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## THE HOUSE OF ISSTENS.

By Sir D'Artagan Isstens, Cadet of a Great House, Knight of the Royal Order of Wassmark and One Time Ambassador to the Court of Charles I of England.

MADE INTO A ROMANCE BY THEODORE ROBERTS.

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### CHAPTER IX THE LOVE OF A WOMAN.

I grew steadily stronger, and soon moved from my bed to a big chair drawn up to the window. It was the heat of summer now. Harry was more dashing and poetic than ever before. All the household, from the baron and baroness down to the boy who twirled the spits in the kitchen, was gay, and yet, deep under my slowly brightening face and outward improvement, lay a black devil eating at my heart. It was the devil of doubt, for Marion, whose eyes I had so often seen kind and soft, came to me seldom now, and when she did it was always with my mother or Harry. Never a word of my passionate note under the verses. I think Harry noticed it, too, for he was kinder than ever to me. Likewise Captain Castletree, who would come and read aloud from his books for hours at a time.

One day I was sitting alone at my open window. It was early evening. My mother had just left my side, and I was in a half dream. It was not a glad dream to cheer the heart, nor a mad dream of battle to set my pulses leaping. My gray meditations were broken by the clatter of hoofs in the courtyard below and the sound of greetings. I stood, as best I could for my weakness, and looked out. A big roan horse was there, and a gentleman had just dismounted and was leaning over my mother's hand. The whole family seemed to be at the dining hall door to greet him. Marion and the captain greeted him with the fervor of old friends. I heard my father say, "Welcome to my house, Sir Willis!"

I sank back in my chair. "Who the devil is this?" I said. "He bows like a sword scabbard and has a face like a bishop."

Presently Harry came up and told me that the newcomer was Sir Willis Howard, who had come from England posthaste with brave news for the captain.

"What is the news?" I asked huskily. "That the estate in Devon will be Castletree's again on Christmas day, and that the real political offender has been discovered."

For some time I said nothing. The light had gone out at the window. How young I was!

Then, "Who is Sir Willis?" I asked. "An old friend of the Castletrees and the captain's godson," he replied, "and a famous swordsman, too. I have heard."

All this, which should have cheered me vastly, only threw me into a deeper gloom.

When Harry presented me to the newcomer, I looked at him narrowly, measuring him as one fencer does another before the saluting. He was not overtall, but square shouldered and long armed. His face was long and grave, his eyes steady, his smile slow and sinister.

He said very little, but his shifting eyes saw everything.

With the family he was quite a favorite at first, and, as the Castletrees were persuaded to stay in Wassmark until after Christmas, Sir Willis postponed his own departure.

I think we all saw his reason for doing so before three days had past. He walked, rode and sat on the south terrace with Mistress Marion, and she accepted all his attentions with gayety.

His manner toward Harry was always considerate and pleasant, but toward me that of a lord to a footman.

One day, when he had come up with the captain to borrow my spurs, he told my mother, who was reading aloud, how in England the younger sons were always packed off to the ends of the earth to find their own fortunes.

The captain flushed crimson, the baroness stared, but I only remembered it and made no sign.

In a few days I could move about the house, and even take short walks on the terrace. At meals I threw off my lately acquired reserve and talked freely, laying myself open to his cutting sarcasm.

I enjoyed this because it made my rival anything but lovely in the eyes of the family and lengthened my score against him. Marion, however, seemed to find his company as fascinating as ever, and the rest had to put up with their guest.

with sad eyes. I cooled mightily at sight of her.

"One more delicate little insult," I said, and touched my rapier hilt significantly.

She followed me and threw her arms about my neck. "Dart, dear Dart, do not forget that he is our guest," she begged.

"He will not always be," I answered. "As the date which Sir Willis Howard set for his departure drew near, I noticed a decided change in both Marion's manner and his own. As he grew warmer, she became cooler. This touched me more deeply than he would have us see."

He was to start for Blatenburg very early in the morning. On the preceding evening Mistress Castletree would not come down from her room.

At 4 o'clock his horse was at the door and the whole household, even the English maid, were there to bid him "good-speed."

