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like carded silk, and he has such woman's hands! But he is a fire eater too." "Rather," laughed Claude de Chantrelon, as magnificent a soldier himself as ever crossed swords. "I said he would eat fire the first time I saw him. I wish I had him instead of you. Chateauray; like lightning in a charge, and yet the very man for a dangerous bit of secret service that wants the softness of a panther. We all let our tongues go too much, but he says so little—just a word here, a word there—when one's wanted—no more. And he's the devil's own to fight!"

The marquis heard the praise of his corporal, knitting his heavy brows. It was evident the private was no favorite with him. "The fellow rides well enough," he said, with an affectation of carelessness. "There, for what I see, is the end of his marvels. I wish you had him, Claude, with all my soul." "Oh-he!" cried Chantrelon, wiping the Rhenish off his tawny mustache. "He should have been a captain by this if I had. Morbleu! He is a splendid sabreur—kills as many men to his own sword as I could myself when it comes to a hand to hand fight; breaks horses in like magic; rides them like the wind; has a hawk's eye over open country; obeys like clockwork. What more can you want?"

"Obeys! Yes," said the colonel of chasseurs, with a snarl. "He'd obey without a word if you ordered him to walk up to a cannon's mouth and be blown from it, but he gives you such a fine gentleman glance as he listens that one would think he commanded the regiment."

"But he's very popular with your men too?" "The worst quality a corporal can have. His idea of maintaining discipline is to treat them to cognac and give them tobacco."

"Farbleu! Not a bad way, either, with our French fire eater. Your squadrons will go to the devil after him."

The colonel gave a grim laugh. "I dare say nobody knows the way better." Cigarette, flirting with the other officers, drinking champagne by great glassfuls, eating bouillons from one, sipping another's soup, pulling the limbs of a succulent ortolan to pieces with all the zest of a bon vivant, did not lose a word, and catching the reflection of Chateauray's voice, settled with her own thoughts that Bel-a-faire-peur had not a fair field or a smooth course with his colonel. The weathercock heart of the little Friend of the Flag veered round, with her sex's common custom, to the side that was the weakest.

"Colonel," she cried while she ate his fole gras with as little ceremony and as much enjoyment as was to be expected from a young plunderer accustomed to think a meal all the better spiced by being stolen, "whatever else your handsome corporal is, he is an aristocrat. Ah, ah, I know the aristocrats—I do! Their touch is so gentle, and their speech is so soft, and they have no slang of the camp, and yet they are such devils to fight and eat steel and die laughing, all so quiet and



"I should like to see him in a duel," nonchalant. Give me the aristocrats—the real thing, you know, not the ginger cakes, just gilt, that are ashamed of being honest bread, but the old blood, like Bel-a-faire-peur."

The colonel laughed, but restlessly; the little ingrate had aimed at a sore point in him. He was of the first empire nobility, and he was weak enough, though a fierce, dauntless, iron nerved soldier, to be discontented with the great fact that his father had been a hero of the army of Italy and scarce inferior in genius to Massena, because impatient of the minor one that, before strapping on a knapsack to have his first taste of war under Custine, the marshal had been but a postillon at the posting inn in the heart of the Nivernais.

"Ah, my brunette," he answered, with a rough laugh, "have you taken my popular corporal for your lover? You should give your old friends warning first, or he may chance to get an ugly spit on a saber."

The Friend of the Flag tossed off her sixth glass of champagne. She felt for the first time in her life a flush of hot blood on her brown, clear cheek, well used as she was to such jests and such lovers as these.

"He would be more likely to spit than be spitted if it came to a duel," she said coolly. "I should like to see him in a duel; there is not a prettier sight in the world when both men have sciepee. As for fighting for me, I will thank nobody to have the impudence to do it unless I order them out. Coqueline got shot for me, you remember; he was a pretty fellow, Coqueline, and they killed him so clumsily that they disfigured him terribly—it was quite a pity. I said then I would have no more handsome men fight

about me. You may, if you like, Mr. Black Hawk."

Which title she gave with a saucy laugh, hitting with a chocolate bonbon the black African burned visage of the omnipotent chief she had the audacity to attack. High or low, they were all the same to Cigarette. She would have "slanged" the emperor himself with the selfsame coolness, and the army had given her a passport of immunity so wide that it would have fared ill with any one who had ever attempted to bring the vivandiere to book for her uttermost mischief.

