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THE SUNSET SERIES.

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**THE
MESMERIST'S VICTIM.**

BY

ALEX. DUMAS.

NEW YORK :

J. B. OGILVIE PUBLISHING COMPANY,

57 ROSE STREET.



Many spelling and punctuation errors have been corrected. [A list](#) of the etext transcriber's spelling corrections follows the text. Consistent archaic spellings have not been changed. (courtseyed,

hight, galloped, befel, spirted, drily, abysm, etc.)

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**THE MESMERIST'S
VICTIM; OR, ANDRE
A DE TAVERNY.**

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DUMAS. Author of "Monte Cristo," "The
Three Musketeers Series," "Chicot the
Jester Series," etc. TRANSLATED FROM
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**THE MESMERIST'S
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CHAPTER I. THE DESPERATE RESCUE.

ON the thirteenth of May, 1770, Paris celebrated the
wedding of the Dauphin or Prince Royal Louis Aguste,

grandson of Louis XV. still reigning, with Marie-Antoinette, Archduchess of Austria.

The entire population flocked towards Louis XV. Place, where fireworks were to be let off. A pyrotechnical display was the finish to all grand public ceremonies, and the Parisians were fond of them although they might make fun.

The ground was happily chosen, as it would hold six thousand spectators. Around the equestrian statue of the King, stands were built circularly to give a view of the fireworks, to be set off at ten or twelve feet elevation.

The townsfolk began to assemble long before seven o'clock when the City Guard arrived to keep order. This duty rather belonged to the French Guards, but the Municipal government had refused the extra pay their Commander, Colonel, the Marshal Duke Biron, demanded, and these warriors in a huff were scattered in the mob, vexed and quarrelsome. They sneered loudly at the tumult, which they boasted they would have quelled with the pike-stock or the musket-butt if they had the ruling of the gathering.

The shrieks of the women, squeezed in the press, the wailing of the children, the swearing of the troopers, the grumbling of the fat citizens, the protests of the cake and candy merchants whose goods were stolen, all prepared a petty uproar preceding the deafening one which six hundred thousand souls were sure to create when collected. At eight at evening, they produced a vast picture, like one after Teniers, but with French faces.

About half past eight nearly all eyes were fastened on the scaffold where the famous Ruggieri and his assistants were putting the final touches to the matches and fuses of the old

pieces. Many large compositions were on the frames. The grand bouquet, or shower of stars, girandoles and squibs, with which such shows always conclude, was to go off from a rampart, near the Seine River, on a raised bank.

As the men carried their lanterns to the places where the pieces would be fired, a lively sensation was raised in the throng, and some of the timid drew back, which made the whole waver in line.

Carriages with the better class still arrived but they could not reach the stand to deposit their passengers. The mob hemmed them in and some persons objected to having the horses lay their heads on their shoulder.

Behind the horses and vehicles the crowd continued to increase, so that the conveyances could not move one way or another. Then were seen with the audacity of the city-bred, the boys and the rougher men climb upon the wheels and finally swarm upon the footman's board and the coachman's box.

The illumination of the main streets threw a red glare on the sea of faces, and flashed from the bayonets of the city guardsmen, as conspicuous as a blade of wheat in a reaped field.

About nine o'clock one of these coaches came up, but three rows of carriages were before the stand, all wedged in and covered with the sightseers. Hanging onto the springs was a young man, who kicked away those who tried to share with him the use of this locomotive to cleave a path in the concourse. When it stopped, however, he dropped down but without letting go of the friendly spring with one hand. Thus he was able to hear the excited talk of the passengers.

Out of the window was thrust the head of a young and beautiful girl, wearing white and having lace on her sunny head.

“Come, come, Andrea,” said a testy voice of an elderly man within to her, “do not lean out so, or you will have some rough fellow snatch a kiss. Do you not see that our coach is stuck in this mass like a boat in a mudflat? we are in the water, and dirty water at that; do not let us be fouled.”

“We can’t see anything, father,” said the girl, drawing in her head: “if the horse turned half round we could have a look through the window, and would see as well as in the places reserved for us at the governor’s.”