I stood, as best I could for my weakness, and looked out.

lish maid, were there to bid him "good-speed." I think my poor mother did this with pleasure, and was much sweeter to him during the last ten seconds of his visit than ever before.

"I will see you to the road, sir," I said in his ear, and went down the avenue at his stirrup.

I carried a sword under my arm—not my favorite rapier, but a heavier weapon with an ingenious notch on the guard against the flat of the blade.

He talked to me with feigned lightness as we went down between the beeches. I wanted to go slowly. I counted every step, for I was not sure of returning—that is, without the assistance of palbearers. The score my sword blade must wipe out was a long one, and yet, as I put my hand on the fellow's bridle when we reached the highway, I wondered if she were worth it all. We had both seen the kind lights in her eyes and had both watched them fading to indifference, as though covered by the ashes of some memory. But this did not soften me one jot.

"What would you have of me?" he asked.

"I would have you dismount, sir," I said quietly. "and give me some sort of satisfaction for the insults I have received from you in my father's house."

"What nonsense is this?" he cried, snarling down at me.

For answer I struck him smartly on the face with my bare hand.

"A peasant's insult, by heaven!" He ripped out his long German sword and charged me. I leaped aside. He whistled his blade up for a cut. It snapped mine, and I felt it jar against the guard, just where the smith had made the deep notch. With a sudden fierce twist I broke the Damascus short off, and before he had realized defeat he was flat on his back, unhorsed and unarmed.

"Give me the hilt," I demanded, and he willingly handed it over.

"Now get into your saddle!" I cried. He mounted silently.

"By the way, baby face, here are some of your rhymes, which Mistress Castletree once gave me." And, flipping a bit of paper in my face, he spurred away.

I lifted the paper. It was the copy of Harry's verses which had caused such a confusion of blushes that day on the south terrace. So she had given it to him—to the fool Englishman! No doubt they had laughed and snickered over it and he had made one of his favorite remarks about the position of the cadet. My pride was cut to the quick. I did not think of my heart.

I wandered away through the white mist that lay on the fields, cursing myself for not killing him when I had the chance. But why blame and curse at the man altogether? Like a wounded wolf, my anger turned on the memory of Marion. The fire of love and respect which I had kept so high on the hearth of my heart in spite of all she had done now blew away—a handful of gray ashes. But it left the mark where it had burned.

I walked with bent head across the wet grass—my sword under my arm, the paper crumpled in my fingers. Only a faint gray line along the eastern hills showed where the morning was lying behind the world when I turned back toward the house. I met Harry at the avenue.

"What in heaven's name have you been doing?" he gasped.

"Bidding Sir Willis good-speed," I said.

He touched my shoulder. "Have you killed him, Dart?" he asked.

I shook my head. "No; I let him go on his way, which is straight to the devil," I answered.

"How much will you have, dear boy? I can give you anything under 200 crowns," he said.

I sipped the liquor slowly, staring carefully around the old room. I was wondering if it would be very hard to lay away from these familiar things. With a start I came back to my brother's question.

"Ten crowns will be enough," I answered.

He went out and returned almost immediately with a leather bag of gold.

He did not ask any questions, but followed me to the stables and helped me saddle Hagart.

We embraced silently before I mounted. "Be back for Christmas," he said, "and do not think that the love of a woman is sweeter because it is easily got."

"What do you mean by that?" I whispered, bending from the saddle.

"That the heart of a woman is not a book of ballads to be understood at one reading," he answered.

I gathered up the reins and rode down the avenue with all the beeches sighing wondrously above my head.

On the highroad I turned in my saddle and tossed a kiss and a prayer bow to the great uneven pile that stood now against a lightning sky.

CHAPTER X  
THE FLIGHT TO THE MOUNTAINS.

My ride into Blatenburg was uneventful. I verily believe that if saints and devils had been placed alternately for the whole way at every milepost I would not have seen them. On reaching the city I made my way through the crowds to the inn we had staid at before and handed Hagart over to a red-headed hostler. I noticed his head because Sir Willis was of the same color.

Without eating breakfast I went up the hill toward the royal palace and sent in my name to his majesty.

He was in his dressing chamber—not being an early riser, except on hunting mornings—and told the footman to send me in.