"By the way," she went on, quick as thought, with her reckless, devil may care gayety, "one thing—your corporal will demoralize the army of Africa."

"Eh? He shall have an ounce of cold lead before he does. What in?" "He will demoralize it," said Cigarette, with a sagacious shake of her head. "If they follow his example, we shan't have a chasseur or a spahis or a pion-pion or a sapeur worth anything."

"Sacre! What does he do?" The colonel's strong teeth bit savagely through his cigar. He would have given much to have been able to find a single thing of insubordination or laxity of duty in a soldier who irritated and annoyed him, but who obeyed him implicitly and was one of the most brilliant fire eaters of his regiment.

"He won't only demoralize the army," pursued Cigarette, with vivacious eloquence, "but if his example is followed he'll ruin the prefects, close the bureaux, destroy the exchequer, beggar all the officials, make African life as tame as milk and water and rob you, colonel, of your very highest and dearest privileges."

"Sacre bleu!" cried her hearers as their hands instinctively sought their swords. "What does he do?"

Cigarette looked at them out of her arch black lashes.

"Why, he never thieves from the Arabs! If the fashion come in, adieu to our occupation. Court martial him, colonel!" With which sally Cigarette thrust her pretty, soft curls back over her temples and launched herself into languet with all the ardor of a gambler and the vivacity of a child, her eyes flashing, her cheeks flushing, her little teeth set, her whole soul in the whirl of the game, made all the more riotous by the peals of laughter from her comrades and the wines that were washed down like water.

Meanwhile, where she had left him among the stones of the ruined mosque, the chasseur whom they nicknamed Bel-a-faire-peur in a double sense because of his "woman's face," as Tata Leroux termed it, and because of the terror his sword had become through north Africa, sat motionless, with his right arm resting on his knee and his spurred heel thrust into the sand.

He was a dashing cavalry soldier, who had had a dozen wounds cut over his body by the Bedouins in many and hot skirmishes, who had waited through sultry African nights for the lion's tread and had fought the desert king and conquered, who had ridden a thousand miles over the great sand waste and the boundless arid plains and slept under the stars, with the saddle beneath his head and his rifle in his hand, all through the night; who had served, and served well, in fierce, arduous, unremitting work in trying campaigns and in close discipline and who had blended the brilliance, the daring, the eat-drink-and-enjoy-for-tomorrow-vedie of the French chasseur with something that was very different and much more tranquil.

Yet, though as bold a man as any enrolled in the French service, he sat alone here in the shadow of the column, thoughtful, motionless, lost in silence.

In his left hand was a newspaper six months old, and his eyes rested on a line in the obituary: "On the 10th ult., at Royallieu, suddenly, the Right Hon. Denzil, Viscount Royallieu, aged 90."

CHAPTER II.

VANITAS vanitatum! Bills of exchange are trafficked in where Cleopatra wandered under the palm aisles of her rose gardens. Drummers roll their caserne calls where Drusus fell and Sulla laid down dominion. And here in the land of Hannibal, in the conquest of Scipio, in the Phoenicia, whose loveliness used to flash in the burning, sea mirrored sun while her fleets went eastward and westward for the honey of Athens and the gold of Spain—here Cigarette danced the cancan!

A little hostelry swung its sign of the As du Pique, where feathery palms once had waved above mosques of snowy gleam, with marble domes and jeweled arabesques, and the hush of prayer under columned aisles. "Here are sold wine, liquor and tobacco" was written where once verses of the Koran had been blazoned by reverent hands along porphyry cornices and capitals of jasper. A cafe chantant reared its impudent little roof where once, far back in the dead cycles, Phoenician warriors had watched the galleys of the gold haired favorite of the gods bear down to smite her against whom the one unparadiseable sin of rivalry to Rome was quoted.

The floor was bare and well polished; the air full of tobacco smoke, wine fumes, brandy odors and an overpowering scent of oil, garlic and cooking. Riotous music pealed through it that even in its clamor kept a certain silvery ring, a certain rhythmical cadence. Pipes were smoked, barrack slang, camp slang and temple slang were chattered volubly. Theresa's songs were sung by bright eyed, sallow cheeked Parisiennes and chorused by the lusty lungs of zouaves and turcos, and now, where the crowds of

soldiers and women stood back to leave her a clear space, Cigarette was dancing alone.

