

THE MAGIC CARPET MAGAZINE




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EVERY STORY COMPLETE—NO SERIALS!

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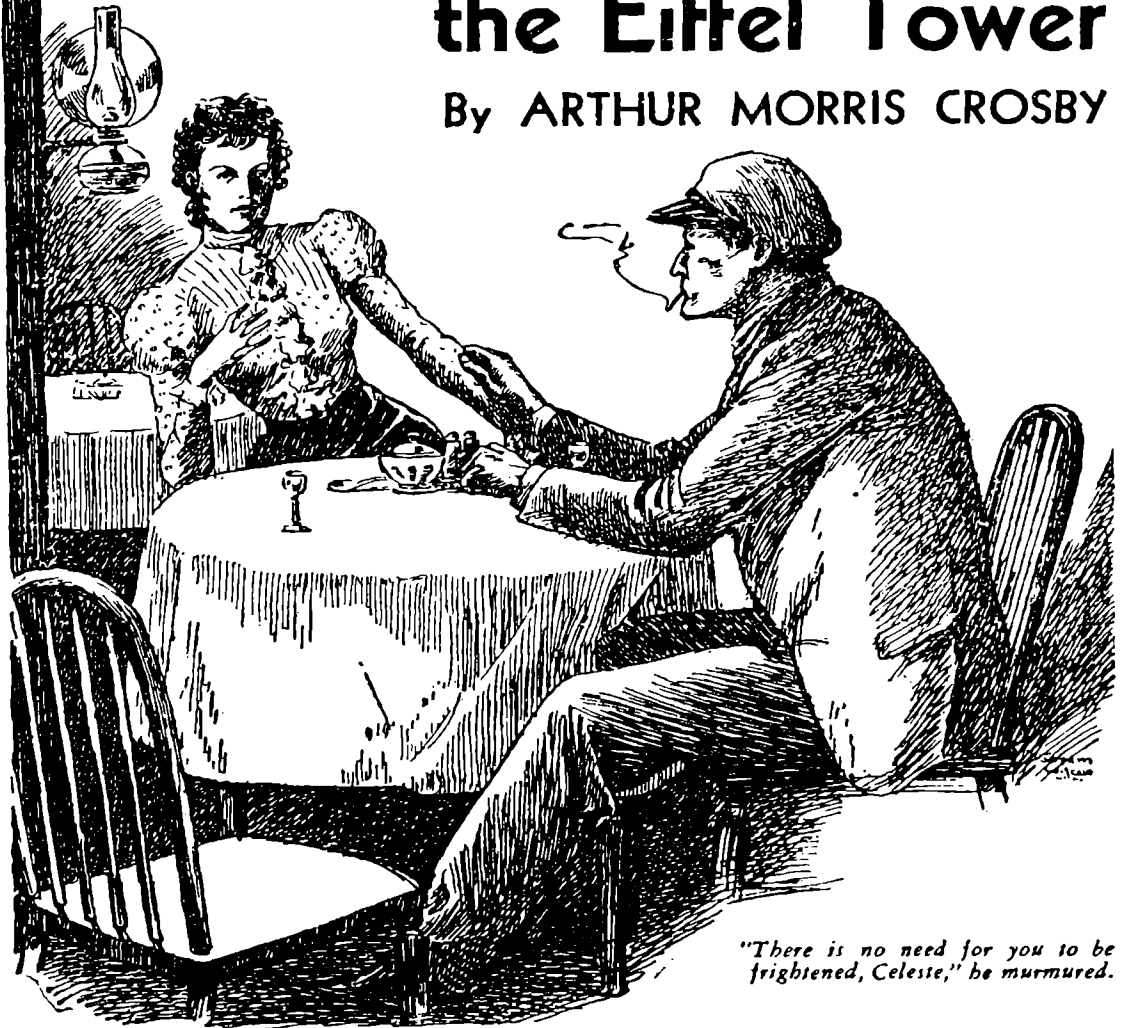
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The Little Affair of the Eiffel Tower

By ARTHUR MORRIS CROSBY



"There is no need for you to be frightened, Celeste," he murmured.

Henri the Fox scorned to use the gross means of hired assassins, but his methods were just as effective—a tale of the Paris underworld

HENRI RENARD leaned his trim figure against the base of the Arc de Triomphe and reflected that it was of a certainty a glorious spring day; that, indeed, it was a perfect day for a murder.

