SIETE HOMBRES Y UNA *zorra*

Peleones, ladrones, groseros, mujeriegos, rivales en el campo de batalla como en las alcobas, Dorgeval y Duprat - los dos capitanes del ejercito de Bonaparte - a pesar de todo, son grandes amigos... que se reconcilian a espalada del enemigo. Pero, esta vez, el enemigo es una hermosa muchacha de veinte años.

Desde su nacimiento, Carlotta se aburre... Hija de une conde italiano que ha aceptado con placidez la protección austriaca, Carlotta non tiene mas perspectiva en la vida que un buen matrimonio aburrido con un gentilhombre austriaco. Asi, pues tiene una inmensa alegria cuando se entero que el ejercito frances - de reputación tan galante - va invadir su pueblo y el castillo donde vive ! Podrá en fin ella divertirse ? Elle se escapa de su padre y del cura que huyen como locos y, sola con dos sirvientas, ella espera palpitante al hermoso « conquistador ».

Por desgracia, ellos son dos ! Invaden montados a caballos, el castillo, - hacen ejercicios de tiro apuntando sobre los retratos de familia ; se emborrachan, se pelean, persiguen a las sirvientas... en fin... Dorgeval y Duprat no tienen nada de los héroes... romanticos, ... con que ella soñaba ... Ah !... es asi ? Carlotta cambia de tactica..., ella les hará presos... les entregara a los Austriacos... los verá suspirar ; ... a sus pies... sin ninguna pena... Para ello, primero, cambia ella de personalidad y de vestidos... Vestiendose como una de sus sirvientas, - ella es muy amable con los dos oficiales, y los enduerme con un poderoso narcotico... y como un francés, Latouche llega con un pliego oficial dirigido a su capitan, ella lo enduerme tambien y ademas Franguillon, otro francés que se ha perdido en el parque persiguiendo una hermosa falda... Asi ahora las tres mujeres tienen presos cuatro franceses... Que van hacer con ellos ?... Matarles ?... Ellas tienen esta intención (no olvidemos que se trata de enemigos)... les falta el valor... Carlota, pues, ordena de atarles en espera de otras cosas... Pero a la mañana siguiente, nuestros héroes se despiertan, se quitan sus ligaduras y deciden vengarse de ellas... Pero persiguiendo... Las tres mujeres, que se escapan « en paños menores »... se dan cuenta que mientras dormian, el regimiento ha salido de pueblo, para proseguir su marcha victoriosa a través de toda Italia... No tienen más que darse prisa para alcanzarlo si no quieren que les tenga, por desertores... pero... andando ?

Huyendo en carretela, Carlotta decide ayudarles... los cuatro hombres se emparan del coche y de la muchacha y deciden de guardar a ambos, la chica serviendoles ademas de guia y interprete. Por desgracia no sospechan de lo que llegará... Y caminan muy contentos de esta aventura... Convencidos de que podran encontrar de nuevo el regimiento antes a que llega la noche y que todo se arreglara... Tanto es asi, que se han juntado à ellos, otros tres soldados franceses que se habian extraviado y que ahora siendo siete nada han de temer de esta pobre chica !... Pero, antes que la noche se termina, esta pobre chica los ha hechado en un precipicio... ella se ha escapado tres veces... por poco ha fallado de hacerlos coger por los Austriacos... ha provocado sucesivamente tan modo a cada uno de ellos... los ha enamistado unos contra otros... que no pueden verse y que la discordia y la desconfianza reina entre ellos, sobre este pequeño grupo que tiene hambre... con los vestidos rotos... y de nuevo andando... Carlotta está encantada. Nunca se habia divertido tanto... Pero ella se angaña de demostrarlo... Dorgeval y Duprat deciden de aliarse contra esta diabolica muchacha... Se servan de ella para attraer en sus redes a una patrulla de caballeros Austriácos... caerles encima y quitarles sus uniformes, armas y caballos... lo que les permite de enterarse que los Austriacos han preparado una emboscada para derrotar al 25. regimiento. Su regimiento !... Nuestros 7 hombres estan fuera de si... Se hablan... discuten... y no se ocupan mas de Carlotta... la cual, naturalmente, aprovecha de la ocasión para libertar los caballos... hacerlos escapar... salvo el suyo... naturalmente...