“Turn a bit, coachman,” said the man.

“Can’t be did, my lord baron,” said the driver; “it would crush a dozen people.”

“Go on and crush them, then!”

“Oh, sir,” said Andrea.

“No, no, father,” said a young gentleman beside the old baron inside.

“Hello, what baron is this who wants to crush the poor?” cried several threatening voices.

“The Baron of Taverney Redcastle—I,” replied the old noble, leaning out and showing that he wore a red sash crosswise.

Such emblems of the royal and knightly orders were still respected, and though there was grumbling it was on a lessening tone.

“Wait, father,” said the young gentleman, “I will step out and see if there is some way of getting on.”

“Look out, Philip,” said the girl, “you will get hurt. Only hear the horses neighing as they lash out.”

Philip Taverney, Knight of Redcastle, was a charming cavalier and, though he did not resemble his sister, he was as handsome for a man as she for her sex.

“Bid those fellows get out of our way,” said the baron, “so we can pass.”

Philip was a man of the time and like many of the young nobility had learnt ideas which his father of the old school was incapable of appreciating.

“Oh, you do not know the present Paris, father,” he returned. “These high-handed acts of the masters were all very well formerly; but they will hardly go down now, and you would not like to waste your dignity, of course.”

“But since these rascals know who I am——”

“Were you a royal prince,” replied the young man smiling, “they would not budge for you, I am afraid; at this moment, too, when the fireworks are going off.”

“And we shall not see them,” pouted Andrea.

“Your fault, by Jove—you spent more than two hours over your attire,” snarled the baron.

“Could you not take me through the mob to a good spot on your arm, brother?” asked she.

“Yes, yes, come out, little lady,” cried several voices; for the men were struck by Mdlle. Taverney’s beauty: “you are not stout, and we will make room for you.”

Andrea sprang lightly out of the vehicle without touching the steps.

“I think little of the crackers and rockets, and I will stay here,” growled the baron.

“We are not going far, father,” responded Philip.

Always respectful to the queen called Beauty, the mob opened before the Taverneys, and a good citizen made his wife and daughter give way on a bench where they stood, for the young lady. Philip stood by his sister, who rested a hand on his shoulder. The young man who had “cut behind” the carriage, had followed them and he looked with fond eyes on the girl.

“Are you comfortable, Andrea?” said the chevalier; “see what a help good looks are!”

“Good looks,” sighed the strange young man; “why, she is lovely, very lovely. She is lovelier here, in Parisian costume, than when I used to see her on their country place, where I was but Gilbert the humble retainer on my lord Baron’s lands.”

Andrea heard the compliment; but she thought it came not from an acquaintance so far as a dependent could be the acquaintance of a young lady of title, and she believed it was a common person who spoke.

Infinitely proud, she heeded it no more than an East Indian idol troubles itself about the adorer who places his tribute at its feet.

Hardly were the two young Taverneys established on and by the bench than the first rockets serpented towards the clouds, and a loud “Oh!” was roared by the multitude henceforth absorbed in the sight.

Andrea did not try to conceal her impressions in her astonishment at the unequalled sight of a population cheering with delight before a palace of fire. Only a yard from her, the youth who had named himself as Gilbert,

gazed on her rather than at the show, except because it charmed her. Every time a gush of flame shone on her beautiful countenance, he thrilled; he could fancy that the general admiration sprang from the adoration which this divine creature inspired in him who idolized her.

Suddenly, a vivid glare burst and spread, slanting from the river: it was a bombshell exploding fiercely, but Andrea merely admired the gorgeous play of light.

“How splendid,” she murmured.

“Goodness,” said her brother, disquieted, “that shot was badly aimed for it shoots almost on the level instead of taking an upward curve. Oh, God, it is an accident! Come away—it is a mishap which I dreaded. A stray cracker has set fire to the powder on the bastion. The people are trampling on each other over there to get away. Do you not hear those screams—not cheers but shrieks of distress. Quick, quick, to the coach! Gentlemen, gentlemen, please let us through.”