Now, with some people, murder is a sordid sort of business, to be done only at night, or on gloomy, dismal days. Not so, however, with Monsieur Henri Renard. Had it not truly been said of him,

and that by none other than Monsieur le Prefet himself, that he was an artist, a connoisseur, an expert? Not for him to descend to such gross means as knives, or pistols, or hired assassins. Besides, what was there to gain by removing from one's path an undesirable, if one were not to be permitted to enjoy such hard-won surcease? *Peste!* There were little point in baking a cake if one could not eat it.

The sentiment pleased Henri.

He removed a cigarette from his lips and allowed himself a thoughtful smile, watching the cloud of smoke spiral up and up against the blue roof of the sky until a vagrant wind caught it and twisted it into nothingness. "Pouf!" said Henri to himself. "Just like that, or"—he snapped his fingers—"perhaps like this. At any rate, very sudden and—*mon Dieu!*—very complete."

He replaced the cigarette between his lips, letting it droop so that the glowing end produced a comfortable feeling of warmth at the point of the chin, which, in Henri's case, was very sharp and protruding. The day was in April, and though sunny, yet nourished a chill that had been bequeathed by a late winter. Any extraneous heat, however slight, was welcome.

He turned so that the rising sun (for the hour was that when fashionable Paris still lingers over its breakfast coffee and in consequence Monsieur Renard's business day was yet to begin) might warm his back, and thrust his long, sensitive fingers deep into the pockets of his blue breeches. Thus he remained, the picture of lazy grace, eyes half closed, his cigarette kept alive by a scarcely perceptible movement of his cheeks, for five minutes. At the end of that time, his cigarette had burned nearly to his nether lip. Henri stirred as a man might who has been dozing and cast an appraising glance down his narrow nose. Apparently satisfied that there was nothing to salvage, he shrugged his shoulders, opened his mouth, and the stump of cigarette fell to the pavement. Henri contemplated it a moment, then crushed it with his heel. "So," he muttered, "everything comes to an end, even the smallest of pleasures. It is a melancholy world."

He pried himself loose from the comfortable support of the massive stone

blocks and began to take a lively interest in the stream of life now beginning to pass under the arch. His quick glance fell upon a short, pompous figure of a man swinging along the sidewalk toward him, thumping the pavement with a cane, his overcoat and jacket open to the breeze. Across the bay-window of a stomach stretched a heavy gold chain. Henri smiled. "It is truly an invitation," he said; and sauntered toward the stranger.

Abreast of him, Henri suddenly twisted, with a sharp cry of pain, and lurched into the arms of the other, instinctively raised to receive him.

"Ah—pardon, *m'sieur!*" gasped Henri, wincing, and still holding fast to the shoulders of the short gentleman. "A thousand pardons! It is my ankle—this beast of a sidewalk——" He pointed to where the cement had cracked, leaving a raised edge.

The gentleman was solicitous.

With much puffing, he steadied Henri, who groaned and grunted in the most alarming manner, holding the gentleman quite fast, as in a lover's embrace.

"It is indeed reprehensible—the sidewalk," agreed the pompous man, recovering some of his pomposity and trying to free himself from Henri's embrace. "But your ankle—you should do something." With an effort he pushed Henri up straight and kept him away with a pudgy arm.

Henri's smile was a benediction. "It is only occasionally, *m'sieur*, that it so atrociously fails me. But then, such a mortification! I have seriously incommoded you—again, a thousand pardons." He touched his cap and hobbled off. Passing behind a parked cab, he hurried across the street, his ankle miraculously healed, and down a side-street. At the corner, he paused to glance affectionately at the gold watch and chain which he drew from

his pocket. "The gentleman," he mused, "has most excellent taste. Nor should I, perhaps, being so much in his debt, censure him for his abominable breeding in vulgarly displaying it. The War, alas! has changed so much." Shaking his head, he slipped the watch back into his pocket and strode rapidly along.

EMERGING on the Boulevard de Courcelles, he followed the crowd to the Place de Clichy, stopped to purchase a copy of *Le Temps* from a wounded veteran, and then passed into that labyrinth of streets and alleys that lies, dismal and forbidding, at the foot of Montmartre.

