Title: The Knight of Malta

Author: Eugène Sue

Release date: June 24, 2012 [EBook #40075]
Most recently updated: February 18, 2021

Language: English

Credits: Produced by David Widger

THE KNIGHT OF MALTA

By Eugene Sue

Illustrated

H. M. Caldwell Company Publishers

THE KNIGHT OF MALTA.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER I. INTRODUCTION.

CHAPTER II. MISTRAON

CHAPTER III. THE WATCHMAN.

CHAPTER IV. STEPHANETTE.
CHAPTER V. THE BETROTHED.
CHAPTER VI. MAISON-FORTE
CHAPTER VII. THE SUPPER.
CHAPTER VIII. THE LOVER
CHAPTER IX. THE PICTURE
CHAPTER X. THE RECORDER
CHAPTER XI. TAKING THE CENSUS
CHAPTER XII. THE BOHEMIAN
CHAPTER XIII. THE GUZIAC OF THE EMIR.
CHAPTER XIV. JEALOUSY
CHAPTER XV. THE SUMMONS
CHAPTER XVI. THE OVERSEERS OF THE PORT
CHAPTER XVII. THE JUDGMENT
CHAPTER XVIII. THE TELESCOPE
CHAPTER XIX. THE LITTLE SATCHEL
CHAPTER XX. THE SACRIFICE
CHAPTER XXI. OUR LADY OF SEVEN SORROWS
CHAPTER XXII. THE BROTHER OF MERCY
CHAPTER XXIII. THE COMMANDER
CHAPTER XXIV. THE POLACRE
CHAPTER XXV. THE RED GALLEON AND THE SYBARITE
CHAPTER XXVI. POG AND EREBUS
CHAPTER XXVII. CONVERSATION
CHAPTER XXVIII. HADJI
CHAPTER XXIX. CHRISTMAS
CHAPTER XXX. THE ARREST
CHAPTER XXXI. THE DESCENT
CHAPTER XXXII. THE CHEBEC
CHAPTER XXXIII. DISCOVERY
CHAPTER XXXIV. THE LETTERS
CHAPTER XXXV. THE MURDERER
CHAPTER XXXVI. PLANS
CHAPTER XXXVII. THE INTERVIEW
CHAPTER XXXVIII. THE THREE BROTHERS
CHAPTER XXXIX. PREPARATIONS FOR THE COMBAT
CHAPTER XL. THE CHALLENGE
CHAPTER XLI. THE COMBAT
CHAPTER XLII. CONCLUSION.

List of Illustrations

Frontispiece
Seized the Bloody Bridle

He Began to Sing

Pog, Calm and Unmoved, Opened his Breast

This Parricidal Combat Continued

CHAPTER I. INTRODUCTION.

The travellers who now sail along the picturesque coasts within the district of the Bouches-du-Rhone—the peaceable inhabitants of shores perfumed by the orange-trees of Hyères, or the curious tourists, whom steamboats are continually transporting from Marseilles to Nice or to Gênes—are perhaps ignorant of the fact that two hundred years ago, under the flourishing administration of Cardinal Richelieu, the seashore of Provence was, almost every day, plundered by Algerian pirates, or other robbers from Barbary, whose audacity knew no bounds. Not only did they capture all the merchant vessels leaving port,—although these ships were armed for war,—but they landed under the cannon even of the forts, and carried away with impunity the inhabitant whose dwellings were not adequately armed and fortified.

These depredations increased to such a degree that in 1633 Cardinal Richelieu instructed M. de Séguiran, one of the most eminent men of that time, to visit the coast of Provence, for the purpose of ascertaining the best means of protecting them from the invasion of pirates.

We will quote a passage from the memoir of M. de Séguiran in order to give to the reader an exact idea of the scenes which are to follow.

“There is,” says he, “in the town of La Ciotat, a sentry-box which the consuls have had built on one of the points of the rock of Cape l’Aigle, in which they keep a man, very expert in navigation, on guard night and day, to watch for pirate vessels.

“Every evening, toward nightfall, the guard in the sentry-box of La Ciotat kindles his fire, which is continued by all the other similar sentry-boxes to the lighthouse of Bouc.

“This is a certain signal that there is not a corsair in the sea.

“If the said guard in the sentry-box has, on the contrary, recognised one, he makes two fires, as do all the others from Antibes to the lighthouse of Bouc, and this is accomplished in less than a half-hour of time.

“The inhabitants of La Ciotat confess that commerce has been better during the last few years. But as far as can be learned, it is ruined.