He put his arms around his sister’s slender waist, to drag her in the direction of her father. Also made uneasy by the clamor, the danger being evident though not distinguished yet by him, he put his head out of the window to look for his dear ones.

It was too late!

The final display of fifteen thousand rockets-burst, darting off in all directions, and chasing the spectators like those squibs exploded in the bull-fighting ring to stir up the bull.

At first surprised but soon frightened, the people drew back without reflection. Before this invincible retreat of a hundred thousand, another mass as numerous gave the

same movement when squeezed to the rear. The wooden work at the bastion took fire; children cried, women tossed their arms; the city guardsmen struck out to quiet the brawlers and re-establish order by violence.

All these causes combined to drive the crowd like a waterspout to the corner where Philip of Taverney stood. Instead of reaching the baron's carriage as he reckoned, he was swept on by the resistless tide, of which no description can give an idea. Individual force, already doubled by fear and pain, was increased a hundredfold by the junction of the general power.

As Philip dragged Andrea away, Gilbert was also carried off by the human current: but at the corner of Madeline Street, a band of fugitives lifted him up and tore him away from Andrea, in spite of his struggles and yelling.

Upon the Taverneys charged a team of runaway horses. Philip saw the crowd part; the smoking heads of the animals appeared and they rose on their haunches for a leap. He leaped, too, and being a cavalry officer, captain in the Dauphiness's Dragoons, knew how to deal with them. He caught the bit of one and was lifted with it.

Andrea saw him flung and fall; she screamed, threw up her arms, was buffeted, reeled, and in an instant was tossed hence alone, like a feather, without the strength to offer resistance.

Deafening calmor, more dreadful than shouts of battle, the horses neighing, the clatter of the vehicles on the pavement cumbered with the crippled, and livid glare of the burning stands, the sinister flashing of swords which some of the soldiers had drawn, in their fury and above the bloody

chaos, the bronze statue gleaming with the light as it presided over the carnage—here was enough to drive the girl mad.

She uttered a despairing cry; for a soldier in cutting a way for himself in the crowd had waved the dripping blade over her head. She clasped her hands like a shipwrecked sailor as the last breaker swamps him, and gasping “God have mercy” fell.

Yet to fall here was to die.

One had heard this final, supreme appeal. It was Gilbert who had been snaking his way up to her. Though the same rush bent him down, he rose, seized the soldier by the throat and upset him.

Where he felled him, lay the white-robed form: he lifted it up with a giant’s strength.

When he felt this beautiful body on his heart, though it might be a corpse, a ray of pride illuminated his face.

The sublime situation made him the sublimation of strength and courage extreme; he dashed with his burden into the torrent of men. This would have broken a hole through a wall. It sustained him and carried them both. He just touched the ground with his feet, but her weight began to tell on him. Her heart beat against his.

“She is saved,” he said, “and I have saved her,” he added, as the mass brought up against the Royal Wardrobe Building, and he was sheltered in the angle of masonry.

But looking towards the bridge over the Seine, he did not see the twenty thousand wretches on his right, mutilated, welded together, having broken through the barrier of the carriages and mixed up with them as the drivers and horses

were seized with the same vertigo.

Instinctively they tried to get to the wall against which the closest were mashed.

This new deluge threatened to grind those who had taken refuge here by the Wardrobe building, with the belief they had escaped. Maimed bodies and dead ones piled up by Gilbert. He had to back into the recess of the gateway, where the weight made the walls crack.

The stifled youth felt like yielding; but collecting all his powers by a mighty effort, he enclasped Andrea with his arms, applying his face to her dress as if he meant to strangle her whom he wished to protect.

“Farewell,” he gasped as he bit her robe in kissing it.

His eyes glancing about in an ultimate call to heaven, were offered a singular vision.

A man was standing on a horseblock, clinging by his right hand to an iron ring sealed in the wall: while with his left he seemed to beckon an army in flight to rally.

He was a tall dark man of thirty, with a figure muscular but elegant. His features had the mobility of Southerners’, strangely blending power and subtlety. His eyes were piercing and commanding.