Arrived at length before the door of a delicatessen, he pushed it open and entered the smoky interior. An old crone, sitting at a counter, half concealed behind swaying strings of sausages, welcomed him with a grunt.

"*Sacré*," said Henri, holding his nose. "What an abominable odor of everything indecent! Where is your saint of a husband?"

Before the old woman could reply, dingy curtains at the back of the shop parted and a leonine figure emerged.

Henri greeted it with his unsurpassed smile.

"I have brought you, papa," he said jovially, "a little trinket, for which I will accept the truly insignificant sum of five thousand francs." He laid the watch and chain on the counter.

The old woman's eyes lighted with an avaricious gleam. The old man said nothing, but took up the watch in talon-like hands and minutely inspected it. Snapping the lids shut, he growled, "It is not without value—I will give you one thousand francs."

Henri's face darkened. "Old fool," he said in a low voice, "the watch and chain are worth not a sou less than ten thousand francs. You know better than to trifle

with me. The nose of the police is acute. It needs but to be given the scent."

The old man muttered ferociously into his thicket of beard. "It is nothing less than robbery," he lamented.

Henri shrugged. "You will not be disappointed," he observed. "I am not one of your worst customers, eh, *maman*?" He tweaked the old woman on the cheek. She grinned up at him with toothless gums. Meanwhile, slyly, the old fellow had reached for the jewelry.

Henri's quick eye forestalled him. He swept the watch into his pocket.

The old man's clumsy effort to get possession amused him. He threw back his head and laughed loudly. "Ah," he admonished, shaking his finger, "the lion is too slow for the fox, *mon ancien*. Had I not business of great importance on hand, I should find means of punishing that greediness. Come—five thousand francs! I have not the time to waste, bandying words with you."

Mumbling strange imprecations, the old man disappeared into the dim recesses of his shop, to reappear presently with a wallet. From this he thumbed out fifty one-hundred franc notes, Henri counting them aloud with him. Simultaneously they exchanged notes for watch and chain. Henri counted the notes again and stuffed them casually into a pocket of his trousers. At the door, he turned. "It interests me to wonder what you do with all your money, *mon papa*," he said pleasantly.

"It is no business of yours!" roared the old man. "Begone!" he made a fierce gesture toward a long, vicious-looking meat-knife. Henri laughed. With a graceful bow to the old hag, he beat a quick exit.

OUTSIDE he followed the dingy street, past grimy, leering houses, up the slope of Montmartre. There, in the very

shadow of the beautiful church which surmounts, as an angel of light the Valley of Darkness, this grisly and romantic eminence, he pushed his way between swinging doors into a gaudy café. The air was fragrant with an aroma compounded of coffee, cigarettes, beer, and cognac. Even at this still comparatively early hour, the place was nearly filled. Henri cast a rapid glance about him. "Ah, *les touristes*," he muttered under his breath, and puffed out his cheeks contemptuously.

He went to a far corner and sat down at a single table. He lit a cigarette and surveyed the scene. Mingled with the sight-seers was an occasional member of the artists' set, for whom Henri had almost as great disdain. He took a piece of paper from a pocket of his jacket and with a stub of a pencil wrote on it. Folding the paper, he wrote again. Then he strolled over to a table near by, where sat a pallid youth in a vivid green smock.

Henri tapped him on the shoulder. "Will you deliver this, *mon enfant*, at the address I have marked? It is only round the corner."

He put a gold piece, than which nothing is rarer in France since the War, in the youth's palm. The boy stammered in his astonishment. "It is my way of giving thanks to Our Good Lady," murmured Henri piously. The gold had been a part of the chimney-hoarding of that queer old Comtesse Gaillard, whose man-of-all-work Henri had once been and who had so suddenly deceased this life during an attack of ptomaine poisoning from eating canned peas. (So had said the doctors. And correctly. But they did not know, and Henri never saw fit to tell them, that he had instructed the old lady to boil the peas in the opened tin.) That chimney-hoarding Henri himself hoarded and resorted to only on festive occasions. So

now he folded the young man's limp fingers over the coin and added, "Hurry!"

Still dazed, the young man departed.

Henri sighed and returned to his table. "And I suppose," he mused, "the poor fellow really expects to become another Corot."