“The corsairs from Barbary in one year seized eighty vessels and put about fifty of their best sailors in chains.”

As we have said, so great was the terror that these Barbary pirates inspired dong the coast that every house was transformed into a fortress.

“Continuing our way,” says M. de Séguiran, “we arrived at the house of the lord of Boyer, gentleman of the king’s chamber, which house we found in a state of defence, in case of a descent of the corsairs,—having a terrace in front, facing the port, and on it twelve pieces of cast iron, several pieces of less calibre, and two swivel-guns, and in the said house four hundred pounds of powder, two hundred balls, two pairs of armour, and twelve muskets and short pikes.

“At Bormez and at St. Tropez,” says M. de Séguiran, further on, “commerce is so seriously injured that it cannot amount to ten thousand pounds, which is a consequence not only of the poverty of the inhabitants, but also of the invasions made by pirates, who enter their ports almost every day, so that very often vessels are compelled to touch port, in order that the men who man them may escape, or the inhabitants of the place arm themselves.

“At Martignes, a community which has suffered great losses in the persons of its inhabitants,—esteemed the best and most courageous seamen on the Mediterranean,—many of them have been made slaves by the corsairs of Algiers and Tunis, who practise their piracies more than ever, in the sight of the forts and fortresses of that province.”

The reader can imagine the contempt of these Barbary pirates for the forts on the coast, when he knows that the seashore was in such a deplorable state of defence that M. de Séguiran says, in another passage of his report to Cardinal Richelieu:

“The next day, January 24th, at seven o’clock in the morning, we went to the fortified castle named Cassis, belonging to the Lord Bishop of Marseilles, where we found that the entire garrison consisted of a porter only, a servant of the said bishop, who showed us the place, and where there were only two small pieces of ordnance, one of which had been emptied.”

Later, the Archbishop of Bordeaux made the same remark in reference to one of the strongest positions of Toulon.

“The first and most important of these forts,” says the warrior prelate in his report, “is an old tower where there are two batteries, in which fifty cannon and two hundred soldiers could be placed; there are good cannon within, but all are dismounted, and no ammunition, except what was sent by order of your Eminence [Cardinal Richelieu] fifteen days ago. The commandant is a simple, good man, who has for garrison only his

wife and her servant, and, according to what he says, he has not received a farthing in twenty years.”

Such was the state of things a few years before Cardinal Richelieu was invested by Louis XIII. with the office of grand master in chief and general superintendent of the navigation and commerce of France.

In studying attentively the aim, the progress, the methods, and results of the government of Richelieu,—in comparing, in a word, the point of departure of his administration with the imperious conclusion of absolute centralisation toward which it always tended, and which he attained so victoriously,—one is especially impressed by the character of the navy, by the incredible confusion and multiplicity of powers or rival rights which covered the seashore of the kingdom with their inextricable network.

When the cardinal was entrusted with the maritime interests of France, he could count but little upon the support of a weak, timid, restless, and capricious king; besides, he felt that France was secretly agitated by profound political and religious discords. Alone, opposing the exorbitant pretensions represented by the most powerful houses of France,—haughty and jealous guardians of the last traditions of feudal independence,—it was essential that the will of Richelieu should be indomitable, even obstinate, in order to crush beneath the level of administrative unity interests so numerous, so tenacious, and so rebellious! Such was, however, the work of this great minister.

There is no doubt that the ardent and sacred love of the general good, the noble, instinctive perception of the needs and progress of humanity,—those pure and serene aspirations of a DeWitt or a Franklin,—would not have sufficed the cardinal in undertaking and sustaining so fierce a struggle; perhaps, too, it was essential that he should feel himself animated by an unbridled, insatiable ambition, in order to cope with so many formidable antagonisms, to despise so many outcries, to prevent or punish so many dangerous revolts by prison, exile, or the scaffold, and at last achieve the end of gathering in his dying and sovereign hand all the resources of the state.

It was by this means—we think so, at least—that the genius of Richelieu, exalted by an unconquerable personality, succeeded in consummating this admirable centralisation of conflicting powers,—the constant aim and glorious end of his administration.

Unfortunately, he died at the time he was beginning to organise this authority so valiantly conquered.

If France, at the time of the cardinal’s death, presented still upon her surface the distinct evidences of a complete social overthrow, the soil was at least beginning to be freed from the thousand parasitical and devouring forces which had so long exhausted her strength.

So, one might say that almost always eminent men, although of diverse genius, are born in time to achieve the great labours of governments.

