

A decorative border with intricate floral and scrollwork patterns in a dark green color, framing the central text.

# **The Escape Agents**

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London: T. Werner Laurie, 1910

## THE NEW COMMISSION

“I AM not in the French Army for the sheer sport of the thing,” said the tall thin man that the others addressed as Major, or Colt, or Joseph, according to their degree of intimacy. He took the long clay pipe from his lips, and punctuated the sentences with its stem. “I’m here to learn the art of war from the best teachers, and to get a position. If possible, and if it can be done within the time, I intend to try what a marshal’s *bâton* feels like for a riding switch.”

“And then won’t you give the girls a treat in Europe?” bantered the dandified little Colonel Paillard.

“No, sir,” said Colt. “Once I get my education complete here, back I go to the United States to realise on it; and as for girls, I don’t care for you to forget that I am affianced to a Miss Patience Collier, of No. 207 Pilgrim Avenue, Boston, Massachusetts.” He mopped his brow and shifted his chair forward into the window to catch the breeze. “Miss Collier is at present following the occupation of schoolmarm, combined with that of historian, and it was she who suggested that, as I was set upon the military profession, I should come to Europe, and go through a regular college course in one of Emperor Bonaparte’s armies. I am supplying her by mail with subject-matter for her ‘Conduct of the Continental Wars.’”

Colonel Paillard took snuff with an air. “Pah!” he said; “you talk, you Americans, but you are not like those solid English; you do not mean all you say. You have tasted Europe; you will not go back again to your dark and savage America. Mademoiselle Collier must come to adorn France.”

“It’s little you know her. She’s of the strictest Puritan stock. She’d as soon think of turning Mohawk as Frenchwoman.”

“If she is a true sweetheart, my dear Joe, she will have regard for your prospects. Here you are, a field officer at twenty-seven, and two years ago you were a private soldier, just starting to learn the rudiments of war and the French language.”

“I wasn’t exactly new to war when Miss Collier had me come over to this side. I was raised on our frontier, Colonel, and out there a man can only quit Indian fighting when he ceases to sit up and breathe fresh air.”

“Learning to steal one another’s scalps,” said the grizzled Captain Ricaud, “is not exactly war as the Emperor teaches it.”

“Well,” drawled Colt, rubbing his blue-black chin, “as the only man here who has sampled each brand, I say that both were originally baled out of the same keg. Now, General Dupont, that we’re under right now here in Spain, is allowed by all judges to have his uniform as Marshal of France cut and ready for him in Paris against when he comes back. Well, gentlemen, I assisted him and you to sack Cordova last week, and I brought along a nice jewelled mayor’s chain and that picture against the wall there, which you tell me is a Velasquez.”

“I repeat my offer of the pair of black jennets for the portrait,” said Paillard.

“Nope. I guess we got mules in the States already, but our future home, when I marry and we furnish one at Washington, could do with a Velasquez. I was going to tell you, though, that I was there when Ephraim Taylor’s men sacked the Mohawk villages at Striped Rock.”

“Never heard of either him, them, or it,” laughed Colonel Paillard.

Colt thumped the table.

“There you have the whole case in a clamshell. Out of the Striped Rock fight I got a pack of beaver skins which turned out later to be full of moth. We have no titles chucked in out West. Here, for less work, I get named Major, and find the wherewithal to keep up my rank and style. As a Major in the French Service I’d step straight above Ephraim Taylor’s head, for instance, in one push at home. That is what Miss Collier predicted at No. 207 the night before I sailed from Boston harbour.”

But at this point the list of Major Colt’s ambitions was cut short. There was no preliminary noise from outside to show that the outpost of General Dupont’s army, of which they were officers, was being attacked. A bullet hummed in through the window, and, hitting the plaster on the further wall diagonally, ploughed a great streak along it, and as a finale, dived behind the Velasquez, and blew out the face of the portrait into a mere star of rags and paint.

Colt, with the quickness of a conjurer, tipped his chair over and fell backwards on to the floor before the noise of the shot came to them, skillfully saving his long clay pipe from fracture. Grizzled old Ricaud sneered from the table.

“Pooh!” he said, “bullets don’t kill, Major, though to beginners I believe they are startling. Now, at the Pyramids, where I had the honour to carry a musket —”

Captain Ricaud broke off, and coincidental with his last syllable, a curious sharp squelching noise came from his head. As he pitched awkwardly off on to the floor, both observers commented on the accuracy with which the second bullet had struck the exact centre of his brow.

Colonel Paillard made a leisurely step to the shelter of the wall, and again took snuff. “But still, my dear Joe, in spite of the exception which has just been proved, I must maintain the theory that bullets do not kill. I fancy that Ricaud was going to point out that it is undignified for French officers to hurry out of their way.”

“Ricaud is dead,” snapped Colt. The window commanded most of the room, and through it other bullets were hopping, which scored further furrows in the plaster, and made other gaps in the Velasquez. Major Colt, on hands and knees, was keeping under the level of the window sill, and making for the door.

“And so, of course, you cannot challenge him,” continued Paillard gently; “but as I’m sure you would not like to miss having satisfaction for what has been said, I shall be most pleased to assure you that his sentiments on the matter are entirely my own.”

Colt got to the shelter of the doorway, stood up, and scratched his square black whiskers. “You wait till we’re out of the present mess, and then I’ll see about combing your hair for you if you still want it. My Land! They’re scrapping downstairs now. Colonel, this post has been fairly rushed, and we’ve been caught talking instead of being out on the job.”

When it came to the point Colonel Paillard was sufficiently alert to his duties. He snapped the snuff-box and crammed it into his pocket. Then he vaulted out of the window through which the bullets were arriving, and shouted fiercely for the troops to rally round the church.

Colonel Paillard had carried his first musket as a super on the Porte St Martin stage, and the actor’s love of showy display still stuck to him. He brimmed with bravery; but his was the bravery which aches to show itself before an audience. Here, outside in the street, and in the ranks of the opposite houses, was an audience ready enough; but it was an hostile audience, with never a plaudit;

throwing criticisms instead, in the form of more bullets. One chance shot took the florid little Colonel in mid-air, and he fell to the cobble-stones with a shriek, and one leg bone snapped in two like a pipe stem.

Forthwith from a dozen doors men came out knife in hand to finish him. Spain was raw then from the savageries of Zaragoza and the red cruelties of the sack of Cordova, and the Spaniards looked upon a Frenchman as people regard a rabid wolf — a creature beyond pity even though it be sick and pitiful, a wild beast to be exterminated.

But in the meanwhile, Major Colt was putting into use his Indian education. He crept and glided along, always silently, always in cover. His scheme was not only to preserve his own skin, but to leave the enemy unconscious of his existence. At the same time he was reconnoitring keenly and with swiftness.

He dived down the cool stone stairway, and at its foot came across the sentry limp and dead.

“Stalked and knifed,” he commented. “Well, I’ve seen that before, only out there the chap was scalped as well. This is getting like old times. I must keep my eyes skinned, or they’ll be lifting my hair next.”

He swept through the temporary guard-room of the headquarters, and saw at a glance all the guard surprised and silenced for ever, and then through the doorway he saw Paillard drop helpless to the ground and a dozen men leaping out of cover to give him the *coup de grâce*.

Major Colt jumped out into the scorching sunlight, calling to imaginary troops to follow him. The Spaniards stopped, turned, and bolted: mere terror of the French soldiery was enough for them. The American clapped a long, thin, wiry arm round Colonel Paillard’s middle, and started back with him to the guard-room.

But the Spaniards, though fluttered by the surprise, were, as men, brave enough. Quickly they returned to the attack, and as quickly Joseph Colt, on the threshold, turned to face them.

His sword lay stacked in a corner upstairs, but he had picked up a knife. Now the knife was the national weapon of the Spanish peasant, but it was native also to those American frontiersmen who were pushing the snake fences of the Eastern Settlements out towards the West. No Colonel Bowey had yet arisen to give the

weapon glory and a name; but it was there in daily current use, alongside the tomahawk and the long rifle, and had been used by the red man down through history.

The Spaniards found Colt's knife play far in advance of their national science. The man jabbed upwards, and they knew no parry to that attack, and for their downward stabs he had always a point or a fist in readiness. And then not only was he as hard as a creature built out of rolled copper, but he was as powerful as any six men, and as active as a dozen wild cats. As an exhibition he was a marvel; as a man to fight against at close quarters they had no further use for him; so they retired to give the bullets once more a chance.

But Major Colt picked up the dapper Paillard again (who had by this time crawled to the doorway) and carried him through, and shot the bolts.

"Good man, Joe," said his friend, "I owe you for my skin there. I thought we'd those Spaniards well whipped, but they are looking ugly again. Now we must think of what to do next."

"No time to think," snapped Colt; "got to do."

He clutched hold of his friend's arm, thrust a shoulder under his stomach, and ran up the stairs.

"Thousand thunders!" screamed Paillard, "mind my leg!"

"I know all about broken legs. Crawled seventeen miles in three days with one after Great Snow's son got a shot into me, back of the Lakes. But I'd his hair at my belt, too, so that perhaps made the journey lighter."

"Why, man, you've come back to the very room where we were first shot at. It looks to me the most dangerous place in the house."

"That's why it's the least likely spot for them to hunt for us in. Now keep under cover, and don't let us have any more attitudinising before the window."

"I've my dignity to consider," said the plump little Colonel, and sat back against the wall and reached for his snuff-box.

"Now, see here. Do you want to be carved so full of holes that you'll look more

like a ladder'n a man? Nope? Then, sir, you let me arrange the rest of this funeral."

There were two tables in the room, and Colt stood one on the other. "Now for a chair," he said, "and then I shall have a scaffold high enough to work from."

"What's the trick this time?" asked Paillard, dusting his uniform.

"Break a way through the plaster, get into the false roof, and so on to the next house; set fire to this one behind us to cover the retreat." Colt proceeded to climb.

But at this point a part of the panelled wall which happened to be a door, opened, and a little thin woman of thirty stepped gravely in to the room.

"I am sorry, *señor*, that a guest of mine should meet with such rough treatment in this village, especially a guest who has saved me and a hundred other women from so much indignity as you have done."

The American bowed from his perch. "I haven't the pleasure of recognising you, madam, but I presume you were one of those at the church. What little I did, madam, was merely what white men in my country consider it their privilege to do for any woman. The soldiers who insulted you were scum, and wanted a lesson, and, my Land! they got one."

"At your hands, *señor*. The French officers merely looked and laughed."

"It was my turn for duty, madame," said Colt stiffly. "In the French army it does not take two officers to do one job. You must excuse me now, please. There are some fellows below after our scalps, and we have got to quit. He climbed a storey higher on the scaffold.

"If it is all the same to you, *señor*, I would rather not have my house burnt; it has historical associations, and it is the only house I've got. You see, I've been listening to your plans. If you will permit me, I will take you to a room where you will be quite safe till the trouble has blown by."

Colt came to the ground, and promptly picked up Colonel Paillard.

"I did not invite your fiend," said the lady pointedly. "He was one of those that



laughed when you rescued us.”

The American pulled at his black whisker.

“Madam,” he said, “I guess this firm can’t entertain a dissolution. If your proposition is not to take it over as a going concern under the present directorate, I reckon the deal’s off.”

But at this point the house door below gave plain sounds that it was giving way under the repeated attacks, and the lady was startled out of her previous attitude.

“Well, Major, you may bring the other monsieur with you for the present. But for Colonel Paillard, until he has apologised — Dear Mary! the man’s fainted! There, bring him along.”

Colt did not press for a more gracious permission. They slipped through into the passage. The door in the panelling was closed behind them, and they wound to the right and the left through the cool, dark alleyways of an old Spanish house; and gaining at last the attics of Colt’s original design, stepped out presently on to a high roof garden with tall white walls, once the exercise ground for a Moorish harem.

“And here,” said the lady, “I design that Major Colt shall stay till the prospect tires him. When the town calms we will have in a surgeon to set the other monsieur’s leg, and afterwards we will pack him off to join General Dupont and the other prisoners at Baylen, according to the terms of the capitulation — him and his snuff-box.”

Colt’s black eyes snapped. “Prisoners! *Señora*? Capitulation! I have not heard from my General for three days, but he was sitting up and taking nourishment then, and seemed hearty enough to eat up all this section of Spain if his appetite went that way.”

The little lady sat back in a chair and fanned herself. One saw that she had an ankle of the neatest and most trim. “Nevertheless, Major, I tell you of the plainest fact. The heavens do fall sometimes. If you had Spain cowed, why the *émeute* in the streets just now?”

“Merely, as you say, an *émeute*.”

“Well, I had hoped you would stay merely because of my *beaux yeux* — I like you all the better, Major, for not making these obvious compliments — but as you are still the soldier first of all, permit me to hand you a dispatch from your General.”

“It has been opened,” growled Colt, taking the paper.

“Obviously,” said the lady with much dryness. “And if you further mark, there is a hole in each corner where it has been nailed to the church door. Oh, there is no secret about the capitulation.”

“No,” said Colt gloomily. “I know that signature ‘Dupont, General.’ My Land! Here’s a mess! Here’s a thing to get into the history of the war; and I know Miss Collier will not leave out a spicy chapter like this just because I happened to be snarled up in it.”

“Ah! here’s Colonel Paillard come out of his faint once more. Now, gentlemen, your orders — as I read them on the church door — state that the capitulation includes all outposts. You are directed to march your detachment into Baylen and surrender your arms.”

“I can’t march,” said the dapper little Colonel, smoothing out his uniform. “They’ll have to provide transport.”

“But you’ll go?”

“Must obey the orders of a superior; it’s one of a soldier’s first axioms, my dear Joe.”

“I don’t know much about axioms,” said Colt, scratching at his square whisker, “though a lady in Boston that I always consult did insist on my reading Euclid once, as one of the necessary ingredients for culture. But I do know that a Spanish gaol isn’t going to be a healthy place for French troops after the way we’ve been harrying Spain. I guess I’m not going to risk standing up to any torture stake this trip.”

Paillard dipped fingers in his snuff-box. “Oh, one will have an honourable imprisonment, and presently there will be an exchange. The Emperor does not forget his soldiers.”

“Emperor Bonaparte,” said Colt drily, “according to my mensuration, forgets his soldiers least when they’re close at hand, and when they’ve got success hot and new in their pockets. I guess he’d have far more memory for me, personally, for instance, if he saw me whittling the butt of a Spanish ensign staff at his tent door than if he just read my name amongst ten thousand others in ex-General Dupont’s list. Man, think! A whole French army capitulated, and to Spaniards! It’s the Emperor’s first great disaster.”

Colonel Paillard shrugged his dapper shoulders. “If my General has capitulated, and I’m included in the capitulation, there’s no choice in the matter.”

“My Land! isn’t there,” snapped the American. “You watch, and you’ll see me make a choice. If Dupont’s got rattled, there’s no reason why I should not want to save my own hair. There’s that marshal’s uniform we spoke about, waiting in Paris. Well, I guess Dupont won’t want that now. Dupont’s a short man” — Major Colt cast a humorous glance over his own lengthy limbs — “but with letting out a bit, I don’t see why that uniform should be wasted yet. In a year or so’s time — eh? But I’ve got to light out of this, and quick.”

But at this point the lady intervened.

“It seems I am listening to a scheme for robbing Spain of a most redoubtable and valuable prisoner. Well, there are limits to the obligation I am under to you, Major, and I tell you frankly that if I am to permit this escape you must bribe me further.”

Major Colt gave an angular bow.

“I am in the *señora*’s power — to a certain extent.”

The lady laughed.

“The size of my bribe is a private matter, and as Colonel Paillard has still not given me that apology, I do not care for him to hear it.” She tapped the American on the arm with her fan. “There is a seat beyond those lemon bushes at the further side of the garden. If you will come with me there we will talk.”

“Oh, go, my dears,” said the plump little Colonel. “Joe, *mon brave*, my congratulations on your conquest.”

But when they came to the seat the lady's air changed. So far, her talk had carried a flavour of badinage, and her manner hinted at gentle admiration. But here, at once, was the woman of business, cold, and a trifle anxious.

"Major Colt," she said, and stood before him, "my condition is that you take me back to France with you."

The American was startled, and then (as a thought came to him) plainly shocked. "Certainly not, madam," he said. "In the first place, I shall travel too fast and too rough for any Spanish lady to keep pace, and in the second, I am a bachelor and a most unfitting escort."

The little woman remained stiffly before him under the glare of the sunshine, clicked her heels, and brought up her hand in military salute. "And I, my Major, am not of Spain. This is not my house. The woman of the house I met below. She babbled to me of the French, and how the American major had saved the women from a few French kisses."

"From insult, madam."

"Oh, she said insult. She said, too, that you would not so much as look at her when she tried to thank you. But at that point of her tale came the shots and the scuffling, and so I packed her into a wardrobe with her dressed and her jewels, and turned the key on her further babblings."

"Still, I do not understand how you, a Frenchwoman (as you say) came to be in this section."

"Yesterday I was *vivandière* to the 82nd regiment of the line at Baylen. To-day my regiment is disarmed, and I, like yourself, wish to get back to France to find another."

"Mademoiselle," said Colt doubtfully, "is a most accomplished actress."

The little woman flushed and bowed. "I have to thank Monsieur the Major for his generous appreciation, and to hope that some day he will repeat it to the Emperor. Before I was a *vivandière* in the army, I was an actress in Paris, and they told me I could act. But — but the Emperor thought differently."

"Oh, mademoiselle, I know you now. You are Mlle Clarice. You were famous,

and one day the Emperor and his Court came to the theatre where you played, and he — well, these great men are somewhat crude in their manner. Even in America we have them.”

“The Emperor came, and he hissed. Professionally I was dead from then on. As Emperor it was his right to judge. But I vowed I would make him praise me yet, and so I went to the army. My chance will come to me one of these days; I know it will come.”

The American rubbed at his blue-black chin.

“I do not see that anyone involved in this beastly capitulation will have their chances of advancement made easy for some time ahead. That’s why I intend to run. But with deference, mademoiselle, I do not see that I can offer you escort. For one thing, the pace will be quick; and, for another” — he flushed awkwardly under his sallow skin — “for another, I am engaged to a Miss Patience Collier in Boston, and have to be most circumspect. You have no idea how tittle-tattle floats, even across the Western Ocean!”

“Dear Mary! And are those your only scruples, Major?” — she snapped her small brown fingers — “Against your first objection I believe I have shown you already that I own some power of ruse, and against your other, why, I am engaged to be married myself to Monsieur Charles le Sage, a man whose jealousy is frightful, and so you see of necessity one must be most circumspect. Knowing your fighting skill, Major, you can judge whether I want to see Monsieur le Sage standing before your pistol.”

“And there’s Paillard to be considered first. He will not come, he said, but I must see him safe before I begin to run.”

“Oh, ease your fears for him. The woman of the house adores him. The creature told me so, but I did not tickle his vanity by handing it on. Trust a barber’s block of an actor for catching admiration. Faugh! Show me an actor, and I will show you something less than a man.”

“But I thought mademoiselle had been an actress herself.”

“And so, monsieur, I was forced to herd with those most detestable bipeds called actors, and can speak of their quality as I know it. We will drop the subject, if you please, and get to the matter of this escape. Have you a scheme?”

“I shall wait till nightfall and creep past their sentries, if they have any. If anyone discovers me, I shall have my knife. I told you it was no road for a lady.”

“By nightfall, Monsieur the Major, this village will be the headquarters of the Spanish army to which ours has capitulated, and even with your Mohawk training that we have heard so much about, my Major, you will not creep through the sentries of an army. Will you hear a better plan?”

He nodded curtly, and she led him to the edge of the roof garden, and stood upon a green painted tub so that their heads were level. They looked over the parapet on to a swift river flowing past the old house, and on out through the town to the country beyond. “Can Monsieur the Major swim?”

“Like a beaver.”

“Good. And I, before I joined the legitimate stage, exhibited in a tank as the Girl Mermaid. I was brought up to the profession very young, monsieur.”

Colt’s quick scout’s eye scanned the chances. “Unless we could dive all the way we should never get through under this glare of sunshine. Look, mademoiselle, there, and there, and there again. All those men are armed, and some or other of them cannot help but look in the river; it must be after nightfall or not at all.”

Mlle Clarice stamped a little foot. “And I repeat to you that after nightfall will be too late. This house will swarm with buzzing, stinging Spaniards. We must go now or stay and join the other prisoners. And if you want a method, look at those bunches of reeds. They are cutting reeds up above. For myself, I guarantee a head-dress of floating weeds, will be a make-up under which no Spaniard will see the actress.”

The American thrust out a large hand.

“Put yours there, miss,” he invited. “I’ve seen that trick done by Indians on the Lakes when they’ve been catching ducks, and never thought of trying it here. You’ve never heard of it in your life before, I lay a dollar, and yet you are the one to suggest it. You’ve invention, Miss Clarice, and I’m proud to enter into a partnership with you.”

She took his hand in both hers and pressed it to her lips.

“Oh, how can I thank you,” she murmured.

“Said partnership,” the American added awkwardly, “to be terminated when the objects stated in the prospectus are carried through.”

The lady dropped his hand.

“I will see to it,” she said sharply, “that the interests of Miss Collier are thoroughly guarded. I think you said she was a Mademoiselle Collier? You see I have Monsieur le Sage and his so frightful jealousy also to consider.”

“Then,” said Colt, still more awkwardly, “if that is fixed, I guess we’d better start in right now.”

They released the lady of the house from her wardrobe, and under her direction took the dapper Paillard to a comfortable room inside, and there left him to an adoring attention under which he preened himself contentedly. Then they went into the basement of the house and found a water-gate with a miniature dock, inside which a boat might be moored. The boat was absent, but the walls of the dock gave them fine cover for their preliminary work.

By some eddy of the rapid stream the descending bunches of rush swept against the outer edges of this harbour, and these Colt proceeded quietly to capture, and to tow into the backwater of the dock. Between whiles, with some sticks and twine he found there, he fashioned a pair of frameworks, which presently he began to thatch with the rushes. He worked rapidly, neatly, and cleverly, as though the building of these quaint helmets was the one handicraft he had specialised on during all of a lifetime.

In the meantime Mlle Clarice had run back silently into the house, from which, after a very short interval, she emerged with a small skin of wine, a cheese, a dozen cakes and a flask of cognac.

“That’s quick work,” said Colt. “I can give you a certificate for knowing where to find things, mademoiselle.”

“The earliest quality of a *vivandière* is a quick eye for foraging. We’ll waste the wine,” said she, and let the skin empty into the water. “And there you see is a bag for the victual and the cognac which when tied up again will be watertight. Monsieur the Major will notice further that I have brought none of your common

cognac. This is *fine champagne*. There are degrees of palate even amongst foraging *vivandières*.”

“These contraptions are almost done,” said Colt, launching one of his rush rafts to see how it floated.

“So much the better, monsieur. The house was filling with Spanish soldiery as I came out, and they may look in on us here at any moment.”

“And yet you never hurried me on! My Land, miss, but you have a nerve! I’d like,” he added to himself, “to have that performance recorded in print. But I’m afraid it would cause misunderstanding if I wrote it to Boston.”

She stepped down into the water. “Oh, I saw that monsieur was working his quickest. Now here is quite an admirable contrivance: a cross bar to rest the chin upon, and meshes of rush above that one can see through perfectly, and yet the whole thing looks no more than a floating rush-heap from the outside.” She curtsied to him in the water: “I make monsieur my congratulations,” she said, and put on the head-dress, and pushed off into the rapid stream of the river.

Major Joseph Colt followed her, and somewhat unnecessarily assured himself that though as a schoolmarm in peaceful Boston Miss Patience Collier had no opportunities for such a display of pluck and resource, still she had other qualities which made her more desirable than all the French *vivandières* in Europe.

The voyage down the river between the white houses of the town was no easy trip even for skilled swimmers. The current ran fiercely under a hot glare of sun, and swirled amongst frequent rocks; eddies circled one every minute or so in a giddy dance; there were shallows which scraped the knees, and overfalls which sucked one down; and with one thing and another it was a matter of the nicest art to keep the head snug and tight beneath the screening rushes.

Once they came across the enemy’s sappers building a bridge of boats, but slipped through the central gap beneath the eyeglassed stare of an engineer officer, as the last craft was being swung into position. And once they drifted like some helpless salmon into a long seine of fishermen’s nets, where Mlle Clarice was drawn under the surface, and was like to have been drowned before Colt could claw away from downstream up to her, and slash through the entangling meshes with his knife.



But they got clear through to the unpeopled country below the town in due time, and then with the warning roar of a heavy fall ahead of them, swam into the bank and lay there in the shelter of an osier bed to dry their clothes in a hot sunshine, and rest for the remainder of the afternoon.

With nightfall they took to the road, and presently came upon a farmhouse. This, after due reconnaissance, they took by storm, and to their surprise found unoccupied. They lifted from its scanty stores two suits of peasants' clothing, male and female, and then cremated one tell-tale French uniform and a gown of dragged silk brocade without ceremony. A rickety gig and cow-hocked mule from the same source took them along the next stage of their journey, and brought them down to the coast and a fishing village.

Here, a day later, Fortune seemed indeed to hold out both hands. A French frigate lay becalmed a mile from shore, sawing lazily over the dark blue Mediterranean swells. That night they stole a boat, took unscathed the fire of a dozen Spanish guardacostas who spotted the phosphorescence from their oar-blades in the purple darkness, and ran up alongside the frigate, just as she was trimming yards to the first zephyrs of an off-shore wind.

They climbed on board, and were received with suspicion, then with rough civility and compliments — the sea service of Bonaparte was never remarkable for its social polish — and presently, as the ship spanked off through the darkness, close-hauled to a snoring breeze, they heard a word which badly dashed their hopes.

“Nile, did I hear you say?” Colt rapped out. “Is this craft bound for Egypt?”

“Ay, Major, and we'll take you there safe enough unless we blunder up against one of John Bull's cut-throats on the road.”

To which Colt, in no very chosen sentences, blurted out his pressing desire to get north to France. Mademoiselle, in more polished, but hardly less vigorous French, backed him up.