A waiter, smirking, shuffled to the table. "Two glasses of benedictine," said Henri, without looking up. When they came, he sat slightly bent forward, watching the door, his slender, pickpocket's fingers twirling one glass by its stem, round and round. . . .

As she paused in the doorway, it was plain to be seen for whom Henri waited. Tall she was, and willowy, with small, exact features and jet-black hair that matched her eyes. Watching her, Henri smiled and, if so fastidious a man could be guilty of so animal-like an act, almost it might be said that he licked his chops.

When the girl located him through the fog of tobacco smoke, she started and the powdered white of her cheeks seemed to grow a little more white. Steadying herself with an obvious effort, she walked slowly toward him.

Henri was already on his feet, bowing her with studied grace to a chair which he had moved over from an adjacent table. The girl slipped into it, rather than sat down, and regarded him with vague, troubled eyes, as he took the chair opposite.

"Célcste," murmured Henri, "you are more beautiful than when I went away." His gaze fell ardently on the perfect curve of her neck and throat. "One would most certainly believe that you were of the Ballet at the Opera, instead of furnishing entertainment to the ribald habitués of Pierre's. It is that which disturbs me."

"I didn't know that you had returned," she said in a low voice.

"No?"

Henri smiled, pushing one of the cordial glasses toward her. She took it mechanically, her dark eyes still intent on his lean features. Henri must have seen that she was in desperate fear; for he leaned forward and patted her hand. "There is no need for you to be frightened, Céleste, my angel," he murmured. "Should you not rather rejoice that your Henri is back?"

"They told me," she went on in a dull voice, "that you were in prison at Lyons—sentenced for ten years."

"It was, alas, too true. But surely, my dove, you could not expect your Henri to remain long in such provincial surroundings. *Ma foi!* It was not to be endured. Not with Paris calling—and you." He squeezed her hand and, for an instant, she averted her head. Then, with a quick movement, she faced him squarely. "Why have you sent for me?" she demanded. There was a flash of bravado in her manner.

"Because," he answered her evenly, over the rim of his glass, "I have heard stories, my dear, that have set me wondering; stories that have persuaded me that the memory of Henri Renard is less potent than his presence."

"You could not have expected me to become a nun," she said defiantly.

"A nun? But no, my sweet." Henri's tone was as smooth as the liqueur which passed so smoothly down his throat. "But no. Of a certainty one could not charge you with leanings toward the devout life. Yet, a measure of—what shall I say, my priceless one? Fidelity? No, that is perhaps too strong a word. Rather let us say loyalty. Yes, of loyalty to a memory. Because it can never be said of me, my beloved, that I treated you in any way ill—is it not so?" The sneer that twisted his narrow lips belied the lingering tenderness in his voice.

The girl shuddered. "No," she breathed, "I had nothing to complain of."

"And yet, so soon after my civil decease, you permit the company of that overgrown baboon of a Pierre's son!"

"How did you know?" the girl flung at him.

Henri's eyes became little slits. A bit of color tinged his sallow cheeks. "Ah," he whispered. "Then it is so. . . . I was not quite certain."

The girl perceived her blunder. She bit her lips, flinging her head back recklessly.

"Well, what of it?" she cried. "You had gone—for all I knew you were dead. He was kind—I was lonely. I am not made of stone, God knows." Her lip was quivering. Suddenly she flung her head down on her arms, on the table-top, and unuttered sobs shook her.

Renard watched her silently. A few persons at tables near by regarded the couple curiously a moment and then became interested again in whatever had interested them before. Scenes like this were not uncommon in Montmartre.

Henri took out a cigarette from a beautifully jewelled case and lit it, coolly releasing a huge cloud of smoke toward the ceiling. When a woman weeps, there is nothing to do but wait.

PRESENTLY, the spasmodic movement of the girl's shoulders ceased. She raised her head and looked at him with eyes red, but without a trace of a tear. "You are a beast," she said, pouting, and thrusting back her hair from her forehead.

"That may be," agreed Henri, pleasantly conscious of the subtle change in her attitude.

"Well, what are you going to do?" the girl demanded.

He spread out his palms in a gesture

of complaisance. "Invite your François to lunch."

She stared at him, incredulous.