To Richelieu, that resolute and indefatigable clearer of untilled ground, succeeds Mazarin, who levelled the earth so profoundly ploughed,—then Colbert, who sowed it, and made it fruitful.

The imperial will of Richelieu appeared under one of its most brilliant aspects in the long struggle he was obliged to sustain, when he was entrusted with the organisation of the navy.

Up to that time, the governor-generals of Provence had always challenged the orders of the admiralty of France, styling themselves the “born admirals” of the Levant.

As such, they pretended to the maritime authority of the province; a few of these governors, such as the Counts of Tende and of Sommerives, and, at the period of which we speak, the Duke of Guise, had received from the king special letters which conferred upon them the title of admiral. These concessions, drawn from the weakness of the monarch, far from supporting the pretentions of the governor-generals, protested, on the contrary, against their usurpation, since these titles proved clearly that the command of sea and land ought to be separate.

Thus we see how divided and antagonistic were these rival powers, that the cardinal, in performing the functions of his office as grand master of navigation, wished imperiously to unite and centralise.

It can be seen by this rapid and cursory view, and by the extracts which we have borrowed from the report of M. de Séguiran, that a frightful disorder reigned in every department of power.

This disorder was the more increased by the perpetually recurring conflicts of jurisdiction, either through the governors of the province, or through the admiralties, or through the feudal claims of many gentlemen whose estates commanded a forest or a river.

In a word, abandonment or disorganisation of fortified places, ruin of commerce, robbery of the treasury, invasion of the seashore, terror of populations retiring into the interior of the country, in the hope of flying from the attacks of these Barbary pirates,—such was the grievous picture presented by Provence at the period in which this story opens,—a story of incredible facts which seem rather to belong to the barbarity of the middle ages than to the seventeenth century.

CHAPTER II. MISTRAON

About the end of the month of June, 1633, three distinguished travellers, arriving at Marseilles, established themselves in the best inn of the city. Their dress and accent were foreign. It was soon known that they were Muscovites, and although their attendants were not numerous, they lived in magnificent style. The eldest of the three travellers had called upon the Marshal of Vitry, Governor of Provence, then residing in Marseilles, and the marshal had returned his visit, a circumstance which greatly enhanced the dignity of the foreigners.

They employed their time in visiting the public build-ings, the port, and the docks. The preceptor of the youngest of these travellers, with the permission of the Marshal of Vitry, made careful inquiry of the consuls concerning the productions and commerce of Provence, the condition of the merchant service, its equipment and destination, evidently anxious, for the benefit of his pupil, to make a comparison between the growing

navy of the North and the navy of one of the most important provinces of France.

One day these Muscovites directed their journey toward Toulon.

The eldest of the three foreigners appeared to be fifty years old. His countenance presented a singular union of pride and severity. He was attired in black velvet; a long red beard covered his breast, and his hair, of the same colour, mingled with a few silver locks, showed beneath a Tartar cap trimmed with costly fur. His sea-green eyes, his sallow complexion, his hooked nose, his heavy eyebrows, and his thin lips gave him a hard and ironical expression.

He walked at some distance from his companions, and seldom spoke, and when he did it was only to hurl at them some bitter sarcasm.

The age and appearance of the two other Muscovites presented a striking contrast.

One, who seemed to be the preceptor of the younger, was about forty-five years old. He was short and fat, almost to obesity, although he seemed to have a vigorous constitution.

He wore a long robe of coarsely woven brown silk, after the manner of the Orientals, and an Asiatic cap; a Persian dagger of rare workmanship ornamented his girdle of orange-coloured silk. His fat, ruddy face, covered with a thick brown beard, and his thick lips breathed sensuality; his small, gray eyes sparkled with malice. Sometimes, in a shrill voice, he gave vent to some jest of audacious cynicism, frequently in Latin, and always borrowed from Petronius or Martial; so that the other two travellers, with allusion to the taste of their companion for the works of Petronius, had given him the name of one of the heroes of this writer, and called him Trimalcyon.

The pupil of this singular preceptor seemed at the most to be only twenty years of age. His person was of the ordinary size, but most elegant; his dress, like that of the Muscovites of the age, was a happy union of the fashions of the North and the East, arranged with perfect taste. His long brown hair fell in natural curls from a black cap, flat and without brim, set on one side and ornamented with a gold and purple band; the two ends of this band, finely embroidered and fringed, fell over the collar of a black woollen jacket, embossed with designs in purple and gold, and fastened to the hips by a cashmere shawl; a second jacket with loose sleeves, made of rich black Venetian fabric, and lined with scarlet taffeta, reached a little below the knees; large, loose Moorish trousers, hanging over red morocco buskins, completed the picturesque attire.