As the mad ocean of human beings poured beneath him he cast out a word or a cabalistic token. On these, some individual in the throng was seen to stop, fight clear and make his way towards the beckoner to fall in at his rear. Others, called likewise, seemed to recognize brothers in each other, and all lent their hands to catch still more of the swimmers in this tide of life. Soon this knot of men were formed into the head of a breakwater, which divided the

fugitives and served to stay and stem the rush.

At every instant new recruits seemed to spring out of the earth at these odd words and weird gestures, to form the backers of this wondrous man.

Gilbert nerved himself. He felt that here alone was safety, for here was calm and power.

A last flicker of the burning staging, irradiated this man's visage and Gilbert uttered an outcry of surprise.

"I know who that is," he said, "he visited my master down at Taverney. It is Baron Balsamo. Oh, I care not if I die provided she lives. This man has the power to save her."

In perfect self-sacrifice, he raised the girl up in both hands and shouted:

"Baron Balsamo, save Andrea de Taverney!"

Balsamo heard this voice from the depths; he saw the white figure lifted above the matted beings; he used the phalanx he had collected to cover his charge to the spot. Seizing the girl, still sustained by Gilbert though his arms were weakening, he snatched her away, and let the crowd carry them both afar.

He had not time to turn his head.

Gilbert had not the breath to utter a word. Perhaps, after having Andrea aided, he would have supplicated assistance for himself; but all he could do was clutch with a hand which tore a scrap of the dress of the girl. After this grasp, a last farewell, the young man tried no longer to struggle, as though he were willing to die. He closed his eyes and fell on a heap of the dead.

CHAPTER II. THE FIELD OF THE DEAD.

TO great tempests succeeds calm, dreadful but reparative.

At two o'clock in the morning a wan moon was playing through the swift-driving white clouds upon the fatal scene where the merry-makers had trampled and buried one another in the ditches.

The corpses stuck out arms lifted in prayers and legs broken and entangled, while the clothes were ripped and the faces livid.

Yellow and sickening smoke, rising from the burning platforms on Louis XV. Place, helped to give it the aspect of a battlefield.

Over the bloody and desolate spot wandered shadows which were the robbers of the dead, attracted like ravens. Unable to find living prey, they stripped the corpses and swore with surprise when they found they had been forestalled by rivals. They fled, frightened and disappointed as soldier's bayonets at last appeared, but among the long rows of the dead, robbers and soldiers were not the solely moving objects.

Supplied with lanterns prowlers were busy. They were not only curious, but relatives and parents and lovers who had not had their dear ones come home from the sightseeing. They came from the remotest parts for the horrible news had spread over Paris, mourning as if a hurricane had passed over it, and anxiety was acted out in these searches.

It was muttered that the Provost of Paris had many corpses thrown into the river from his fears at the immense number lost through his want of foresight. Hence those who had ferreted about uselessly, went to the river and stood in it knee-deep to stare at the flow; or they stole with their

lanterns into the by-streets where it was rumored some of the crippled wretches had crept to beg help and at least flee the scene of their misfortune.

At the end of the square, near the Royal Gardens, popular charity had already set up a field hospital. A young man who might be identified as a surgeon by the instruments by his side, was attending to the wounded brought to him. While bandaging them he said words rather expressing hatred for the cause of their injuries than pity for the effect. He had two helpers, robust reporters, to whom he kept on shouting:

“Let me have the poor first. You can easily pick them out for they will be badly dressed and most injured.”

At these words, continually croaked, a young gentleman with pale brow, who was searching among the bodies with a lantern in his hand, raised his head.

A deep gash on his forehead still dropped red blood. One of his hands was thrust between two buttons of his coat to support his injured arm; his perspiring face betrayed deep and ceaseless emotion.

Looking sadly at the amputated limbs which the operator appeared to regard with professional pleasure, he said:

“Oh, doctor, why do you make a selection among the victims?”

“Because,” replied the surgeon, raising his head at this reproach, “no one would care for the poor if I did not, and the rich will always find plenty to look after them. Lower your light and look along the pavement and you will find a hundred poor to one rich or noble. In this catastrophe, with their luck which will in the end tire heaven itself, the

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