He laughed at her expression of blank disbelief. The rows of even white teeth, which were his one vanity, gleamed even in that poor light.

"But why not?" he said. "Surely, do I not owe him a debt? I can see that he has taken good care of my Céleste—you were not so plump when I went away." He leaned over and pinched her arm.

"You can not mean him any good," she said, ignoring the act.

"Why should I wish him evil? Have I not said that I am in his debt?"

"You will not harm him?"

"*Peste!*" said Henri, chuckling. "That is worthy of a place in *Le Rire*. Do you know how much I weigh? Not over forty kilograms. And that baboon of yours—*ma foi!* he is a gorilla. He can not weigh less than a hundred. What could I do to him?"

"I do not know—I only know that you are a devil."

Henri's enormous good humor vented itself in a horse-laugh. "A devil, eh? First it's a beast, and now it's a devil." He called for two more glasses of benedictine, sprawling happily in his chair, hands in his pockets, his eyes bright and mocking. Beast and devil he undoubtedly was, although opinions sometimes differ in these matters. But that he was a handsome rascal, there was no denying; and Céleste smiled.

Henri smiled back and flashed the cigarette case at her.

"Would you like it, rose of my heart?" he queried. "I got it for you. It belonged to a *nouvelle riche* from Idaho. I met her at Cannes—in the Casino. Little pig—how she squealed when I grabbed it from her!" He shoved the bauble across the table.

Céleste eyed it. A new gleam came into her eyes, as she turned it over and over.

"It is a pretty trifle," added Henri, airily. "It will go well with the wrist-watch I have selected for you at Cartier's."

"Cartier's!" The girl looked at him hungrily, her cheeks flushed.

"But yes, my angel. Your baboon has, after all, only a jungle taste." He pointed to a cheap watch held to her slender wrist by a tawdry bit of ribbon. "Could I endure that my Céleste's charms should be so outraged? It is not to be thought of! The watch I mention," he blithely lied, "I saw today in the window. I immediately priced it and left a deposit of a thousand francs as an option. I desired time to look about; but I confess that I have not found a better, nor one so nearly matching my Céleste's beauty."

The girl's face was radiant. With feline contentment, she curved her lithe body toward him. It could never be said of Henri Renard that he did not know his women. He stroked her white arm; then, with a swift movement, leaned forward and kissed her on the lips.

She pulled away. A shadow crossed her face. "You do not blame me?" she asked anxiously.

"My angel—I could not blame you did you consort with the Devil himself. Beauty like yours is above the censure of earth-born mortals."

She smiled at his extravagance, as she had always—ever since the day when he had flung, one by one, all his apprentice's paintings into the charcoal burner and had moved his belongings, such as they were, to her cozy two-room apartment overlooking the twin towers of Notre Dame. Art for him, from that time on, had meant simply skill in extracting purses from the pockets of their owners

and keeping out of the clutches of the police. That he had failed in the one affair at Lyons was due not to any remissness on his part, but to an ironic fate which had put a banana peel under his foot at the precise moment when he was about to dissolve into the crowd. The opulent burgher who had unwittingly delivered up his watch had at the same instant discovered his loss—the rest had followed as a simple matter of course.

"But François——" she persisted. "After all, he was good to me in his way."

Henri waved aside the suggestion contained in her tone. The gesture was one of a superb magnanimity, of Christian forbearance and tolerance.

Céleste smiled and coiled herself, more completely cat-like.

Henri, watching her with a quicker beating of his heart, realized that, like a cat, she was entirely faithless. A saucer of milk—to continue the metaphor—and she was entirely happy.

He sighed and shrugged his shoulders. There were times, of which this was one, when he considered how pleasant it would be to have a girl who was absolutely dependable. But he thrust this weakness from him. *Peste!* Were not such women invariably dull and uninteresting? And where would he find such beauty as Céleste's?

He beckoned to the waiter and gave him money to cover the bill and a generous *pourboire*. Then he patted Céleste's hand and helped her out of her seat. "It is time," he murmured, pulling her arm through his, "that I go to meet that baboon of a François—he will soon be coming from work. And you, my angel—you will wait for me after your first dance at Pierre's? I have a presentiment of a sort that Pierre will not want you to dance

tonight." He squeezed her arm and she flashed him a look that made him dizzy.