An observer would have been embarrassed in assigning a certain character to the countenance of this young man. His features were of perfect regularity; a young, silky beard shaded his chin and lips; his large eyes shone like black diamonds, under his straight brown eyebrows; the dazzling enamel of his teeth scarcely equalled the deep carmine of his lips; his complexion was of a soft brown pallor, and his slender figure seemed to combine strength and elegance.

But this physiognomy, as charming as it was expressive and variable, reflected in turn the different impressions which the two companions of this young man made on his mind.

If Trimalcyon uttered some gross and licentious jest, the young man, whom we will call Erebus, applauded it with a mocking, sneering smile, or, perhaps, replied in words which surpassed the cynicism of his preceptor.

If the nobleman, Pog, a silent and morose man, made a remark of unusual bitterness, suddenly the nostrils of Erebus would dilate, his upper lip curl disdainfully, and his whole face express the most contemptuous sarcasm.

On the contrary, if Erebus did not come under these two fatal influences, or an absurd boasting did not make him appear the advocate of vice, his face would become sweet and serene,—an attractive dignity beamed from his beautiful features; for cynicism and irony only passed over his soul,—noble and pure instincts soon resumed their sway, as a pure fountain regains its clearness when the disturbing element no longer troubles its crystal waters. Such were these three distinguished persons.

They were walking, as we have said, from Marseilles to Toulon.

Erebus, silent and thoughtful, walked a few steps in front of his companions. The road plunged into the defiles of Ollioules, and hid itself in the midst of these solitary rocks.

Erebus had just reached a small open space, where he could overlook a great part of the route, which at this point was very steep and formed a sort of elbow around the eminence upon which the young man stood. Interrupted in his reverie by the sound of singing in the distance, Erebus stopped to listen.

The voice came nearer and nearer.

It was a woman’s voice, with a resonance of wonderful power and beauty.

The air and the words she sang expressed an unaffected melancholy. Soon, at a sudden turn of the road, Erebus could see, without being seen, a company of travellers; they quietly accommodated themselves to the step of their saddle-horses, that climbed the steep road with difficulty.

If the coast of Provence was often desolated by pirates, the interior of the country was as little safe, for the narrow passes of Ollioules, solitudes almost impenetrable, had many times served as a refuge for brigands. Erebus was not astonished to see the little caravan advance with a sort of military circumspection.

The danger did not seem to be imminent, for the young girl continued to sing, but the cavalier who led the march took the precaution to adjust his musket on his left thigh, and at frequent intervals to test his firearms, leaving behind him a little cloud of bluish smoke.

This man, a military figure in the full strength of manhood, wore an old leather jerkin, a large gray cap, scarlet breeches, heavy boots, and rode a small white horse; a hanger or hunting-knife was fastened to his belt, and a tall black hound, with long hair and a leather collar bristling with iron points, walked in front of his horse.

About thirty steps behind this forward sentinel came an old man and a young girl.

The latter was mounted on an ambling nag, as black as jet, elegantly caparisoned with a silk net and a blue velvet cloth; the silver mounting of the bridle glittered in the rays of the setting sun; the reins, scarcely held by the young girl, fell carelessly upon the neck of the nag, whose gentle and regular step by no means

interrupted the harmonious measure of the beautiful traveller’s song.

She wore right royally the charming riding-habit so often reproduced by painters in the reign of Louis XIII. On her head was a large black hat with blue feathers, which fell backward on a wide collar of Flanders lace; her close-fitting coat of pearl-gray taffeta, with large, square basques, had a long skirt of the same material and colour, both skirt and waist ornamented with delicate lace-work of sky-blue silk, whose pale shade matched admirably the colour of the habit If one ever doubted the fact that the Greek type had been preserved in all its purity among a few of the families of Marseilles and lower Provence, since the colonisation of the Phoenicians,—the rest of the population recalling more the Arabian and Ligurian physiognomy,—the features of this young girl would have presented a striking proof of the transmission of the antique beauty in all its original perfection.

Nothing could be more agreeable, more delicate, or purer than the exquisite lines of her lovely countenance; nothing more limpid than the blue of her large eyes, fringed with long black lashes; nothing whiter than the ivory of her queenly brow, around which played the light chestnut curls that contrasted beautifully with the perfect arch of eyebrows as black as jet, and soft as velvet; the proportions of her well-rounded form resembled Hebe, or the Venus of Praxiteles, rather than the Venus of Milo.