I bowed low, and he returned my salute graciously.

After inquiring after the health of all connected with the house of Isstens he asked my reason for honoring him with a visit.

"You did not seem at all anxious to spend your time with me when you were here before," he said.

"Your majesty, I have come to offer my sword, and if you have something out of the common that a humble gentleman who is not afraid to fight and ride can do for you I beg the commission," I answered.

"By heavens, sir, you have come in the nick of time! Here is a letter and a little package I would like to have delivered at the court of Cloburg as soon as horses can get you there."

"I will start in half an hour," I replied.

He handed me the package and the letter and a signet ring with the royal arms.

"Show that whenever you want a change of horse," he said, "and here is a purse which will cover expenses. Good morning, sir!"

I bowed myself out and returned to the inn, where I ate a scanty meal and then ordered my horse. I went out of the western gate of the city and started away on a good road of solid red earth. Fruit trees—pears, apples and plums—grew here in great quantities. The meadows were high with grass, and in fields the haymakers were at work.

The people ran to the cottage windows to see me dash past on my big black horse.

At the end of 30 miles I drew rein at an inn door and, dismounting, gave directions for the feeding and care of Hagart, until I should return for him. Then I showed the royal seal to the landlord and asked to have a good horse ready for me in 15 minutes. A jack of beer and a few slices of cold fowl freshened me wonderfully. With a long-legged brown mare under me and the sun still high in the heavens I started off on my second stage of 30 miles. I will not describe the country through which I rode, for I took little heed of it. Old memories filled my mind, which I could not dispel.

Two beds. One was occupied. Against the post stood a sword in its scabbard, and articles of apparel in rich material lay on the floor.

"You have another guest?" I said, taking the candle from the old fellow's hand.

"Yes, a gentleman of the court of Cloburg," he answered.

It did not take me long to get out of my clothes and into the bed, which, in spite of discolored curtains, was spread with white, fragrant sheets.

I was awakened by some one moving about the room. Opening my eyes, I found it nearly daylight and my fellow traveler half dressed. He was wonderfully small, with light hair and blue eyes, and as finely built for a man as the little mare for a saddle beast.

"Good morning, sir!" I said.

He returned my salute with a bow and smile.

Just then the landlord thrust his head under the door to tell us that the horses were at their corn and breakfast ready on the table.

Upon finding while at our meal that the stranger was bound in the same direction, I told him my name.

"I think I heard of you not long ago," he said.

"And a ride you took with a lady," he continued.

"Ah, exactly!" said I. "Well, after the first ten miles it was a pleasant ride."

His name was Tom Feverley.

"My father is a cleygman in England, rector of a parish in Devon," he said.

This did not surprise me, as I had heard of the custom in England for priests to marry. But I asked him if he had ever known Sir Willis Howard.

The blood rose under his fair skin. "Yes, and fought with him," he answered.

Here was a bond of fellowship at the very beginning, so I shook him warmly by the hand.

A boy led the horses up, and we swung to the saddles and started away. The road was good and led us through a beautiful farming land. My new

friend sang blithe English songs and at last one of Marion's favorites. Straightway my new found contentment was bitter as gall.

I asked him why he had left his native land and chosen the court of Cloburg for his home.

He laughed softly and said: "When I was at Oxford, a doctor of divinity called me a young fool, and I kicked him down stairs. So they told me to go home, and instead I wrote down the name of every country in Europe, each on a separate slip of paper, shook them around in a basket and drew one. It said 'Cloburg.' So over I came, and now I am one of the royal guard, where every trooper must show five quarters."

"It was a game of chance," I commented.

"Yes, much like the dice. That is why I did it," he answered. We rode on until noon, when we dismounted—I for a change of horses and wine, he for nothing but the wine.

"This is the only beast I will throw leg over," he said.

I was supplied with a huge white brute, who shied at every hedgerow and galloped like a bound. They were always careful to give me big horses.

The west was red and the east black when we entered the capital city of the Dukedom of Cloburg. We rode straight up to the palace and delivered our messages—his to the duke, mine to the Princess Barbara.