On the sidewalk, outside the café, he left her, turning at the corner to blow her a kiss and receive one in return. A raw-boned English woman, just dismounted from a sight-seeing bus, exclaimed, "How charming—what atmosphere!" and gazed at him through a lorgnette. Henri made her a grimace under the vizor of his cap and reflected that, at another time, he might have inspected the contents of her bulging handbag. . . .

ON THE way down the slopes of Montmartre, he stopped at a pawnshop and asked the broker to show him ladies' wrist-watches. "And none of your tricks," he added, scowling.

"But no," protested the proprietor with dignity. He was a wizened, misshapen creature and his attempt at dignity was so comical that it put Henri immediately in good humor.

After some haggling, he selected a dainty Swiss creation with a chased platinum case that might have belonged to some comtesse impoverished by the War, priced as a special concession at fifteen hundred francs. Henri counted out the notes and the broker fitted a ribbon to the watch and handed it over.

"And now, *mon brave*," said Henri, "I desire a box of Monsieur Cartier's to hold fittingly this treasure."

The pawnbroker smiled indulgently. "A fresh lot came in this morning," he said. Grunting with the effort of reaching up on a shelf, he produced a plush-lined case bearing the counterfeit device of the famous jeweller in the Rue de la Paix. The watch lay resplendent in its chaste nest. Henri was satisfied. Humming a gay tune of the gutters, he swung on down toward the river.

Arrived at length at the Pont D'Iéna, he leaned on the balustrade and gazed at the spidery beams and spans of the Eiffel Tower.

A stout citizen edged close to him. "It is to me," the stranger confided, "ever a mystery how those fellows can keep their balance." He pointed to several black objects walking along the steel beams. "Every day since they have started to make repairs on the Tower, I have come here to watch. *Ma foi!* How they crawl about! It gives one the vertigo merely to watch them." The plump stranger shivered.

Henri regarded the little citizen amusedly. The tail of his coat bulged with significance, and Henri, one eye cocked at the top of the Tower, swayed toward the fat rump. Then he caught himself up sharply—he could not afford now to have an accident. "You have the great right," he agreed pleasantly, sighing with extreme reluctance at having to pass up so golden an opportunity. "But—*chacun à son gout.*" He waved his hand and crossed out of sight behind a string of market wagons homeward-bound.

HE SWUNG along the embankment until he reached the great sprawling base of the Eiffel Tower. Here he paused and gazed up into the maze of steel. Workmen were descending; the hour was nearly twelve. As they reached the ground, a ridiculously tiny whistle blew from nowhere in particular and the men, laughing and gesticulating, hurried toward a work-shanty that lay in the mottled shadows of the amazing structure. One of them topped his fellows as the Tower itself tops Paris. To him Henri stepped with quick silence, and tapped him on the shoulder. The giant, a youth of some twenty-five summers and

a head of thick, straw-colored hair, turned and his jaw fell. "I—I thought," he stammered and broke off, his face a brick red, though whether from embarrassment or anger, Henri could not then precisely determine.

"You thought," Henri finished for him, flashing all his teeth in the sunlight, "that I was safe at Lyons for at least ten years. . . . But you should know, my friend, that I never stay where I am not genuinely welcome. It is inexpressibly bad manners."

The young giant hitched about awkwardly. Henri Renard's French—the polite French of the boulevardiers—disturbed him. "What do you want of me?" he growled, rolling down the sleeves of his shirt over arms that were bigger than Henri's thighs. The splendid muscles played back and forth like the sinews of a percheron.

The gesture was not lost on Henri, but he pretended not to notice it.

"François," he said affably, "I have come to take you to lunch and to thank you."

The young giant threw back his head and his roaring laughter echoed among the girders.

"That's good!" he cried. (Henri winced at the gross accent of the slums.) "That's good! By Christ! I'll accept any man's invitation to lunch and ask no questions. But what have you to thank me for?" He glowered down at Henri, diminutive in comparison.

"Why"—Henri spread his palms—"for taking such good care of Céleste—what else?"

"Look here!" cried François, gripping Henri by the arm so that it hurt—Renard carried the black bruise for days—"Be careful what you say! You deserted her—I was her friend. . . . Have a care!"