As she sang she yielded herself to the measured step of her steed, and every movement of her charming and graceful body revealed new treasures of beauty.

Her small, arched foot, encased in a boot of cordovan leather, laced to the ankle, appeared from time to time beneath the ample folds of her long skirt, while her hand, as small as that of a child, gloved in embroidered chamois-skin, carelessly played with the switch by which she urged the gait of her nag.

It would be difficult to picture the frankness which shone from the pure brow of this young girl, the serenity of her large blue eyes, bright with happiness and hope and youth, the unsophisticated sweetness of her smile, and, above all, the look of solicitude and filial veneration which she often directed toward the aged but robust father who accompanied her.

The eager, hardy, and joyous air of this old gentleman contrasted not a little with his white moustache, and the vinous colour of his cheeks announced the fact that he was not indifferent to the seductions of the generous wines of Provence.

A black cap with a red plume, a scarlet doublet trimmed with silver, and mantle of the same, a shoulder-strap of richly embroidered silk, supporting a long sword, and high boots of white sheepskin, with gilded spurs, testified to the quality of Raimond V., Baron des Anbiez, chief of one of the most ancient houses of Provence, and related or allied to the most illustrious baronial houses of Castellane, Baux, Frans, and Villeneuve.

The road which the little caravan followed was so narrow that it permitted two horses to walk abreast with difficulty; a third person rode a few steps behind the baron and his daughter. Two servants, well-mounted and well-armed, closed the march.

This third person, a young man of about twenty-five years, tall and well-made, with a handsome and amiable face, managed his horse with grace and ease. He wore a green hunting-habit, trimmed with gold lace.

His face expressed an indescribable delight in the contemplation of Mlle. Reine des Anbiez, who, without discontinuing her song, every now and then turned to him with a charming glance, to which the Chevalier Honorât de Berrol responded with all the ardour of an infatuated and betrothed lover.

The baron listened to his daughter’s singing with joy and paternal pride; his genial and venerable countenance beamed with happiness.

His contemplative felicity was, nevertheless, not a little disturbed by the sudden jumps of his little horse, brought from the island of Camargne,—a bay stallion with long mane and a long black tail, a wicked eye and ferocious disposition, full of fire, and evidently possessed with a desire to unhorse his master and regain his liberty in the solitary swamps and wild heath where he was born.

Unfortunately for the designs of Mistraon,—named for the impetuous northwest wind, on account of the rapidity of his gait and his bad character,—the baron was an excellent horseman.

Although suffering from the consequences of a wound in the hip, received in the civil war, Raimond V., seated on one of those ancient saddles which in our day we call picket-saddles, answered these vicious caprices of the untamable animal with sound blows of whip and spur. Mistraon, with that patient and diabolical sagacity which horses carry to the point of genius, after several vain attempts, stolidly waited a more favourable occasion for dismounting his rider.

Reine des Anbiez continued to sing.

Like a child, she amused herself by waking the echoes in the gorges of Ollioules, making by turn loud and soft modulations, which would have put a nightingale to despair.

She had just made a most brilliant and musical arpeggio, when suddenly, anticipating the echo, a male voice, sweet and melodious, repeated the young girl’s song with incredible exactness.

For some moments these two charming voices, meeting by chance in a marvellous union, were repeated by the many echoes of this profound solitude.

Reine stopped singing, and blushed as she looked up at her father.

The baron, astonished, turned to Honorât de Berrol, and said, with his habitual exclamation: “Manjour! chevalier, who in the devil is imitating the voice of an angel?”

