."

"Why has the matter attracted no

"The board was a secret one, and the

"Since it has been inspected by such

good company I confess curiosity to

"I, monsieur!" indignantly.

public attention if a board of inquiry

was appointed?"

per and my master were distant kins-

parted in a brown study.

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In his fury that his chance had slipped away, after wounding and, as he swordsmen I ever saw. Who is he, supposed, blinding his opponent Mau- anyway?" ville, throwing prudence to the winds, recklessly attempted to repeat his rash expedient, and this time the steel of his antagonist gleamed like quicksilver, passing beneath his arm and inflicting a slight flesh wound. Something resembling a look of apprehension crossed the land baron's face. "I have underestimated him?" he thought, "The next stroke will be driven nearer

He felt no fear, however; only mute, helpless rage. In the soldier's hand the dainty weapon was a thing of marvelous cunning. His vastly superior strength made him practically tireless in his play. Not only tireless; he sud- same." denly accelerated the tempo of the exercise, but behind this unexpected, even passionate, awakening the spectators felt an unvarying accuracy, a steely coldness of purpose. The blades clicked faster; they met and parted more viciously; the hard light in Saint-Prosper's eyes grew brighter as he slowly thrust back his antagonist.

Mauville became aware his own vigor was slowly failing him. Instead of pressing the other he was now obliged to defend himself. He strove to throw off the lethargy irresistibly stealing over him, to shake the leaden movements from his limbs. He vainly endeavored to penetrate the mist falling before his eyes and to overcome the dizziness that made his foeman seem like a figure in a dream. Was it through loss of blood or weariness, or both? But he was cognizant his thrusts had lost force, his plunges vitality, and that even an element of chance prevailed in his parries. But he uttered no sound. When would that mist become dark and the golden day fuse into inky night?

ushered into a large reception room, Before the mist totally eclipsed his sending his card to the marquis by the sight he determined to make one more neat appearing colored maid who ansupreme effort and again sprang forswered the door. ward, but was driven back with ease. The knowledge that he was continuing sober man of virtuous deportment, a futile struggle smote him to the soul. came downstairs to inform the land Gladly would he have welcomed the baron his master had suffered a refatal thrust if first he could have sent lapse and was unable to see any one. his blade through that breast which so far had been impervious to his efforts. high," said the valet. "My master is Now the scene went round and round. very ill, more so than I have known The golden day became crimson, scarhim to be in twenty years." let, then gray, leaden, somber. Incautiously he bent his arm to counter an imaginary lunge, and his antagonist was leaving the room. "Do you rethrust out his rapier like a thing of life, transfixing Mauville's sword arm. He stood his ground bravely for a moment, playing feebly into space, expecting the fatal stroke. When would it come? Then the slate colored hues were swallowed in a black cloud. But while his mind passed into unconsciousness his breast was openly presented to his antagonist, and even the

of a smile gleamed in the land baron's count shuddered. With his blade at guard Saint-Prosgaze, and, encouraged by that ques per remained motionless. The land tioning look, the man continued: "The baron staggered feebly and then sank marquis and General Saint-Prosper softly to the earth. That fatal look, were always together. My lady had the expression of a duelist, vanished from the soldier's face, and, allowing the point of his weapon to drop to the ground, he surveyed his prostrate an-

"Done like a gentleman!" cried the cast. Why did the visitor wish to learn tagonist. count, breathing more freely. "You about the Saint-Prosper family? Why, had him at your mercy, sir"-to Saint- instead of going, did he linger, and eye the man half dubiously? Francois Prosper-"and spared him."

A cold glance was the soldier's only had sold so many of his master's seresponse, as without a word he turned crets he scented his opportunities with brusquely away. Meanwhile the doctor, a sixth sense. hastening to Mauville's side, opened "The marquis and General Saint-Prosper were warm friends?" asked

"He is badly hurt?" asked Barnes the land baron at length. his shirt. anxiously of the surgeon.

"No; only fainted from loss of ter was a severe shock to the Marquis blood," replied that gentleman cheer- de Ligne; but, Mon Dieu"-lifting his fully. "He will be around again in a eyes-"it was as well he did not live to witness the disgrace of his son!"

day or two." The land baron soon regained consciousness and walked, with the as- land baron eagerly. "Oh, you mean sistance of the count, to his carriage. running in debt - gaming - some such As they were about to drive away the fashionable virtue?" sound of a vehicle was heard drawing "If betraying his country is a fashnear, and soon it appeared followed by ionable virtue," replied the valet. "He another equipage. Both stopped at the is a traitor." confines of the Oaks and the friends of Incredulity overspread the land barthe thickset man, Susan's admirer, and on's features; then, coincident with the young lad on whom she had smiled the assertion, came remembrance of

his conversation with the marquis. "Ha!" exclaimed the doctor, who had "He certainly called him that," rualighted. accompanied the count and his com- minated the visitor. Not only the words, but the expression of the old

panion to the carriage. "No. 2!" "Yes," laughed the count, as he lean- nobleman's face, recurred to him. ed back against the soft cushions, "it What did it mean unless it confirmed promises to be a busy day at the Oaks! the deliberate charge of the valet? The Really," as the equipage rolled on, land baron forgot his disappointment "New Orleans is fast becoming a civ- over his inability to see the marquis ilized center!"