But the captain of the frigate had his orders, which he repeated stiffly; and when Colt continued with more warmth and a minimum of compliment, to press his request for at least a boat to return in:

“If you don't care,” said the captain, “to travel with me in civility, I can

accommodate you with irons, and will do on short notice. But whether you return to France or not, you may take it from me, monsieur and mademoiselle, that Egypt you visit first.”

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Without then recounting the details of each month of exasperation, it can be understood how half a year had passed before Major Colt and the *vivandière* at last made their way to the great military camp which stood beside Boulogne. And here their reception had something of strain in it. Hitherto the Bonapartist armies had been invulnerable; and so it may be readily gathered how the French soldiery spat on the name of General Dupont.

The terms of the capitulation had, it appeared, been broken by the Spanish. The French troops had not only been disarmed, but they had been herded on to hulks, where they had died off like flies, and by the latest news, the survivors — and these were not more than half of those who laid down their arms — had been packed off to Cabrera, a small islet in the Balearic group lying off the southern coast of Majorca. “And there,” men told him, “the poor lads are gaoled safe enough. Those sacred swine of English keep the seas.”

But with that marvellous organisation of the Bonaparte war machine which made it so effective, a very short time elapsed before Major Joseph Colt was identified, examined, praised (as he passed on up the scale of officers), gazetted as senior major to a new regiment recently raised, tried for flat refusal of duty, degraded to the ranks, and condemned to be shot, all within twenty-four hours. A rumour came to him as he sat and smoked a long clay pipe, and waited for his platoon, that Mlle Clarice, on the other hand, had been praised, and was presently to be decorated by the Emperor himself. And at this he was gratified. He had grown to like her vastly, though he was still of opinion that she was not a lady who would commend herself to Miss Collier, of Boston, and still omitted mention of her in all his letters to 207 Pilgrim Avenue, though thereby he felt that she was being defrauded out of her due niche in history.

It was not Joseph Colt’s way, as has been pointed out, to despair unduly when he was in a tight corner. But there were two armed sentries in the room with him, old moustaches both of them, and escape was out of the question. Besides, his military career, so far as France was concerned, seemed over for good; that marshal’s uniform which waited in Paris would never be altered to fit his figure,

anyway; and it is always depressing to have one's hopes swept away. So he borrowed the Indian stoicism of his early upbringing, sat back with a wooden face, and smoked pipe after pipe from the cool yard of clay. When night came, he turned in on the plank bed of the guard-room, and, to outward appearance, at anyrate, slept placidly.

With morning he was roused in a hurry, and one of his guards genially mentioned a fear that he would have to be shot on an empty stomach. As they went out into a cold, damp, fog this guard further explained that the officer who had sent the command was usually in a hurry, and always saw to it that his hurry was attended to.

“Well,” said Colt, buttoning his coat, “breakfast one can do without on occasion, though I should like to have had a pipe. But I always like to meet an officer who knows the meaning of hustle.”

They marched rapidly on through the greyness, down the accurate streets of tents and the streets of huts which made the great military camp, and presently came to a cliff head, over which the fog was rolling in, raw and wet, from the unseen Channel beyond. Staring into the fog was a short, fat man with humped shoulders, who now and then muttered oaths to himself, and now and then shook a venomous fist towards the North.

The two guards and their prisoner waited and made no attempt to announce themselves, and so they remained for an hour, whilst the man before them forged his plans and hurled imprecations against England out into the grey obscurity. Major Colt had never seen the Imperial shoulders before, but he recognised them from hearsay.

Then the Emperor turned, strode abruptly up, and stared at the prisoner.

“Joseph Colt, ci-devant Major?” he snapped.

“That's my name and grade, sire.”

“Well, you shan't be shot for another hour, at any rate. Here, take this notebook and pencil. My fool of a secretary is not here; asleep, I suppose. And my writing — Here, you, take down what I say.”

Forthwith Colt, sitting on the wet grass, and using his knee for a desk, wrote

with furious haste to the director of the Opera in Paris, to ministers of Justice and Police, to an administrator of ordnance stores about a faulty horseshoe, to the Empress Josephine about the vile colour of one of her new dresses, and the complexion of one of her Maids of Honour. He wrote also to a painter condemning his picture, and to the Emperor of Austria about the moral arrangement of his household, and, to wind up with, dashed off a note to the American Ambassador, inviting him to join in a coalition against England, and offering him Canada as a fee.

“That will do,” said the Emperor, and Colt stood up. “Now I will attend to your own matter. I don’t want to shoot a soldier who has come to me voluntarily, but discipline must be upheld. Have you anything to say against the justice of your sentence?”

“Oh, if you come to justice, there’s no justice about it. But I guess you hold the gun.”

The Emperor smiled grimly. “I understand you gave a definite refusal to serve on the forthcoming expedition against Great Britain?”

“That’s so, your Majesty. I enlisted in the French service expressly to fight against any continental enemies of France.”

“My man, I do not take divided allegiance.”

“Well, I reckon the officer who enlisted me was less particular. He just snapped up what he could get.”

“Huh!” said Bonaparte. “Well, there’s one Clarice de la Plage, late *vivandière* in the 82nd regiment of the Line, who has interested herself in your case. I offered yesterday to decorate her for past services, but she most impertinently asked to exchange the decoration for your pardon. I offered to give her a post in my own household, and forthwith she pleaded her engagement to some Monsieur Legrand.”

“Le Sage, the gentleman’s name is, your Majesty.”

“I said Legrand,” blared the Emperor. “That is what she told me, and I never forget. You will understand, monsieur, that my memory is acknowledged to be the most wonderful known in history. The girl was once an actress till I said she

couldn't act, after which she very sensibly joined the army. Well, Monsieur Colt, I shall not shoot you this time. I like Americans and I wish to be friendly with the young United States. Besides, I have given a promise to the girl, de la Plage. But I can have no man for a soldier of mine who is a lover of England."

"What," fairly shouted Colt, "me love England! My Land! Emperor, you never made a bigger mistake. I'm here right now learning war because some day I foresee the United States will scrap with the Old Country, and I want a high command in our army. No, sir, there's no man hates England more'n me."

Bonaparte nodded thoughtfully. "Ay," he said, "you think you hate one another, you relatives, and each would like to see the other get a whipping, so that the stripes are not laid on too hard. But you will not help the man who carries the whip, and for ten *sous* I believe you would come and yap at his heels if his whipping showed over lusty."

Major Joseph Colt scratched thoughtfully at his square, black whisker, but made no further comment.

"As it happens," the Emperor went on, "there will be no invasion of Britain for the present. And for a reason, I give you the name of that cur Dupont — a man I trusted, a man I looked to one day making a Marshal of the Empire."

"That uniform could be put by in camphor for a bit, and then let out in the sleeves and legs later on to fit another man if he earned it."

The Emperor stared, and then his cold face relaxed into a momentary smile. "Maybe," he said drily, "But for the present, monsieur, I am confronted with the necessity of dismissing an officer who offers me imperfect service, and of finding a way of getting 5500 good troops from Cabrera" — the boom of a gun came to them faintly through the grey billows of the Channel fog ñ "whilst those d—d English command the Mediterranean."

"Why, sir," said Colt quickly, "the thing's easy. Give me the contract. You dismiss me from one grade, and I'll suggest another that would meet the case. Name me your Head Escape Agent. Surely I have shown ability in this matter of escaping. Mlle Clarice and I are just fresh from Spain, and I have not heard that others got away."

"Ay," said the Emperor doubtfully, "but what force would you want, and what

money?”

“Oh, I’ve got two hands and a tongue, and I’ll make shift with those. And for coinage, your Majesty, the *real* passes current in Spain, and, I believe, grows there. I’ll make shift with *reales*.”

“By God!” said the Emperor, “I’ll give you the appointment. And you can take that girl Clarice with you to help. The wench is no actress, as I’ve said before. But she’s the makings of a diplomatist in her. There, be off with you and tell her your news. And see here: the report of you that will please me best will be the report of soldiers who have been in Cabrera, and who have come back to join the Eagles. Au revoir, Monsieur Colt.”

But to Mlle de la Plage, when he gave her his news, there was one point on which Colt seemed to lay somewhat undue stress.

“The Emperor made mention, mademoiselle, of the gentleman to whom you were affianced, a Monsieur — Monsieur—”

“Legros.”

“Legrand, he said.”

“And I repeat, Legros. Dear Mary! it comes to a pretty pass when a girl’s word cannot be taken without question as to the name of the man to whom she is engaged.”

“But still, mademoiselle, it sticks most firmly in my memory that on the day in Spain when we first met, the fortunate gentleman’s name was Le Sage.”

“Dear Mary!” expostulated the *vivandière* with uplifted shoulders, “and is a poor girl to be restricted to one fiancé? Ah! Monsieur Joe, it is plain to see that you come from that so savage America. I can be assured of it without even looking at your barbarous delightful long clay pipe.”

## THE FIRST FIFTY-FOUR

“IT looks to me,” said Sergeant Colorado appreciatively, “as if they would end up by contriving a shipwreck out of it.” He made a telescope of his hands, and peered hard through the spindrif. “And even if she breaks up and sinks in deep

water — which is probable, with our beastly luck — the bodies should have clothes on them when they begin to come ashore. Name of Mahomet! But I have almost forgotten the feel of breeches! And as for a shirt, well, one wore shirts, I believe, once, when one was a French soldier, but here on this disgusting Cabrera — I ask you even to figure to yourself the luxury of wearing a shirt!”

“It looks to me,” said the small man, with the bandy legs, “as if they were trying to pile her up purposely. And, as I was a sailor during the ten years before I joined the army of the accursed Dupont, perhaps my opinion is better than that of laymen.”

“My dear Monsieur Jean Baptiste Rousseau,” the lanky sergeant bawled back at him through the gale, “conjure me that ship ashore on this infernal isle, and I’ll quarrel with you on no matter of professional knowledge whatever. I want breeches. I starve for breeches. And I’d dearly love a shirt. But let them escape their shipwreck — as every selfish brute of a sailor does when we start praying for him to be thrown here on Cabrera — and I’ll send my seconds to you, and see the colour of your insides before a dozen hours are over.”

The dull thump of a heavy gun came to them down the wind.

“There’s the Britisher loosing off a foredeck carronade again. Might as well try to shoot a horn off the moon as hit a ship in that sea with a little sawn-off, wide-mouthed dog of a four-pounder carronade like the bulldog’s got. Face of a pig! What a shot! He’s nicked the fellow’s fore-topsailyard.”

The sound of the gun carried sullenly over the isle, and of the 5500 French prisoners of war who were marooned there, just seven had sufficient energy and curiosity to join Sergeant Colorado and the bandy-legged Rousseau, and watch listlessly with them the manoeuvres of the two brigs.

With one brig, the clumsy, leewardly Britisher, they were bitterly well acquainted, and that she still sailed the Mediterranean was a standing proof of the inefficacy of their daily prayers and vituperation. She had been set to patrol the seas round their prison by the brutal island sea-power in the north, and time after time had she caught boat-loads of men escaping, flogged them soundly for contravention of rule, and sent them contemptuously back upon the island again. She was captained by one Meadey, a small, dandified, proud, old, and disappointed man, who preserved an iron discipline amongst his own crew,

handled his clumsy vessel with almost supernatural skill, and observed a ferocious contempt for all men and things which did not happen to be of British birth and origin. As Captain Meadey, with his ruffled shirt and his gold-buckled shoes, sailed across the vision of each of the 5500 prisoners at least once per diem, it may be plainly understood that his claim to be the best-cursed man in the Mediterranean rested on no slender foundation.

The other brig, the nimble-heeled polacre, had been sighted by the prisoners the day before, and had obviously tried to communicate with the island. Twice she had run in, and twice Meadey's ponderous *Frolic* had worried her off. She was a heavily-sparred little thing, with an astonishing turn of speed in a light breeze, and she played with His Britannic Majesty's 20-gun war brig in a way that rasped on Captain Meadey's nerves.

At the third attempt the pole-masted brig ran in close enough to the rocks for a man in her main rigging to attempt to bawl a message through a speaking-trumpet. He was a tall, sallow-faced man, with a black whisker. They had noted him before as smoking incessantly at a long clay pipe. And his French was fluent, inaccurate, and delivered with a fine nasal accent. The prisoners, who were clustered like limpets on the rocks, could pick up one sentence in ten.

*"Take you right back ... French soldiers have no use for this brand of treatment ... Emperor Bonaparte had me come ... us two, Escape Agents ... You swim off ... Pick you up ... My Land! yes! ..."*

And then the bellow of the voice was blown beyond earshot, though the pipe wagged at them, emphasising further sentences. All the afternoon it had been breezing up, and a heavy sea was beginning to run, that knocked the speed out of the polacre. On the other hand it was just the *Frolic's* weather, and under Meadey's magnificent handling she soon made things very warm indeed for the other brig. Even now the intruder might have run to sea, and, once driven off debatable waters, would probably have been spared further interference. But it seemed she was captained by someone as dogged as Meadey himself; and though it was plain she was very short-handed, she stuck to her plan of making short boards due north and south just a mile to eastward of the rocks.

"Face of a pig!" screamed the sailor Rousseau. "What did I tell you? Look, they are deliberating starting sheets and heading for inshore. They are deliberately intending to pile her up. There is that long fellow with the black whiskers at the



wheel himself, and looking for a soft spot to beach her on.”

“We want no more lodgers on this island,” grumbled another of the prisoners. “The Spaniards will not increase the ration, and we’re three parts starved as it is.”

“Toad-brain!” said Sergeant Colorado, “and who was it that ever dreamed of getting those gentlemen ashore alive except your particularly ugly self? We invite them to join us as corpses. Afterwards we take their breeches and wear them. Time was when I should not have cared to wear a dead man’s breeks. But here on this beastly Cabrera I am not so nice.”

“She will strike on the outer reef if she sticks to her present course,” said Rousseau, “and who was it that ever dreamed of getting here. With this wind the current will set due south. Those that want pickings must swim for them.” He began to clamber down the cliffs. “I’d risk drowning for a cask of good salt horse. Face of a pig! But think of having one good square meal again!”

Nearer and nearer the polacre rushed into the rocks, rearing madly over the creaming seas. For a time she was plain to all their eyes, and then something of the suddenest she was blotted from sight. A white squall, that typical pest of the Mediterranean, swept down on her through the gale, and before that merciless impact of rain and spindrift and shouting wind, the prisoners on the edge of the island had to turn away their faces.

There they lay whilst the rain flogged them, and the wind blew their shaggy hair into fluttering flags, and yelped at them with an impish frenzy; and when at length the white squall blew through, the polacre brig was not, and out at sea, on Meadey’s hateful *Frolic*, a couple of top-men were lashing a besom to her main royal truck. Captain John Benjamin Meadey, R.N., was pointing out in his agreeable fashion that he had swept the seas.

At the sight of that nautical insult the Frenchmen on the rocks danced and screamed in an ecstasy of rage; but the hunger-pinch in their bellies, and the bareness of their limbs, soon drove them back to business. They spread amongst the rocks, holding there against the surf, and peered with smarting eyes for any possible thing that would alleviate their condition.

It was Sergeant Colorado himself that found the black-whiskered man who had bawled at them through the speaking-trumpet.

They had all seen the fellow swimming strongly shorewards through the surf, and there had been many fears that he would be thoughtless enough to reach the rocks alive. But some piece of floating wreckage stunned him, and he disappeared; and it was fully an hour later that the blue-faced Sergeant found him cast up limp and sprawling under a rick of seaweed.

“Wearer of breeches,” said Sergeant Colorado, “I bid you welcome, and promise you decent burial in return for your clothes. Name of Mahomet! To think how I shall revel in wearing that shirt of yours.”

He began with vigorous hands to pull away the seaweed, and presently got the body cleared.

“And now,” said the Sergeant, “I’ll trouble you first of all for your coat, as I feel sure you have no further use for it.”

The grizzled old soldier proceeded with a deft thoroughness which proved that he was by no means unused to such post-mortem spoliation, and until he arrived at loosening the supports of the coveted breeches, there was no interruption. But as he was stooping down to disentangle the last reluctant button, a bunch of fingers reached up from below him, and the Sergeant sprang back with a yell, and began fumbling tenderly with both hands at his right eye.

The man with the black whisker drew himself shakily up, and spat sea water.

“You blue-faced cannibal,” he gasped presently, when Sergeant Colorado showed further signs of returning to his task, “if you touch my suspenders again, I’ll have your eye clean out next time, and bite it in two.”

“Name of Mahomet! But here again is my usual luck! Here is monsieur sitting up and recovering his undesirable life. I imagined monsieur had no further use for clothes, and here on this beastly Cabrera we have been forced of late to go for the most part naked.”

“‘Monsieur’ be hanged! I am Major Joseph Colt. Don’t you know enough to salute your officer?”

Sergeant Colorado smacked his bare heels together and saluted. “I have spread your coat out to dry, Major. I thought it might be a little damp for you.”

“Thanks,” said Colt drily, “I like a thoughtful man.” He turned to the coat and after a fumble, produced a bowl and stem of a pipe in sections, which he blew clear of water and screwed together. His tobacco was in a watertight box along with flint, steel, and tinder, and presently he was drawing smoke from the long tube with an air of great contentment.

“Well, Sergeant,” he said at last, “it’s a rough way of landing at a place, but I’ve got here in spite of all their teeth, and that’s the main thing. One item for congratulation, though, “I’m glad I didn’t bring Miss Clarice along.”

“What, the late *vivandière* of the 82nd of the Line!” The old sinner grinned. “Well, we have women on the island certainly, but I shouldn’t recommend it as quite the place for an officer to bring his ladylove to.”

“My Land! but you’ll get it in the neck before I’m done with you if you sing any more of that tune. Miss Clarice is no more my ladylove than she is yours. As a point of fact, I believe she’s engaged to a Monsieur Legros, or Le Sage, ‘way over in Paris. But, anyway, she’s down in this section, same as I am, by Emperor Bonaparte’s orders, to see you prisoners out of this Cabrera, and back to your work in the army again. In fact, the Emperor has created a new billet especially for Miss Clarice and me — he’s named us his Escape Agents.”

“Live the Emperor!” Sergeant Colorado hit his chest. “I was with him in Italy and Egypt. I helped him sweep out Austria and the German States. The Emperor can do no wrong, and if he has appointed you, Major, to get the 5500 of us out of this hole, it is because you are the best man in the world for the job. But” — the Sergeant rubbed his great hammer-headed nose — “to brigade you with Mademoiselle Clarice is curious, even for the Emperor.”

“She is far more fitted for the job than I. But I want you to know right here that we work entirely independent of one another. And to take the snigger further off your ugly chops, I am going to tell you once and for always that I’m engaged to be married to a Miss Patience Collier, of 207, Pilgrim Avenue, Boston, Massachusetts, in my own country, and anyone I have to remind of that too often will need a doctor badly, and probably an undertaker. You understand that?”

Sergeant Colorado saluted stiffly. “I can take an order, Major, and carry it out exactly. And if my talk has more of freedom in it than you find to your taste, you must remember I’m an old soldier and have been admitted to intimacy with men

who are now Marshals of the Empire. Moreover, we prisoners here have lived as savages so long that we have almost forgot what French discipline is like.”

Major Colt pulled deeply at his pipe. “So you have known other men who have climbed to be marshals, eh?”

“Berthier, Marmont, Massena — there’s three for you, Major, anyway. Who knows but what there’s a *bâton* carved with the name of Marshal Colt stored up somewhere?”

“I’m mighty tickled to think there is.”

“Well, you bring the 5500 of us here back to the Emperor again, and he’ll draw the *bâton* out of store quick enough. But perhaps that’s what you’re after.”

“Well,” drawled Colt, “I’m not here for the climate, I guess, and it would be too flattering to say I’d come for the society — Land of Columbia! Here’s Meadey sent for me already!”

Sergeant Colorado turned sharply round, and saw advancing fourteen sturdy sailormen, cutlass at hip, club-butted pistol in belt, unmistakable Britons. They all rolled to exactly the same angle in their walk, and had their pigtails served to a precise pattern. Beside them marched a contemptuous officer in a uniform that was spruce, stiff, and finely faded. And behind, and on either flank, hovered a rabble of ragged, naked prisoners spitting hate.

The Britishers marched on to near where Sergeant Colorado stood, halted to a cold and formal word of command, and scanned the coastline. Then the officer, in vilely accented grammatical French (after the pattern set by his Grace the Iron Duke), made pronouncement as follows:

“Order begins.

“Any salvage from polacre brig to be given up to authorities duly appointed to receive same at once. And prisoner concealing same to be flogged.

“Any body or bodies coming ashore from wreck to be pointed out to authorities before touched. Any prisoner stealing from or searching same to be flogged.

“Any survivor or survivors coming ashore alive from wreck to be reported at

once to authorities. Any prisoner concealing or failing to report same to be flogged.

“Order ends.”

The chilly Englishman folded the paper and put it back into his pocket, and “here then,” thought Sergeant Colorado, terminates the usefulness of this Yankee Major.

He turned his head to see how the Escape Agent, who a minute before had talked so feelingly of *bâtons*, would take the check, but to his amazement the man was gone. There was the imprint on the rick of seaweed to point out where he had sat; a splash of wet on the shingle showed where he had emptied the sea water from his shoes; and in the air was the scent of his tobacco.

The Sergeant lifted up his great bottle nose and sniffed appreciatively. Yes, although there was still a stiff breeze, the odour from that quaint long pipe lingered delicately. But of the man, look though one might over every rock within sight, there was not the dimmest trace.

“Name of Mahomet! —”

“If you have a report to make,” rasped the Lieutenant Cabott, “make it, and don’t stand there spluttering and swearing at nothing. Just like a Frenchman, wasting his wind swearing at nothing.”

“My officer, the man was here — a man thrown up from that wreck — and saw you come up, and therefore unless you admit your eyes are worse than a French officer’s, you must have seen him. Now he is gone. It was no business of mine to guard him; but as he was under your eyes all the time you must have seen him go.”

“You blue-nosed son of Belial,” snapped Cabott, “you’ll be getting your back scratched if you don’t take a pull on your jaw tackle” — and then to his men: “Spread out there, my lads, and hunt this fellow up.”

Merrily frolicked the sailors amongst the rocks, and half a dozen times they thought they had their man, but it always turned out to be one of the *bona fide* French prisoners; and in the end they were called in by their chilly officer, who led them back again to the *Frolic*’s cutter.

In the meanwhile, Major Joseph Colt was making himself at home elsewhere, and attending to his creature comforts with the ease of an old campaigner.

At the first sight of the English, he had clapped down to the ground behind the rick of seaweed. He was a man bred up to such quick alarms as these, and every rock and every fold of the ground had already mapped themselves in his eye by instinct. Moreover, his Indian training had taught him how to keep his body always in cover, whilst at the same time moving with the extreme of rapidity.

For a dozen yards he progressed snake-fashion below a ridge not more than a foot in height. Then behind a deeper fold of the ground he straddled along at a fine pace, crouching on all fours, and presently he was running on his two feet at a good round speed. Each footstep was studied. He did not think it likely that there was a tracker amongst those English sailors; but he never took superfluous chances; and so he left no footmarks. But he was by no means flurried. He unscrewed and stowed away the parts of his long pipe as he ran.

By the time Cabott began his proclamation, Major Colt was in the sea, first wading and then swimming; and by the time that chilly Islander has reached his last paragraph, the American had pulled out into the mouth of a cave which he had noted some hours before when coasting by in the polacre.

He had with him a small lobster and a handful of shellfish, which he had gathered *en route*, and felt ready to stay hidden for a week if necessary.

The cave, as it turned out on inspection, ran upwards and inland, and at its upper end was (as caves go) tolerably dry. A great straggle of dry wood, the jetsam of the Mediterranean, filled the cave's middle part.

“Here,” thought Colt, “are the materials for a boat, anyway;” and with characteristic promptitude he pulled out spars which would make keelpiece, stem and stern-post and ribs, and saw to it that enough timber remained over to dub into the requisite planking. But a sheath knife was the only cutting tool he then possessed; and, even for an American with a frontier training, that is short allowance with which to attack so large a piece of carpentry. An axe, or preferable of course an adze, was an early requisite, and so for the time he halted, screwed together, filled, and lit his pipe, and in contemplative clouds of tobacco smoke tried to evolve some scheme by which this weapon might be materialised.

From this mechanical reverie he was aroused, somewhat of the most abruptly, by a giggle — a giggle, too, of unmistakably female timbre.

Major Colt's pipe was quenched with a plug of sand, and Major Colt's person was clapped into a shadowed fret of the rock with the quickness of a thought; and then he had the mortification to hear a comment which made him rapidly emerge again with angular dignity.

Said the voice: "Why it's that Yankee officer that was with Dupont. The one old poker-back Meadey's sent ice-cream Cabott for. And now he's shut his eyes and thinks he can't be seen. My!" And then as he came out into sight — "Good-day, Major."

"Good-day." Colt looked up and saw the faces of two comely damsels laughing down at him from the head of a hill of sand which he had thought before ran up in one unbroken sweep to the cavern's roof. "I didn't know there was a back door to my cave."

"Well, we call it our cave," said the darker lady, shaking her curls. "Permit me to present you to my friend Mademoiselle Kabak. I am Mademoiselle La Rueuse."

"I make my salutation. You followed the army, I believe?"

"When there was an army, my brave one. But we are Frenchwomen of the Empire, and adapt ourselves finely to circumstances. Behold us now as cave-dwellers."

"I am sure you act the part charmingly."

"Ah, monsieur! What discernment. Once I was on the stage in Paris, and I left it because they said I could neither act nor kick. You say I can act, Monsieur the Major; presently you shall see my high kick, and I will convince you there also."

"Yes," said Colt drily, "we'll get on to that later. But just now I want your kind assistance in another direction. I want a boat. To build a boat I must have an axe. Can you find one, or beg or steal an axe?"

"Is this boat for yourself?" inquired the dark-haired Mademoiselle La Rueuse, pushing away the sand, and coming into fuller view.

“Sure!”

“Because you talked to that blue-nosed old Sergeant of a partnership. You said the Emperor had appointed you as one of his Escape Agents, and that stuck-up chit, Clarice de la Plage, was the other.”