She had danced the cancan; she had danced since sunset; she had danced till she had tired out cavalymen who could go days and nights in the saddle without a sense of fatigue and made spahis cry quarter who never gave it by any chance in the battlefield, and she was dancing now like a little Bacchante, as fresh as if she had just sprung up from a long summer day's rest.

Marshals had more than once essayed to bribe the famous little Friend of the Flag to dance for them and had failed, but for a set of soldiers, war worn, dust covered, weary with toil and stiff with wounds, she would do it till they forgot their ills and got as intoxicated with it as with champagne. And she was dancing for them now. All her heart was in it—that heart of a girl and a soldier, of a hawk and a kitten, of a Bohemian and an epicure, of a lascar and a child, which beat so brightly and so boldly under the dainty gold aglets with which she laced her dashing little uniform.

So she danced now in the cabaret of the As du Pique. She had a famous group of spectators, not one of whom knew how to hold himself back from springing in to seize her in his arms and whirl with her down the floor. But it had been often told them by experience that unless she beckoned one out a blow of her clinched hand and a cessation of her impromptu dance would be the immediate result. Her spectators were renowned fire eaters, men whose names rang like trumpets in the ear of Kabyle and marabout, men who had fought under the noble colors of the day of Mazagan or had cherished or emulated its traditions, men who had the salient features of all the varied species that make up the soldiers of Africa.

And every now and then her bright eyes would flash over the ring of familiar faces and glance from them with an impatient disappointment as she danced. Her big babies were not enough for her. She wanted a chasseur with white hands and a grave smile to be among them, and she shook back her curls and flushed angrily as she noted his absence and went on with the piroettes, the circling flights, the wild, restless abandonment of her inspirations, till she was like a desert hawk that is intoxicated with the scent of prey borne down upon the wind and wheeling like a mad thing in the transparent ether and the hot sun glow.

He was in the house; she knew it. Had she seen him drinking with some others, or rather paying for all, but taking little himself, just as she entered? He was in the house, this mysterious Bel-a-faire-peur, and was not here to see her dance!

He was leaning over the little wooden ledge of a narrow window in an inner room, from which one by one some spahis and some troopers of his own squadron, with whom he had just been drinking such burgundies and brandies as the place could give, had sloped away one by one under the irresistible attraction of the vivandiere.

A whirlwind of laughter, so loud that it drowned the music of the shrill violins and thundering drums, echoed through the rooms and shook him from his reverie.

Amid the shouts, the crash, the tumult, the gay, ringing voice of Cigarette rose distinct. She had apparently paused in her dancing to exchange one of those passes of arms which were her specialty.

"You call him a misanthrope, and you have been drinking at his expense, you rascal!" she cried disdainfully.

The grumbled assent of the accused was inaudible.

"Ingrate!" pursued the scornful, triumphant voice of Cigarette. "You would pawn your mother's grave-clothes! You would eat your children in a fricassee! You would sell your father's bones for a draft of brandy!"

The screams of mirth redoubled. Cigarette's style of withering eloquence was suited to all her auditors' tastes,



Cigarette was dancing alone.

and under the chorus of laughs at his cost her infuriated adversary plucked up courage and roared forth a defiance. "White hands and a brunette's face are fine things for a soldier. He kills women—he kills women with his lady's grace!" "He does not pull their ears to make them give him their money and beat them with a stick if they don't fry his eggs fast enough, as you do, Barbe-Grise," retorted the contemptuous tones of the champion of the absent. "White hands, morbleu! Well, his hands are not always in other people's pockets, as yours are!" The screams of mirth redoubled. Barbe-Grise was a redoubtable authority, whom the wildest daredevil in his brigade dare not contradict, and he was getting the worst of it under the

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

W E A K N E S S
PECULIAR TO MEN AND WOMEN
 It is sad to contemplate the unfortunate condition of so many men of our day and generation. At 30 they feel 50; at 40 they feel 60, and at 50 when they should be in the very prime of life, they are almost ready for the grave. The fire of youth has gone out, the fountain of vitality is exhausted. Premature old age! No matter what produced it, whether evil habits in youth, later excesses, or business worries, the one thing for you to do is to get back the vim, the vigor and vivacity of manhood. Don't lose your grip on life. There are yet many happy, golden years for you if you only get help. We can and will not only help you, but cure you to stay cured. Curing diseases and weaknesses of the nervous and sexual system has been our exclusive business for the past 30 years, during which time we have cured enough fallen men to make an army. OUR NEW METHOD TREATMENT will restore to you what you have lost.
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