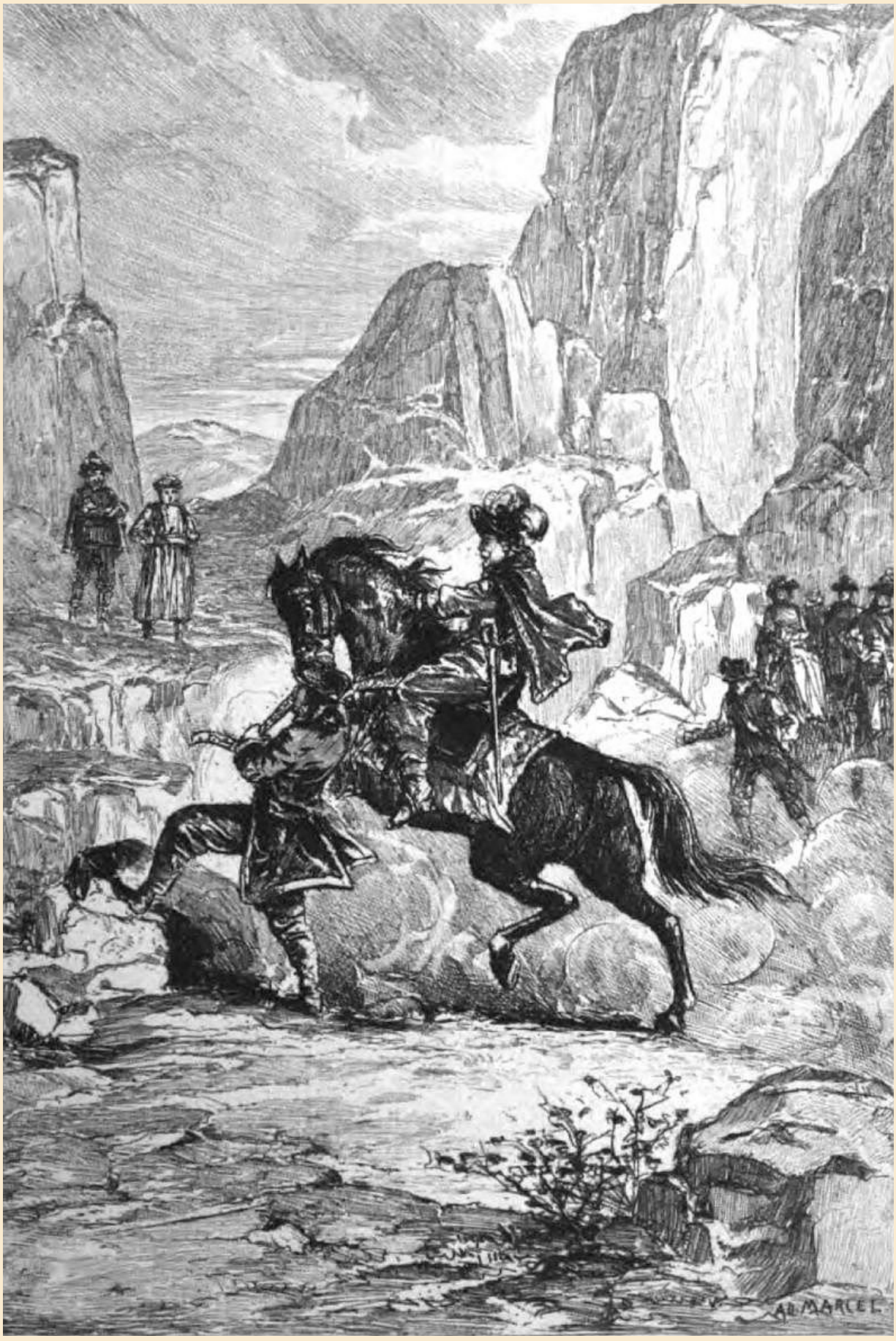
In the first moment of surprise the baron had unfortunately let the reins fall on Mistraon’s neck.

For some time the deceitful animal kept his step with a gravity and dignity worthy of a bishop’s mule, then in two vigorous bounds, and before the baron had time to recover himself, he climbed up an escarpment which shut in the road.

Unhappily, the horse had made such an effort in ascending this steep acclivity, that he fell upon his head, the reins went over his ears, and floated at random. All this happened in less time than is required to write it.

The baron, an excellent master of horse, although not a little surprised by the adventure of Mistraon, reseated himself in the saddle; his first effort was to try to seize the reins,—he could not reach them. Then, notwithstanding his courage, he shuddered with horror, as he saw himself at the mercy of an unbridled horse that in his frenzy was trying to leap the precipitous edge of a torrent bed.

This deep and wide gulf lay parallel with the road, and was separated from it only by a space of fifty feet.



Seated in his saddle, and by reason of his wound unable to get out of it before the horse could plunge into the abyss, the old man gave his last thought to his God and his daughter,—made a vow of a weekly mass and an annual pilgrimage to the Chapel of Notre Dame de la Garde, and prepared to die.

From the height where he was standing, Erebus saw the danger of the baron; he saw that he was separated from him by the deep bed of the torrent, ten or twelve feet wide, toward which the horse was plunging.

With a movement more rapid than thought, and an almost desperate leap, Erebus cleared the abyss, and

rolled under the animal's feet The baron screamed with terror,—he believed his saviour would be carried over into the golf, for, notwithstanding the pain and fright which this violent jerk had given him, Mistraon was not able to arrest the impetuosity of his spring, and dragged Erebus several steps.

