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Nov. 9, '03.

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The REFUGEES

By A. CONAN DOYLE, Author of "The Return of Sherlock Holmes"

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Continued from Page 6.

one side, and he was able to catch a glimpse of the Catinat house. It was surrounded on every side by an immense crowd. The house of the Huguenot merchant was a tall, narrow building, standing at the corner of the Rue St. Martin and the Rue de Biron. It was four stories in height, grim and grave like its owner, with high peaked roof, long diamond paned windows, a framework of black wood, with gray plaster filling the interstices, and five stone steps which led up to the narrow and somber door. The upper story was but a warehouse, in which the trader kept his stock, but the second and third were furnished with balconies edged with stout wooden balustrades. As the uncle and the nephew sprang out of the caleche they found themselves upon the outskirts of a dense crowd of people, who were swaying and tossing with excitement, their chins all thrown forward and their gaze directed upward. Following their eyes, the young officer saw a sight which left him standing bereft of every sensation save amazement. From the upper balcony there was hanging head downward a man clad



"Pull me up, son of the devil, pull me up!" he screamed.

in the bright blue coat and white breeches of one of the king's dragoons. His hat and wig had dropped off, and his close cropped head swung slowly backward and forward a good fifty feet above the pavement. His voice resounded over the whole place until the air was filled with his screams for mercy.

Above him at the corner of the balcony there stood a young man who leaned with a bent back over the balustrade and who held the dangling

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...on by either ankle. His face, however, was not directed toward his victim, but was half turned over his shoulder to confront a group of soldiers who were clustering at the long open window which opened out into the balcony.

Suddenly the crowd gave a groan of excitement. The young man had released his grip upon one of the ankles, and the dragoon hung now by one only, his other leg flapping helplessly in the air.

"Pull me up, son of the devil, pull me up!" he screamed. "Would you murder me, then? Help, good people, help!"

"Do you want to come up, captain?" said the strong, clear voice of the young man above him, speaking excellent French.

"Yes, sacred name of God, yes!"

"Order off your men, then."

"Away, you dolts, you imbeciles! Do you wish to see me dashed to pieces? Away, I say! Off with you!"

"That is better," said the youth when the soldiers had vanished from the window. He gave a tug at the dragoon's leg as he spoke, which jerked him up so far that he could twist round and catch hold of the lower edge of the balcony. "How do you find yourself now?" he asked.

"Let me up, sir; let me up!"

"All in good time. I fear that it is inconvenient to you to talk with your heels in the air. I am going to pull you up, but only on conditions."

"Oh, they are granted! I am slipping!"

"You will leave this house-you and your men. You will not trouble this old man or this young girl any further. Do you promise?"

"Oh, yes; we shall go! Only pull me up!"

"Not so fast. It may be easier to talk to you like this. I do not know how the laws are over here. Maybe this sort of thing is not permitted. You will promise me that I shall have no trouble over the matter?"

"None, none. Only pull me up!"

"Very good. Come along."

He dragged at the dragoon's leg, while the other gripped his way up the balustrade until amid a buzz of congratulation from the crowd he tumbled all in a heap over the rail on to the balcony, where he lay for a few moments as he had fallen. Then, staggering to his feet, without a glance at his opponent, he rushed with a bellow of rage through the open window.

While this little drama had been enacted overhead the young guardsman had shaken off his first stupor of amazement and had pushed his way through the crowd with such vigor that he and his companion had nearly reached the bottom of the steps. The uniform of the king's guard was in itself a passport anywhere, and the face of old Catinat was so well known in the district that every one drew back

to clear a path for him toward his house. The door was flung open for them, and an old servant stood wringing his hands in the dark passage.

"Oh, master! Oh, master!" he cried. "Such doings! Such infamy!"