Mientras Duprat, con ayuda de Latouche, da a Carlotta una gran paliza... los otros toman una decisión... Como tienen armas, uniformes del enemigo y un caballo... deciden de informarse a Cento, un pequeño pueblo donde está el Estado Mayor austriaco asi como un polvorin cuanto al sitio donde los Austriacos han planeado la emboscada. A pesar suyo - Carlotta ti ene que ponerse un uniforme austriaco y se le ruega con cortesia (el cuchillo en la garganta)... que los lleve a Cento... como si se tratara de prisioneros franceses... Carlotta parece someterse... ella accepta... lo que no la empide que cuando encuentra una patrulla austriaca - de designar a Duprat y Latouche como « a los prisioneros los mas cansados los pobre citos... » Complacientes, los Austriacos se llevan a Duprat y Latouche sobre sus caballos... y nuestros heroes no son mas que cinco... Eso pone Dorgeval fuera de si... Pero en lugar de vengarse sobre Carlotta, le hace comprender lo que ella ha hecho, pues practicamente ella ha conducido a muerte Duprat y Latouche, que seguramente seran fusilados apenas llegaran a Cento.

Inesperadamente, Carlotta se asusta... Nunca ha deseado la muerte de estos franceses... con los cuales ha pasado dias apasionantes... Ella ayudara a libertar los dos hombres, lo jura sobre « la Madona »... Y asi es en efecto que gracia a ella nuestros héroes llegados a Cento, conseguiran reunirse con sus compañeros... liberandoles... con una gran astucia... haciendo estallar el polvorin y enterandose de que la emboscada esta prevista en el puente San Bernardo. Reunidos todos de nuevo, huyen..., aprovechando del panico que hay a Cento... pero son reconocidos, rodeados y detenidos por una patrulla enemiga...

Esta vez no iran muy lejos... Condenados a muerte todos los siete, los austriacos van a fusilarles, pero el peloton d'ejecución sera sumergido por un torbellino de mujeres que Carlotta ha reunido durante la noche... pues nuestros franceses... a pesar de haber permanecido solo doce horas a Cento... su galanteria habia hecho muchas victimas entre las bellas italianas... Salvados nuestros heroes y Carlota corren a galope hacia el lugar de la emboscada... Pero los austriacos les persiguen. Nuestros heroes abandonan sus caballos y - guiados por Carlotta - atravesan la montaña... Pero Carlotta agotada se cae... Duprat va a Buscarla... Dorgeval lo ayuda... Y los dos hombres son precipitados en el torrente ; ... se acogen una balsa que por casualidad estaba alli... y son alcanzados por sus compañeros... y es asi que llegan cerca del Puente San Bernardo... donde el ejercito austriaco esta escondido... esperando el regimiento frances que avanzaba confiado... Naturalmente nuestros héroes transformaran la emboscada a su beneficio... Naturalmente el ejercito austriaco no tendra mas que huir... Naturalmente nuestros hombres serán felicitados, llenos de honores... condecorados... Naturalmente Carlotta se escapará... todavia... Pero naturalmente ella volverá ; para quien ? — Para Dorgeval ?...

— Para Duprat ?...

— Para Otro ?

SEVEN MEN AND A *gal*

Brawling, plundering, seducing, raping, Dorgeval and Duprat, two captains in Bonaparte's Army, are though rivals on the battlefield as well in boudoirs and haylofts, great friend. When they are not on the outs with one another, they are always reconciled by their solidarity in front of the enemy together. This time, however, the enemy is a beautiful girl of twenty. Carlotta has been bored with her existence ever since she was a child. She is the daughter of an Italian count who was submitted with good grace to Austrian "protection", and all Carlotta has to look forward to is an excellent and tedious marriage with an Austrian gentleman. She is filled with hope when the French Army, preceded by its romantic legend, invades her village and the castle in which she lives. Is she finally going to enjoy her life? She hides from her father who —with the local priest—flees in alarm before the oncoming Frenchmen. All alone with her two young maids, she waits in impatient expectancy for a knight in shining french armor to come and spirit her away. Unfortunately, there are two of them. They come clattering into the castle on horseback, exercise their markmanship on the family portraits, get drunk, fight, plague the servant-girls. No, Dorgeval and Duprat have nothing in common with the dashing heros who have illuminated her dreams. Very well, if that is the way they are going to act, Carlotta will change tacties. Since they refuse to pay the kind of attention to her that she desires, she will have them taken prisoners, turned over to the Austrians, and watch them die at her feet without a single sigh of regret. First, she changes her personality as well as her clothes. Dressed like one of her little maids, she attends upon the officers and with every show kindness and good will, puts them to sleep with a powerful narcotic. A French soldier, Latouche, happens to arrive with an official message for his captain, and she puts him to sleep also. For good mesure she does the same with Franguillon, a Frenchman who got lost on the estate while pursuing a pretty skirt.

