

**CORSE DE LEON: OR,
THE BRIGAND: A
ROMANCE, VOLUME 2**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649556595

Corse De Leon: Or, the Brigand: A Romance, Volume 2 by G. P. R. James

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Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
Cover @ 2017

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A ROMANCE.

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"THE ROBBER," "THE GENTLEMAN OF THE
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IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

NEW-YORK:

PUBLISHED BY HARPER & BROTHERS,

NO. 82 CLIFF-STREET.

1841.

CORSE DE LEON;

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CHAPTER I.

THE sky was still gray, when Bernard de Rohan, up and dressed, stood waiting in his own chamber till his horses, which seemed somewhat long in coming, were brought forth into the court of the inn. As he did so, he slowly and thoughtfully drew his sword from the scabbard, and, pressing the point against the ground, bent the weapon nearly double. Then, withdrawing his hand suddenly, he suffered it to spring back again, and the well-tempered blade became instantly as straight as it was before.

The young gentleman marked it with a smile, and, putting the true friend in need back again into the scabbard, he walked down the stairs and spoke a few words to the host at the door, till his horse being at length led forward, he sprang into the saddle and rode out, as if taking the way to Geneva.

When he had gone about a mile, he met a peasant coming in on a gayly-decorated mule, bringing supplies for the good city; and as the man gave him the good-morning, the baron asked whether there were any travellers on the road before him.

"Oh ay," replied the man, "a fair party as you would wish to see, and a gallant gentleman at their head. Perchance you are looking for them?"

"It may be so," replied Bernard de Rohan. "How far are they in advance, my good friend?"

"Truly you must use whip and spur," replied the man, "for I passed them a good hour and a half ago, beyond Mirebel, and they were going at a mad rate."

Bernard de Rohan did apply the spur; and in a much

less time than an hour and a half, passed through the small hamlet of Mirebel, and under the old castle which then stood upon the hill beyond. Inquiring at one of the cottages as he passed on, he again heard of the same party, but still found that they were far in advance of him; nor, by the accounts of the peasantry, did he seem to have gained upon them much, when he was once more obliged to pause in order to refresh his horse.

"It will be night before I overtake them," he thought; "but I will overtake them, or die."

Such resolutions are always very, very vain, as, indeed, is every other resolution of human nature. Tossed as we are upon the sea of circumstances, and never knowing where the next wave may bear us, there is but one resolution which man can safely take, with even a probable hope of not breaking it—the resolution of doing right, whatever may be the event. Then, even then, he must count with daring boldness upon the stability and the firmness of that most weak and wavering thing, his own heart.

Bernard de Rohan resolved to overtake them or to die, and with that resolution he rode on. At Mont Luel he heard of them again, and eagerly pursued his way, till, towards the afternoon, he arrived, with tired horses, at the small town of Pont d'Ain. He had heard of the party that he sought at every place where he had paused to inquire, even as far as the village of Varambon, which, as the reader well knows, is scarcely a mile and a half from the pleasant little town of Pont d'Ain. In the latter place, at that time, though it was directly on the way, as the road then lay, from Paris to Chambery, and a castle belonging to the Duke of Savoy stood upon the heights, seeming to claim it as a part of his dominions—at that time there was but one inn in the place which afforded accommodation for man and horse. There were two or three houses, indeed, of the kind called *Repues*, where travellers on foot were entertained; but to the other house, or the *Gite*, as it was called, Bernard de Rohan directed his steps, and immediately, on dismounting, inquired for the party of horsemen which had preceded him.

"The gentleman and his servant," replied the hostess, who was the person to whom he addressed himself, "the gentleman and his servant, who came about two hours and a half ago, have both gone out, and are to re-

turn by supper-time ; but there has no other party, sir, either stopped here or passed through Pont d'Ain to-day."

Such tidings were not to be believed by Bernard de Rohan ; and, although he had passed through Pont d'Ain more than once before, and had every reason to believe that there was no other inn in the place, he now imagined that in this respect he must be mistaken ; and, saying that he also would return to supper, he set out to inquire at every other house of public entertainment in the town, whether the person whom he sought for had as yet arrived.

The purposes with which he went were certainly of a fierce and stern kind : he felt that he had been deeply and bitterly wronged, and he went to punish him who had done it ; but, as he walked on, there was a calm sweetness in the air, somewhat tempered from the heat of noon, which in a degree soothed him, and caused a feeling of sorrow at being forced to perform so bloody a task, to mingle with the other sensations in his bosom.

He inquired at more than one place whether there was any other inn than that at which he had stopped ; but found that there was none where the party which he sought could have paused for the night. At every other *auberge*, also, the same story was told him, that no persons had passed through the town that day, nor had any party of consequence entered the town except the cavalier and his servant who had put up at the great inn, and who, it appeared, had been seen by every one. One old woman, to whom he applied, began to enlarge upon the grace and beauty of the cavalier ; and Bernard de Rohan, thinking that Adrian de Meyrand might possibly have left some of his attendants behind on the road, or sent them in some other direction, began to question her as to whether she had remarked which way the gentleman took when he left the inn, and could point it out to him.

" Doubtless I can, sir," she said in reply. " He seemed to saunter forth quite idly, and looked about the town. Then he walked up towards the castle, and then cast his eyes up the river, and came down again, and crossed the bridge, and I saw him go slowly up, gazing upon the water as if wondering at its clearness."