“Miss de la Plage is the other Escape Agent, and I want to tell you right here that she is neither stuck-up nor a chit — whatever that may be. She is a very high-toned young lady, and, as far as an engaged man may, I admire her exceedingly.”

“Ah, you’re engaged to Clarice, are you?”

“I am not,” snapped Colt. “I am engaged to a lady in Boston, America, who finds employment there as a schoolmarm, and is a very different sort of young person.”

“And Boston must be so very far away for an ardent soldier’s sweetheart. Well, we all must find our consolations.”

“Madam,” said Colt savagely, “I could swear right here, but I wouldn’t like you to hear me. If I thought you actress enough to play another part, I’d ask you to talk about something else.”

The other woman, a stout placid blond, here joined in. “Oh, stow it, you two, or, as sure as my name’s Kabak, I’ll begin using language myself next, and you know what that means. Now, Major, you want to pay your footing, don’t you? Yes? Well, hand up that lobster.”

“Catch!”

“Good. You are hereby enrolled as a Free Miserable of Cabrera, with authority to go starving as long as you can stand it, and full leave to forage at all times and get nothing for your pains. I don’t suppose they’ll give you a ration, and if they do, the rations are not worth the having.”

“But if you please, mademoiselle.”

“Don’t call me mademoiselle. I am just Kabak.”

“Right. What I want, Kabak is that axe.”



“There is one axe on the island — figure it: one axe to build the huts and cut the firewood for 5500 men — and if you want it you must hire it. The tariff is six *sous* the day.”

“That goes. I’ll take it for a week, and as I guess there’s a commission payable on this deal, if I give you a five-franc bill that will be O.K.”

Now from the first, Major Colt had little hope of building his boat without disturbance. The women in the further cave — there turned out to be four of them all told — were merely camp-followers, and were constantly squabbling. It seemed quite too much to hope for that his presence there and his occupation should remain for long unreported. So he was constantly plotting and scheming to find some other means to deport the first batch of prisoners, but always without effect. Invariably, when he had a new plan formed, some item of it in re-testing proved faulty, and there he was left to begin again afresh. Still he was getting together admirable material to send to that fair historian, Miss Collier, of Boston, for her “Conduct of the Continental Wars.”

At the same time he was not idle. He worked ten diligent hours a day at his boat. He was one of those men who always thought best and most clearly when strenuously employed. Between whiles, when he was not sleeping, he foraged. There was no ration served out to him by the Spanish authorities, who, indeed, were unaware of his existence there, and for foraging purposes the island and the smaller islets round it were very barren. The 5500 prisoners were all in a state of semi-starvation, and half of them were on the constant prowl for food.

But all the world over there is the one man who can grow fat where the thousand will starve, and Major Joseph Colt was one of these exceptions, though in actual girth fatness was not his to acquire. He was always lean and lanky in figure, and his blue-black cheekbones and jaw were always strongly outlined. But he needed food in plenty to keep his machinery going at its accustomed high pressure, and he saw to it that he had it. He charmed out rabbits that no one else could lure from their burrows, he caught fish which had refused every other hook, he found edible roots and salads at whose existence none of the prisoners had so much as guessed.

And still work on the boat progressed till at length she stood up on her rollers, completed. La Rueuse, Kabak, and the other two women had developed an unexpected fidelity. In return for the surplus meats of his forays, they vied with

one another in doing him small kindnesses. And in return for a certain angular deference he paid them — a deference which they saw little enough elsewhere — they all of them gave “this dear Joe” an affection which was quite open and unrestrained; and, what was far more to his taste, added every possible assistance to his scheme which lay in their power.

Upon matters advanced then to this state, descended one day Mademoiselle Clarice de la Plage in fine millinery, and under official escort. She had arrived at Majorca, it appeared, a week ago, and on landing at Palma had brought with her, baggage labelled “Countess Czerny, Vienna.” She spoke Spanish and English with fluent inaccuracy, and because there was no one in the city to examine her, they took it on trust that her native tongue was some Hungarian dialect with an unspellable name. Austria was the chronic enemy of Bonaparte, and any enemy of France was the friend of the Spaniards. Even Captain J.B. Meadey, who came ashore at Palma one morning to make things unpleasant for his beef contractor, was acidly civil to her.

The Countess, it appeared, wished to revel in the sight of enemies in misfortune, and, this being quite comprehensible to the Spanish mind, she was taken over to Cabrera by the next supply boat, assigned quarters, and given the run of the island. It was all ridiculously easy, as she assured Colt with sly malice, when he told his own hard struggle to get a footing.

But, in point of fact, she had moved always in a halo of danger, and knew it. As Mademoiselle Clarice, *vivandière* of the late 82nd Regiment of the Line, she had been for various reasons one of the best known figures in Dupont’s army, and many of the tattered, shaggy prisoners stared at her in open recognition. So far she had met their looks with clever winks — with whole volleys of winks — and none of them named her as countrywoman. But she knew she was every moment in danger of being denounced as what she was, and once caught, she was quite certain the Spaniards would put her down as a spy. They had a perfect mania for discovering spies. And their treatment of them — a very final treatment — was too horrible to think about.

The British, she heard, only shot or hanged spies, and, although so far the bag had been all of the other sex, she wondered whether Captain Meadey would hang a female spy if he caught one.

It was Sergeant Colorado, who first put her in the way of finding Colt. That

grizzled old warrior had one day met her on one of her promenades, had heard her addressed as Countess, and had promptly doubled up in a fit of silent laughter. Later she got him alone, and gave him her views of his indiscretion. “And to think that you, you of all fellows, should behave so to me. Why from my canteen alone came half the liquor which coloured that great bottle nose of thine. And there’s a score of drinks owing for yet.”

“Which shall be paid for honourably, mademoiselle, when my purse refills. Name of Mahomet, yes. But in the meantime one can serve. Will you accept service, mademoiselle? I know your business here. Major Colt told it to me.”

“Ah,” she said quickly, “now, there is how you can wipe off your score. Take me to Major Colt.”

This, as it turned out, was no easy task. The Sergeant had not seen or heard of Colt since the day of his landing, and, indeed, being well occupied with his own hunger and miseries, had let him drop from memory without ten more thoughts. But to serve Mademoiselle Clarice — and possibly to acquire further benefits — he was ready to exert himself, and did so to such good purpose that at the end of a week he had the American’s earth located.

With the four nymphs of the outer cave Clarice had a preliminary skirmish that left many ruffled tempers. They did not approve of her, and said so. She very openly did not approve of them. La Rueuse recommended her to leave the Escape-Agency business to people who understood it, and to go back to the army as a *vivandière*, or to the stage as an actress. Clarice regretted she could not suggest that La Rueuse should again become an actress, seeing that she had never been one at all. They all called each other “dear” very effusively, and any spiteful cut they omitted was one they did not think of.

As a consequence, when at last she did come face to face with Colt, she was flushed of cheek, and her temper beneath was ruffled; and when in his second sentence the tall American extolled the services of La Rueuse and her friends, Mademoiselle Clarice let him grasp the situation in rapid phrase.

“I can’t understand any man letting such hussies wait upon him. Least of all, a man who so continually prated about his girl in Boston — Conyer, I think you said the name was.”

“Collier, miss. I have noted before that you have a difficulty in remembering

names. There was your own fiancé for instance — Monsieur Legrand — Lesage — Lequelquechose —”

The lady wagged a slim brown finger at him.

“Monsieur evades the point! Monsieur is aware of his guilt.”

“I’m nothing of the kind. I’m down here on business, and I had to make use of such employees as came to hand. If you haven’t forgot Emperor Bonaparte’s commission, you’re down on business, too, and I guess we’d better get back to that right now, and leave frills alone.”

“If a further recitation of Monsieur the Major’s tastes can be avoided, let us get to the ‘business,’ as you name it, at once.”

“Sure. Well, miss, that’s the boat I built, with — er — some help. With crowding she could carry fifteen men. Yes, I had reckoned on sending a first consignment of fifteen men back to Emperor Bonaparte’s service. But there will be fourteen now, and the odd seat will be for you. Indeed, I just freeze to think of the risks you have run already.”

“Pooh! I am not like your Boston schoolmarm. I have no nerves to stay a-tittering.”

“No. But it is the Boston schoolmarm that I shall marry.”

“Meaning that you wouldn’t marry me if I were the last woman on earth? Dear Mary! Do you think I’d have you, even if I were not engaged already to Monsieur Le Brun? What a prospect for any woman who becomes your wife, to be dragged back to your savage America, there to be scalped by the Red Indians! No, Monsieur the Major, be faithful to your Miss Patience Collier, or you will die a bachelor. There is no woman in Europe who would go to the backwoods, as I daresay you have found even with La Rueuse and Kabak, and those creatures.”

“Then,” snapped Colt, “as I have no intention of breaking my word to Miss Collier, we will take it I am well suited, and drop the subject if you please. There will be no moon to-morrow night, and, if the sea is sufficiently smooth, the boat will take you off then. I will arrange to-night for the fourteen men who shall accompany you. There is a bandy-legged little sailorman, Jean Baptiste Rousseau, who shall be in command.”

“And this boatful is the limit of your ambitions for the time?”

“For the time, yes. My brig was wrecked.”

“But my ship was not. How do you suppose I got to Majorca? Flew there? No, monsieur, I came in an abominable little craft, named a felucca, manned by sailors who adore me. I earned money for her hire by singing and dancing, and acting in Marseilles. Oh, I know, monsieur, that the Emperor and others have said I am no actress, but still I can earn money on the stage, and good money, too. And my felucca waits now every night behind Formentera yonder.”

“Good. I guess you’ve seen me, and gone ten better. How many men will she hold?”

“Say three loads of your boat.”

Colt pulled at his square black whisker. “Well,” he said with a sigh. “I guess the Emperor will have to enter up the first forty men delivered on this contract to your account, Miss Clarice.”

“Not at all, monsieur. Without your boat, and without your ferriage across to Formentera, none could get away. So I am afraid the men will have to go down to the joint account for the pair of us, and I can only hope that Miss Collier will not disapprove of the partnership. Perhaps it would be one of the things best left out from the notes you send her for that history she is writing.”

“Miss Collier,” retorted Colt, “when I parted from her in Boston, gave me instructions to ‘get on,’ and secure a high position in the French Army. Well, I guess I’m doing it. She didn’t mention any limitations about the methods. I have to use what help I can.”

“There’s one lot of help you’ll not use again,” snapped Clarice, “and that’s those four creatures in the other cave there. They go off by the first boat, or nobody goes off at all. Mind that.”

“But, my good girl, the Emperor wants men — soldiers — not women camp-followers.”

“I know as well as you do what the Emperor wants, and I know better still what he will get, and that’s La Rueuse, and Kabak, and the two others in the first

batch. Come, monsieur, have you no gallantry. Surely it should be the poor weak women to be rescued first!”

Major Colt rubbed hard at his chin. “The Emperor’s orders were for men,” he persisted. “He said nothing about women.”

“Bah, you incorrigible! You philanderer! You want to keep the creatures here to enjoy their pawings, and listen to their silly flatteries.”

“They shall go by the first boat, miss, and be hanged to them. There shall be five of you in the boat, and I hope your tongues will keep you warm.”

“Ah, but,” said Clarice, sweetly, “I do not go in the boat. I stay here. I have my reputation to make as well as you have yourself. And it is only on Cabrera that I can make it.”

The night following came away moonless and black, and, as the sea was smooth, Major Colt crammed no less than eighteen of the prisoners in his boat. A layer of them had to lie on the floorboards, it is true, but they had served too long an apprenticeship to discomfort on Cabrera to mind such small inconvenience as that.

They reached the felucca and were discharged on to her, and then Colt ordered the sailor Rousseau to help him row back to the boat.

“Face of a pig!” screamed the bandy-legged Jean Baptiste, “and here was I picturing myself with a full belly at last. And now you ask me to go back to that beastly island again and starve? Never will I budge from here.” After which he seated himself sturdily on his thwart, and they rowed off.

On the next night and the next, cargoes of the gaunt, shaggy prisoners were taken off to the felucca, which then hove her anchors out of the Balearics, and in due time discharged her freight at Toulon. The hungry J.B. Rousseau was with them, very much to his satisfaction, and Colt rowed back the heavy boat alone.

That night, so it happened, Captain Meadey had in mind to give certain of his crew a little boat-exercise, and whilst he sailed the *Frolic* round Cabrera one way, Lieutenant Cabott was set to circumnavigate the island on the opposite course.

It was Cabott who picked up the phosphorescence of Colt's oar-blades against the blackness, and very promptly turned his ten-man-power boat towards the glow, and ran him aboard. Colt had the sense not to resist, but gave instead such explanation as his wit suggested.

One hour later, an elderly, dandified Captain Meadey received this same contemptuous lieutenant on his quarter-deck in the light of a battle-lantern, and heard the curt report that he had captured an Englishman who was a born liar.

"Send him aft," said Meadey, and Colt came to him under escort. "My officer tells me you call yourself an Englishman."

"That is so," said Colt. The men around sniggered openly at the accent.

"You're a liar. Also an American. But I am short of hands, and will overlook both offences. You may consider yourself pressed."

"My Land! But I don't."

"If you do your duty," said the chilly Englishman, "you will get what you're entitled to. If you don't you will be flogged. Get forward."

Now Major Joseph Colt was cool and calculating, and the least impulsive man on earth but Captain Meadey was too much for him. Here was the type of man who had made the American Colonists revolt, and Colt was his father's son. His sheath knife was still inside his shirt, and he was within an ace of drawing it and making a rush on the Captain and holding him, knife at throat, a hostage for his own freedom, when of a sudden he halted and drew back with a cough and a gasp. Clarice de la Plage stepped out of the blackness into the circle of the battle-lantern's light.

"An addition to your crew, Captain Meadey? Oh, I am so glad you are going to be kind to 'im."

And then Colt saw the pity glow in her eyes, and her lips — her clever, stage-trained lips — deliberately frame the words, "Poor Joe!"

Major Colt marvelled at her impudence in addressing him by his Christian name.

But on consideration he rather liked it.

As he went forward between the rows of guns, he wondered rather curiously why he should like it. He wondered also how she had come on board the *Frolic*. But as she was there, he felt half reconciled to being there himself for the time being. He somehow seemed to himself responsible just now for the safety of this girl Clarice de la Plage.

But at the same time he wondered rather uneasily if Miss Collier, of Boston, Massachusetts, would altogether approve of his interest.

#### THE YELLOW GALLEY-FULL

MAJOR JOSEPH COLT stood six feet two on his bare heels, and as the 'tween decks of H.B.M. 20-gun brig *Frolic* offered only some five feet seven of head room, he did most of his travelling below bent into the form of an ess.

Like all tall men, Colt was used to keeping his head out of collision, and so avoided actual bumps and abrasions. But his height extracted constant sarcasms from both his stumpy fellow seamen and the stocky petty officers, and like all United States citizens of that period he was perilously sensitive to any criticism which came from British lips.

The clumsy little war brig hung on to the coasts of Cabrera through gale and calm, guarding the 5450 half starved and wholly savage French prisoners, ready to spit red battle at a hundred seconds' notice, and carrying on always her own domestic affairs under the iron discipline of Captain John Benjamin Meadey.

Every morning, whether the brig beat wetly through a gale, or grilled under an outrageous sun, gratings were rigged in the gangway, and the cat-o'-nine-tails scored the backs of sundry members of the crew. It was Captain J.B. Meadey's theory that plenty of flogging made his men both tough and smart; and whatever may be said for the specific, there is no doubt that as nautical fighting material, the *Frolic's* crew were hard to beat. They accounted themselves the equal of four times their number of Frenchmen, and six times their number of Spaniards, and on at least nine separate occasions had proved this balance to be satisfactorily correct. The trifle that half their sea fights were won by superior seamanship and gunnery was left out of the record. It was an unscientific age, and any advantage that was gained otherwise than by personal bravery was rather looked upon as hitting below the belt.

In the *Frolic's* forecabin there was Joseph Colt, ordinary seaman and pressed



man, and aft (where she had usurped Meadey's own sleeping cabin as boudoir and sanctum) was domiciled a bright little woman with a remarkably neat ankle, who styled herself Countess Czerny, but who was more widely (and more accurately) known in French Army circles as Mademoiselle Clarice de la Plage.

The *Frolic*'s officers understood that Captain Meadey himself had rescued the lady from the insults of Spaniards one evening in Cabrera, and the detail that Meadey had dined rather opulently before his trip ashore, and had swallowed far more muddy port than was good for him, weighed with them as nothing in the transaction. All English gentlemen did drink as much port as they could get hold of in the year 1810, or they were not gentlemen; and anything bad about a Spaniard was easily understandable. That at least was the way the *Frolic* looked at the matter. The average Briton of the period had a far greater contempt for his ally the Spaniard as a man, than for his hereditary enemy the Frenchman.

To see Captain Meadey, who had a most insular and ferocious contempt for all unmentionable foreigners, doing the amiable to Clarice was a sight for the gods. By right of proprietorship over all the oceans, the British sea officers of those days had an intimate acquaintance with charts, harbours, sea-borne commerce, and coastal ports; they were mightily self-complacent in view of the fact that they held the seas in the teeth of Bonaparte; and they had a good deal of contempt for those who arranged land affairs and allowed the French to beat them. Accordingly, to avoid being mixed up in any way with these incompetents, they took a frigid pride in knowing nothing about the land and the ways thereof, and on the *Frolic*, which was as eminently British a brig as ever designer bungled, there was not a man who could have drawn any fuller map than a mere coastline of Europe.

Austria they knew as a name, but beyond that it was to them merely a blank piece of territory of vague size, peopled apparently by a soldiery uniformed in white coats, who got more lickings from Bonaparte than did most of their neighbours.

Came then among this ship's company Mademoiselle Clarice de la Plage, a lady of nimble wit and highly fascinating manner. She said she was Countess Czerny, and because no one could disprove the statement, they took it for fact. She knew the Czerny country — as a point of fact she had bivouacked amongst the ruins of the old château when she was a *vivandière* with the conquering French Army — and she told them all about the place and its histories and its beauties, and they

listened, politely uninterested. It was the morning after her arrival on board, and Captain John Benjamin Meadey, who had a bad headache, broke in upon the subject by asking where he could put her ashore.

But Clarice by this time was getting a more full measure of her entertainer. She was desolated to think what inconvenience her intrusion amongst so many gallant officers could have caused. But she had a mission. On her estate of Czerny she had fighting cocks; she had come to Spain for more birds to improve the strain.

Englishwomen at that time did not often take interest in sport, and certainly they never fought cocks. Englishmen did, and cock-fighting happened to be a passion with J.B. Meadey. Of course to an Austrian woman anything was possible; and, at anyrate, this taste seemed a creditable one. His interest in her grew. He had fighting cocks in his hencoops — it was from them, by the way, that the lady had got her pointer — and he insisted on displaying to her their qualities.

Now Mademoiselle Clarice knew poultry only from the mess table point of view. But she was an actress, and as she was acting then, as she told herself, to an audience which could throw her a noosed rope as an adverse criticism she did her best.

“Devilish smart young woman that,” condescended Captain Meadey an hour afterwards to his second in command, Lieutenant Cabott. “Smart for a foreigner, that is. Knows a thing or two about game fowl, I can tell you. Pity she isn’t an Englishwoman. What the blank she wants to go back to that dashed place of hers in Austria for, dot me if I can see.”

“The lady wants to have another look at Boney, perhaps, sir. She knows she won’t see much of him aboard here? Boney’s not likely to call on us, eh, sir?”

They both laughed at this bright joke, and then said Cabott: “Bo’s’n’s mate reported that new hand we pressed last night, sir, is showing ugly.”

“Then the bo’s’n’s mate will probably provide him with physic at the gangway to-morrow.”

“Oh, I have him in irons already, sir. The fellow complained to me that he was a free-born American citizen, and when I promised that we’d make an honest man of him instead before the end of the commission, he was insolent to me. I

promised him the cat, of course. I should say, sir, three dozen will meet the case.”

“Six dozen,” said Captain Meadey pompously. “I always support my officers, Mr Cabott, in matters of discipline. By the way, I wish you’d call away a cutter, and go over yourself to that yellow-painted gunboat, and find out what’s wrong between her skipper and the Countess here. I didn’t quite understand the matter last night. Fact is, I was thinking over something else at the time, and just took the young lady away principally because she wanted to come.”

“Quite so, sir.”

“I know I gave the fellow some good straight English, and he seemed annoyed. I remember he said that he would come and take the Countess back by force. Of course, you will tell him that if he tries that on, I shall fire into him at once. You can tell him I am Captain John Benjamin Meadey, and don’t stand dictating to from any Jack-Spaniard living.”

“Certainly, sir.”

“That’s all, Mr Cabott. You may call away your boat. And, oh! by the way, if you can manage to get me a bag of small red maize from anywhere, I’d be obliged to you. The butcher tells me we’re out of corn, and he’s been obliged to feed my game birds this last week on ship’s biscuit, and they’ve distinctly lost brightness. The Countess noticed it at once, and she says there’s nothing like small red maize, steeped in a little beer, for bringing them round.”

“Very good, sir,” said Lieutenant Cabott, and took himself off upon his errands.

Captain Meadey rejoined his guest on the quarter-deck. “I’ve sent off,” he said, “an officer and boat’s crew to teach manners to that Jack-Spaniard you were foul of last night. By the way, I didn’t quite catch what the bother was about. If the fools can’t speak English how can they expect one to understand them?”

“A law ought to be passed,” said the lady pleasantly, “that all peoples that are not English should be taught English without further delay.”

“Now that’s a very sound idea,” said Meadey, “and,” he added thoughtfully, “it would really be worth their while. It would save them a tremendous lot of trouble in making themselves understood. I always think a man must be

abominably handicapped in having to *sacré-parlez-vous* all day long when he wants to say anything. Now, there's your own example. You were brought up, I suppose to speak Carpathian, or some language like that, all c's and z's and j's, that you have to translate with your hands and feet as you go along. But your people had taught you English, and you can see for yourself how much more useful and easy it is.

“English is a most noble and melodious tongue as one hears it spoken here on the *Frolic*, Captain Meadey.”

“Of course it is, of course. No one could help seeing that. Why if you stayed with us a bit longer, and practised, I don't believe anyone would guess you were a foreigner.”

“Ah, Captain, you are holding out too dazzling hopes. But when I have done my errand I must get back to my own poor country again.”

Captain Meadey stared down upon his guest. She was a devilish smart little woman he told himself, and what few foreign notions she had left could be soon knocked out of her. He was a bachelor, and getting on. He felt that he might do worse. He rubbed his hands, and looked at her with a very appreciative eye.

“If I could only find a boat,” said the lady, “however small, and a couple of sailors to man her, I could slip across to my friends in Italy.”

“You don't seem to get on very well with Spaniard,” observed Meadey thoughtfully, “and that's a fact.”

“I suppose you couldn't wink at letting me have a crew of those poor French prisoners?”

“Impossible, madam; impossible. Indeed, I'm surprised at your asking it. As an Austrian you ought to hate a Frenchman worse than I do, and I hate 'em as badly as I hate the devil.”

“My dear Captain Meadey, was I proposing to do the wretches any special benefit? Once ashore on Austrian territory they would be prisoners just as much as they are here. But, yes, Captain, I can assure you that in one point the poor Austrian can beat the proud Briton.”

“I don’t take you. How do you mean madam?”

“Why in hatred of the French, Austria is far ahead of you. No, I think you might trust any Austrian not to be over kind to French prisoners.”

But Captain Meadey shook his head obstinately, and Clarice dare not press the question further just then. Still Meadey was perceptibly thawing, pompous Island bear though he was, and there, under the warm Mediterranean sunshine, she set herself to further fascinate him, whilst on the snow-white deck planks their shadows danced round them to the swing of the brig.

In the meanwhile, away below in the cable tier, with his heels handcuffed to an iron “horse,” sat Joseph Colt awaiting stripes. For the pain of the flogging he was not much concerned. He had stood up once, tied to a Huron torture stake, and had watched unmoved a fellow white man killed with every horrid circumstance, and had only escaped his turn through a fortunate capture of whisky by the Indians. He was a man absolutely stoical in this respect; but when it came to insult and indignity at the cousinly hands of the British, he was a mere bundle of hysterical nerves.

It made him rage to think that after the contemptuous Lieutenant Cabott, other members of the *Frolic*’s ship’s company had set themselves out to draw him, and he had been fool enough to let them do it to the top of their bent.

So as he sat there, with his heels in the bilboes, he bit his thumbs in an ecstasy of rage, and, could he have had the ordering of it, he would have ruthlessly sent every Englishman on the *Frolic* to death to the accompaniment of torture.

By degrees, as the first flux of his rage wore through, shreds of his old scheming coolness returned to him, and he began to make exploration with a view to finding some plan for escape, or, at least, revenge. His prison was in black darkness. He commenced to fumble over it with his fingers in every direction to the limit of his reach.

He was built in on all sides with great knees and massive planking of heart of oak. His head as he sat was a good fathom below the brig’s water-line. Down in that darkness there he saw red when he thought of the torture-stake ahead of him — for that was how he classed Captain Meadey’s grating and cat-o’-nine-tails — and if with his teeth and talons he could have torn a hole through the ship’s side and scuttled her he would have drowned himself without a pang. But, as it was,

he could only rub his chin in impotence.

Then a sound came to him: it was a snore, an unmistakable snore. For an hour previously the marine sentry outside the door had been thoughtfully hiccupping the vapour of new rum, and here the man had fallen off to sleep. The discovery thrilled him.

He unlatched the clumsy door, and softly fastened it back upon its hook. Then he leaned forward upon his knees, stretching out as far through the doorway as his shackled ankles would permit. Not a fibre of his clothing rustled; not the slightest clank came from his irons: the Indian training held good.

Major Colt was a very tall man, and his arms were abnormally long even for his height. The drowsy sentry was almost beyond his reach. Only with his finger tips could he touch the man's bayonet, and the weapon was tight in its scabbard. But even those finger tips could grip with the strength of a hand vice. He strained and strained, and stretched out a further quarter of an inch. He got another finger-nail on to the scabbard, pressing downwards, and by hair-breadth pulls drew the weapon out.

Presently, and with the same quickness and the same caution against noise, he was squatted back in his prison with a British bayonet in his hand.