The latter, endowed with extraordinary strength and admirable presence of mind, had, as he fell, wound the reins around his wrists, while the horse, overcome by the enormous weight which hung upon him, seated himself on his haunches, having exhausted the impulse which instigated such activity.

Scarcely ten steps separated the baron from the edge of the gulf, when Erebus slowly raised himself, seized the bloody bridle-bit with one hand, and with the other threw over the smoking neck of Mistraon the reins which he offered to the old man.

All this transpired so rapidly that Reine des Anbiez and her betrothed, climbing the escarpment, arrived near the baron without having suspected the frightful danger he had just escaped.

Erebus, having replaced the reins in the old man's hands, picked up his cap, shook the dust from his clothes, and readjusted his hair, and, save the unnatural flush upon his cheeks, nothing in his appearance revealed the part he had taken in this event.

"My God, father, why did you climb this steep? What imprudence!" cried Reine, excited but not frightened, as she bounded lightly from her nag, without seeing the unknown person standing on the other side of the baron's horse.

Then, seeing the pallor and emotion of the old man as he made a painful descent from his horse, the young girl perceived the danger which had threatened the baron, and throwing herself into his arms, she exclamed:

"Father, father, what has happened to you?" "Reine, my darling child," said the lord of Anbiez with a broken voice, embracing his daughter with effusion. "Ah, how frightful death would have been,—never to see you again!"

Reine withdrew herself suddenly from her father's arms, put her two hands on the old man's shoulders, and looked at him with a bewildered air.

"But for him," said the baron, cordially pressing in his own hands the hand of Erebus, who had stepped forward, gazing with admiration on the beauty of Reine, "but for this young man, but for his courageous sacrifice, I should have been dashed to pieces in this gulf."

In a few words the old man told his daughter and Honorât de Berrol how the stranger had saved him from certain death.

Many times during this recital the blue eyes of Reine met the black eyes of Erebus; if she slowly turned her glance away to fix it on her father with adoration, it was not because the manner of this young man was bold or presumptuous; on the contrary, a tear moistened his eyes, and his charming face expressed the most profound emotion. He contemplated this pathetic scene with a sublime pride. When the old man opened his arms to him with paternal affection, he threw himself into them with inexpressible delight, pressed him many times to his heart, as if he had been attracted to the old gentleman by a secret sympathy, as if this young heart, still noble and generous, had anticipated the throbs of another noble and generous heart.

Suddenly Trimalcyon and Pog, who, twenty steps distant, had witnessed this scene from the height of the rock where they were resting, cried out to their young companion some words in a foreign language.

Erebus started, the baron, his daughter, and Honorât de Berrol turned their heads quickly.

Trimalcyon looked at the baron's daughter with a sort of vulgar and sneering admiration.

The strange physiognomy of these two men surprised the baron, while his daughter and Honorât regarded them with an instinctive terror.

A skilful painter would have found wealth of material in this scene. Imagine a profound solitude in the midst of tremendous rocks of reddish granite, whose summit only was lighted by the last rays of the sun. On the first plane, almost on the edge of the torrent bed, the baron with his left arm around Reine, grasping in his right hand the hand of Erebus, and fixing an anxious, surprised look on Pog and Trimalcyon.

These two, on the second plane, the other side of the golf, standing up side by side, with their arms crossed, outlining a characteristic silhouette upon the azure sky, distinctly perceptible across the ragged edges of the rocks.

Lastly, a few steps from the baron, stood Honorât de Berrol, holding his horse and Reine's nag, and farther still the two servants, one of whom was occupied in readjusting the harness of Mistraon.

At the first words of the strangers, the beautiful features of Erebus expressed a sort of distressed impatience; he seemed to be undergoing an inward struggle; his face, which awhile ago was radiant with noble passions, gradually grew sombre, as if he were submitting to a mysterious and irresistible influence.

But when Trimalcyon, in a shrill and bantering voice, again uttered a few words, as he designated Reine by an insolent glance, when the lord Pog had added a biting sarcasm in the same language, unintelligible to the other actors in this scene, the features of Erebus completely changed their expression.

With an almost disdainful gesture, he roughly repulsed the hand of the old man, and fixed an impudent stare on Mlle, des Anbiez. This time the girl blushed and dropped her eyes.