As he spoke a clatter and shouting which had burst out again upstairs ended suddenly in a tremendous crash, with volleys of oaths and a prolonged bumping and smashing, which shook the old house to its foundations. The soldier and the Huguenot rushed swiftly up the first flight of stairs and were about to ascend the second one, from the head of which the uproar seemed to proceed, when four men, so locked together that they formed but one rolling bundle, came thudding down amid a debris of splintered stair rails and writhed and struggled upon the landing, staggering up, falling down, and all breathing together like the wind in a chimney. So twisted and twined were they that it was hard to pick one from the other save that the innermost was clad in black Flemish cloth, while the three who clung to him were soldiers of the king. Yet so strong and vigorous was the man whom they tried to hold that as often as he could find his feet he dragged them after him from end to end of the passage, as a boar might pull the curs which had fastened on to his haunches. An officer, who had rushed down at the heels of the brawlers, thrust his hands in to catch the civilian by the throat, but he whipped them back again with an oath as the man's strong white teeth met in his left thumb. Clapping the wound to his mouth, he flashed out his sword and was about to drive it through the body of his unarmed opponent when De Catinat sprang forward and caught him by the wrist.

"You villain, Dalbert!" he cried.

The sudden appearance of one of the king's own bodyguard had a magic effect upon the brawlers. Dalbert sprang back, with his thumb still in his mouth and his sword drooping, scowling darkly at the newcomer. His troopers had released their victim and stood panting in a line, while the young man leaned against the wall, brushing the dust from his black coat.

"I had a little account to settle with you before, Dalbert," said De Catinat, unsheathing his rapier. Your sword, sir."

"I have no quarrel with you."

"No?" De Catinat stepped forward and struck him across the face with his open hand. "It seems to me that you have one now," said he.

"Hell and furies!" screamed the captain. "To your arms, men! Hola, there, from above! Cut down this fellow and seize your prisoner! Hola! In the king's name!"

At his call a dozen more troopers came hurrying down the stairs, while the three upon the landing advanced upon their former antagonist. He slipped by them, however, and caught out of the old merchant's hand the thick oak stick.

"I am with you, sir," said he, taking his place beside the guardsman.

"Call off your canaille and fight me like a gentleman," cried De Catinat.

"A gentleman! Hark to the bourgeois Huguenot, whose family peddles cloth!"

"You coward. I will write liar on you with my sword point!"

He sprang forward and sent in a thrust which might have found its way to Dalbert's heart had the heavy saber of a dragoon not descended from the side and smothered his more delicate weapon off close to the hilt. With a shout of triumph his enemy sprang furiously upon him with his rapier shortened, but was met by a sharp blow from the cudgel of the young stranger which sent his weapon tinkling on to the ground. A trooper, however, on the stair had pulled out a pistol and, clapping it within a foot of the guardsman's head, was about to settle the combat once and forever when a little old gentleman who had quietly ascended from the street and who had been looking on with an amused and interested smile at this fiery sequence of events took a sudden quick step forward and ordered all parties to drop their weapons with a voice so decided, so stern and so full of authority that the saber points all clinked down together upon the parquet flooring as though it were a part of their daily drill.

"Upon my word, gentlemen; upon my word!" he said, looking sternly from one to the other. In his gait and bearing he had a dainty strut and backward cock of the head, which, taken with his sharp black eyes, his high, thin features and his assured manner, would impress a stranger with the feeling that this was a man of power. And, indeed, in France or out of it there were few to whom this man's name was not familiar, for in all France the only figure which loomed up as large as that of the king was this very little gentleman who stood now, with gold snuffbox in one hand and deep laced handkerchief in the other, upon the landing of the Huguenot's house, for who was there who did not know the last of the great French nobles, the bravest of French captains, the beloved Conde, victor of Rocroy and hero of the Fronde?

De Catinat raised the stump of his sword in a salute.

"Heh, heh!" cried the old soldier, peering at him. "You were with me on the Rhine-heh? I know your face, captain. But the household was with Turanne."

"I was in the regiment of Picardy, your highness. De Catinat is my name."

"Yes, yes. But you, sir, who the devil are you?"

"Captain Dalbert, your highness, of the Languedoc Blue dragoons."

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[TO BE CONTINUED.]

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