He slipped the weapon inside one of his leg-irons and strained at it. The fetter opened with ridiculous ease under the leverage. Another wrench at the other ankle, and he was free. Free and armed. Outside the door the sentry snored and exhaled a stale vapour of rum. Colt emptied the priming from his musket, took the lantern which stood at his feet, and stole on down the dark alleyway. He had it in mind then to reach the magazine, stab the sentry, lay a minute's train of powder, fire this, fight his way on deck and overboard, and leave the brig to blow up behind him as a salve for his ruffled honour.

As a point of fact, he would have failed in this attempt. The magazine was aft, and heavily locked, and its keys were in Captain Meadey's cabin. But as it was, his attention was turned to another scheme for revenge. He passed a gloomy cabin with the unlatched door swinging idly as the *Frolic* shouldered over the swells. The dim lantern light showed him a sea-chest, with lid thrown back, and inside the orderly array of a ship carpenter's tools. There was a two-inch auger, bright, new, and sharp. A gush of joy well-nigh choked him as he stooped and

took it in his hand. Also there were some small shot-plugs newly made.

It was back in his prison that he started to scuttle the brig, boring vertically downwards through her floor, and plugging each hole as he made it. The auger bit finely, and his jarred nerves were soothed as the piles of wet oak chips grew.

But after boring the fifth hole of a sudden Colt stopped, and plucked vexedly at his square black whisker. "My Land!" he said, "just consider me for a fool! Here's my girl has me come to Europe to get on and secure a position, and here am I wasting time just to scratch even with John Bull Meadey and Ice-Cream Cabott. Moreover, unless I light out of here quick, it strikes me I shall drown, and that stops promotion anyway." He dropped the auger and pulled out the plugs. Water whistled into the *Frolic* in five steady fountains.

Outside the door the sentry snored, and exhaled more rum. The gloomy, unventilated labyrinths of the brig beyond the carpenter's cabin were still strange to him, and though he moved in the shadows with all the stealth and quietness of his Indian training, he bumped into hammocks and aroused men here and there. One and all they spotted him in some undefinable way, and lent venom to their comment with some gibe at his nationality. Colt came very near to slipping the marine's bayonet into some of them.

That he must have escaped from his irons one and all of these aroused sleepers on the lower decks knew full well, but they made no effort at interference. "Run, Yankee, run!" they scoffed. "John Benjamin will score up your rebel hide finely to-morrow."

But Colt had no mind to go out on to the upper deck, and there he forced to surrender at discretion. He found the one gun port that was triced up to give air to the lower deck. Blackness and the sea were outside, and he leaped into these with a beaver's splashless dive, and was swallowed out of sight.

Only the lower deck knew, and though they were just as willing as their betters to chaff the Yankee, still of course they were loyal to the lower deck. So no alarm was given from below that Ordinary Seaman Colt was attempting to desert, and the upper deck knew nothing of it till the master-at-arms made his report next morning. Then of course it did not take long to discover the sudden leak which had kept the *Frolic's* crew so hard at work all night.

In the meanwhile Colt swam away from the brig under water till he nearly burst,

dived again as soon as he had breathed, and so on, till he had run her out of sight in the darkness. On one side the low hills of Cabrera loomed black through the purple blackness of the night, and for that destination he swam, and presently was encouraged by hearing behind him the dim bellow of distant orders, and then the unmistakable *cluck-clank* of hard-driven pumps.

“I guess,” he mused as he swam — “I guess I’m causing that push of Britishers considerable pain at the pump breaks, anyway. If I could only have scuttled that cursed *Frolic* completely, my Land! but I should have been a big man. Still, when I send the facts home to Boston, and Patience Collier works them up into her ‘Conduct of the French War,’ I reckon they’ll add to the sale of that volume. Gee! It’s just the thing to sell a book our side.”

The water was warm, the sea smooth, and Colt was a strong man and a powerful swimmer. The black outline of Cabrera came nearer to him and more near, and he had decided in his own mind exactly where he would land, where he could conceal himself, and how he would set about getting away with the next batch of those prisoners which the great Emperor wanted so badly for his army. But there was no Escape-Agency business for him that night, and it was out of a quite unexpected quarter whence came the interruption.

To his ear there drifted the faint thud of row-locks, irregularly pressed. At first he thought it was a small boat which was coming towards him; but as it drew more near he diagnosed it for one of the Spanish war-galleys which helped the *Frolic* to guard the island; and presently when it loomed into sight, he could see the great oars hitting the water one after another, like a peal of bells.

“Well,” thought Colt, “there is plenty of room in the Mediterranean for both of us” — and kept on his course. But the galley, it soon appeared, had a helmsman as bad as her rowers, and she steered the vilest course imaginable, yawing to this side and that, till there was no deciding what her intended course might be. And then, as she drew still more near, Colt found her suddenly on the top of him, dived to clear her, and thereupon very nearly lost his life. Some spiteful (or, it is more probable, unskilful) slave dug his oar down to beyond the prescribed depth, hit the American on the head, and stunned him deep down there below the surface.

As it happened, the wash of the oars brought him up again, where he was seen — and ignored. The Spanish watch officer was too idle or too callous to bring-to



for a mere anonymous swimmer.

But another galley was close upon her heels — they were hunting in couples it appeared — and someone hailed. She yawed, either through bad steering or design, and a couple of slaves fished up the flotsam with a boat-hook. Spanish galley slaves always appreciated getting an extra hand on board who might possibly be set to an oar.

The night passed on, and the galley thumped and lurched on her way round the island, guarding always against escape of the French prisoners. On her foredeck lay her new acquisition, left there to die or survive, as he thought fit. The slaves were callous, the officers and crew careless as to the result. If he survived they could inquire as to who he was, and, anyway, that was for *mañana*. The Spaniards were an incurious race, and very much impressed with the futility of doing anything to-day that there was the chance of putting off till to-morrow.

In due time Joseph came by his wits again, and there was the sun up, and genially employed in drying for him his sodden clothing. The musky smell of the slaves made him cough and spit, and presently he was aware that his head ached as though someone had been endeavouring to chop it in two. That and a further odour of garlic gave him the clue to recent proceedings, and he sat up and propped his back against the galley's bulwark.

His survival was languidly reported to an officer on the quarter-deck, and he was ordered aft, and went there in somewhat tottery fashion. As an officer in General Dupont's army he had fought against Spaniards in Spain, and had caused casualties to many of them. But he saw no necessity to mention this. He stated the solid fact that he was a citizen of the United States, and the officer bowed and gave him a civil smile.

“But how did the *señor* come to be in the water?”

An answer to this might be awkward. Colt squeezed his muddled wits for diplomatic reply.

“There was no vessel near the *señor*,” the officer went on languidly, “except that detestable *Frolic*.”

“Oh, detestable, is she?” thought Colt. “Well, I'll risk telling I was pressed on her against my will, and was escaping.” He did so, and was promptly shaken by

the hand and invited below for breakfast.

“Bully for me,” thought Colt, but did not say so aloud. Instead, he went below, availed himself of what primitive toilet appliances the galley offered, and presently was seated in a tiny cabin, eating an olla which was largely made up of heat, garlic, and high-flavoured Mallorquin olive oil.

Don Randolphe, the galley’s captain, was a long and melancholy Spaniard, with a square-cut whisker, almost of the pattern of Major Colt’s own. The situation explained itself quickly.

“The diplomatists of my country,” said Don Randolphe, “have made an alliance with these detestable British; and perhaps at the time it was necessary to use any stone which one could throw at the French. But their presence is hateful, and their manners are a constant insult.”

Major Colt hit the table. “My Land! Cap, but you should hear an American talk about them!”

“Figure to yourself an instance. Three evenings ago I was ashore to see these French cattle, and to rub my hands and think that we could hold so many of the Corsican’s men to such an abominable imprisonment. There was a lady there, an Austrian, the Countess Czerny. At least she called herself an Austrian, but I have my doubts.”

“Ah!”

“Of course, you have met her, Don José. Now, what do you think? Is she Austrian?”

“How should I know? Me meet her? Where can I have seen her?”

“Why on the detestable *Frolic*?”

“Oh, to be sure; on the *Frolic*! Why, you see, Cap, I was forrard, and she was aft, and we didn’t have much truck. So if the lady says she’s Austrian, I guess you’d better take her as such. But might I ask what you were doing with this Countess?”

Don Randolphe preened himself in his melancholy way. “Why, *señor*, one does

not so often see a woman on this service that one can afford to neglect opportunities.”

“I see. Thought you saw your way to do a bit of lady-sparking; and then up came John Bull Meadey and wanted to punch your head?”

The Spanish captain’s face-muscles tightened. “Ah, you also are Anglo-Saxon. You speak lightly. You cannot understand how a Latin feels when his honour is touched. You would never grasp my feelings towards Captain Meadey.”

“Sir, you’re making a very considerable error. I tell you, you can’t guess anything bad I wouldn’t like to do to J.B. Meadey. He treated me worse’n if I was a yellow dog, and, so far’s it doesn’t clash with other business in hand, I’ve got to get square with him.”

“Then rest content, Don José. Presently your vengeance shall be carried out completely and horribly — by other hands.”

The American did not show enthusiasm. “I guess you mean it very kindly, Cap, but if it’s all the same to you, I rather fancy I’m competent to settle up my own accounts, and if they have to be somewhat long outstanding, I don’t forget to clap on reasonable interest. I picture myself one day with a hand on the back of John Bull Meadey’s collar, and then if I don’t get my shoe-toe six times hard into his posteriors, I’m content to have that negligence mentioned in a history of the war now being written by Miss Patience Collier, of Boston.”

The captain of the galley looked mystified. “You speak of things, Don José, which are beyond me.”

“Sir, I am a free American, and hate all Britisher in a way that would surprise you.”

“Then why do you not rejoice when I tell you that shortly he will be punished? Listen, Don José! I shall set two sets of dogs mutually to worry and tear one another. On that island are French curs innumerable.” He waved a hand to where Cabrera baked under the midday sunshine. “To-night the *Frolic* anchors inshore off the castle. News will be taken to *Señor* Meadey of a landing of Frenchmen come to rescue prisoners. Meadey and half his crew will go ashore to capture these. While they are gone, a great mass of the French prisoners will find boats on the beach, will put off under the darkness, and will take the *Frolic*. Many of

the dogs on both sides will be killed. Then will return Meadey and his men. They will go aboard unsuspecting, will be surprised, and killed. And so is wiped out the detestable Captain Meadey.”

“This is playing my game,” thought Colt. “A nice brig-load of the prisoners should escape. But they shan’t do it, all the same. It’s not a fair trick. Besides, I don’t approve of Jack-Spaniards putting their knives into white men, even though they are a pack of stuck-up Britishers.”

“Afterwards, of course, Don José, we shall deal with the *Frolic*. There will be four galleys of us lying off her bow and her quarter, and when we perceive she is out of the hands of our dear ally, the detestable Britisher, we shall open fire on her — the four against the one — and sink her. So will end the *Frolic*. And so will be cured your wounded honour, Don José, and mine. May I offer you cigarettes?”

“Thanks, no.” Colt pulled from his pocket three tubes and a bowl, and screwed them together. “I’ll put your tobacco, if you’ll give me a load, in this. There’s nothing like a cool, long pipe for a pleasant smoke, especially if you want to put in a big think as well.”

“Well, *señor*, with permission, I will leave you to it. It is my hour for siesta. May I offer you a cabin?”

“Why, if it is the same to you, I’d rather sit right here on deck. I guess I’m a man that wants to get too much out of life to have any immediate use for sleeping when the sun’s turned on.”

Now, as Colt knew full well, the great Emperor looked more to results than means, and if he could contrive to bring three or four hundred men back to the Eagles, with a British 20-gun brig thrown in as a *bonne bouche*, that act would go a long way to sending him up in the scale of promotion and bringing him nearer to that marshal’s *bâton* which he so ardently coveted, and which he had marked for his own.

As to his own personal scruples, they must be neglected for the time being, and, of all British subjects, surely Captain Meadey deserved least consideration from him.

Supposing (he told himself) he were boarding the *Frolic* with a crew of

Americans, he would tomahawk Meadey with his own hands as soon as look at him; so why be scrupulous of doing the same thing by deputy without risk?

Miss Collier had bidden him come to Europe to “get on,” and to take the *Frolic* into Toulon full of Frenchmen would be doing this. He set his jaw, and proceeded to think out a process of persuading the captain of the galley to set him ashore.

As it turned out, his diplomacy to this end went very much astray. He first of all ruffled Don Randolphe’s temper, and next aroused his suspicions, and in the end, when, after nightfall, the galley had set up to moorings in the little harbour of Cabrera, near the ruined castle, he got ashore by the simplest of all means.

The captain and those of the officers he had spoken to were below; he was pacing the deck in sulky solitude under the stars; and a boat came alongside with a message from the shore commandant.

Major Colt walked to the gangway, stepped calmly down into the boat, and there was no one near who dreamed of questioning him.

He got ashore with an equal lack of formality, and a minute later had strolled away into the friendly darkness. He could have laughed aloud at the easiness of it all.

Time pressed. If Don Randolphe was to be believed, the plot for the capture of the *Frolic* was already afoot, and Colt had no mind that any boarding-party should go off to the *Frolic* without his company. In the first place, he had his personal account with Meadey to square, though it irked him horribly to let Frenchmen be mixed up in this adjustment; and, in the second place, once the brig was captured, it must be his part to see that Clarice got clear.

Don Randolphe, it must be remembered, had only divulged half his plot to the French prisoners. They knew he wished them to take the British brig: they did not know he intended to silence them with his own guns immediately afterwards. Colt felt he must be there in person to attend to Don Randolphe.

Again and again Colt came across batches of prisoners, or went into their rude huts and tried to get in touch with those who were in the secret. Some regarded him with open suspicion; others took him for what he said he was; and others remembered him as a Major in General Dupont’s army. But none had heard of

any scheme to take the *Frolic*. Or, what was far more to the point, no one owned up to having heard of such a scheme.

The warm night passed on, and Colt grew more insistent in his inquiries. There was a curious wakefulness over the isle that made him sure that something was afoot. When 5450 men all whisper together, a noise goes up like the subdued hum of machinery. But one and all they most exasperatingly kept him out of their councils.

Then Major Colt got a shock. A voice from the blackness of a hut's doorway said, "Joe! You! — and they told me he was dead! Dear Mary!"

"Clarice!" cried Colt. "I beg your pardon, Miss Clarice, I should have said. My Land! how did you get here?"

"Come in here out of the moonlight, monsieur. I squeeze your hand, Monsieur Joe. Word was brought to Captain Meadey that there had been a landing of French Escape Agents, and he has come ashore with fifty of his crew to capture them."

"But why are you here?"

"Oh, that was simple, once I heard he was going ashore. The brightness of his fighting-cock's plumage was dulled; he told me so, the dear, heavy creature, and I agreed with him. There was no cure for it like the leaves of a certain herb, boiled in a little port, and served with red pepper. What was the name of the herb? Well, I could only think of the Hungarian name, and nearly blew out a tooth in saying it. It grew largely on my estate of — I nearly forgot that name too, but got it in time — estate of Czerny, and also, Monsieur Joe, on Cabrera. No, I could not describe the herb, but I would in part discharge myself of the enormous obligation under which the great, the magnificent, Meadey, had placed me. I would go ashore and find it myself."

"Well?"

"I must own he did not see it at first, but I wheedled him into it. Oh, I can do anything with the dear Meadey — 'Jack' he desires that I should call him. Figure it to yourself, Monsieur Joe — he wants to marry me."

"Here, miss," said Colt sharply, "I can't spend all the night chattering like this.

You and I are here on Cabrera as Emperor Bonaparte's Escape Agents, and if we don't want to be superseded, we must get to business right now. Whose hut is this you are in? Who is that sniggering there in the darkness?"

"Sergeant Colorado, my Major."

"Come, now, are you as behindhand as all these other fools? Do you know anything about this attack on the brig?"

"The men are to muster for it an hour after midnight, Monsieur the Major, and because we have no watches, and the parish clock does not chime to-night, the intelligent Spaniard has given to one of us a pistol with which to sound réveillé. At the noise of the first pistol shot, those of us who feel inclined, get to the harbour. At the sound of the second shot, some swim, and the rest take what boats are there on offer. We reach the brig. We take her. There it is — all."

"How are you armed."

Sergeant Colorado thrust out a large lean hand into the moonlight, and showed a heavy knob of jagged rock — "It will serve, Monsieur the Major, till I can borrow a more polite weapon from some English unmentionable pig. Name of Mahomet! but I can smash faces finely with this little tool!"

Colt tugged vexedly at his square black whisker. At last: "Here," he said, "Sergeant, you go and play outside. I've something to say to mademoiselle."

Sergeant Colorado saluted, grinned and went.

"I suppose," said Colt, "you hardly want me to set these wolves to cut John Bull Meadey's throat now, miss?"

"But tell me," said Clarice sweetly; "do you want to do it yourself, Monsieur Joe?"

"Well, I do. I want to handle Meadey myself. I want badly to handle him. But I don't want any Frenchman or Spaniard to do it for me, and that's a fact."

"But still, you are in the Emperor's service, and the Emperor's enemies should be your enemies."

“They are miss, they are. Only, when I entered that service I made one proviso — I wasn’t to be called upon to fight against Britain. My Land! hark to that.”

Crack!

The sharp whip of a pistol shot divided the night outside.

“It seems to me,” said the *vivandière*, “that there’s little time left now for monsieur to argue out these niceties further. This poor Captain Meadey, that had been so gallant to me, I have a tenderness for him. But with a Frenchwoman the Emperor must come first.”

“Right,” said Colt, with sudden inspiration. “Emperor Bonaparte shall come first. You stay here. You’ll be safer on the island.”

“No, Monsieur Joe,” said the little woman. “I am accustomed to the fighting line, and I shall come with you.”

Outside, in the warm darkness, there came the noise of bare feet padding quickly over the bare earth, and Colt and Clarice de la Plage (after another moment’s talk) ran from one to the other, quietly passing the word. The English brig, they said, was too ugly for them. These perfidious British were so full of their own undesirable fog, that they had forgotten how to sleep. Besides, even if they took her, there was a calm, and they could not sail her away. Now the galleys had oars, and the yellow-painted galley in particular was swift and easily handled.

Against the Spaniards these prisoners were always especially bitter. It was the Spaniards who had originally broken the terms of the capitulation, and instead of sending them back to France, had marooned them on this desolate Cabrera; it was the Spaniards who had starved them there; it was the Spaniards who had heaped upon them a thousand indignities. The British they merely disliked with a national enmity. For the Spaniards each separate prisoner had a venomous personal hatred.

By the time they had reached the harbour, word had been passed, and each man of the storming party knew of the change of plan. They were desperate fellows all, unarmed except for sticks and stones, volunteers for this most forlorn of all forlorn hopes. None of the women prisoners were there. The only member of the gentler sex with the storming party was an *ex-vivandière*, who wore a face of easy assurance, and carried a tongue of the most cheerful, but who was inwardly



half-frozen with terror at what was to happen. I think it never occurred to those who knew Clarice de la Plage to credit her with half of what she had to go through.

As it chanced, the languid watch-officer of the yellow-painted Spanish galley, with infinite carelessness had paid out his head warp from the buoy, and let his vessel's stern come within a fathom of the stone quay. A plank bridged the two — it saved the trouble of getting a boat into the water — and that it placed every throat on board in jeopardy did not trouble the languid officer. It did not occur to him that the 5450 French prisoners that he insulted on every possible occasion should ever resent their treatment.

Then *crack*, another pistol shot snapped out, and from behind every rock, every wall, every building, from out of every patch of shadow there issued men, dumb, half-naked, shaggy men, who ran swiftly on naked feet, making for the galley's stern.

A great bottle-nosed Sergeant and a tall black-whiskered man raced for first place. Bottle-nose was on the plank first, but black-whisker jumped and landed on the galley's rail ahead of him. Of their following, only a few could use the plank, many jumped and missed, and of those on the brink of the quay, scores were thrust over into the water by those pressing on behind. The watch on the galley's deck fought savagely, the galley's crew poured up from below and fought savagely also. At them the stormers raged with teeth and talon, with jagged rock and with weapons snatched from the fallen. It was just a shambles of a fight.

In the water some drowned, some doggedly held on till they scrambled on board, some struggled back to the shore. On the galley men hacked, and stabbed, and strangled, and there was only one who gave a thought or a care to any wounded, and that was a woman.

Then it began to be plain that the French were getting the upper hand. The tall, sallow, black-whiskered man, who seemed to be everywhere, and to see everything, and to fight harder than anybody else, jumped on a gun and bawled above the din: "Over the side with them now — slaves and all!"

The order was carried out with a furious rush.

"Now then, we must light out of this right now. All you gentlemen to the oars,

and row like galley-slaves, or slaves you'll be for the rest of your lives, with Meadey's cat-o'-nine-tails to help you on. Now, cast off those warps."

Away they went with a roar and a rattle of sound. The other galleys were awake and buzzing, and one had cast loose and was under oars. Upon her Colt bore down, threatening to ram. Whereupon she dodged, and fouled one of her friends. Shot came after them fast and thick. But the hot, still night was too dark for accurate aim, and away they tore out on to the open sea without further scathe.

And then came the time to sort out the dead for over-side, and to give more care for the wounded than Clarice could contrive with her crude, first-aid appliances during the thick of the fight.

When dawn burned up egg-yellow over distant Minorca, the galley had rounded the westernmost cliffs of Majorca, and was heading north for France over a desert sea. The shaggy, half-naked prisoners bent lustily to the oars, and from the cook-house, which was clamped to the deck just abaft the great forecastle gun, there billowed a rich and appetising scent of roasting coffee.

Mademoiselle Clarice came aft on to the quarter-deck, and brought up her hand in military salute to Major Joseph Colt, who was still at the galley's tiller.

"Of sound men, and those wounded which are likely to recover, there are one hundred and eighteen, Monsieur the Major. A tidy mouthful even for the Emperor."

"Tidy enough. Are you sound, Clarice? What's that blood on your sleeve, girl? My Land! I felt as if I was stabbed myself when I saw you down, with that great gawky Randolphe standing over you with his knife, and I couldn't get near."

"Ah, but he was the jealous one, monsieur. However the good Sergeant Bottle-nose plucked him from me, and threw him over the side. This blood — that's the Sergeant's. Just a scratch on the wrist. I mended it for him, and kissed his purple cheek for a reward."

"You are mighty free with your kisses, miss."

"To those I don't care about, yes. Will you have one, Joe?"

"I guess not."

Mademoiselle Clarice de la Plage stood in the sunlight, and addressed the East: “Now what is it, I ask you, that this dear Joe desires? Meadey, Don Randolphe, Sergeant Colorado, all of whom I care nothing about, I kiss those, and he resents it. I would kiss dear Joe also, to show I care nothing about him too, but he will not let me. There is a Miss Patience Conyers that he prates about —”

“Collier.”

“Miss Patience Collier, a schoolmarm and writer of history in distant, very distant Boston. Now if he really loved this Miss Collier, to whom he is affianced, he would take a kiss from me, as that would show he knew I cared nothing for him, and did not mind. But, no, he will not, this dear Joe. I wonder what does he really wish for?”

“Miss,” said Colt savagely, “if it were a thing any American could do to a woman, there are times when I should like to take you up and shake you. You are that exasperating. I keep on telling you I am properly engaged, and have to stick to it.”

“La—la!” said Clarice. “But I wager that I do not appear in the ‘History of the Wars,’ which the correct Miss Collier is writing for the enlightenment of Boston. La—la! dear Joseph.”

## THE PIRATE

THE captain of the pirate was a Portuguese, and carried the name of Hernando de Soto in deference to the feelings of his friends when his time should come for the gallows. The mate was a Frenchman, wore his own name, Georges Chobar, and gloried in piling infamies upon it. The second mate was a Moor of Algiers, decked out in the style and clothing of a Spaniard. Call him Pedro, and he would beam upon you. Slip out Ali, and if the night was sufficiently dark, it was odds on your feeling the chill of his knife.

Half of the crew of this pirate felucce were as great a mix of nationalities as the afterguard; the other half were African Moors or African negroes.

A pirate she was open and confessed, flying any flag that came first to the halyards, a pariah in every sea; and one would have thought that to put a woman on such a craft was to enlarge the limits of calamity. Yet there was a woman on this dark schooner, a Mademoiselle Clarice de la Plage, and she was there, moreover, by her own free will and choice. Into such desperate situations could the glamour of Bonaparte lure even a woman who had once known and appreciated all the delicacies and dainties of Paris.

Out of all that wild ship's company there was only one man she could trust, and he was an American — one Joseph Colt. But then he also was in the service of the great Emperor, and, as it happened, they were partners in the same enterprise. Major Joseph Colt was the pirate's purser, and, for the one and only time in his ambitious life he was not anxious to climb to a higher grade in the service. There was only one other English speaker on board, a half-witted creature called Trotter, but he never seemed clear whether his nationality was British or American, and he was a man who had brought unreliability up to the level of a fine art.

The tale of their arrival on this picaroon was sufficiently adventurous. They had stolen a Spanish galley, and in her had carried stolen French prisoners from Cabrera, and brought them back to Toulon, there to rejoin the Imperial Eagles. They had set off back to the Balearic Islands for another load, but the very first night they dropped the French land, the galley and her feeble crew had been snapped up by a pirate out of Algiers. Into her hold they were clapped, with the promise of slavery later on in Algiers city; and because the Dey of Algiers cared

not one jot for Bonaparte or anybody else, they were morally sure that this promise would be faithfully carried out.

The pirate, however had been successful; she had made many captures and had sent away many men as prize crews; and because slaves were a commodity marketable in Algiers she had a fine assortment of sailormen sandwiched in between the pilfered bales in her hold.

Amongst these an insurrectionary movement was already on foot when the galley's contingent arrived and that night it gushed over into activity. They gained the deck. The Moorish captain rushed up, and was promptly killed. A couple of his men followed him over the side, and the two parties were within an ace of commencing a mutual massacre. But the Moorish first lieutenant, Ali (who called himself Pedro), jumped into the forerigging, and howled out for a parley and a truce.

