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The REVENGE of PHILIPPE AUGUSTE*

By HASAN VOKINE
and HENRI DE CROUET

WHY do I write this? I suppose it is because we lonely souls must have someone in whom to confide, and so we have discovered a way of confiding in ourselves.

When I was but seven years old, my brother Henri, in a fit of childish temper, caused me to fall from a tree in which we both had climbed. The fall crippled me, not only in a physical sense but in a mental one also. All my fond dreams, all the bright horizon of childhood's ambition, all my

hopes, everything became, that day, shattered and ruined.

If I have absorbed a deep hatred of the human race, not on me but on my brother be the blame. At that moment a passion for revenge was kindled, and it has long been smoldering in me. However, imbued with a cunning which only a passion bordering on insanity gives to one, I smiled through it all, told everyone I bore my brother no grudge, and in return was called by all, "brave, cheerful little invalid."

My brother Henri was also bright, and soon it was time for him to go to college at the University of Paris. After graduation he became a lawyer

*Fragments culled from the journal of one Philippe Auguste de Margerac, son of Baron Henri Mauret de Margerac of Ville Niots.

and acquired a moderate fame in the capital.

As for me, the long years of pain, consciousness of my infirmities and sorrow at my miserable position only served to increase my longing for revenge. I was now able to get up from my bed and hobble about the great expanses of the château. I made use of this privilege to delve into a great deal of old reading matter and books of a morbid sort.

About this time our venerable father died, leaving us only the château and the honor of his name. My brother's success left me undisturbed in the château, and now my favorite haunt is my father's laboratory. Here his magnificent apparatus and chemical library have imbued in me the same love for research work that he once had, but I have specialized intensively on high explosives.

[So far, the incidents in the journal have been undated. At this point, however, they take diary form, and the writer begins with July 17. On this date he tells that he has decided to dismiss the old domestics in order to work in greater privacy. The following week he describes his work on a special cabinet in which he is to conduct his researches. "In it," he says (July 25), "I am free from any outside influences which might foil all my plans. . . It is dangerous work, but I love it because it keeps my hatred of Henri continually in my mind."]

JULY 29. I work, I study, I dream, I laugh. Soon my brother will know how truly I forgave and forgot.

AUGUST 5. The stage is set. After many days of preparation I have created enough suppressed energy to make the halls of De Margerac disappear from the face of the earth. It lies waiting at my command on the floor below. I have sent a telegram to Henri with the news that I am lying

in bed with a fever and am on the verge of death. Ah, Henri! You do not know how near we both are to that abyss.

AUGUST 7. This is the fatal day. My brother has wired back that his train will arrive at Ville Niche a few minutes before 8 o'clock tonight.

12:00 NOON. I have spent the morning in reinspecting the stage. My engine of destruction, the largest I have ever created, is connected with the door of my bedchamber. My brother, upon entering and seeing no one in the lower apartments, will ascend to my room, as was his wont in former days to tease his crippled brother. The moment that he enters the room I will leap upon him and sink my yellow fangs into the flesh of his neck. The wretch shall feel those teeth about whose length he has so often taunted me. Are they like the teeth of maniacs? Well, there is something else that is peculiar to maniacs—a never-failing memory.

I will have three of the happiest minutes of my life, and, at the end of the one hundred and eightieth precious second my bomb will have its way.

6:10 P. M. I have wasted the afternoon, laughing by turns, crying by turns, singing and yelling by turns. Food has been the least of my thoughts, but I have bolstered up my courage with some of the best De Margerac vintage.

7:35 P. M. The doom approaching with the night has caused me to break out in a cold sweat. My fury increases.

8:00 P. M. How ominous is the sound of that striking clock which I shall never hear again! It is now but a matter of a few minutes.

8:05 P. M. From my bow window I can see a light slowly approaching De Margerac by the Ville Niche road. It is Gustave, the old sot who runs the cab stand at the station, unconsciously

luring Henri into my web of destruction.

8:08 P. M. I hear the sound of his phaeton rolling over the cobbles of the courtyard. I shall extinguish my candle.

[The following entry, very illegibly scrawled, has been translated as accurately as is possible.]

8:09 P. M. Ah, I must stop. . . . Gustave is turning his phaeton. Henri mounts the stair. . . . The only three minutes of bliss I have ever experienced are about to be . . . Farewell. The knob turns. . .

AUGUST 8, 4:30 A. M. Here I am five miles from the château. I find myself hiding in the fields and trembling like a hunted beast. Ah! But I have had my revenge. I have not lived in vain.

Contrary to my plans, however, I still live. As Henri opened the door I pounced upon him like a blood-thirsty lynx. I closed my jaws on his scrawny neck and tore at his throat until I was bathed in the warm ooze which gushed from him. He had been too startled to struggle, and my vise-like grip soon overcame him, but he continued to cry out loudly in words that I could not understand. In the darkness it was only possible to feel his body and hear his screams, yet I also imagined that I could see those anguished eyes appealing to me for mercy. To me! Hal I clawed at them and laughed in glee at his agony.

At that moment, catapulted by a terrific explosion, the room hurled itself into the air, then with a sickening lunge all crashed to pieces with the rest of Margerac. The shock had torn me from my victim and I had been thrown far from the crumbling walls. When I came to I lay sprawled among the wild gorse which I had so often gazed upon from high above.

Something rustled over the cobble stones. It was moved by the wind like a scurrying bird and fluttered at my feet. I stooped to pick it up. There were the pages of my diary to remind me that I had partially failed.

I had had no wish to go on living, once the supreme desire of my life was fulfilled. Without knowing why, I hobbled madly from the hated spot.

AUGUST 9. Wretched God! When is my torment to end? Under what unlucky star was this helpless creature born? Have I ever fulfilled any plan?

I am captured. I am chained in the dirty cell of this Ville Niche court house. Merciful heaven, how much do they know?

AUGUST 10. Each hour puts another curse upon my life. My jailer has just brought me my bread and half-cooked carrots folded in a page of yesterday's *Figaro*. And here—what is this that I see when I scrape the mess on to my pan? Why do I tremble with terror and then with rage? Simply because this stares up at me:

VILLE NICHE, August 8.—A mysterious explosion here last night ruined the old château of Margerac. Among the ruins peasants found a dead body with the throat and face torn as if it had been attacked by a beast.

The following note was in the man's wallet: "Dear Brother Philippe Auguste: As I am suddenly called to England I shall be unable to reach you as I wired, but I have persuaded my friend, Herr Doctor Schnitzer, an eminent Austrian physician, to give you some of his time. He will arrive on the train I expected to take, and will give you this note. I have spoken to the Herr Doctor about your case and he seems positive that, if you can recover from this probably temporary fever, he will be able to cure your lameness. Accept, dear brother, my most sincere wishes. Henri De Margerac."

This morning the lame owner of the mansion was discovered hobbling around in the fields like a madman. He is being detained while the authorities investigate.