The flush was most certainly of anger

now, thought Henri, and added to himself, "One may do so much with an inflammable nature." Aloud, he said, "Pouf! my François—do I not know? It is a debt of gratitude I owe you—I acknowledge it freely. I would repay it."

The giant eyed him dubiously. "Céleste won't go back to you," he said defiantly. "She told me she was through with you, dead or alive."

Henri shrugged. "Dead—yes, of a certainty. But alive"—he grimaced—"well, one can not blame her . . . and you have such an engaging personality."

"Eh?" grunted François, struggling to stretch a jacket over his taurine shoulders.

Henri laughed merrily.

"Look you, M'sieur Renard," rumbled François menacingly, "I will go with you to lunch, because I want to talk, away from the ears and eyes of these comrades"—he nodded toward his fellow-workmen who were clustered in a group curiously watching the oddly assorted couple—"but I don't like your laugh."

"The intensity of your dislikes is equalled only by your frankness in expressing them," replied Henri cordially. "Unfortunately, it is my nature to be gay—and the gay man necessarily laughs. I can not change my nature."

He took François by the arm and they walked along the river-edge until they came to one of those tiny cafés that adorn the sidewalks of Paris. Two tables stood on the sidewalk under a huge green umbrella much faded by unrelieved exposure to sun and rain. They sat down at one of the tables and the proprietor, a swarthy Gascon, attended upon them. Henri ordered chicken livers with truffles, and a bottle of green chartreuse.

FOR several minutes they ate in silence. Henri, watching his companion through the fringes of his eyelashes, could see that his brain was ponderously work-

ing on his problem. At length the giant laid down his knife—his fork he had not touched—and scowled.

"I have decided," he said heavily, fumbling for the right words, "that I can't let you see Céleste. You are through—it is final."

The sudden wave of wrath that swept him at the words, Henri dissembled under the most naïve of smiles. He raised his hands and let them drop in a gesture of compliance. "I must indeed," he said, "have forfeited all my claims. Besides, how could Henri Renard hope to compete with François Martaud, the champion strong man of Mo'martre? I am resigned." He smiled enigmatically into his glass.

"I don't trust you," went on François. "You must leave Paris."

"Even that can be arranged," said Henri urbanely.

The giant seemed baffled by this ready acquiescence. "You must leave Paris at once," he pursued doggedly.

"Tut," chided Henri, with some impatience. "Do not distress yourself. Have I not seen how the wind blows? When a lady's ardor cools, it is less acceptable than yesterday's soup. I come not to bury Cæsar—but, faugh! why do I cast pearls? It disturbs me that I must leave Céleste in your tender care . . . but not in the sense you think."

François looked at him with a frown. "What do you mean?"

"Only this," said Henri coolly: "It is a perilous trade you ply—if I go away and, ah, anything happens to you, *mon brave*, what becomes then of the gentle Céleste?"

"Bah!" said François. He tossed off his glass and reached for the bottle. "Nothing can happen to me," he boasted. "There isn't a cat in all Paris more sure-footed."

"Even cats fall—sometimes. And here is a paragraph concerning a gentleman of your profession, doubtless also of experience, who fell from one of the Loire bridges." Henri tapped his newspaper. "What a splash he must have made!"

"*Diab!e!* Are you trying to frighten me?"

Henri refilled the cordial glasses and drew a long sip before replying.

"Frighten you?" he repeated. "No. But I can not escape anxiety—with Céleste's interests so much at stake. . . . Tell me," he said suddenly, "don't you ever consider your danger? Haven't you ever reflected, as you walk your airy beams, what one single misstep can mean?"

"No!" cried François.

"Have you never experienced fear?"

"Fear!" burst out François, with a strident laugh. "I don't know the word!"

A smile flickered across Henri's face. "But this fear," he pursued evenly, "it is not the ordinary fear that you and I have sometimes known. It is something far different. It is like the terror which sometimes comes in the blackness of night—when you suddenly awake seized with a nameless dread."

"I say, you can't frighten me!" cried François, with a searing oath.

"No, no, my friend," said Henri somberly, "it is not my intention. But I can't help thinking—it is a frightful thing to fall from a great height. And I have read that, once the structural-steel worker knows fear, real fear, he is doomed . . . doomed, I say."