The Moors, it seemed, were sick of their present employment. They were pirates, with all the risks and without any of the more pleasing emoluments of piracy. If caught they were hanged; if they turned their cruises to a profit, that profit went to His Highness the Dey. They had for long enough wanted to go a-pirating on their own account, and only the captain (just recently deceased) had stood in the way. Now that he was removed, the advantages of a free commission seemed still more pleasing. They even went further: they suggested a joint-stock concern for all hands.

The Europeans from the hold were struck by the fairness of the proposition. They had got what they were fighting for — liberty; and now they began to look a little more to the future. Even if they did capture the felucce, how were they to decide where to take her? They were of too many nationalities for all to agree. The world was full of war. The French, British, Spanish, Russians, Austrians were all fighting this week or next in the year 1810, and taking from each other eagles, territory, ships, anything they could capture. Why not set up a new nation of their own — the Felucce Nation for example — and make war themselves? It would be no more risky than fighting for other people, and they could see to it that the plums and prizes did not go astray.

The beauty of the scheme struck the majority as marvellous — and the small minority held their tongues. Major Colt was amongst that minority and so also was Mademoiselle Clarice, and they would very much like to have offered an

alternative plan. But some wit knocked out the gangway, and rigged a plank outboard by which objectors might leave the ship if they found existing arrangements damaging to their tastes; and this chilled the critics. So all hands fell to electing officers.

On the strength of her previous practise as *vivandière*, Mademoiselle Clarice was named purser's-assistant (with special reference to the grog department), and nurse to any wounded that the carpenter might find necessary to whittle down. There was no one on board, it appeared, who was qualified to act as surgeon, but the carpenter was a handy man, and said that after a few trials he had no doubt he could amputate as well as anybody.

In view of mademoiselle's election, Colt saw to it that he was appointed purser. He had no following to support him, and he proposed and seconded himself in the teeth of another candidate who was strongly supported.

"I hate to think I'm pushing in where I'm not exactly wanted," the tall American explained civilly, "but if there's any gentleman here with an eye to that pursership, he's just got to fight me right now; and when I've shown up the colour of his inside I'm ready for the next, and so on for as many times as there are applicants. But it's just the one office I've got use for on this ship, and it won't do for anybody to forget it."

Upon this the other candidate discovered that a knowledge of reading and writing was one of a purser's necessary equipments; acknowledged himself illiterate; and gracefully stepped out of the contest. So Joseph Colt went below and took possession of his official quarters. Mr Trotter alone deigned to applaud the election — after it had been made.

To these quarters presently he inducted Mademoiselle Clarice. "There, miss," he said, "that room's yours, and the bolt you see at the back of the door I fixed up out of a crowbar. I guess you'll be a sight safer there than anywhere else on this packet."

"Oh, Joe, you are good to me."

"I'm just doing what any American would, Miss Clarice."

"More, far more."

“Not at all. You must see for yourself that I am remembering all the time that I am behaving as an engaged man should. I have always Miss Collier of Boston at the back of my mind.”

“And for that matter I, too, am, of course, faithful to the dear memory of Monsieur le Brun, to whom I also am affianced.”

“But I thought the gentleman’s name was le Sage. Well, never mind, miss. Anyway, each knows the other’s engaged, and that’s the main thing. Now I’m an American, and you’re a lady, and you’re just now in a blistering fix, and I want to say right here that I’m going to see you safe out of it. And that’s the job I’m going to attend to next.”

“But surely, Monsieur Joe, the Emperor has named you his chief Escape Agent, and your duty is first and foremost towards him?”

Major Colt pulled at his square black whisker. “I guess the Emperor Bonaparte must wait a bit.”

“And there’s your own promotion to be thought about. You will never reach that marshal’s *bâton*, my Major, if you lose thought of it for even one little moment.”

“That *bâton*,” said Colt stubbornly, “is in store for the present, and there, if you please, we’ll leave it for the present. Miss, I want to warn you particularly about that man Ali, who calls himself Pedro. He’s no Spaniard any more than I am a Mohawk. He’s a Moor right through to the finger-nails, and though I’m sure you’ve too much sense to have any use for bigamists of his description, I’ve seen you smile at him in a way that’s given the creature obvious pleasure.”

“Why, dear Joe, I must smile at someone, and he’s the least detestable of the bunch. Now there’s that hateful captain, for instance; you cannot say that I smiled more than twice at Captain Hernando de Soto, as he calls himself.” Major Colt rubbed vexedly at his blue-black chin. “I don’t see why you need smile at any of them. You know what they are. Mr Satan out for a week-end from down below would be reliable and a gentleman compared with any one of the gang. And yet you can laugh at them, and throw pleasant, easy words. My Land! For ten *sous* I believe you’d kiss that Ali.”

“Dear Mary! and why not? Is it your prim Miss Collier of Boston who has taught you that all kisses leave a taste?”

“Miss Collier,” began Colt, “holds that a kiss is only permissible between engaged people;” but when, in answer to Clarice’s shrill laughter, he would have added his own adherence to these views, the conversation was ended and changed to something of the suddenest. From overhead came the crash and concussion of guns, and almost simultaneously there was added to this the din of shot striking their own vessel.

“That calls me to deck,” said Colt. “I’d hate to be killed on a ship like this, but I guess if some of us don’t fight there’s the alternative of being hanged as pirates. You’ll excuse me, miss, for what I’m going to do, but fighting here’s not part of your job at anyrate, so I’ll just keep you out of mischief’s way.” With which he slipped out of the cabin, and hasped the door on the outside, in spite of Clarice’s shrill and scathing disapproval.

On deck the scene was none of the most encouraging. A night, black and starless, hung over the sea. The watch of the picaroon had, it appeared, seen the other vessel a bare two cables’ length away, and had forthwith fired into her without measuring her size. But the stranger travelled with guns loaded, and must have had linstocks smouldering in tubs alongside of them. She returned the shot almost before the flashes had left the enemy’s guns.

The pirates from below poured out on deck, and for a moment showed a very lively panic. The other vessel — a heavily sparred brig they made her out to be — had gone about, and was brazenly coming after them. They were men of a dozen nations and tongues, and Captain Hernando de Soto’s vitriolic Portuguese, though well intentioned, reached the inner feelings of but few of them. The renegade, Pedro Ali, a man full of hot courage, was for accepting battle. “The brig trimmed deep,” said Ali, “and promised rich pickings.” But, “Let us get away,” pleaded others; and presently pistols began to crack between these two parties, and there was every man fighting a neighbour for his own hand.

Now inside Major Joseph Colt there were lungs of brass, and, indeed, the envious freely said that he had fairly shouted his way up out of the ranks of the French army, and then on up through the commissioned grades. He had been cradled on a frontier where the Indian warwhoop was common music, and in the warmth of action no one could deny that he had the knack of putting a certain terrifying ferocity into his yell.

He yelled here; moreover, he backed his words with a hail of blows from an ash



belaying pin on all who attempted to fight with him or with anyone else till presently he was left gnashing and shouting in the middle of an empty circle.

“Shoot the American,” said somebody.

“Just you dare!” snarled Colt. “I’ll kill the man that shoots me.”

No one laughed, and what is more to the point, no one pulled a trigger.

“Now,” said Colt, “who wants hanging? Speak up quick, please. There’s the hangman so close astern that you can hear the creaking of his gear if you listen, and I tell you my neck tickles already.”

Once more uprose a yammer of voices, and once more Colt yelled them into silence. “Looks as if he could make a right smart speech,” said Trotter. “Let’s hear what he’s to say.”

“You lunk-headed scum, that’s a British brig-o’-war you’ve run foul of. That’s the *Frolic* that patrols round Cabrera in the Balearic Islands to keep the French prisoners from escaping.”

“What! You know her?” gasped Captain de Soto.

“My Land!” shouted the exasperated American, “how could I tell you her name if I didn’t? John Bull Meadey’s her captain, and he’ll hang every son-of-a-dog here if he takes the felucce, and try us afterwards. Want to ask any more fool questions?”

Apparently they did not. The great majority of them might not understand the tall Westerner’s words, but his gestures bit home, and the glare of his fierce dark face from beside a battle-lantern brought back discipline. Captain and mates screamed their orders, and the crew jumped to duty without help from the flying belaying pins. The felucce bore away till she had both of the brig’s masts in one in the dimness behind her, and then with her own great lateens goosewinged, and half of her crew aft on the poop to bring her by the stern, she fled like some great scared seafowl down wind into the night.

Long after they had congratulated themselves on having shaken off Captain J.B. Meadey’s pursuit, that worthy man rounded the *Frolic* to, and with a promise to each of his gun captains who made a miss of three dozen at the gangway next

morning, let loose the whole of his starboard broadside into the darkness. Two trundling round-shot from the carronades smashed into the crowd on the pirate's poop, and killed five men there by way of leavetaking.

The escape, and the demise of their friends, had small enough effect on the spirits of the survivors when the Mediterranean sun rose next morning into a pleasant turquoise sky to warm their bodies; and as in the course of the day they overtook and captured a small wine ship out of Valencia, by nightfall they were roaring songs in twenty different tongues, and firing off the felucce's guns at intervals by way of accompaniment. The unspeakable Trotter had daubed his face black with a paste of gunpowder and water, and lurched about howling that he was the devil.

It was whilst this concert was at its height that Major Colt again went down to see Clarice.

For a minute, when he had thrown open the door, the thin little woman glowered at him in tight-lipped fury.

Then: "You savage," she hissed, "you American savage to dare to chain me up here whilst brave men are on deck standing shot."

But Colt was not to be intimidated even by her. "Brave men do you call them? Say mad dogs, and you'll be nearer the mark."

"Oh, poof! You do not understand a little soldierly enthusiasm. To me it would have been nothing. Monsieur the Major, whilst I was viviandière with the French armies, I have seen the sack of Saragossa, yes, and the sack of four other cities, and know what even French soldiers can do. These boys here would not terrify me half so much as did the lonely blackness of this cabin. Major Colt, you forget, the light went out."

"The darkness doesn't appear to have hurt you, miss, and I tell you again it has been no place for you on deck. I don't guess, I know. Once whilst I was trading cutlery to a Mohawk tribe 'way out West by the Great Lakes, they lifted the scalp of a business rival who represented a firewater firm, and drank his samples. Well, miss, if I compared those Indians to wild beasts, it would be insulting to beasts. But I say to you straight, I'd rather be there than here as an insurance proposition."

“Poof! I tell you. The *cher* Pedro Ali would be my escort. I am sure he would be most gallant.”

“That blighted renegade,” said Colt grimly, “has been making such remarks about you already that I have had to attend to him.”

“What did he say?”

“He said you must be lonely down below alone, and proposed to come down and comfort you. The rest of the beastly crew cheered him on.”

“The brutes!” said Mademoiselle Clarice with a shiver.

“Precisely. But they kept the ring fairly enough whilst he and I had it out.”

“So you dissuaded him, my Joe?”

“I set him off to swim home if he can find the way.”

“You killed him?”

“To be exact, I flung him overboard.”

The little woman’s eyes brightened. She put out a slim brown hand and reached up and patted the tall American on the shoulder. “Once when I was on the stage I acted in a play of the classic time. There was a knight in it, and the knight fought for his ladylove and rescued her. Did you ever fight for Miss Collier of Boston, dear Joe?”

“Miss Collier,” snapped Major Colt, “occupies far too ladylike a position ever to want fighting about. If you’d taught school yourself, Miss Clarice, you’d have felt the dignity of it.”

“And Miss Collier also writes history?” suggested Clarice sweetly.

“She does. She is writing a book on the ‘Conduct of the European Wars,’ and from time to time I send her a batch of material.”

“I can picture her, this Boston miss, so prim and accurate, that never kisses any except her dear fiancé that is away from her so savage America, and, therefore,

cannot be kissed at all. Dear Mary! what an image of a perfect woman! Now I am different; I could not stand up stiff and demure and sharp-voiced to teach school, nor could I sit in dull patience and write out history that was sent to me. No, myself I am small, and I am thin, but I am very full of hot blood. Once I was an actress till the greatest man on earth bid me cease acting. So now I take my pleasure as you take yours, my Joe, in making history for others to write about.”

Major Colt pulled vexedly at his square black whisker. “I am afraid, miss, that you and I are of too different temperaments to have much in common. I am afraid you will never appreciate Miss Collier as I do.” He took out the joints of his long pipe and screwed them together, and fitted on the bowl. “But we’re getting away from the matter in hand. With permission I’m going away to find a bunk now to have a smoke and a sleep, and see if that won’t show me a way out of the bad mess we’re in. I just want to ask one favour, miss.”

“Well?”

“Keep yourself snug behind a barred door till I come again.”

“If it will make you rest more soundly, *mon brave*, I promise. And here is something to direct your night thoughts. You told me once that Mademoiselle Collier (after teaching you Euclid) had sent you to Europe to ‘get on.’”

Major Colt sheathed his knife, and repocketed the plug from which he had been shredding tobacco. “Yes,” he admitted, “that is so.”

“Then be ambitious here. You are not safe as purser. Meadey would hang a pirate’s purser without a qualm if he caught him, and he could do no more to a pirate captain. Be ambitious, dear Joe. Send de Soto after Ali, and be captain yourself, and then you can best give directions about how to save our necks.”

“I don’t know,” said Colt, fumbling for his flint and steel. “I want to be quit of this ship, not captain of her. Besides, I hated Ali, and de Soto isn’t such a bad sort of cut-throat. I noticed he was civil to yourself.”

The *vivandière* shrugged. “Oh, if Monsieur the Major must deal tenderly with all my admirers, it will be hard to give so much as a rough word to any of this crew. Captain de Soto certainly did kiss me with much tenderness when we parted.”

Major Joseph Colt blew on his smouldering tinder with such violence that it

flamed extravagantly. "I've no right to interfere with your tastes in kissing, I know, miss, but I'll see to it that de Soto at anyrate ceases from troubling in that direction. I bid you good-night," he snapped, and gave an angular bow, and stalked away, puffing volumes.

Overhead the drunken crew danced madly and filled the warm night with their shoutings. And punctuating the whole were occasional pistol shots, and now and then a scream.

The 'tween decks of the lurching felucce were full of noise and smells, and they had small allowance of head-room. Colt had to bend almost double as he walked, and Clarice leaned out of her cabin doorway and watched his tall stooping figure with a tender eye. "If it were not for thoughts of that ridiculous stiff school-mistress in Boston (wherever that may be), I'd like to tell my hero that I shall die of sheer terror if I have to stay in this awful ship much longer. But whilst he continues to speak of her, never shall he learn it. Dear Mary! What a thickness is this bar he has fitted to my door. How he cares for me! Well, never girl needed care more."

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Once more through the gloom of that night the drunken crew sighted a sail, fired into her and again caught a tartar. Major Joseph Colt awoke to the bellow of guns. He was refreshed with a four hours' sleep, and after satisfying himself that Clarice was safe, he went cautiously out on deck.

The stranger was a big barque of nationality undistinguishable, but she was heavily armed and heavily manned; moreover, her guns were admirably served. The pirates fought with a savage ferocity, and some considerable skill with weapons. But discipline was not theirs. Twice they stopped their fire to clear the decks, and many wounded went over into that black night sea with the dead, so that full space might be left to fight the guns. But the barque held steadily to her distance and poured in a merciless fire, and then of a sudden the wind dropped.

There was nothing for it now but to fight the felucce till she sank, and this her crew with shouts prepared to do. It was probable the barque would take no notice of an offer to surrender; and even if they were granted quarter for the moment, it would be merely to spare them for an inevitable hanging in the near future. Sailormen of honest extraction had a short way with pirates in the crude

year 1810.

As purser, Major Joseph Colt had no fighting station; but it was not in the nature of the man, when battle was lit, to keep aloof from the entertainment. The blood in his veins ran scalding hot, and it was the itch for a fight that had driven him to Europe, quite as much as the “get on” advice of Miss Patience Collier. So after his first eruption on deck, he employed himself for awhile in carrying wounded men down the hatchways. But presently, when a powder-monkey dropped, he found himself handing ammunition; and next he thrust himself in to lay and aim one of the broadside guns, vice a Moorish gun-captain, who was hopelessly incompetent.

Splinters flew, and round shot hummed around him, but Colt’s iron coolness was unruffled, and his gun was the best fought in the ship.

Then came the dropping of the wind, and the pirate’s desperate resolve to die fighting; and it was there that Major Colt’s genius for success was forced to show itself. He left his gun, jumped up on the break of the poop, and by sheer weight of lung, even in the midst of that furiously-contested action, got himself attention.

“Who wants to die?” he shouted above the din of firing. He had a heavy flint-lock pistol in either hand, held muzzle up, ready to drop into instant use, and there was a look in his grim, dark eyes that got the attention of the men who were even then prepared to glare unawed into the face of death.

“You may be ready to quit the earth, you scum, and I daresay it is the best thing that could happen to most of you. But I’m not. I’ve got a lot of work mapped out for me on ahead, and I can’t afford to die and leave it. My Land! no. So I’ll just have to save your blackguard necks along with my own, whether I like it or not. Now attend to me, you gun-captains. You all see that big white splinter mark on the barque’s water-line there, just abaft of ‘midships? I want all of you to lay your guns on to that, and lay them true. You’re to fire when I give the word, and not before or after. Any gun-captain who misses his aim I’ll pistol with my own hand, and promote the number two of that gun to be captain. So turn-to again, you nonation swine, and fight for your dirty necks.”

The guns were loaded, run out, laid; Colt bawled an order to fire, and the felucce reeled to the shock of the discharge. The barque also reeled, and white

splinters sprang in bristles from an ugly wound in her side.

The pirates sponged their guns, reloaded, clapped on to the breech-tackles, and ran them out. But the barque's crew fired no more, applying themselves instead with a sudden industry to pumps and bucket-chains, and Major Colt saw that it was wisdom to accept the involuntary armistice.

"Hold your fire," he ordered, and when one gun barked in spite of his prohibition, he dropped a pistol on to the man who pulled the lanyard, and shot him through the head. "That's my cure for a hound who didn't know that discipline had arrived on board here. There are more pills from the same box if any others of you want doctoring. I guess we'll quit this neighbourhood before that brig fellow has cured his stomach ache, and can attend to us again."

De Soto came across the poop. "I thank you for your help," he said. "That lesson was needed."

"Say 'sir' when you address me."

De Soto's hand slid to his belt, and he promptly found himself looking down the barrel of Major Colt's pistol.

"I shall be very pleased to serve under you, sir."

"I thought you would be. Now see to it that you don't play any monkey tricks, or you'll get it quick and sudden where the chicken got the axe." Major Colt raised his voice again. "Men and officers! There's been a new election of captain on this packet, and the officer who's promoted gets the job because he's the best man on board. Anybody dispute that?"

No one did. Indeed, the American's demeanour so jumped with their fancy, that they gave him what they intended for a cheer, each pirate of them shouting in his native mother tongue.

"Mark, I don't want to be captain of your old iniquity shop. But you made me so frightened I just had to elect myself. I've worn a scalp so long that I've grown to like it, and I tell you I've never before felt it so loose as it's been since I've travelled in your undesirable society. I just hate this pirating idea; but if it's got to be, I'm going to have it run on sound, safe commercial lines. Fall-to at those sweeps, you. Mr de Soto, stave every liquor cask there is on board, and then see

the decks swabbed up and holystoned. For the future I wish this ship kept as clean as one of those blasted British men-o'-war, and for that I hold you responsible.”

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Now a gap occurs here in the records that have been placed at my disposal; but to a certain extent this can be bridged from hints let drop here and there in the context. It is pretty plain that for the moment neither of the Escape Agents saw a way to get back to the work which Bonaparte had given them on Cabrera; and so the best was made of the alternative. The felucce was sailed towards the Eastern Mediterranean, because, as Major Colt stated, all Greeks and Turks were pirates themselves anyway, and so it was no robbery to play the pirate amongst them. And amongst the islands of Greece she plied with industry her nefarious trade. At the end of that time she sailed back west for the Balearics, carefully dodging the English cruisers, which were just then strung out across the Mediterranean for the especial benefit of the French.

It is rather laughable to think of the means taken to induce this crew of hopeless rascallions to lend their services to the cause of Emperor Bonaparte, for which no single man of them cared one jot; and the key to the whole mystery may be given in the one word discipline. Scattered over the face of the seas in the year 1810 were many thousands of men who earned a precarious livelihood by following the industry of pirating, and without exception these had all tried honest seafaring first, and thrown it over because the smallness of the profits and the heaviness of the discipline irked them. They thirsted for gold easily won, for women slaves, for wild drinking bouts; and all their brains and thews were turned to reach these ideals. Beyond these they asked for nothing. A short life, and a wet and merry one, was their motto. Discipline they scoffed at, and openly told their captains that Jack was as good as his master. As for holystoning decks, or keeping their vessels dandified, they would as soon have thought of carrying a chaplain.

Enter then upon such a society, Joseph Colt, United States subject, with ideas of his own upon tidiness and discipline, and a strong enough personality to see to it that his theories were carried into practice. “You’re a sickening lot of swine to start upon,” he informed his crew with grim emphasis; “but my Land! I’ll make you into the most efficient pirates in the Eastern Mediterranean before I’m through with you. You shall never throw it in my teeth that you were hanged as



nobodies.”

Accordingly he practised them with cutlass and small arms, drilled them at the great guns, exercised them at sail drill, landing drill, boarding, skirmishing, scouting, in fact made them perfect in all the manoeuvres which could possibly occur to the mind of a major of French infantry, with an Indian training, suddenly promoted to a sea captaincy. Between whiles he made them holystone, paint, scrub, and polish, and he beat loiterers over the head with a brass pistol butt. He seldom went below, still more seldom slept. He sat for the most part on the after skylight, smoking at a long, many-jointed pipe, and looking grim, and black, and savage. The crew feared him more than anything on earth or sea, and hated him and their sad hard lot with a hate that was almost pathetic.

“How long?” was the question Clarice put to him every day, and his reply was always: “As short a time as I can make it.”

Once when they had taken a prize, and she was more than usually anxious to be gone from the horrors of her present situation, “My Land! miss,” he snapped out, “do you think I forget what I came to Europe for? I’m tickled to think there’s a marshal’s *bâton* somewhere in store for me, and if I don’t soon get to work trying for it again, I guess Emperor Bonaparte will forget I’m in the contest.”

In the meanwhile they appear to have been taking ships, easing them of money, food, valuables, and ammunition, treating their crews and passengers with a fine courtesy, and then letting them go little harmed. Colt would permit no liquor to be looted, neither would he allow his crew to go ashore at any port to spend their money in a regulation piratical debauch. And the pirates, worn thin with hard work, clicked their dry tongues, patted the useless gold in their pockets, and swore that if this were piracy, then a moral life was the life for them.

To his crew, then, in this chastened mood, Major Joseph Colt at last made a proposal.

They all had money saved now. How would it suit them to settle down ashore, each man as a respectable householder?

Some of them looked glum; the rest grinned; they thought they were to be treated to a specimen of Major Colt’s grisly humour.

“Beg pardon, Captain,” said Trotter, “is this the South Seas you’ve got in view?”

“France.”

Mr Trotter passed two fingers tenderly round his neck, to hint that the very idea made him feel the twitch of the rope.

“I can dump you down in France, and guarantee that the old record against each of you shall be wiped clean. On terms. I know quite well you’ll be up to your old iniquities again twenty hours after you’ve landed, but that’s no concern of mine. As I say, I can set you ashore free men, on terms. Question is, do you want to hear now?”

There was no doubt that they did. In spite of the new discipline, they fairly yelled for information; and when they were told that a free pardon could be earned by anything so ridiculously easy as lifting a cargo of Cabrera prisoners from under the noses of Captain Meadey and H.B.M.S. *Frolic*, their enthusiasm knew no bounds. Heavens! how sick they were of being hard-driven, thirsty outlaws.

Major Colt was quick to catch their mood before the rebound. They were lying at somebody else’s anchor and cable in a bay at the back of Zante, waiting for the passing trader. They did not trouble to weigh. They manned halyards, and the great lateens were mastheaded. The stolen cable was slipped and went to join its anchor on the sea floor; and as the huge triangular sails filled and drew, that rascally crew danced and sang from sheer light-hearted joy. Honesty fairly oozed from them. Just outside they came upon a currant boat, romping home light, her cargo sold, and its price in good red gold (so they told themselves) in her cabin locker. They ran down close and wished the scared Greeks good voyage and profitable commerce. For themselves, they said, they had gone out of the business.

Now in their present reckless mood, the pirates (so sick were they of sober piracy) would have attacked Captain Meadey’s *Frolic* herself had they been so ordered. And, indeed, Colt had no little trouble to hold them in hand till a moonless night would give him the weather he needed. But till that date occurred he was resolute in keeping Cabrera out of sight, even from his mast-trucks; and so to fill in time ran to Alcudia Bay in Majorca for wood and water.

It was here, during one of his brief snatches of sleep, that Clarice deserted, leaving in her place a letter. His brown cheeks grew sallow as he read it:

“DEAR JOE, — The trouble is, how are we to let those so ragged prisoners on Cabrera know that they must stand in readiness the instant we come for them? You could do it, or I could. But you cannot leave your detestable ship, or, to be exact, I dare not be left on her without you. Oh, mon cher, I am an amazing coward. So I will make my way to the island. Remember I can swim there if the need arrives; and when the dark nights come, and you see three camp fires in a triangle, with the point towards the beach, that is where the passengers will be awaiting. So come there also for your comrade —

CLARICE.

P.S. — Could your Miss P. C., of 2907 Pilgrim Avenue, Boston, swim back to an island where those detestable Spaniards had threatened to kill her already?”

Now the crew of the felucce had little love for Major Joseph Colt, as has already been plainly stated; indeed, he imagined them to be mere callous brutes, who could carry no affection for anyone except themselves; and so it came to him as somewhat of a shock to learn that they had in a way set up the *vivandière* as their goddess. It seemed she had told Trotter, who was in the boat’s crew that had set her ashore, something of the nature of her errand, and Trotter spread the news. The crew were on fire. Sooner than Meadey or the Spaniards, yes, or the beastly French prisoners should so much as hurt the little finger of Mademoiselle Clarice, they were ready to cut the throats of every living soul in the Mediterranean.