" That is not like Adrian de Meyrand," thought Bernard de Rohan, as the woman spoke. " He has no such tastes as that. Nevertheless, I will make myself sure ;"

and, following the way that the good lady pointed out to him, he too crossed the old bridge, and walked quickly on at the side of the Ain by a path which skirted the river, and along which the high road is now carried. He pursued this path for nearly two miles before he perceived any human being, except here and there, in the fields around, some of the peasantry gathering in the abundant gifts of Nature, or boys and girls scaring the birds from the vines. At length, however, the young cavalier perceived another gentleman, sitting in a picturesque situation on a bank overhanging the stream, and gazing down upon the water. He was amusing himself by pitching off pebbles from the bank with the point of his sword scabbard, while his hat and plume lay beside him, and his long dark hair fluttered in the summer breeze.

The stranger was evidently not Adrian de Meyrand, but yet the form was familiar to Bernard de Rohan. He could not see the face, indeed; but the figure, the attitude, the employment, each instantly served to awaken remembrances of other days, and to tell him that there before him sat Henry de Brienne, the brother of his own dear Isabel. The young gentleman did not perceive that any one approached; and, the path which his friend followed passing over the bank behind, Bernard de Rohan came within a step of him without rousing him from his revery. The attitude and countenance of Henry de Brienne were both melancholy, and Bernard de Rohan heard him sigh deeply.

"Henry," said the young soldier, laying his hand on his arm, "Henry, this is a strange meeting."

Henry of Brienne started up, and, drawing a step back, gazed upon Bernard de Rohan with an inquiring and bewildered look. "Mortbleu!" he exclaimed at length, grasping his companion's hand, "here is the dead alive again! Why, Bernard, 'tis but this morning I heard of your death. Intelligence the most certain was brought of your being crushed under one of the towers of the castle of Masseran; and you have no earthly right to be alive."

"Has that story travelled even hither!" said the young cavalier: "Rumour has certainly quicker wings than the wind, for that false tale to have reached even the Pont d'Ain in four or five days."

"Nay, it was in Lyons that I heard it," replied Henry de Brienne, "and there dame Rumour appeared on a

horse's back, and clothed in the dress of a courier of the Lord of Masseran's."

"Were you then in Lyons this morning?" demanded Bernard de Rohan, eagerly.

"In truth was I," his companion answered; "even at the inn called the Dolphin, Bernard; and, had you but sought for me there, you would have found me with more than one old friend of yours."

"With Adrian de Meyrand?" replied Bernard de Rohan: "where is he now, Henry? He it is I am now seeking. Did he come with you hither?"

"Not only Meyrand," replied the young count, without directly answering his friend's question, "not only Meyrand, but the Lord of Masseran also would you have found, had you but visited the Dolphin. But come, let us return to the inn, and, like statesmen and lawyers, discuss all things over our supper;" and, thus saying, he drew his friend back in the direction of the town.

"But where is the Count de Meyrand?" again demanded Bernard de Rohan. "Henry, he has basely wronged me; and if he be anywhere within reach, I must find him, and make him give me a reason for what he has done."

"He is far away by this time," replied the other, in a careless tone, that did not much please his companion. "Why, Bernard, he is at Moulins ere now, and will be in Paris before you can reach him."

"Then he came not on with you hither?" demanded Bernard de Rohan, seeing that the prey had escaped from him. "This is unfortunate."

"No; he returned to Paris as quick as he came," replied Henry of Brienne. "It was my good lord and stepfather who came hither with me; but if you would know, dear friend, how it all fell out, you shall hear the tale;" and he proceeded to give Bernard de Rohan as clear an account as his own knowledge would afford, of all that had taken place in Paris affecting the marriage of his friend and his sister.

Bernard de Rohan listened in silence, with busy but bitter thoughts chasing each other through his brain, while Henry proceeded. "I set out alone," continued Henry de Brienne, after having detailed the announcement of the edict, "I set out alone, and, to say sooth, I did not much covet the good Lord of Masseran as a travelling companion. I had scarcely reached the third

post, however, when I was overtaken by my amiable stepfather and the Count de Meyrand: the Lord of Masseran being bound by the king's commands to set you instantly free; and the good count, I have a notion, being very desirous of helping me to seek for Isabel. When, however, we heard this morning at Lyons, by a courier from Savoy, that you were buried under the ruins of one of the towers, the count sped back again to Paris, to make his claim to the hand of Isabel good before the king, while the Lord of Masseran did me the honour of accompanying me almost to the gates of the Pont d'Ain. I was very anxious to get rid of him; but I knew it might be difficult to do so straightforwardly, and therefore, by a word spoken now and then during our morning's ride, I just let him understand that the King of France was very likely to visit your death upon his head somewhat severely, if he did not seek that gracious monarch at once and tell his own story first. I insinuated this fact more than asserted it, and he consequently became so strongly possessed with that idea, that he quitted me where the road turns off, leaving me to pursue my search alone. Here, however, we are, once more upon the bridge, and I trust that supper is ready, for I am an hungered."

"Have you any clew," demanded Bernard de Rohan, "to guide you in your search for Isabel? She, too, it seems, is persuaded that I am dead, and I long to find and comfort her."

"I have no certain clew whatever," replied Henry de Brienne, in an indifferent tone. "She escaped from the charge of Meyrand, it would seem, somewhere about Bourgoin, and he, suspecting that Masseran had taken her, followed with all speed to Paris. As soon as he found his mistake, however, he sent off a servant to watch for her at Lyons, and gain what intelligence he could of the course she pursued. From this man we learned last night that a lady had paused at that inn, whom, from a slight glance he obtained of her face in the close litter that bore her, he could have sworn was Isabel herself; but she stayed not for more than a few minutes, and then took the road onward towards Geneva. What should lead her to Geneva I cannot conceive; and, moreover, the fellow represents her as being accompanied by an almoner and a large train, which how poor Isabel should get I cannot divine. However,