She looked at me with such laughter in her eyes that I was overcome with confusion, for all the maids of honor were in the room ogling me too. Then she took me aside and said that her own messenger would return with a letter to Wassmark, for she wanted me in attendance for awhile, which was very flattering, and I retreated as soon as possible.

Beverly was waiting for me in the passage and took me off to his own quarters, which were very richly hung in tapestry and ornamented with arms and rare pictures along the walls.

My way took me through crooked streets, between leaning houses and noisy wineshops. The night was chill and foggy for the time of year. At some of the doorways torches and massive lamps glowed dimly. I entered the Unicorn's Head, and upon making inquiries for the Cavalier Tom Beverly and hearing that he had not arrived I seated myself at an obscure table in the corner of the room.

Men of all classes were drinking and gaming around me. Some were talking of the war, which still fizzled along the boundaries, and some of trade, and a few of the court. A casual glance at a group of cavaliers in the center of the room caused the blood to throb up over my face. Howard, the English knave and baronet, sat there, with his face turned toward me. He was flushed with wine and talking feintly for so morose and caustic a fool. While I sat there staring, wondering if a sudden rush at him would prove wise, the door opened, and in strutted my little fair comrade, Tom Beverly. I knew that he saw me, though his face showed no recognition. He had scarcely come six paces into the room when up sprang the baronet, with a curse, and made as if to snatch loose a pistol. Tom paused and looked at him with a fine air of bored indifference.

"If you wish to dispatch me, why not use your sword, or has it been taken from you?" he drawled.

The other men in the room turned about in their seats—some grinning, the more peaceful puckering their brows. The men at Howard's table cried for him to chastise the young cub. I sat still, but under the folds of my long cloak my rapier lay bare. Beverly smiled, and Howard hesitated. I remembered Tom having told me that they had fought before. Perhaps the older man bore painful memories of that fight.

Tom broke the silence. "Didn't the cadet of Isstens give back your sword?" he asked, looking interested.

That started it all, and the baronet red with fury, went stabbing at him across the room. My friend could not withstand the onset of his fellow countryman at first, and so followed close, with my fingers itching on the hilt. Tables were overturned, and wine crept over the floor. The men, especially those deep in liquor, swore and laughed. I was pressed close to Beverly.

"Be ready to help me break to the door," he muttered.

Then, six inches from the wall, he stood firm and played at his antagonist's eyes. The men yelled in admiration. The landlord swept at the spilling of his wine. I thrilled with a fine pride at my dear comrade's skill. In a minute the crowd saw that Beverly was playing with the baronet, but they did not seem to realize that so little a fellow would take a life. The hardening of his face, however, revealed to me a fateful purpose. There was a scraping, clanging parry, a lunge, a cry, and the baronet reeled back, grabbing with bloody fingers at his side. I rushed at the door, smashed it down and dragged Beverly out after me into the street. Then we ran at the top of our speed.

The palace of the royal house of Cloburg stands near the outskirts of the city in a level park, unlike that of Blatenburg, which is approached by a steep hill. When we reached the park gates, we paused to draw breath. Beverly leaned against me, faint from the fight and the night. All was quiet, as no fierce death had occurred in the town's heart. For a moment we listened; then Beverly cried, "Great God! I have left my sword there, and the king's arms and mine on the guard!" I did not speak at first, but looked down at his hatless head on my shoulder. Ruin for my friend—the whole national importance of the duel had come to me—stared me in the face.

"We will have to go away—ride for the mountains!" I said presently.

"We? Why we?" he groaned, looking up.

"Man, do you think I care no more for my friends than a wine merchant for his clerks? I am glad of the rogue's death—I will not deny it—and I will flee with you."

"Isstens," he said in his English way, "I believe you are the best fellow in God's world. But have I done right in killing the brute?"

"I would have done it myself else," I answered.

Just then a bell rang out in the town angrily.

"Calling out the royal guard to arrest one of their own men," said Beverly, smiling faintly.

We made all speed to the stables and found part of the guard saddling. I ordered Hagart to be got ready. The men—all fine fellows—spoke to us.

"Are you coming with us?" they asked, and I nodded. Little they thought that the man they were after was the pet of their squad and at that moment seeing his girth in the very midst of them. Twelve of us rode out of the yard, and at the corner of the park wall Beverly and I gave them the slip. We spurred hootfoot to the gates and found them closed.