In fact their mood jumped with his most intimate desires; but still there was need for patience till the time came. However willing the felucce’s desperate crew might be, Colt knew quite well they were no match for the hateful *Frolic*.

But time and the moon move on at their own pace. The date arrived as set forth in the calendar. The felucce moved out of harbour. Night came away moonless, starless, and blessedly thick with a drizzle of rain. Major Colt ran his vessel down the Majorcan coast, and into the strait between it and Cabrera. Three tiny crumbs of light threw him the longed-for signal.

He ran in towards the Cabreran rocks, and cast off two fisher boats he had in tow. They rowed off softly into the wet darkness and faded out of sight. He dared show no light, not even the glow of a pipe to guide them back, and he stared after them into the gloom, and was torn with the most heavy anxiety; but in an

hour's time they returned to him, full of shaggy, half-naked men, who had once been conquering French soldiers.

There was no Clarice with them.

Again they went off, and again returned. It was not till the third boat load came off that she rejoined.

The felucce had been lying with stripped masts in the trough, so as not to court inspection; but now word was passed, and the great lateens soared aloft with eager speed. The boats were cast adrift. The felucce sprang out on her race for France and the Eagles.

The *vivandière* came up to Major Colt on the poop.

“Come aboard, Captain,” she said, saluting.

“I saw you. I couldn't come down to the gangway to meet you. I am a little upset.” He gripped her hand and looked down at her with something in his black eye that made her thrill.

But she took his mood lightly as usual.

“Dear Mary! Major Colt, but I thought you were going to kiss me!”

He sighed heavily. “I fear it would not be right to go so far as that. You see, my comrade, I am an engaged man.”

Trotter came up to them grinning, and saluting: “This crew wishes to say, miss, how very happy they are to see you safe and sound amongst them once more. Captain, you'll make a good story out of this for that young lady in Boston. I'll send the crew's account of it myself if you like.” He saluted again and went forward.

“You've no idea, miss,” said Colt gloomily, “how little things do get distorted as they drift across the Western Ocean, even when you feel sure they're just a private matter of your own. We are taking back to the Emperor one hundred and three of his soldiers, and of our forty-seven scoundrels on the felucce, when they have had their spree, I daresay as many as forty will be glad enough to enlist. It would look very pleasant printed in a history book, with one's name

tacked on; but I guess, miss, we'll have to suppress it."

## TWO DUELS

“NAME OF MAHOMET!” swore Sergeant Colorado, “but I thought you had sent Arcole over the Boundary Line. Your fingers can grip like a crab’s claw, my Major.”

“It isn’t the first time I’ve squeezed the wind out of a man,” said Colt. “It’s an old redskin trick. If you keep the little finger of each hand pressing tightly on the patient’s carotids you can tell the exact moment when those cease to throb, and if you let them go then, five times out of six he comes round again little the worse. There, look at him, he’s beginning to wriggle already. Mr Arcole will get up and walk away in ten minutes from now, and in an hour’s time will be plotting another burglary.”

“Well,” said the bottle-nosed *sous-officier*, “it’s your own affair, of course, Major, but, to my thinking, you would have been better advised either to have left Arcole alone, or to have squeezed harder. We make very few inquiries about a corpse here in this undesirable Cabrera, but latterly we have grown very law-abiding over matters of assault and battery.”

“In the name of Fortune, why?”

“Because, I suppose, it gives those we have set up as our rulers something to whet their rulership upon, and so justify their existence. Oh, I tell you, my Major, we were sick to the teeth of anarchy here, and now, naturally, we have run to the other extreme, and govern down to the way a man may draw his breath. Why, I could believe it, if one offered me the statistics that in no State on earth are there more laws per head of population than there are here spread out amongst us wretched prisoners of Cabrera.”

Major Colt scratched thoughtfully at his blue-black chin, and then pulled out and screwed together the parts of a long pipe. He sighed as he put it to his mouth, and pulled in tobacco-scented air through the empty bowl. “I don’t know how many have escaped by their own arrangements?” he said at length.

“Not a score,” Sergeant Colorado assured him, “beyond the 350 that you and Mademoiselle Clarice personally conducted back to the Eagles.”

“The prisoners seem woefully thinned since I first visited Cabrera.”

“Never army had the knack of dwindling like ours, Major. Here is our history packed small. When the accursed Dupont surrendered, 12,400 men laid down their arms under promise that they should have safe conduct to France. The beastly Spaniards lied, and broke the treaty forthwith, and clapped us in foul hulks. At first we were unpleasantly crowded, but, when some 6000 had died off, the rest of us had more room. Well, then for a health trip, they sent us here to Cabrera, but, as they never fed us much, and some weeks forgot to feed us at all, some of us recruited so slowly that we lost heart and died in the process.”

“Disease came, too! then, of course, being French soldiers, and out of employ, we must needs keep our hands in with a little fencing, and more died of that; but it has been King Famine who has hit us hardest. Why, one week, sir, last April, when the beastly Spanish meat contractor over there at Palma in Majorca, forebore to send his provision boat at all, there were no fewer than 300 brave boys who turned up their toes within ten days, and the rest of us were very near put to making a dinner off their —”

“Tut!” said Colt, “you need not repeat to me all these horrors that I know quite well for myself. The thievish Arcole you will note is sitting up now, and if I can read his ugly eyes correctly he would give about all he will ever possess in this world for the opportunity of murdering me painfully and slowly. Do the Spaniards supply you with a food ration only? Do they never give you clothes?”

“Behold me, Major, clad in a shirt and my sins, If it had not been for a wreck and one who came ashore on the rocks here, with no further use for it, I should not even have the shirt. As for the breeches and a coat, I have forgotten their feel — Ah, Monsieur Arcole, you get up, and you totter away, and you shake your fist at the Major here. I give you my advice that you fall and break your neck *en route* for where you are going. It will save you further trouble. No, Major, the Spaniards give us no clothes, no doctors, no shelter. They present us only with a very meagre ration of food, and a very full ration of curses whenever they meet us. Why there is a captain of a small packet in Majorca there, who is making a fortune by bringing out the young bucks and the *señoritas* of the Palma gutters for a day’s trip to this infernal isle, where they take their refreshment in cursing Spain’s prisoners.”

“Then the more quickly I arrange to take the best of you back to France the better. Now, Sergeant, I’m dead tired. If I could have kept an eye open that scoundrel would not have stolen the last fill of tobacco I’ve got out of my very

pipe, and been able to swallow it before I could choke it out of him. So I'll trouble you for that corner you offered me in your hut."

The ragged bottle-nosed man saluted, and led the way up from the cluster of shore rocks where Colt had first found harbourage.

A shrill breeze blew over the roof of the isle, and the naked, half-starved men crouched in their miserable burrows and shelters. Major Joseph Colt was lean at the best of times, and after his recent hard spell carried even less flesh than usual; but he looked aldermanic to a Cabreran eye; and many a shaggy, hungry prisoner shook a knot of birdlike talons at him, and reviled him out of sheer envy as he and Sergeant Colorado made their way along the rutted paths which the bare feet had worn so deep.

At last they came to the spot, and with the air of one who was conscious of having carried a musket in Egypt, and hobnobbed with marshals of France, Sergeant Colorado waved the hand of hospitality.

"I welcome you to our quarters, Major, in the name of my five comrades and myself."

"You and them, six, and me seven! My Land! I've see what we call crowded dwellings out in the West. I've seen five Ojibbway braves tucked into a teepee double that size, and you could have dug out the air with a spade next morning. You don't mean to tell me you think seven of us can cram into that shack!"

"Our original complement was ten. There were ten of us who strained our muscles to claw down fir branches, and tear up rock, and steal rushes one by one to build and thatch that maisonnette, my Major, and four of us kindly died, and left more space for their betters. Crowded, did you say? Name of Mahomet! We think it as spacious as a Bey's palace in Cairo! I'll ask you to notice also that a squad of the accursed Spanish carabinieri are just showing their detestable cocked hats over the hill yonder, and you are too fat and too spruce for a Cabreran prisoner."

Major Colt dropped to his knees, and crawled in through the hut's doorway, and coughed and spat as he bit the atmosphere inside.

"I bid you good-day, my children," he said pleasantly. "I never knew what the inside of a parrot-cage smelt like before."



The shaggy savages cursed him.

“What’s that? Well, there’s no room to stand, but — on your knees — Attention!”

The ring of the sharp, crisp voice lit old embers of discipline. On their knees they shuffled into line; their backs straightened; they thrust out their bony chests, and with heads preened up against the rafters, and hands clasped tight to their sides, they awaited an officer’s command.

“Good. When the pinch comes, I see that you have not forgotten what Emperor Bonaparte had taught you. Sergeant Colorado drill this company.”

The bottle-nosed Sergeant crawled into the squalid hovel, and straightened up knee high.

“Attention!” he rasped, and so on, for the rest of the manual.

“Stand at ease!” Colt ordered, when the men had worked themselves up to a fine sweat of heat and enthusiasm. “You are of the class that Emperor Bonaparte bid me give this message to: ‘My children,’ he said, ‘come back to the Eagles. I and France have need of you.’ Hitherto there have been some small difficulties about ferriage; but my partner in this matter, Miss Clarice de la Plage, has a ship which will lie off a certain point of Majorca, when the nights are sufficiently dark, and I came on here as agent in advance to bid certain picked men have their portmanteaux packed ready for embarkation. See!”

They grinned appreciatively at that word portmanteaux.

“With one exception, I nominate all of you here for seats in the next boat. Sergeant Colorado.”

The bottle-nosed man slapped his bare heels together, and drew up stiffly to attention — till, be it understood, upon his knees.

“Sir?”

“You are the exception. I do not consider it fit that you should leave Cabrera and go back to the Emperor’s service in Europe.”

Sergeant Colorado looked murder, but discipline held strong. He saluted in silence.

“Because you are far more valuable to the Emperor here in Cabrera as local representative of his Escape Agents.”

Sergeant Colorado’s great nose and his mottled face fairly glowed with pleasure. The starvation, the wretchedness, the unspeakable squalor he would have to put up with went for nothing; one word of commendation from the Great Emperor, be it never so indirect, counteracted all this.

But here an interruption stepped rudely in upon the proceedings. Men, marching up barefoot, had surrounded the hovel noiselessly, and one of them, with military curtness, called for Joseph Colt.

That officer bent down, and peered under the two-foot doorway. “My Land!” he said, “what’s this? A prehistoric survival?”

Sergeant Colorado stooped down and peered beside him, and then laughed. “Behold, my Major, the Brigade of Household Guards set up by messieurs our rulers. As the Spaniards and that accursed Meadey see to it that there is no iron in our arsenal in Cabrera, you observe that our armourers lash a lump of rock on to a club’s end, and so make a tolerable battle mace, or they burn and sharpen the point of a tree branch, and provide you with an excellent pike.”

“If you men do not deliver up Joseph Colt within the next three seconds I will have the hut pulled down about your ears in the name of the Committee of Public Safety.”

The American shot out like a rabbit from a burrow. “Who spoke?” he demanded.

“I did,” said the giant with a stone axe.

“Then what in hell do you mean by addressing your officer disrespectfully? I am Major Colt.”

The giant eyed him doubtfully for a moment, and was apparently impressed by the grim dark face. He swung his stone axe to the vertical till the hilt was level with his chin, after the fashion of a swordsman saluting. “I ask pardon for the omission, my Major. The name was given me without the title. But my orders

from the Committee of Public Safety were distinct, and I arrest you all the same.”

“Very well,” said Colt, who saw no way of resisting it, “I submit to that arrest; and now, perhaps, you will be courteous enough to tell me the charge.”

“The charge was not mentioned in my instructions,” said the giant, and then, as his men had closed up, presumably in obedience to a previous order, “Seize the prisoner!” he called out. And presently, when the scuffle had ended in the only way a scuffle can end when one man is in the grip of ten, “Search the prisoner,” he added as a further command.

“I was told, Major,” he explained, when two small pistols and a murderous-looking American knife made from a file were handed to him, “I was told, my Major, that you were a pretty desperate fellow, and took my precautions to prevent a brawl. The Committee of Public Safety have set their faces dead against brawling. For the Hôtel de Ville, quick march.”

The town hall, when they arrived at it, was nothing more or less than a disused quarry, and, as it happened, the Committee of Public Safety was in session. The quarry had yielded that soft white building stone which once had been exported to Palma, and its sides ran up in irregular steps. The nine members of the Committee sat on a ledge that raised them some five feet above the floor of the court.

Facing them, and above the further lip of the quarry, there stood a solitary red pine, stripped of all its branches save two, which jutted out at right angles to the parent stem. On this cross a naked man writhed, and for the moment even Major Colt’s Indian stoicism was upset, and he winced with the idea that he was looking upon a crucifixion. But presently it was borne in upon him that the man was merely tied to the tree to grill and blister in the outrageous sun, and though the penalty was savage, for anything he knew it might be justified by the crime, and from his experience, both in America and in the French wars, he knew that discipline at times has to be maintained by enforcing strange punishments.

Another trial was just being concluded as he came up. The poor wretch had been accused of the heinous crime of stealing rations. The evidence against him had apparently been conclusive.

The President of the Committee was a tall, half-naked man, shaggy, with clots

and streamers of chestnut hair. He turned to the prisoner and inquired laconically. "Any defence?"

"I was mad with famine."

"So would be the man you stole from, after his week's ration was gone. Any further defence?"

"No."

"Take that one away, and hang him. Call the next case."

"Joseph Colt!" called out the Clerk of Arraigns, "to answer a charge of assault and battery. Accuser, Arcole. The prisoner Colt is here, messieurs, but I cannot see the accuser." He called again, "Arcole!"

From above the upper edge of the quarry came a husky voice, which said: "I withdraw the charge."

"It is for the Committee of Public Safety," said the red President, "to decide if a charge once made may be withdrawn. Is that Arcole?"

"Yes."

"You should know the course of procedure. Come down and take your stand on the witness stone."

The man did so slowly, reluctantly. His eyes kept swivelling from the wretch who writhed against the pine tree, like an impaled worm, to the other poor creature who was being made ready for his hanging. Arcole's knees gibbered under him as he took his stand upon the crumbly white stone.

"The accusation originally stood," said the red President, "that this Joseph Colt held your throat till you were within an inch of death?"

"Yes, citizen," said Arcole huskily.

"You do not wish to say, now, that you came here to the Committee of Public Safety and lied about this matter?"

“No, citizen.”

“But still I understand you wish to withdraw the charge?”

“Yes, citizen.”

“Any reason?”

The man’s huskiness nearly choked him. At last, after a dozen efforts, he managed to croak out, “N—no, no special reason, citizen.”

“You admit that the man brawled, and then you add your wish to withdraw your evidence against him ‘for no special reason.’ You know, of course, full well, that this Committee have determined to stamp out brawling amongst the citizens of Cabrera?”

“I’m in a very difficult position, citizen,” Arcole wheezed out.

“Ah,” pounced the red man, “now we may get to it. Will you tell me freely and truly why this man Colt should have seen fit to half-strangle you, or shall we get that interesting piece of evidence from another source?”

“I am not here on my own defence, citizen.”

“Many a man,” snapped the red President, “who has come in front of this Committee, parading his honesty, has turned out to be a rogue before I was through with him.” He thrust out a long sunburnt finger almost into the witness’s face. “You stole from this Colt, is that not so, and he punished you?”

“Quite so, Corporal Garnier,” Colt himself cut in. “The man was punished once by me, and therefore needs no further attention. I am quite competent to personally correct the morals of those who offend me, as you yourself will recollect. So in common equity you should dismiss the case.”

The eyes of the Committee of Public Safety swung round upon the prisoner, and those of their chestnut-locked President glinted dangerously.

“The penalty for using a ci-devant military title here is, at its lightest, that.” The President pointed to the pine tree where the naked man writhed under the scalding sunshine. “We stop hardened offenders more effectively. I am Citizen

Garnier, and if you address me so, and with the respect due to one who has been elected their chief magistrate by all the other citizens of Cabrera, I shall presently be pleased to hear you. In the meanwhile I have not yet finished with Arcole.”

Now, being a man of quick passions, Major Colt had it in him to have retorted promptly and with sharpness. But, with an effort, he withheld retort. It would be sheer folly to lose sight of the main object of his errand to the isle (which incidentally was wrapped up with his own personal advancement) for the mere sake of asserting his superior rank over one who had once been his underling. Besides, nothing, he conceived, of these small differences on Cabrera could find a place in that “Conduct of the Continental Wars” which Miss Collier of Boston was so diligently compiling from his notes; and it was in those permanent pages that he really wished to shine, not amongst these obscene prisoners. So he closed his mouth till it appeared as a mere straight line across his sallow face, and Citizen Garnier drew away his stare, and fixed it once more on Arcole.

“They are using the rope belonging to this Committee on another thief at present, but if you do not tell me exactly what you stole from Colt I will have you strung up as soon as the rope is free.”

“Citizen, you couldn’t do that! It would be murder, sheer murder! The man dozed, and his pipe hung loose from his lips. There were scarcely a dozen shreds of tobacco in it unsmoked, and, citizen, I craved so much for tobacco that I must have lost my senses, for presently I found myself chewing them. Moreover, although the man appears to be an American in the French service, I heard him speak an English word — the only English word I know — when he stubbed his foot, and so I judged him by that and by his good clothes to be one come ashore from the British guard-brig. Surely, citizen, it is no crime to steal from a Britisher?”

The red President turned to Colt. “Are you British?”

“My Land, no! I’d ram the teeth down the throat of any liar who suggested I was one.”

“I don’t see how I can avoid hanging you, Arcole,” said the President.

“Citizen, I ask you to remember that first it was a mistake, and second I have had punishment already. He has made me feel death once to-day. And I have my

lesson to carry along with me; my throat will never be what it was before he clinched it with his great iron fingers. For God's sake, citizen, do not hang me after all he has made me suffer."

"I am here," said the shaggy red President, "to weigh out exact justice, and that is what you will have." He pointed to the tree where the naked man had ceased his writhing, and now hung limp and flaccid. "You shall not wear the rope round your neck this time, but when that tree is vacant at sundown you shall be tied there for the next twenty-four hours to let your new ideas of honesty burn well in. Stand down from the witness stone. Joseph Colt, by the sumptuary laws of Cabrera, no man may dress better than the President of the Committee of Public Safety. To do so is considered an insult to the chief magistrate elected by all the citizens of Cabrera. You are, therefore, directed to give up your coat, breeches, and boots. As a special act of leniency you may keep your shirt, although its fineness and clarity very nearly mark that out also for confiscation."

Now Major Colt knew when he was in a tight place. He knew that at the least show of resistance on his part (and the red Corporal Garnier obviously looked for it), his clothes would be stripped from him violently, and other indignities would be heaped upon his person. He was only one to a multitude, and would be helpless in face of numbers. Very possibly he might be hanged. But he knew also Garnier's soft place, and he aimed his words for it ruthlessly.

"You may have the clothes if you will take them from me yourself. But I wish to remind you of something else. You say military titles are abolished here in Cabrera. But once when they were in being, and you were Corporal Garnier, and I was Major, we met, if you will recollect, before Saragossa. It was the day before we stormed it, and I beat you over the head with my scabbard in the trenches there, and called you a coward. You could not challenge me then, because of my rank, which I would not waive. But here on Cabrera it is different. Ranks, you say, are gone, so, if you still want satisfaction, send your seconds."

The President threw back his chestnut head. "Our ranks, it appears to me, have been inverted; you here are a nobody, I am what you see; but I will not stand on that. The work of this Committee is over for the day." He stood up, and stepped down to the floor of the quarry. "I am a private individual now, and as such can attend to mine own private honour. Go to your hut, citizen, and appoint your seconds. My seconds will wait upon them there within an hour from this."

“I just hate to think of killing Corporal Garnier,” said Colt to Sergeant Colorado, as the pair of them trudged back together over the roof of the island, “but I don’t see any help for it. If only I could get him clear of this accursed island he would serve the Eagles again splendidly.”

“But, my Major, you say the man is a coward. The Emperor has no use for those.”

Colt laughed grimly. “I do not say anything of the sort to you. It is quite true I called him a coward in those trenches before Saragossa, because that was the hatefulest thing I could say to him at the moment. As a point of fact, the man’s sergeant had been detailed to lead a section of the storming party, and Garnier picked a quarrel with him and ran him through, so that he might have the honour of leading a forlorn hope himself. That’s the sort of coward Corporal Garnier is: frightened to death of being anything but first.”

“He’s made himself first citizen on Cabrera here, that’s a fact, and if you don’t know it, I may tell you he’s got his position chiefly through duelling. He’s been out twenty times, at the very least, and always pinked his man. We’re alone now, my Major. Before we join the others, perhaps there is some message you’d like to leave for your fiancée — in case of accidents.”

“There will be no accident to me,” said Colt sharply. “I’ve too much to do on ahead to spare time for being hurt or killed by Corporal Garnier. Besides, Sergeant, it is vastly improbable that you will ever see my fiancée.”

“Your pardon, my Major, but if you are scratched, the lady will come into the island as fast as wings can bring her. Name of Mahomet! but I know the sex!”

“You do not know Miss Collier, of 207 Pilgrim Avenue, Boston. Not all the men or all the books that Europe holds would tempt her to leave Massachusetts. Indeed, she has told me as much herself.”

The bottle-nosed Sergeant was shaken by an inward spasm, and was forced to turn his back on Major Colt till the emotion was past. But presently: “There is the little *vivandière*, Mademoiselle Clarice, my Major, that is associated with you in this Escape-Agency business. Now I do not know what your arrangements are with her, but if by chance you should be scratched, I warrant she will come over here with her cool hand, and her lint, and her cup of brandy, in spite of all their teeth.”



“You will kindly leave Miss Clarice’s name alone.”

“Well, Major,” said Sergeant Colorado doggedly, “I once had that cool small hand pressed to my own gross head, when a Croat hussar got home here above the eye with his sabre, before I could disengage my bayonet from his covering file. You say you are engaged to Miss Collier, and therefore you cannot love Mademoiselle Clarice; but as far as a rough old fellow such as I respectfully may, I love her from the tip of her spur to the tricolour on her forage cap, and if there’s any message, civil or more than civil, which it would give her pleasure to get, I am a man that would stick at nothing to see it reached her.”

But to this offer Major Colt gave no reply whatever, and the pair walked the rest of the way to the tiny hutch in grim silence.

“You will kindly act as one of my seconds, Sergeant,” said Colt, when he had sat down on the fir branches that made his bedplace, “and I shall be pleased if you will pick out the best drill amongst this squad here as the other. What is the choice of weapons?”

“There is small enough choice. We used spears till recently, Major. We had a pair of scissors on the island, and for an affair of honour the blades were taken apart and lashed to sticks, and there you were. But last week some clumsy boor made a foul stroke. He hit his friend’s thigh-bone, and the blade broke off midway. So we have now on the island only one scissor-blade left, and that certainly will not arm two men. How would a stone axe meet your fancy?”

“Finely. I won out of a fight once at Smoked Bear’s villages entirely through my tomahawk play.”

“Speaking as an old soldier, a stone axe is not what I should call a neat tool, Major; but you’ve a fine reach and an unexpected lot of strength, and I dare say you could put in some very effective work with it. Only look out for ci-devant Corporal Garnier. If Garnier proposes stone axes, it’s all France to a toe-nail that he’s been practising stone-axe fence every day for this month past.”

“That’s all right,” said Major Colt easily. “I don’t want to whip a man without giving him a show for his money. But over the arrangement of all those preliminaries I give you an entirely free hand. There’s only one thing on which I want you to insist: I must have three minute’s private talk with Corporal Garner before there’s any fight at all.”

Sergeant Colorado sprang up to his knees under the low roof in violent protest. "But the thing's unheard of. Once an affair of honour has been placed in the hands of seconds, it is dead against the code for the principals to meet again except across the point of their weapons."

"I know that as well as you do," said the American coldly. "But in this instance I wish to have the code re-arranged to suit my personal convenience. I look to you to see this done, Sergeant, and for the present I am going to put in that spell of sleep that I told you this morning was then overdue by forty-eight hours. You may wake me when the time has come for the meeting."

Now though the bottle-nosed Sergeant was a great stickler for all the niceties of the code of honour as learned in the Napoleonic armies, and imported for use amongst the prisoners of Cabrera, he was very deeply impressed with the need of carrying out the exact orders of that very forceful person, Major Joseph Colt. He convinced his own co-second over the matter, which was no easy job, and together they convinced the seconds of Corporal Garnier, which was so difficult a task that it led to the threat of a further series of duels before the unheard-of point was finally conceded. It came as rather a surprise to them all that when the proposal was put to Garnier he made no demur at all, and so forthwith Colt was aroused from his slumber.

The American walked up over the rocks to a niggardly ilex-wood that was indicated to him, and there found the President of the Committee of Public Safety in waiting. Major Colt saluted as he came up, and extracted an instinctive salute from the other. Then he sat himself on a fallen trunk, and looked up at the Corporal.

"Corporal Garnier, I have seen you fight, and you have seen me, and there is no question that either of us will shirk a scrimmage if we think it necessary."

The red President laughed grimly. "I had the honour to follow when you led the storming party at Ciudad Real. You got your majority over that, and I got nothing, which I thought then, and still think, grossly unfair. But I do not question your courage, nor do I think you question mine."

"No, you saved my life at Ciudad Real, and I tried hard to get you a commission. You know why the general would not forward my recommendation. Now I do not wish to kill you here, and you could not kill me if you tried."

“I might. There is chance in these things.”

“There is not. I have work to do on ahead. I could not afford to be killed. And therefore I should see to it, at whatever cost, that I stayed alive. Now, Corporal Garnier, you wanted that commission badly before Ciudad Real, and I presume you still would snap at it if it was offered. Well, I am here to hold it ready for your taking. I am open, moreover, to promise you that Emperor Bonaparte, when he gets my report, will forget that old black-list mark, and thank you personally — personally, mind — for what you have done amongst the prisoners on this infernal island; and presently, when there is a battle fought, and promotions are next distributed, you shall have your company.”

“A captaincy? Is that all you can offer me?”