CHAPTER XXI.

the man. long keep him indoors, for it hold," continued the servant softly; HE land baron's injuries did not was his pride rather than his "not through fear; oh, no; but for ambody that had received deep bition, power, under Abd-el-Kader, the and bitter wounds. He chafed and fumed when he thought how in all likelihood the details of his defeat could not be suppressed in the clubs

and cafes. "I played him too freely," he groaned to the Count de Propriac as the latter sat contemplatively nursing the ivory handle of his cane and offering the land baron such poor solace as his company afforded. "I misjudged the attack, besides exposing myself too much. If I could only meet him again!" "It would be the same," retorted the you"count brutally. "When you lost your

mper, you lost your cause. Your work

"You have no compunctions about selling a reputation, Francois?"

lynx's.

"Reputation is that!" said the man. contemptuously snapping his tingets, emboldened by his compact with the caller. "Francs and sous are every-

"To oblige monsieur!" he answered softly, but his eyes gleamed like a

"Lord, how servants imbibe the ideas of their betters!" quoth the patroon as he left the house and strode down the graveled walk, decapitating the begonias with his cane.

Passing into the Rue Royale, the favorite promenade of the creole-French, the land baron went on through various thoroughfares with French-English nomenclature into St. Charles street, was brilliant, but he is one of the best reaching his apartments, which adjoined a well known club. He was glad to stretch himself once more on his "All I know is, he served in Algiers," couch, feeling fatigued from his efforts and having rather overtaxed his "An adventurer, probably!" exclaimstrength. "I'd give a good deal to know his rec-

But if his body was now inert his mind was active. His thoughts dwelt upon the soldier's reticence, his disinclination to make acquaintances and the coldness with which he had received his (Mauville's) advances in the Shadengo valley. Why, asked Mauville, me I did know of a Saint-Prosper at lying there and putting the pieces of the tale together, did not Saint-Prosper remain with his new found friends, the enemies of his country? Because, came mistaken; sent to Algiers; must be the the answer, Abd-el-Kader, the patriot of Algerian independence, had been Here the count closed his eyes and captured, and the subjection of the seemed almost on the point of dropping country had followed. Since Algeria off, but suddenly straightened himself, had become a French colony, where drawled a perfunctory farewell and de- could Saint-Prosper have found a safer asylum than in America? Where more secure from "that chosen curse" for the man who owes his weal to his coun-

had enjoyed a good deal during the past forty-eight hours, did not improve try's woe? In his impatience to possess the Mauville's temper, and he bore his own promised proof the day passed all too reflections so grudgingly that inaction slowly. He even hoped the count would became intolerable. Besides, certain words of his caller concerning Saint- call, although that worthy brought Prosper had stimulated his curiosity, with him all the "flattering devils, and, in casting about for a way to con- sweet poison and deadly sins" of inefirm his suspicions, he had suddenly briation. But the count, like a poor determined in what wise to proceed. friend, was absent when wanted, and Accordingly, the next day he left his it was a distinct relief to the land baron when Francois appeared at his rooms, his first visit being to a spacious, substantial residence of stone apartments in the evening with a buff colored envelope, which he handed to and lime with green veranda palings and windows that opened as doors, him.

"The suppressed report?" asked the latter, weighing it in his hand. "No, monsieur; I could not find that. My master must have destroyed it."

stood in the French quarter, contrast-The land baron made a gesture of ing architecturally with the newer disappointment and irritation. brick buildings erected for the Ameri-"But this," Francois hastened to add, can population. The land baron was "is a letter from the Duc d'Aumale, governor of Algeria, to the Marquis de Ligne, describing the affair. Monsieur

Soon the marquis' servant, a stolid. am sure." "How did you get it?" said the patroon thoughtfully. "My master left the keys on the

will find it equally as satisfactory, I

dresser." "And if he misses this letter"-"Oh, monsieur, I grieve my master is so ill he could not miss anything but his ailments. Those he would willingly dispense with. My poor master!" "You have served the marquis so "There! Take your long, hypocritilong?" said the visitor, pausing as he

cal face out of my sight!" said Mauville curtly, at the same time handing him the promised reward, which Francois calmly accepted. -

TO BE CONTINUED.]

A Witty Scot. At an auction sale in a Scotland vil-"He preferred it to Paris-when my lage the auctioneer was trying to sell a number of domestic utensils, including a porridge pot. As usual he was making a great fuss. Finishing, his keen eye caught a well known worthy, the beadle, standing at the back of the crowd, and he shouted out:

"Maister McTavish, make an offer for this pot! Why, it would make a splen- SLEIGHS, ROBES did kirk bell!"

"Aye," replied the beadle, "if your and COATS. tongue was in it!"

John Bunyan.

The bill of indictment preferred against John Bunyan ran thus: "John Bunyan hath devilishly and perniciously abstained from coming to church to hear divine service and is a common upholder of several unlawful meetings and conventicles, to the disturbance and distraction of the good subjects of this kingdom, contrary to the laws of our sovereign lord the king." He was convicted and imprisoned twelve years and six months.

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"He surrendered a French strong-When work is hard and duty is heavy, it makes life Moorish leader. My master has the re- bright.

It is the thin edge of the wedge; the thick end is food. But what is the use of food, when you hate it, and can't di-. report was suppressed. Few have seen gest it? it except the late king of France and Scott's Emulsion of Cod done.

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