"No one may pass. An English nobleman has been killed," said the old keeper.

Beverly had a fresh sword in his scabbard. He wore his guardsman's uniform. "We are after him," he said quietly. I rode up to the fellow and told him to let us through or beware of the king's anger, and I showed him the royal arms on a ring Princess Barbara had given me.

"I crave your pardon, my lords," he muttered, and unbarred the gates. We passed through without looking back, and once on the easy country road broke into a swinging gallop.

Trees and hedges slid by like mocking onlookers. Cottage windows blinked in the night and disappeared. The wind blew raw from the east, and there were no stars nor moon. But I heard only the thudding of our horses' hoofs in flying companionship, and knew only that the mountains ahead of us held a brief safety.

TO BE CONTINUED.

## Miscellaneous Reading.

### EXECUTION OF AN ELEPHANT.

How a Man-Killer Was Put to Death in New York Last Sunday.

Dick, the man-killing elephant of the Adam For-pugh & Sells Bros' circus herd, was executed by strangulation in the basement of Madison Square Garden Sunday morning. Two hundred men pulled ropes looped about the great elephant's neck and he was choked to death. The sight was an unusual one and even the herd of elephants that witnessed the execution exhibited signs of horror at the work.

Dick was known as a bad elephant. He killed several men in his time and was ferocious in disposition. He would not even allow his keeper to approach him, and made repeated efforts to kill anyone who went near him. When the show was ready to leave the garden Saturday night, Dick could not be moved, as he would not permit anyone to unchain him, and it was decided to put him to death. Chief Keeper Starr, of the elephant herd, was instructed to have the beast killed, and he secured great ropes and 200 men to do the work.

"Bill" Campbell, the keeper of Dick, pleaded for the life of his charge; but to no avail, as the circus people had determined to kill the dangerous elephant.

Starr, very joyful, went about his preparations for the execution. He employed all the circus men who could be spared from moving the show; he called on men from the streets, picking out sturdy ones, who were glad enough to work to see an elephant die. He rigged, between rings in the floor and iron pillars, two blocks and tackles, one on either side of Dick, who, swaying his body and pulling his chains, looked on suspiciously.

"Shall we take away the herd, sir?" asked a keeper.

"Leave 'em alone; it'll do 'em good," answered Starr, bluntly.

Then Starr got an inch hawser, of sufficient length for his safety, and with a keeper at the other end of the rope, tossed it over Dick's head. It was easy then to tie the rope at the ends in a loop until it was tight around Dick's neck with the twist in the rope under his throat. Just as a man makes the first loop in a cravat he is tying and pulls it taut.

The ends of Dick's cravat were fastened to the tackle. Two hundred men grasped each tackle.

"Are you all ready?" asked Starr.

"Bill" Campbell walked around the end of the wall to the other side, so that the bricks and mortar hid Dick from him.

"All ready," chorused the men on the tackles.

"Pull away, then!" yelled Starr, and he cheerfully cursed them.

Grunting in unison, some crying "Heave ho!" the 400 pulled together on the tackles; poor, murderous Dick's cravat tightened uncomfortably.

He raised his trunk and emitted a loud, angry roar. If he knew he was about to die, there was no note of repentance in it.

At the sound a remarkable thing happened. All the other elephants turned their heads away from Dick. To look away from him, of course, the elephants on his right had to turn their heads to the left, and that is just what they did. And that is just what they did. And all the elephants pulled as hard as they could at the creaking chains that held them to the rings in the floor; some of the beasts swung their trunks here and there, some trumpeted shrilly, in a very different note from Dick's, a note of fear.

It was terrifying to them that the ropes; it seemed to them that the herd would stampede. But the keepers ran among them, shouting at them, prodding them with goads, reassuring them, quieting them.

"Pull away," yelled Starr.

The hawser around Dick's neck grew tighter, tighter. He trumpeted again, even more loudly. He kept flapping his ears, his body swayed more and more. While he could not change the position of his legs, he must have been exerting every ounce of his tremendous power, for one of his chains—no one could tell which—snapped loudly. The feelings of the men on the tackles were almost as tense as the ropes themselves.