The three young women are now in possession of four Frenchmen. What to do with them? Kill them? They have every intention of doing so — they are not forgetting that the men are their enemies — but not the courage to put their plan into execution. Carlotta orders the other girls to bind the men. Perhaps, she thinks, another idea will come to her later. At dawn however, our heroes regain consciousness, free their arms and legs, and decide to take revenge on their "captors". They pursue the three girls, who run away in scanty clothing. Then to their surprise, they notice that, while they where asleep, their regiment left the village to continue on its victorious march across Italy. There is nothing left for them to do, but catch up with their fellows quickly, for otherwise they will be considered deserters. But who to catch up? On foot? Carlotta fleeing in a carriage, provides the solution to their problem. The four men succeed in sizing both the coach and the girl—and decide to keep both, for Carlotta can serve as a guide and an interpreter. If they could only have foreseen , the poor wretches! But no, they are too delighted with the escapade—and certain that they will rejoin their regiment before nightfall and everything will be arranged. The adventure is all the more pleasant!for three other French soldiers, who have also been on the prowl for wine and women—join them. What have seven great big men to fear from one tiny girl? Before the end of the night, the tiny girl has shoved them over the edge of a precipice, run away three times, missed having them hanged by the Austrians by a hairsbreadth, played up to each man successively so cleverly that they are all against one another. They cannot stand the sight of each other anymore, discord and suspicion reign over the group. Besides, they are now hungry, dirty, and—again—on foot. Carlotta, personally, is enchanted. She has never enjoyed herself so much in her entire life. But she is wrong to show her enjoyment. Dorgeval and Duprat decide to join forces to teach the little minx a lesson. They even make use of her, order to draw a patrol of Austrian cavalrymen into an ambush. They kill them all—and take their uniforms, weapons, and horses. They also learn that the Austrians have prepared an ambush to crush the 25th French Regiment.

This is our heros' regiment. The seven men are troubled and apprehensive. They hold parleys, they discuss, and they no longer pay any attention to Carlotta, who, naturally, takes advantage of the opportunity to free the horses and drive them off—except her, of course. While Duprat, assisted by Latouche, gives a screaming Carlotta a good spanking, the others make a decision: they have weapons, enemy uniforms, and a horse. Ignoring where the Austrian ambush is to take place, they resolve to go in search of information in Cento, a nearby village, here the Austrian Headquarters is garrisoned and is reserve of gunpowder stored. Carlotta, whether she likes it or not, finds herself dressed in a handsome Austrian uniform. Very politely, the Frenchmen, pointing a dagger at her little pretty throat, ask her to take them to Cento as if she were bringing back some French prisoners. Carlotta seems to be tamed. She accepts. But this does not prevent her, when they encounter another Austrian patrol, from designating Duprat and Latouche being "the most exhausted, the poorest of the prisoners". Sympathizing, the Austrians take Duprat and Latouche away on horse back—and our heros are now only five in number. Duprat's arrest has infuriated Dorgeval. Instead of taking paying Carlotta back, however, he informs her of what she has done: she has condemned Duprat and Latouche to death all by herself, for they will certainly be executed upon their arrival in Cento. Unexpectedly, Carlotta burst into tears. The farthest thing for her mind was to be responsable for the deaths of the Frenchmen with whom she has been having such a good time. She now vows to help deliver the two prisoners—she even swears to do so by the Madonna. And, in fact, it is thanks to her that our heros, having arrived in Cento, manage to join their two friends and deliver them by means of a supremely clever trick: blow up the gunpowder reserves. They also learn that the ambush is going to take place at the St. Bernard Bridge. All seven of them start to flee from Cento, thanks to the panic which reigns there. However, they are recognized, surrounded, and captured by an enemy-patrol. This time they have apparently, had it: condemned to death, all seven of them, they are going to be shot when the execution squad is submerged by a whirlwind of women. Carlotta spent the night rounding them up. Our Frenchmen may have passed only twelve hours in Cento, but that was long enough to make an impression on the beautiful female part of the population.

Saved in the nick of time, our heros and Carlotta gallop toward the place where the ambush is to take place. They are pursued by the Austrians—and, about to be caught again, they abandon their horses and, guided by Carlotta, cut across a region full of gorges. Carlotta exhausted, falls over the edge of one. Duprat goes down in search of her, and Dorgeval helps him. The two men slip into a raging torrent, manage to reach safety thanks to a makeshift raft. Their five friends find them, and they all manage to reach St. Bernard Bridge, where the Austrian Army, camouflaged, is waiting patiently for the French Regiment, thinking there is no danger, to advance. Naturally, our heros turn the ambush to their advantage, and naturally the Austrians decimated and heartsick, take to their heels. Naturally, our men are congratulated, and showered with decorations and distinctions. Naturally, Carlotta runs away, again. But not less naturally, she return—but for whom? For Dorgeval? For Duprat? Or for some one else?