“It should be enough. Man, think! Imagine yourself a trim smart company commander in a regiment of the French Line. I wish you could see yourself now.”

“I am a scarecrow, you mean? Granted. But I am first citizen — and let me tell you that means king — of 5000 other scarecrows; and I’d rather be that than second-in-command of a French brigade.”

Major Colt rubbed vexedly at his blue-black chin. “I see your point, and I can guess what you are going to say next. I’m afraid I shall have to kill you.”

“Or I you. You see, Major, I know you are here in Cabrera as an Escape Agent. You are proposing to take away my subjects from this Government piecemeal; and that, if I live, shall not be permitted. Man, think! I am getting them under a firm discipline; it has taken many severities to do this, but presently I shall have 5000 hard, desperate men under my sole command. What next, you ask? Well, this war may end, or we may enlarge ourselves by force. Five thousand men have a big momentum if they act sufficiently together. We can offer ourselves to the highest bidder as a Free Company. His Holiness the Pope, for instance, would snap at us if the price was not too dear. Or we might seize one of the smaller States, and set up a Government of our own. Oh, I tell you, Major, there are infinite possibilities in an army of 5000 hard-trained soldiers.”

“But you are helpless with naked hands.”

Corporal Garnier nodded to where H.B.M. guard-brig *Frolic* buttocked trimly

over the swells “I have plans to take her. I have further plans to take the Spanish guard-boats. There will be our weapons.”

Major Colt shook his grim head. “For every hundred times you might catch a weasel asleep, you’d not find Captain J.B. Meadey dozing once. I know that blighter. The Spaniards I’ll give you; I’ve captured one of their galleys myself, as you know; but if you’ll take the cinch from me, leave Meadey and the *Frolic* alone. He’d be a tough contract for even Americans to handle, and I tell you he’s far above the weight of anyone bred in Europe. Well, Corporal Garnier, there’s a marshal’s *bâton* in store for me; and although I’ve made you a fair sporting offer, I take it you’re going to persist in interfering with my business in Cabrera, and that means getting in the way of my promotion.” He stood up on his feet and stretched. “I’m very sorry to have to kill you, but that’s what’s going to happen next. We’d better whistle up the seconds and get to work.”

“There’s just one other point,” Garnier persisted. “You have a partner in this Escape-Agency business?”

“Yes,” said Colt shortly. “Emperor Bonaparte named Miss Clarice de la Plage and me partners over this matter.”

“And being, as I understand, affianced to another lady —”

“To a Miss Patience Collier, of Boston, Massachusetts, whom you are never likely to meet.”

“Precisely. You cannot, therefore, have more than a business interest or a friendly interest in Mademoiselle Clarice. Now I have. In short, Major, I love her.”

“That will be news to Miss Clarice.”

“Not at all. She knew of my affection in Spain. I told her of it again here in Cabrera.”

“Miss Clarice is engaged to marry a Monsieur le Brun. She has told me as much.”

“Le Sage, I believe the name is. But that does not matter. If you will use your undoubted interest with her, to induce her to marry me, I on my part will rejoin

the Eagles, with or without a commission, so soon as ever you can ferry me across to France.”

“I shouldn’t dream of trying to influence Miss Clarice over such a matter,” Colt snapped. “You’re wasting my time, Corporal Garnier. Whistle up those seconds, and let’s get to work.” me, monsieur and mademoiselle, that Egypt you visit first.”

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The duel took place, by the second’s arrangements, in a small circular quarry, a regular cock-pit of a place, fringed round by scanty evergreen oaks. The one way down to this delectable spot was by notches cut in one of the walls, which took some nimble climbing. One rather shuddered to think of the pain to which a wounded man would be put when, after a tedious fight below, he was dragged once more to upper earth with the island’s one and only rope. The weapons, as Sergeant Colorado had forecasted, were stone axes, such as might have been wielded by warriors in the Cave days.

Major Joseph Colt stripped to shirt and breeches, and climbed down the dusty white stone ladder. He spat on his hands and hefted the clumsy weapon till he learned the balance of it, and then he cast his eye rapidly over the floor of the quarry to memorise the position of the boulders with which it was littered. A stumble would very probably be fatal, once they were hotly engaged, and Major Colt was firmly determined to avoid fatalities — at anyrate to himself. Garnier watched all this preparation with his weapon at rest. Corporal Garnier was evidently well acquainted both with his axe and with the battle-ground.

But presently Corporal Garnier was presented with a surprise. The seconds lay down on their bellies round the lip of the quarry above, and Sergeant Colorado gave the word to engage. Major Joseph Colt split the air with a yell — the savage Mohawk yell with which he had lived in intimate neighbourhood for most of his life — and he sprung for the Frenchman with a wild ferocity.

Garnier considered himself a master of his weapon; had trained himself with tedious diligence to its use; but to this barbaric lack of science, he knew no parry. So he gave ground skilfully, and hoped to tire Major Colt into more seemly fighting.

Twice round the circuit of the quarry they circled in this way, feinting,

stumbling, sparring; and then Garnier leapt back a dozen feet, and grounded his axe. "A truce!" he gasped out. "We are betrayed! There's Ice-Cream Cabott!"

Colt looked up. On the brink of the quarry, with hands behind his back, was the first lieutenant of H.B.M.S. *Frolic*, of his old and painful acquaintance. He was a stiff, starched, pigtailed British officer, with a finely faded uniform, and a brick-red face; and Colt, who expected insults and arrest, was amazed to hear him thaw into an unexpected civility.

"Go on, you beggars," said Lieutenant Cabott. "Damme, d'ye think I'd stop a fight?"

He dived into his fob, produced a copper box, and from it took snuff with vigour. "Damme, I'm an Englishman, and that means I'm a sportsman. Come now, who'll back Carrots? I'll lay five guineas to three the Black-muzzled One taps his claret next round. Oh, beg pardon; I forgot, you've no currency on this beastly island." He reached up and unhooked his faded epaulettes and thrust them into his pockets. "If it's any comfort to ye to know, we'll make it that I'm here unofficially. Now go ahead. Drop the handkerchief, you Pug-Nose there. D'ye use snuff, Puggy? Try my rapparee."

Again the murderous axes whirled, and again the duel blazed into vicious life. Garnier slashed, and his edge tore the shirt from Major Colt's left shoulder, but did not even graze the skin. But the American's blade never hit anything but air; Garnier dodged like an eel whenever he saw it approach. Round and round the quarry they circled, between and over the tumbled blocks, and the English lieutenant's prize-ring comments from above scalded Major Colt's nerves like boiling pitch whenever they fell.

And then came the end. Garner fainted again, and Colt gave a sudden quarter-arm swing with his axe. The axe-head nicked the thongs which lashed the Frenchman's axe-head to its handle, and it flung limply to the dusty floor of the quarry. Garnier lost his balance, tried desperately to recover himself, stumbled again, and sprawled down on all fours.

Major Colt stooped down. "I think," he said gently, "that a company command in Europe is better suited to a man of your talents than an uncertain savage life like this."

"You are very generous, Major. And about Mademoiselle Clarice?"

“I forget that you ever mentioned her. So long as I continue to forget, there’s nothing broke over that.”

From above came the loud harsh voice of Lieutenant Cabott, speaking in fluent, grammatical, vilely accented French, after the fashion set by His Grace, the Iron Duke. “I’ve very bad eyesight, Sergeant, when I haven’t my epaulettes bent, but we’ve news that a black-whiskered fellow that was entered on the *Frolic* once is adrift on this island. Of course he’s a deserter, and if we catch him he’ll have his back finely scored up with the cat. Captain Meadey’s great on discipline; he’ll give him twelve dozen at the least. It’s him I’m ashore after, and I’m bound to find him, too, if he stays here long enough. In fact, my orders are to go through the prisoners here with a fine-toothed comb till he’s dredged out!”

“Very good, sir,” said Sergeant Colorado. “I believe you’ll find your man down by the landing-place, and having his hair curled by the new barber.”

“I thank you. Here, take another pinch of rapparee for your information.” Lieutenant Cabott stared down into the quarry, a yard and a half past Major Colt’s head. “I hate Americans in the bulk, but that black-whiskered fellow seemed to have points about him.”

Major Colt hated the British, too, with a fierce enthusiasm, but he could respect a courteous enemy. He saluted Cabott with his stone axe. Lieutenant Cabott saluted space, turned on his heel, and marched sharply away.

Colt stretched out a hand and helped Garnier to his feet. “There,” he said, “a drink of water, and a cold bandage on your forehead, where you bumped it in falling, and you’ll be as well as ever you were. Now that Englishman behaved well. But I don’t want to strain his generosity. We must pull out of Cabrera this very night.”

“But how will Mademoiselle — I mean how will your fellow Escape Agent know that this is the night you want the boat?”

“There is no boat. But I have brought with me a pack of bullock’s bladders, and to each man who goes back this time to Emperor Bonaparte’s service, there will be dealt out two, which he is to blow up and tie beneath his armpits to give him buoyancy in the water. With the help of these bladders we swim across to Majorca there; with the help of our wits we live upon Majorca, whilst we make night marches across that island to the Puig Major on the other side. From the

top of that mountain we can look into the Port of Soller down below, and when we see a certain English milady's yacht run into Soller port we go down and join her. That is all."

"And the English milady is Mademoiselle — is your fellow Escape Agent?"

"It is probable."

"Ah, well, I always said she was as admirable as an actress, as in all other ways, though it was the Emperor himself who drove her off the stage. Good, Major, I will be there at the hour to receive my two bladders."

But when it came to the moment of embarkation, no Corporal Garnier groped his way to those dark rocks on the northern shore of this isle which had been appointed as a rendezvous. Three times Colt counted the heads of those who crouched amongst the boulders, and still only twenty-nine were present. The thirtieth, who had been proved to be Corporal Garnier, still remained absent, and the American was on the point of ordering a start without him, when the gloom was parted by the arrival of Sergeant Colorado.

Colt examined him narrowly. The man lurched in his walk, and if drink had been procurable in Cabrera, the cause would have leaped to the imagination in a moment. But on water, which was the only Cabreran beverage, no man could by over-indulgence grow unsteady on his legs; and so Major Colt inspected more closely.

"You are wounded, Sergeant. Why, your arm is in a sling, and your shirt is sodden with blood. Yes, and you are limping in your right leg."

"Mere scratches, my Major. I come to bid you *bon voyage*."

"Well, we were just on the point of sailing. We could not wait for Corporal Garnier any longer. By the way, where's Garnier?"

"He's wounded."

"Curious. May I ask what wounded you?"

"Impaled my arm on a sharpened stake, Major."



“Garnier suffered from the same complaint?”

“I believe he did. The stakes were fire-hardened at the tips, and went in grandly. He prefers to stay where he is for a bit. Thinks the crossing would be too much for him to-night.”

“Were these more affairs of honour?”

“I suppose you might say they were.”

“And were you holding the other end of the stake on which Corporal Garnier impaled himself?”

Sergeant Colorado scratched his matted head with his sound hand, and looked preternaturally stupid. “I suppose I must have been holding it.”

“Like to tell me your reasons for having the blamed impudence to upset a part of my plans?”

Sergeant Colorado drew himself up and saluted. “Yes, Major. The beast told me he should marry Mademoiselle Clarice in spite of everybody’s teeth.”

“My Land! —”

“Yes, Major, I know what you are going to say. You are going to tell me again that the lady is nothing to you, and you could not interfere. But she is all the world to me. I love her as much as a woman may be loved. I have no hopes beyond being permitted to respectfully love her. Name of Mahomet! I would as soon see her marry the devil as marry an old fellow like me. When she does marry, it shall be to a commissioned officer, who may one day carry a marshal’s *bâton*, and not to a non-commissioned lump of incompetent conceit like Garnier. Major Colt, I bid you good-night and good voyage. By the time you return, I will have a fine batch of further recruits ready for you.”

Now about the voyage under that escort of bullock’s bladders across the strait between Cabrera and the greater island, much might be written; and concerning the land journey across Majorca, a portly volume might be added. But other adventures crowd in for the telling, and there is no space here to narrate even how they lived on the Mallorquin country-side for a whole ten days, without once seeing so much as the green cotton gloves of a pursuing carabinieri. It was

a masterpiece of leading and strategy, and like other feats of a like nature, one can only hope that it will appear in Collier's "Conduct of the Continental Wars," when that exhaustive MSS. shall at length find a publisher.

But at last, be it well understood, they were received on board the yacht (which was not a yacht) of the haughty Englishwoman (who was not English), which had successfully imposed for a week past on the simple-minded inhabitants of the little port of Soller. And thereafter, when they had put to sea, and were clear of the guns in the old amber-coloured castle, the two Escape Agents made mutual explanations. me, monsieur and mademoiselle, that Egypt you visit first."

\*

"And you fought for me, you dear Joe! You say you did not, but I do not believe you. I adore you more than ever for fighting for me."

"Miss Clarice, I cannot have you going away with that idea. I fought for Emperor Bonaparte. He ought to have had that man Garnier back with the Eagles, and there was no other way of getting him."

"But dear old Sergeant Colorado fought for me, and made no bones about saying so either. If I had him here on the yacht I would hug him."

Major Joseph Colt knit his brows, and with difficulty restrained himself from stamping on the deck. "There are times, miss, when I should like to pick you up and — and —"

"And kiss me? I knew it was coming. I knew it would come at last."

"No, miss, smack you."

"Oh, that would be the same thing. They would both mean that you love me. Oh, fie, Joe! Think hard of Miss Patience Collier, of Pilgrim Avenue in Boston."

## SLAVES IN SALLEE

MAJOR JOSEPH COLT rapped smartly on the cabin door with the butt of his pistol. “Miss Clarice,” he called, “please come out and get it over.”

“In a minute,” the *vivandière* replied. “You must give me another minute. I cannot get ready — for such a change — all in a moment, like you great strong men.”

“A minute may be too late, miss,” Colt pleaded. “The ship’s surrendered. The Moor’s boat may be back here any second now, and once they come below and see you, and set hands on you, you know what follows. Come out and get it over.”

“And have you no final message for me?” came the woman’s voice through the door. “Aren’t you going to tell me that you love me, even now?”

“Miss,” replied the American desperately, “you force me to repeat to you that I am still engaged to Miss Patience Collier of Boston, and though I am never likely to see her again, I haven’t it in me to break my word to her even now. But, as regards yourself, I am sure you know what I feel.”

“Well, Joe, as you won’t say anything beyond that, I’ll come out.”

The lock of the cabin clicked, and Major Joseph Colt cocked his flint and raised his pistol. The schooner’s narrow alleyway was lit by one small smoking lamp, and in its feeble radiance the man’s sallow face, with its square-cut black whisker, looked drawn and ghastly. But this final shot was necessary. Any fate was better for a woman one cared about than to fall into the hands of the Barbary pirates in the year 1811. He was going to shoot her through the heart. She herself had asked him to put the final bullet through her brain, but he, could not bring himself to fire into Clarice’s face. It was her dear heart that he would still.

The catch lifted, and the door swung slowly open. Major Colt lifted his pistol to the place, and pressed the trigger with his forefinger to half its firing pin. He would explode it as soon as his eyes rose to hers.

Then the pistol-muzzle dropped as though the brass-armed butt had scorched him, and “My Land!” rapped Major Colt, “who’s this?”

He saw a dissolute-looking young man in stained finery; with a patch over one eye, and hair drawn into a queue behind, and tied with a knot of ribbon.

“Now this,” said Clarice, “is what we call a fine dramatic situation. It would bring down the house anywhere. Ah, if I only had played this piece that day when the Emperor came to the Port St Martin, he never would have hissed me off the French stage.”

“Curse your acting, miss,” said Colt, brutally. He flung his pistol to the deck, and strode off to the schooner’s tiny main cabin. “I shall never forgive you for what you have made me go through this last five minutes.”

She ran lightly after him, and when he had sat down moodily at the table, dropped an arm upon his shoulder. “Joe, *mon cher*, forgive an actress her little piece of comedy.”

“I am in no mood for it. I had wound myself up for tragedy.”

“Well, there’s tragedy enough. I’ve had to cut off quite a third of my hair. And does not that even move you, Joe? The loss of my hair that you have been so kind more than once to admire.”

“I never told you I admired your hair, miss.”

“Oh, not in plain crude words, I admit. But you have looked upon it, and your so speaking eyes have told me what they thought. You cannot deny, dear Joe, that you have imagined yourself caressing my soft red hair.”

“It’s brown. I mean, I give no thought whatever to your hair, miss. I can see for myself that you’ve done it as a man’s now, and I must say your get-up disgustingly effective. Heaven send it sees you through, for I flatly tell you we’re in desperate hands. As soon as the boat comes back we’ll have to go.”

Clarice shrugged her shoulders. “It seems to me you are unduly gloomy. We were chased by Captain Meadey half way to Gibraltar, and then when the *Frolic* turned back, the other John Bull chivied us through the Straits. Then came the squall, and away went our masts. We are waterlogged and helpless, and in two days more must have starved. This xebec turns up, and at least we shall be kept alive for the present.”

“As slaves in Sallee.”

“Like your great English hero, Robinson Crusoe.”

“I am an American, miss,” said Colt sourly. “I never heard of the gentleman.”

“Then let me tell you that in youth he was taken prisoner by a rover of Sallee, and made slave to a Moor in Barbary, and presently escaped to follow fortune elsewhere.”

“Well, we must do the same. Heaven intended me for a free man, miss, and I cannot and will not live as a slave.”

“Do you think I am more eager for slavery than yourself? My duty as one of the Emperor’s Escape Agents is in Cabrera or near it, not on this awful Barbary coast. You prate, my Major, of that marshal’s *bâton* that is in store for you. Do you think a woman cannot be just as keen to earn distinction?”

“Miss,” said Major Colt, with an angular bow, “I honour your brave spirit. What we have gone through these last few days would have been enough to daunt Ephraim Taylor, who fought Indians for forty years; yes, and I believe it would even have daunted Emperor Bonaparte. This desolate sea that’s so near us now; the rover that’ll ferry us presently to Sallee; the chains there, and what’s beyond ‘em in savage Barbary: I tell you flatly that they have frightened me. But I will just shake you respectfully by the hand, miss, if you do not mind, and borrow a pottle-full of your courage. My Land! Did you feel that bump? And, listen; there are bare feet pattering upon the deck. The boat’s come back from the xebec!”

“Dear Mary!” murmured Clarice, “what shall I do if they find I am not a man?” She seized Major Colt’s large hand in both her own, and pressed it to her heart, and then as suddenly cast it away as the bare brown feet of a couple of Moors showed themselves coming down the cabin stairs.

On the xebec they were treated with small consideration. The little vessel was decked only forward and aft, and under these shelters were stored her cargo of pirated merchandise. Her people harboured in the open; and if they were content to expose their own skins to the sprays, the rain, the wind, or the scorching sun, it could scarcely have been expected that they would be more nice with their prisoners.

It happened that the rover was returning loaded after a tolerably successful foray. She had tackled some eight Christian vessels, Spanish for the most part, had made a third of their crews prisoners, and had sent the rest to Eblis, and incidentally had forwarded a goodly percentage of her own people to Paradise in the process. There was no chance, as Major Colt gloomily noted, of an uprising amongst the slaves. Each and all of them were most scientifically chained. Moreover, the allowance of food and water doled out to them was so small that the souls of most of them barely hung in their shrivelled carcasses, and all fighting spirit had been completely chastened away.

The wind held, and the xebec sailed well; and on the fourth day of their captivity brought up to her anchors in Sallee Roads. Kherbs were rowed off through the surf and took her guns and the weightier bales of her cargo; and when her draught had been sufficiently lightened, she hove up and hoisted sail again; and presently was being very skilfully handled as she drove in over the spouting bar of the Buragrag River, which divides Sallee (or Slá, as the Moors call it) from its twin place of iniquity, Rabat. Her copper flamed in the sun as she danced amongst the breakers, and then she shot over into calm water amongst the other shipping, and came to an anchor. And then came a disembarkation of the cargo, the part of it that could not walk being packed on the tottering backs of the part of it that could.

At the subsequent auction sale the disreputable-looking young Frenchman, with a patch over one eye (who happened to be Mademoiselle Clarice de la Plage), was knocked down to a stout and elderly Jew named Benzaki, but an officer of the Kaid stepped in and stopped the bidding for Major Joseph Colt.

“This slave,” said the officer, “is requisitioned by His Holiness the Sultan for work on the new Kasbah.” He looked hard at the American, and noted the grim strongness of his face beneath the four days’ stubble of blue-black beard. “Take him, and show the deaths those slaves die who try to escape. Show him also the tortures those endure who do not work for the Sultan at their hardest, and then give him a rammer, and bid him pound earth for the new walls.”

There for the time the two Escape Agents parted, after their names and descriptions had been taken down by a Redemptionist Father, who was himself also an Escape Agent in his way.

The house of Benzaki, the Jehudi, to which Clarice clanked along in the wake of

her purchaser, was in the quarter assigned to his race, and was almost ostentatious in its unpretentiousness. Facing on the filthy street, it showed a narrow front of untended whitewash, which was broken only by one slim grated window, and a lowly door. But inside it was a regular warren of unexpected rooms, and somehow one gathered that in the thickness of the walls were other rooms which might well contain matters of interest. The internal odours were divided between the scent of partly-dried hides and the smell of decaying malt, with a racy spice of garlic thrown in to tincture the whole.

Benzaki led the way to a little dark room, lowered himself on to a divan, and motioned his new slave to stand before him.

“Do you speak French, Spanish, or English?”

“All three, *señor*. A French soldier who has served is of necessity a linguist.”

“Moorish?”

“No, *señor*.”

“Well, you must learn that. I shall whip you if you do not make good progress. What is your trade?”

“The military, *señor*. And also I have acted on the stage.”

“A loafer, that is to say. Well, I have my own ways of teaching loafers industry. Do you know anything about brandy?”

“I have sold it.”

“And drunk it also when it has come in your way, I’ll be bound. Well, here you will learn to brew it. If you do not learn readily, I shall whip you.”

The slave’s one grey eye glinted dangerously.

“It will be advisable for your own comfort that you take also what discipline is given without open resentment, or otherwise I shall sell you to another master.”

“Who I suggest, *señor*, might prove more kind.”

“Possibly, possibly. But in this house you will learn secrets I do not wish passed on. Moors buy my brandy if it is offered to them quietly, but if it were made public that the stuff were brewed here, the Kaid (who is one of my best customers) would have no choice but to boil me in my own still. I tell you this as an example of one of the many secrets this house contains, which I do not wish to be carried abroad.”

“If I am kindly treated, I can keep a secret with anyone.”

“Ah,” said Benzaki quickly, “but I see you mistake my hint. If you prove fractious, if you prove unremunerative, I shall take out your tongue before I sell you. It would not be so bad a piece of work for me as you might suppose. There is a steady demand for mutes all over Barbary.”

Benzaki rose up heavily from the divan. “The sooner we get you into a Moor’s jelab the better. Come with me now, and I will knock off those chains, and then I will see you strip off those faded swashbuckler’s clothes. I know a renegado they would just fit, and who will pay a good price for them. So you see, slave, I am pointing out a way in which you can begin to earn moneys for your master already. Come with me and let me see you strip.”

The slave shivered, and then backed up defiantly against the wall, with fetters clanking.

“You shall not have my clothes, you old beast.”

Benzaki sat back on the divan, and clapped his fat hands. “Then you shall be whipped. It is always well to whip a slave soon after he comes into one’s possession, otherwise he never learns to love one.”

A couple of burly negroes bustled in, and the Jew gave them certain commands in the Moorish tongue. Clarice could distinguish one word only, and that was *bastinado*, and her heart for the moment stopped its beating. But then her high courage returned. “After all,” she told herself, with a shudder, “there were worse things than having the soles of one’s feet whipped to a jelly.”

But, as it turned out, the discipline was postponed, at anyrate, for the present. There came into the room a stout, dark lady, trousered, and profusely veiled, who, it appeared, was Benzaki’s sister.



“Ah,” she said, and wagged a stumpy finger, “just what I heard. You’ve been buying another Christian.”

Benzaki’s shoulders admitted the obvious.

“Well,” said the lady, squatting beside him on the divan, “you remember what I told you I’d do.”

“I can’t have you interfering with my business affairs, Esther.”

“Poof! as if they aren’t as much mine as yours. With every coin of my money invested in your hides, and your corn, and your arrack, and the other things, do you think I’m not going to interest myself in how you handle them to profit? Now, when you lost money on the last two slaves you bought from the rovers — and you know the Kaid said he’d take off your skin and stuff it with straw if anyone else came out of this house and talked as they did — I told you flatly after that I should manage the next one, if you bought another, myself.”

“Tell me your wishes, Esther, and I will carry them out. It is not proper that you should give order direct to a white man slave.”

The lady was clearly flattered, but she did not yield her point.

“He will merely see in me an employer. He will not be enamoured. My veil protects me. Isaac, you have my permission to go. Now, slave, attend to me, and remember I am merely your owner. What is your name? Your first name, I mean.”

“Clarice.”

“What!”

“Clarence.”

“That is not what you said before.”

“The other slipped out. It is a nickname I got in the army because I was slim and had a high-noted voice.”

“You are a little man, but you do not look effeminate. I rather like little men,”

said the lady, and lowered her veil. "How did you lose your eye? Fighting? Yes, of course, you did, and you don't want to tell me about it. Well, I'll hear the tale of that when we know one another better. You are a Frenchman, of course, and therefore, you must have served under Bonaparte."

"Yes, *señorita*, I had the honour of serving under the Emperor till recently."

"They say he is a great fascinator. But he would not get affection from me. He is too fat. For myself, I could love only a slim, small, thin man."

Clarice straightened her shoulders, and the lady languished. "You Frenchman are dreadfully bold creatures, so I'm told. I shall hardly dare to have your chains taken off. And I've let my veil slip; how could I have been so careless? You mustn't think me bold, Clarence."

"I think you entirely charming," said the slave, and with a clank of fetters lifted one of the lady's hands, and kissed it delicately. "I wish we were on more equal terms."

"Oh, you are so sudden. That may come later. I wonder what you are? Not quite what you seem."

The slave swallowed some emotion. "No, *señorita*, I am not what you think me."

"Some day you may tell the mystery of your past."