When the chain snapped, half the men jumped, scared; the ropes were perceptibly relaxed.

"Pull!" yelled Starr, and the air was blue with his oaths.

And pull they did. Dick emitted one more frightful blast—a defiance—his last. Then he pitched forward. His chains held him tottering for an instant. He rolled over on his right side.

"Pull!" shouted Starr yet once more. The big rope was almost hidden in the folds of Dick's thick hide. It was tight around his windpipe; it was choking him to death. His ears flopped more and more feebly, his legs wobbled like pillars in an earthquake, his side heaved slower, slower, more slowly as he breathed more and more laboriously, then was still.

The 400 stood holding taut the straining rope for perhaps a minute more.

"Slacken up there," Starr ordered. Murderous, man-killing Dick was dead—poor brute. He had paid the penalty of his crimes, and his execution will surely have, what all sacrifices to the law are intended to have, a deterrent effect.

trying. The elephants near Twenty-sixth street was taken up the incline to that street, and the elephants nearer Twenty-seventh street, up that incline.

Sorrowing "Bill" Campbell came from behind the wall, walked up to Dick and patted his corrugated, dusty side. Then silently Campbell took the chains from the beast he had tried so hard to save. Men who have long been with the circus went to Dick and patted his side. One said: "Good-bye, Old Dick." Another: "We're going to Baltimore, Dick, but you're not going. You were bad, you heggar, but!"—and he said no more. All these men sympathized with Campbell, who only remarked, and with much feeling:

"I want a drink and I'm going to get it."

In about 25 minutes Dick's body grew cold, first around the ankles—if an elephant has ankles. Some unfeeling men, who had been brought in from the street, cut notches of flesh from Dick's ears and carried them off as souvenirs.

With the block and tackle on the Twenty-seventh street side Dick's body was dragged near the foot of that incline.

GREAT ENGINEERING WORK OF THE AGE

Rich Resources Which Will Be Opened Up by the Trans-Siberian Railroad.

Scientific American.

In point of magnitude and cost, the Trans-Siberian railroad is certainly the greatest engineering work of the age. According to figures furnished by the Russian Imperial Ministry of Ways of Communication, the total cost of the railway will be \$500,000,000, of which about \$295,000,000 has been already expended. It is considered that this lavish outlay is justified by the fact that the work, when completed, will make available the resources of the country whose wealth has never been told.

According to the official statistics, Siberia has a total area of 5,333,333 square miles. It is liberally watered by some of the finest rivers in the world. The total area of land that is capable of agricultural development is about 20,000 square miles, and the soil of these sections consists of a deep layer of black loam. A total of about 16,500 acres of land has already been colonized, and the government is now parceling out the prairies through which the line runs, with the confident expectation that Siberia will become one of the most powerful competitors in the world's supply of wheat.

For the immediate future it is expected that the new settlers will devote themselves chiefly to cattle raising, which, so far, has proved to be profitable. It seems that the virgin forests of Siberia have been cut down in the same ruthless and wasteful manner that characterized the denudation of our own forest lands; nevertheless, it is estimated that there still remains about 80,000 square miles of valuable pine and fir timber.

The official estimate of the mineral wealth of Siberia is remarkable reading, for it would indicate that this mysterious country is, minerally speaking, one of the richest in the world. North of the Aral sea and mountains the land is rich in lead, silver, copper and gold. Several ranges of the Altai mountains are known to be rich in iron, copper ore, and minor precious stones, while the varieties of porphyry and jaspers, known by the name of this range, have an established reputation. Extensive deposits of coal are found in the Kusnetz region. It seems that in far eastern Siberia the mountain ranges are equally rich in silver, copper, iron, coal and graphite, while the gold fields of eastern Siberia are known to be particularly promising. Elsewhere, coal and naphtha have been developed, while the coast line of eastern Siberia has yielded good results to the gold washers.

WHERE IS CAPE NOME?—Five men were discussing the Alaskan gold fields in the Hoffman House corridor yesterday, and they all began to talk learnedly about Cape Nome. Four of them knew all about the cape. Two of