The word was like the sudden thrust of a knife. It came, sharp, tense, malignant, from Henri's half-closed lips. It seemed to cut into the mind and soul of the young giant opposite him. For François sat there staring, staring with eyes

red and watery, eyes in which gleamed for the first time a look of horror.

Henri watched him an instant. Then he leaned forward, and when he spoke, his words were sharp, as though plucked from a violin string.

"You fool!" he said, his voice low and tense. "Can you not see the danger that lurks at every step? Ah, I can see you walking your high beams! Of a sudden, you become conscious of your height. You are afraid to look down. But you can not help yourself! Something grips you, like a cold hand at your throat. You begin to tremble violently. A great nausea seizes you. If only you could hold on to something for an instant—until this spell passes! But there is nothing—nothing—only that slender walk at your feet. Ah, now truly do you know fear—*fear*, I say! The sweat pours out all over you! You become suddenly dizzy! The Tower reels! You sway—you stagger—you clutch frantically at the air! . . . And—ah——"

Henri let his glass, which he had been gradually pushing to the edge of the table, fall to the pavement. The silvery tinkle, as it shattered into a thousand pieces, struck the silence of the little café like the iron clanging of the gates of Death.

Something must have snapped in the brain of the giant. He was on his feet, his face blanched, his huge form shaking.

"You—you hell-hound!" he cried. A torrent of unspeakable words poured from his twitching lips. He flung his glass at Henri's head and staggered away in the direction of the Tower. Henri shrugged and with his delicate fingers flicked away the few drops which he had been unable to dodge.

The proprietor appeared.

"Your friend," he said, his voluble hands expressing his surprize. "I saw him leave—he is perhaps ill?"

"No," said Henri, his face all smiles

again, "my friend is not ill. He is very much frightened. I told him a story—he is such a child—and it frightened him. He has too vivid an imagination. Also, I fear, he is a little bit drunk. I must apologize for his clumsiness in knocking off the glasses."

"Ah, the chartreuse," said the Gascon proudly, "it is strong. The glasses—no matter." With his foot he scraped the shattered remnants under the table.

"It is delicious," breathed Henri, his eyes fixed dreamily on the clustered girders of the Tower, where already black objects were crawling like ants. "It is nectar—you will please to bring me a litre. I shall remain here for a while."

"A litre!" The proprietor stared spell-bound in admiration and disbelief. Then, rolling his eyes and shaking his head, he disappeared within the darkness of his shop, to reappear presently with a bottle, from which he carefully wiped away the dust of ages, and a fresh glass. "My son," he said, placing bottle and glass tenderly on the table in front of Henri, "if you drink all of this——"

"*When* I have drunk all of this," corrected Henri, "I shall feel like Lohengrin—but perhaps you do not keep up on the Opera."

"No, no—I have no time for such vanities."

"It is a pity," said Henri, narrowly watching the translucent liquid as it flowed smoothly into the glass. "The Opera is an education." He twisted the cork into the bottle and set it upon the table. "My friend," he smiled at the proprietor, "I should like to be left alone—to my meditations."

"But, of course!" The proprietor withdrew, bowing and scratching his head. From time to time he peered out through the narrow door at this odd customer. Henri continued to sit at the little table, sipping his chartreuse and gazing, in that dreamy way, at the Eiffel Tower. . . .

THE afternoon wore on; the shadows lengthened. Still he sat there.

Suddenly he stiffened to attention! His dark eyes flashed. His lips parted. . . .

Down the breeze had come a harsh cry—a cry of terror. There was a commotion at the foot of the Tower. Men went running by.

The little Gascon himself dashed up, hatless and breathless, a market-basket, swaying ludicrously on his arm, threatening to strew the sidewalk with onions and artichokes.

"I was on my way back from the provisioner's," he gasped; and it occurred to Henri to wonder why he had not seen him go. "It is your friend—the big young man who was here. . . . He fell from the second landing—my God, such a sight!" The little proprietor was trembling all over.

Henri drained the last drop of chartreuse.

"It is the will of God," he said piously. "We must bear these shocks with fortitude." He wiped his lips with a dainty linen handkerchief. He flung a fistful of notes on the table. "Take it all, my good man," he said with a flourish. "Lohengrin"—and looking at him, one would not have suspected the blasphemy—"Lohengrin goes now to greet Elsa!"