"Kind treatment may get it from me, *señorita*, but till I had the great honour of meeting you I have come across little enough of that in Barbary. Your brother was just about to give me torture when you came in and rescued me."

"Oh, my brother! You should not mind him much. His bark is far worse than his bite. He never tortures his slaves as the Moors do. Why, Clarence, if you had a Moorish master, and you offended him, he might skin you, or burn you, or have you thrown on the hooks, or pulled to bits by horses. Now, my brother would never waste a slave like that under any provocation. A whipping's the only thing you have to fear, and you may avoid that if you'll learn to please me."

"Then, *señorita*, my business in life is an easy one, and the bastinado is far enough away. Permit me," said the slave, and once more saluted the chubby fingers with a grace that had been learned by the tedious teachings of the stage.

Now, Mademoiselle Clarice de la Plage was, as has been shown before in these memoirs, very neat handed over matters of nice diplomacy; and, with an opening like this before her, was likely to do well, especially in Sallee, where unspeakable tortures would be the reward of mistakes. She was not fond of manual work — in fact, disliked it; but in the household of the Benzakis, where all were industrious, Clarice found it advisable to do some small violence to her feelings in this matter. At first the Jew was minded to put her on to the indelicate business of handling hides, but here Esther intervened, and this was relegated back to the grosser thews of the blacks. Similarly, in dealing with the import and export of salt, the new slave triumphantly proved that it is most uncommercial to expend a fine brain and small muscle on mere portorage.

But noting shrewdly enough that she would not be allowed to eat the couscousoo of idleness, Clarice dropped with all outward readiness into the affairs of the distillery, and was presently brewing an abominable arrack, which certain true believers, who had more affection for their stomachs than for their souls, bought unobtrusively and in increasing quantities. The excitement and the danger of these secret sales were not without their charm. And always in the meanwhile she gave her patroness a most courtly attention.

Miss Benzaki was dark, fat, and forty — which, for a Moroccan Jewess, means that she was well advanced in old age; but she carried still the remnant of past good looks, and the graceful courtship of one who had learned her man's manners in male costume on the boards of the Porte St Martin theatre in Paris, came to the lady just for the moment as one of the most delightful pleasure of her life. Hitherto, it must be remembered, Miss Benzaki had been forced to content herself with the local Sallee civilities; and the manners of pirates are notoriously crude.

The Christian house slaves of Sallee in the year 1811 wore no chains, and were allowed a large range of liberty. Escape was practically impossible, and the horrible examples that were made of those who tried to escape and failed, were festooned from the walls as an open advertisement of what might befall the restless. Even the *ex-vivandière*, who had seen the sack of cities — Saragossa amongst them — shivered and shrank when these met her eye; but she ranged resolutely about the garbage-strewn streets of the town whenever she could get away from the house, searching always for Joseph Colt.

The Sultan of Morocco stabled his Christian slaves, who were employed in

cutting stone and pounding earth for the new Sallee Kasbah, in a row of arches that had been originally planned to shelter horses; so that as things went on the Barbary coast they were well off. Clarice searched through all of these; but Colt was not there. By degrees she saw every workman on the Kasbah, and on all the other public buildings, still without finding him. A dreadful fear began to gnaw at her that he had already lost his life, perhaps to the accompaniment of horrid circumstance; and each time her eye fell on the hooks that carried those frayed rags of what was once humanity, something cold would surge against her heart.

But one day a Redemptionist Father, the same who had taken her name and description on landing, put this fear aside. Colt was working over the river in Rabat. In her thankfulness, she pulled from her pocket a few small coins which from time to time the frugal bounty of Esther had given her, and pressed these into his thin hand. "For your work, my Father. I did not know it till a minute ago, but there are moments when a slave can be gay, even in Sallee, and give his fortune to encourage those who are less fortunate."

A day later Clarice was escorting the portly Esther across the Buragrag ferry.

The finding of so inconsiderable a trifle as one particular American slave amongst the four thousand white men who toiled and groaned and laboured over the public works in Rabat was a big task, especially as Clarice had lured Miss Benzaki across the river to look for a certain cosmetic in the Sok-el-Attarin of the Rabat bazaar, which was guaranteed to conserve eternal youth. Moreover, it is hard to push inquiries amongst tradesmen, whose language you do not speak, for a delicacy which does not exist; and so the morning was wasted very fruitlessly. Neither by build nor habit was Miss Benzaki cut out for walking, and about midday she had worn out both her slippers and her temper, and had waddled herself to a standstill. They found a handful of shade under a deep archway, and Miss Benzaki squatted in that and ate some food. She made Clarice remain out in the sunshine.

"Your affection for me has cooled," she snapped, "or you would never have let me get so deadly tired. Besides, I cannot have you sitting beside me as an equal in this public place. Any girl would be talked about who did such a thing."

So, whilst Miss Benzaki lunched, Clarice stood out in the aching sun, and outwardly, at anyrate, looked penitent and amorous and submissive by turns. But presently the heat and the full meal and the unaccustomed exercise had its

normal effect, and when Clarice was sure that her mistress slept, she also crept into a neighbouring archway and rested in the shade.

Donkeys came past her, bearing white-robed Moors, slave porters and free porters envied her rest as they plodded by in the heat; laden camels sneered at her when their supercilious heads swung to that side of the street. But even the buzzing swarms of flies that filled the place failed to keep her awake. She nodded drowsily, still seeing processions of camels with reeking loads of hides, and men with long guns escorting them, and Moors on switch-tailed horses, and other Moors on asses and stately mules, and still more Moors and slaves on foot. Especially slaves; yes, Christian slaves; but never amongst them one who was tall and straight and strong, with sallow face and blue-black hair—

“Clarice! My Land! it is Clarice, and still in those man’s clothes and carrying the eye-patch. They told me these beasts had caught a woman slave rigged out as a man. My God! you can’t guess what I’ve gone through, thinking of it. Here, miss, wake up.”

“I am awake. I’ve never been asleep. I merely closed my eyes. Good-morning, Monsieur the Major. It is quite a pleasure to see you again. You’d be flattered if you knew how much I’ve been hoping you’d pay me a call, but I suppose you’ve been otherwise employed.”

“Yes,” said Colt grimly. “I’ve been otherwise employed. I tried to come twice, but the second time they caught me.” He pointed to his feet, which were wrapped up in rags of bandage. “It was only yesterday that I was just able to hobble about again.”

“Dear Mary! They bastinadoed you?”

“I believe that’s the local term. Next time they chop off a foot, so I shall have to have my arrangements better planned. I don’t mind giving you a foot, you’ll understand, miss, if it can do any good. But I don’t want the foot to be wasted.”

“Dear Mary! what a country!”

“It’s no place for you, miss. I’d sooner see you in a village of Pottawottomie Indians. I’m just going to put all my think into that one thing till you’re away from here and safe.”

“And what about the marshal’s *bâton* that is in store for you, my brave? That will never be earned if you leave off trying for it for one short day. And then there are the chapters you are to have to yourself in Miss Collier’s ‘Conduct of the Continental Wars.’”

“The *bâton* can be burned. I’m an American, miss, and out West, where I was brought up, I was taught that *bâtons* don’t come first every time. As for Miss Collier’s book, I want to tell you—”

“Clarence!”

“There’s my patroness. Now listen. You must come across to Sallee with me. Only agree to everything I say.”

“Clarence! You tiresome wretch, I’ll have you whipped.”

“Coming, dearest mistress — *I’ll make the old cat buy you* — I have been watching every instant of your sleep. *And then once we are together, we’ll act as our own escape agents.* —Your distresses of this morning have so racked me, sweet lady, that I have done the impossible. I have found the man who in France rediscovered the Bloom of Niñon, which is used exclusively by the Empress Josephine. He is a wise man from the wild backwoods of America. The Emperor heard of him there, and sent for him to France. He is a marvellous man, our Emperor. And now this great American cosmetic-maker is here to humbly offer his unique services at my lady’s footstool.”

“Why that,” said Miss Benzaki, “is a slave.”

“For the moment, yes.”

“But he is a fine figure of a man, although I see he is not very sound in the feet. Stand before me, slave, and let me have look at you. Fine black hair, bold black eyes, and a great strong beak of a nose, almost like a Jew’s. You’ve all the essentials of beauty, but I shouldn’t call you bonny. Well, for myself, I prefer a man who looks strong like you do, rather than one who is slim like Clarence here. Now I wonder what’s your price? If you are for sale, and your people would take Clarence here in part exchange, I might deal for you.”

The *vivandière* knelt at Miss Benzaki’s knee in a terror that was genuine enough. “My adored mistress,” she pleaded, “do not sell me. I should die if I was

separated from you. Besides, think how useful I am at the still.”

“Yes, that’s true, and you know more than we dare let you carry away and tell. My brother says he will have to tear out your tongue if ever we sell you. But I shall not do that unless you force me to it. Frankly, I should not like to cut out any tongue that has rippled out such a constant stream of pretty things. And, after all, you did find me this Americano, who you say can brew the cosmetic you have made me fancy. You there, Blackbeard, did you in your benighted land, wherever that may be, find out the secret of Eternal Youth?”

“A Mr Ponce de Leon did that, *señorita*, way down in Florida. But I guess you don’t know you’re quite wrong in speaking of America as benighted. The United States is one of the few counties that welcome Jews. Why, in a short time from now, they say the original settlers will be under-dogs altogether, and by the year eighteen-five-three, the States will be governed by Jews and Irish exclusively.”

“How often do they impale Jews in the United States, or burn them, or pull off their skins and stuff them with straw?”

“Never, *señorita*. It’s the low-down niggers you’re thinking about, and it’s only done to them in the South, and when they need it.”

Miss Benzaki stood up and shook out her trousers. “Tell me your price, Blackbeard,” she said, “and then come along with me to your owner, and let me see what you can be got for. Limp, Blackbeard, and curve your back; I want to buy you as a damaged slave, not as a sound one.”

“Miss, wait a minute. I’m very sorry to say that I’m the property of the Government.”

“That’s Kaid Stephan Stephanopulos, the renegade here in Rabat. Well, it might be worse. Kaid Stephan owes us a large bill for arrack, and threatens to fill up my brother with gunpowder and set a light to him when he presses for payment. Blackbeard, if you limp sufficiently, and bear out my words that your feet have made you valueless, I shall get you for nothing, merely in settlement of our just and lawful debt.”

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Miss Benzaki was very jubilant that night to Brother Isaac over her commercial

astuteness in bringing home two sound slaves in place of the one she had set out with; and although she was so dead tired she could hardly keep her eyes open during the recital, the sad eyes blinked with more than ordinary admiration at the fine figure of Major Joseph Colt.

The *vivandière* was given to understand that the days of favour were over. "I have always found something lacking in you, Clarence," said Miss Benzaki, with yawning frankness; and the slave, who was a woman herself, knew what that something was.

For a man who said he had no appetite for the job, Major Colt's courtship of the portly Jewess was (according to Clarice) singularly proficient; but even he did not escape that rule of the house which dealt with work. It was put to him very plainly that all the Benzaki assets must become dividend earning from the very first, and so presently behold him as a manufacturer of cosmetics.

It chanced that one of the rovers' ships had brought in a great lump of ambergris amongst her looted cargo, and this scent so beloved of the Oriental, Isaac Benzaki had bought. For long enough it lay in store amongst the mingled odours of the house because no one offered to purchase. But with the arrival of the new black-bearded slave, the opening came.

Now Major Colt, till that moment in Rabat, had given no thought to cosmetics, and was quite unhampered with any knowledge of how to compound them. He had more than once seen Mohawks and Ojibbway braves make up in their war paint, and tried to deduce inspiration from this, but finally was driven to conclude that the two cases were hardly parallel. So inventing by the light of inner consciousness alone, he worked up tiny doses of the grey ambergris into mutton fat, coloured it faintly pink with cochineal insects he caught on the prickly pear hedges, added a little crude borax as a preservative, and so produced a cosmetic that was no better and little worse than the thousand other nostrums of its kind in daily use elsewhere. But having, too, all the American talent for a label, he put up his mixture in jars of native red pottery, and so produced an article of toilette that proved most readily saleable.

Stout old Esther herself introduced it into many harems, and week by week gazed with shrewd black eyes on the complexions it had anointed, and bore noisy witness to the improvements that had been effected there. The Moorish ladies who paid for these attentions considered themselves as first discoverers of



this Bloom of Niñon, and talked (in the strictest confidence) of their find on Fridays at the cemetery, when feminine Sallee met for its week's gossip. And so the sale increased. Then by a stroke of financial genius the quality of the mutton fat was slightly economised in, a cheaper scent substituted for the ambergris (which had run out of stock) and the price per red pot was raised till it became quite valuable. The result was splendid. Even those ladies who had done without it when it was cheap, found it indispensable when it became costly, and so the commercial success of the venture was made sure.

Miss Benzaki's first admiration for Colt had frankly been for his exterior, and once she had him in the rabbit-warren house in Sallee, she coquetted with him in the most brazen manner imaginable. Major Joseph Colt was emphatically not a lady's man; but under stress of circumstances he was willing to play a game to save his neck, or at anyrate his feet. He reciprocated the lady's advances at first awkwardly, but presently, when he, so to speak, got his eye in, with more art.

Isaac Benzaki, although he knew his sister's ways, and although moreover he was a Jew, had all of an Oriental's idea of seclusion for his womenfolk, and was openly scandalised by the whole affair. A dozen times a week he would break in up their intercourse, and would drive the American back to his grease pots with threats of instant torture and mutilations, and scurry his elderly relative away to the women's apartments by the sheer torrent of his shrill and angry abuse. Had she come to her time of life without learning a proper sense of tribal pride? She was a disgrace to the name of Benzaki! Flirting with a slave, indeed, when in her day she might have married the pick of Israel!

But Clarice was the worst of Major Colt's trials. If Clarice had ever guessed that he would turn poor Mademoiselle Esther's head in that disgusting way, never, never would she have taken him away from those horrors in Rabat. "You call yourself a man, and you let the poor old thing make such a show of herself. Poof! I have no patience with such vanity. To me you prate of your prim Miss Patience Collier who keeps school in Boston. But do you ever tell your dear Esther that she is making her silly sheep's eyes at an engaged man, Monsieur Joseph?"

"I am not enjoying myself," Colt would tell her with his grimmest look. "I am hoeing for our mutual advantage, miss, the row you set me, and if you'd show me a better way of keeping our scalps in their proper place I'd be glad to hear it. I tell you plainly I've stood up to the torture stake amongst Indians in my day,

and not winced; but when I remember I've you to look after amongst these beastly pirates, my nerve's shook. Or, at anyrate, my invention's gone." He pulled out and screwed together the sections of a long pipe. "Even their tobacco's barely fit for a God-fearing American to smoke."

"I believe," said Clarice spitefully, "you've even kissed the old hussy."

"Well, miss, first it's wrong all the civilised world over to kiss and tell, and I expect it's the same in Barbary; and secondly I wish to remind you of your own theory that kisses leave no mark. I don't agree with that last, as I've told you many times; but as you're pushing me, I just want to bring up your own words to your recollection. Will you allow me a few draws on this pipe?"

"I hope you got a mouthful of your own nasty grease every time you put your lips to her wrinkles. Well, I suppose you will presently turn Jew and marry this pretty sweetheart of yours. You've made such a sound business in your cosmetics, that I suppose she thinks you're worth marrying for your talents. Dear Mary! But I am thankful that I am engaged already to M. Le Brun, and am free from these temptations to turn renegado."

"Miss," said Colt, puffing savagely, "there are times when I should like to shake you. The last occasion you mentioned the gentleman, too, it sticks in my mind his name was Le Grand."

"Dear Mary!" shrilled the *vivandière*, "is it at a time like this you must twit me with a moment's forgetfulness? I shall leave you, Monsieur the Major, and trust that through the night you will think of your degradation, and repent before morning. Faugh! fancy kissing a made-up old thing like that, and for aught I know dandling her on your knee."

But presently there arrived the unexpected, and existing arrangements in the house of Benzaki were terminated with suddenness. Stout old Isaac tottered in through the narrow doorway one noon, with his mouth filled with blood, and his heart loaded with rage and terror in equal parts.

The Kaid of Sallee had that morning summoned him to the Kasbah, politely offering settlement of a long-standing account; and Isaac had gone cheerfully enough, with the savour of money smelling very pleasantly in his nostrils. But, lo! on arrival, the Kaid, with that true Moorish humour, which rarely ascends above the grisly, invited him to witness the trial of a co-religionist for

malpractices. The trial was short, the sentence curt, and its execution swift; and presently Isaac was exuding the sweat of horror and fear as he witnessed the impalement of a poor wretch whose one crime was that he brewed arrack, and sold it to true believers.

“Now that,” said the Kaid with genial meaning, “removes a business competitor for somebody, eh, Jehudi?”

“Yes, Effendi.”

“I believe you came here wanting payment of certain matters.”

“Oh, no, Effendi.”

“What, is there no debt between us?”

“I owe much for your Excellency’s countenance and benevolence.”

“Then, by Allah,” said the Kaid simply, “you shall pay what you owe. It is not fitting that a dog of a Jehudi should be in debt to a true believer. The debt according to my memory is the weight of a bushel of barley in gold pieces.”

“If I pay that,” whined Isaac, “I shall not have enough to eat.”

“Then pull out five of his teeth,” ordered the wise Kaid, “and thereafter he will eat less. Shall the representative of his Holiness the Sultan here in Sallee go without payment of his just and lawful debts because the dog of a Jehudi must needs fill his great gross belly? Bismillah, no! Ho, you there, not the bastinado as well to-day. Pull me those five teeth and let him go. If to-morrow he brings here the money, we will forgive his presumption in daring to be in our debt.”

Poor old Isaac mumbled out to his household this tale of oppression, and glared round with eyes glinting with pain and hate in search of someone on whom to fix the blame.

“I always told you,” said his sister, “that there was danger in brewing that arrack, and that one day the Kaid (on whose name I spit) would cook you in your own still.”

The Jew shook a vicious fist at Clarice. “It’s you that made the arrack good so

that even the Kaid would drink it. If I'd had warning of this morning's business, it's your teeth the Kaid should have pulled; yes, or I would have let him impale you if that would have glugged him. Good teeth mine were, too; the finest of ivory, and now gone for ever."

"You'll excuse me," said Colt; "but in the States they could fix you up with a new set for a matter of fifteen dollars, that would defy detection even under the closest scrutiny. They are said to eat very well also, if you don't tempt Providence with chewing gum. But if you'll let a practical man make a suggestion, Mr Benzaki, I'd like to point out that the old Kaid isn't gunning for you because you make moonlight whiskey. He likes his glass of corn as well as anybody, and he probably had that stake put through your competitor because he found the poor man was peddling a spirit that gave His Excellency a head the next morning. Isn't that so?"

"Poor Benjamin did brew a filthy arrack, and I know the Kaid complained of it more than once."

"There you are, then. It's dollars the Kaid's really after, not teeth, nor even whisky. His Excellency has had his financial eye on you. He's seen the arrack business is good; he's seen the Bloom of Niñon trade bud and blossom like the rose; he's noted (probably by the increase in the smell of the street outside) that your connection in hides is steadily growing; and I guess the Moors in the local wheat-pit have given him news that you've driven them out of trade."

"Yes," mumbled Isaac, "I'll not deny I've done well of late, and in one way you two Christians have been a good investment. But if I'm to be stripped of all, I wish I'd let both of you be flogged to death on the Kasbah works instead of buying you."

"And I guess under the circumstances that's a very natural wish. But it strikes me as being outside the political situation at present. The fact you've got to face is this: that old Kaid has got his nose on to your dollars. And here is the question you've got to ask yourself: Are you going to sit tight right here in Sallee while the Kaid milks you dry?"

Benzaki mopped at his injured mouth. "There is no help for me. It is the fate of Israel to be oppressed."

"Then let me tell you, sir, you know very little of your modern tribal history. The

United States is the place for your capital and talents. It's God's country first, last and all the time, and it's the one country on earth for any white man. I guess," he added candidly, as he looked at his master's swarthy skin, "I guess they might take you for coloured at first, but climate and some hot water would soon fetch off a lot of that."

"And the women have liberty there, you tell me?" suggested Miss Benzaki.

"They are looked up to most reverently," Major Colt assured her. "I'm not recommending Boston, perhaps, as a residence, Miss Esther; but in New York I believe you would be able to shine in the most exclusive circles, as soon as Mr Isaac here has got his dollar mill fairly started to churn."

But old Isaac put a hand on his black skullcap and shook his head beneath it. "I am a Barbary Jew, and am too old to go to new countries, especially to your New York, where I am told the Indians come in and torture Jews, even as the Moors do here. It is no use your telling me they do not, because I should not believe you. Besides, your New York is too far away across the seas. Now if it had been Spain, where once my people lived till they were expelled, or France—"

The *vivandière* smacked the knee of her *jelab*. "Come to France, Monsieur Benzaki. With your talents, and your so perfect Parisian French you would leap into instant success."

"Not without influence with the Corsican Emperor. We had a slave here once, a *matelot* who had deserted from a frigate, who said that without favour from the Emperor no one in these days could rise to wealth or eminence in France."

"Listen, monsieur," said Clarice, and held out at him a slim brown forefinger. "The Emperor's highest favour can be procured by you, Isaac Benzaki, by the very simplest and most inexpensive of means. By the misfortune of a faulty general, four thousand of the Emperor's troops are imprisoned on the Balearic Islet of Cabrera. The French Navy is occupied elsewhere, and so it cannot go to enlarge them. As a consequence, His Imperial Majesty the Emperor has appointed Major Colt and myself as his Escape Agents, to arrange for the freeing of these prisoners. I am open to tell you that for the moment our operations are interrupted."

"Yes, I can see that," mumbled the old man. "You can make few arrangements in the Mediterranean whilst you are chained up here as slaves in Sallee."

“So there, Monsieur Benzaki, comes in your so magnificent opportunity. Sail to Cabrera yourself, you and your wealth, take us with you as slaves to work your ship; procure a cargo of the prisoners; carry these to the Emperor, and say: ‘See what I, a Barbary Jew, have brought.’ Now I ask you, Monsieur Benzaki, as a man of vast intellect yourself, what will the Emperor say?”

“I think he could not do less than give me a concession to deal in hides. I should brew no more arrack, once I was free of Sallee. But hides and the Bloom of Niñon” — he rubbed his hands appreciatively — “they should together spell fortune in France.”

“They’d do more in the States. My Land! If you’ve a commercial proposition worth—”

“My friend, Major Colt, is an enthusiast for his new and rather savage country, but I do not think you would care to take mademoiselle to shine amongst the painted Indians who have their wigwams in New York.”

“Don’t you believe it, Mr Benzaki. There’s nothing cheaper’n a frame house in New York City. And a lot of the better houses now are built of rock. As for Indians, you don’t find them nearer than Albany since Ephraim Taylor—”

Benzaki angrily slapped his hands. “Peace you two, and quiet, or I’ll have your tongues bored through. America I will not go to, because I hear they eat beans there, and their only meat is the accursed hog. France and the goodwill of the Corsican are not without their attraction. You, Clarence, will you lay your hand upon your beard and swear that what you have told me about these prisoners and the Emperor is true?”

The *vivandière* placed a hand on her smooth chin. “I swear!” she said, and broke off into a fit of coughing.

The uprooting of the house of Benzaki from the soil of Barbary was not a thing its heads could have carried out in less than a matter of weeks. Old Isaac, when it came to the point, sat helplessly on a divan, and held his aching jaw with one hand, whilst he gesticulated against fate with the other. Esther bustled with furious industry. She packed, and she fussed, and she ordered. From old forgotten corners she produced old forgotten rubbish, and decided and redecided a score of times over each item as to whether it should be taken to France or left in Sallee. And in the end of course she had to desert the lot.

Isaac had a trading xebec at moorings in the river, and in this they were to make their evasion; and, as she was naked of stores, food would have to be their chief burden. When from its hidden nooks in the thickness of the walls the old man's capital in gold and silver coin was added, the two white slaves and the two blacks of the household had all they could stagger under. It was madness, as both Colt and Clarice pointed out, to linger. To-morrow the Kaid would come and rob them of all. On the morrow, if by the disorder of the house the Kaid discovered their intention of leaving Morocco, he would make their stay permanent by those horrible methods which were peculiarly his own.

So for the Kaid's benefit they left behind them in the house a goodly stock of the Bloom of Niñon in its attractive jars of native red pottery, a fine parcel of stinking hides, and many demi-johns of rasping fiery arrack. There were also, heaped up to the size of a goodly haystack, garments which represented Miss Benzaki's wearing apparel for the last forty years. She was a tremendous collector of old clothes. It was a racial habit she never could break herself of.

Night fell moonless and chill; the pirates of Sallee snuggled into their homes; and when midnight came, and sleep was at its deepest, the lowly door beside the narrow window in the unkempt whitewashed wall was opened, and a procession came out loaded down with bags and bundles. Old Isaac and his staff led the way; a dead-tired Esther tottered behind him, with one arm thrust through that of Clarice, and the other hand clutching Colt's sleeve; and in the rear staggered the two black slaves, heaped up with burdens like the carrying animals that they were.

Dogs sniffed at them in the street, but forebore to howl; no human being accosted them. They came to the river side, and heaped themselves and their belongings into a boat. They rowed off to the xebec and made transhipment. And thereafter they hoisted plain sail, cast off from the moorings and blew away down stream towards the river bar roared against which the outer sea.

"The dear Esther will be woefully disappointed unless you marry her when we get to France," said the *vivandière* maliciously.

"I think," retorted Colt, "that when she finds she's been tricked into making love to a pretty girl rigged out in breeches, she'll have nothing more to do with either of us."

“You do think I am pretty, then, Joe? Dear Mary, how jealous Monsieur Le Beau would be if he could hear you! Still, I warrant you do not write me down as pretty in those letters you send to your Miss Collier in Boston, which give the facts for her great book on the wars.”

“Le Beau!” said Colt. “I thought your fiancé’s name was Le Brun. Well, I don’t think I’m very terrified of him anyway. My Land! Look out! Here we are on the bar. It’s all Barbary to a tin-tack she’s swept before we get her out to sea.”