This sudden metamorphosis in the manners of the stranger was so striking that the baron recoiled a step. Nevertheless, after a silence of a few seconds, he said to Erebus, in a voice deeply moved:

"How shall I acknowledge, sir, the service you have just rendered me?"

"Oh, sir," added Reine, overcoming the peculiar emotion which the last look on the part of Erebus had inspired, "how shall we ever be able to prove our gratitude to you?"

"By giving me a kiss, and this pin as a remembrance of you," replied the impudent young man.

He had scarcely uttered these words, when his mouth touched Reine's virginal lips, and his bold hand tore away the little pin enamelled with silver, which was fastened in the young girl's waist.

After this double larceny, Erebus, with wonderful agility, again cleared the gulf behind him, and rejoined his companions, with whom he soon disappeared behind a mass of rocks.

Reine's fright and emotion were so violent that she turned deathly pale, her knees gave way, and she fell fainting in the arms of her father.

The next day after this scene, the three Muscovites took leave of the marshal, Duke of Vitry, departed from Marseilles with their attendants, and proceeded on their way to Languedoc.

CHAPTER III. THE WATCHMAN.

The gulf of La Ciotat, equally distant from Toulon and Marseilles, lies in between the two capes of Alon and l'Aigle. The latter rises on the west of the bay.

By order of the council of the town of La Ciotat, a sentry-box for the use of a watchman had been erected on the summit of this promontory. It was the duty of this man to watch for the coming of pirates from Barbary, and to signal their approach by kindling a fire which could be seen all along the coast.

The scene we are about to describe occurred at the foot of this sentry-box about the middle of the month of December, 1633.

An impetuous northwest wind, the terrible *mistraon* of Provence, was blowing with fury. The sun, half-obscured by great masses of gray clouds, was slowly sinking in the waves, whose immense dark green curve was broken by a wide zone of reddish light, which diminished in proportion as the black clouds extended over the horizon.

The summit of Cape l'Aigle, where the watchman's box was situated, commanded the entire circumference of the gulf; the last limestone spurs of the whitish mountains of Sixfours, and Notre Dame de la Garde, descending like an amphitheatre to the edge of the gulf, here joined themselves to little cliffs formed of fine white sand, which, lifted up by the south wind, invaded a part of the coast. A little farther, on the declivity of a series of hills, shone the lights of several quicklime ovens, whose black smoke increased the gloomy aspect of the sky. Almost at the foot of the cape of l'Aigle, at the entrance of the bay, backed up against the mountains, could be seen, as the crow flies, the island Verte and the little town La Ciotat, belonging to the diocese of Marseilles and the jurisdiction of Aix.

The town formed almost a trapezium, the base of which rested on the port This port held a dozen small vessels, called polacres and caravels, laden with wines and oil, waiting for favourable weather to return to the coast of Italy. About thirty boats designed for sardine fishing, called *essanguis* by the inhabitants of Provence, were moored in a little bay of the gulf, named the cove of La Fontaine. The belfries of the churches and of the convent of the Ursulines were the only things which broke the monotony of the dwellings, almost entirely covered with tiles.

On the hillsides which commanded the town, fields of olive-trees could be seen, several clusters of green oak and hillocks of vines, and at the extreme horizon the pine-covered summits of the chain of Roquefort mountains.

At the eastern limit of the bay of La Ciotat, between the points Carbonières and Seques, the ancient Roman ruins, called Torrentum, could be distinguished, and farther and farther toward the north several windmills, thrown here and there upon the heights, served as seamarks to the vessels which came to anchor in the gulf.

Outside, and west of the cape of L'Aigle, almost upon the edge of the sea, rose a fortified mansion named Les Anbiez, of which we will speak later.

The summit of the cape of L'Aigle formed a tableland fifty feet in circumference. Almost everywhere was the same precipitous rock of yellowish sandstone, variegated with brown; sea-broom, heather, and clover crossed it here and there; the watchman's sentry-box was erected under the cover of two stunted oaks and a gigantic pine, which had braved the fury of the tempests for two or three centuries.

When the wind was very violent, although the promontory was more than three hundred feet above the level of the sea, one could hear the muttering thunder of the surf, as the waves broke themselves against its base.

The watchman's box, solidly built of large blocks of stone, was covered over with slabs taken from the same quarry, so that the massive construction was able to resist the most violent winds.

The principal opening of this cabin looked toward the south, and from it the horizon was completely in view.

Near the door was a wide and deep square kiln, made of iron grating placed on layers of masonry. This kiln was kept filled with vine branches and fagots of olive-wood, ready to produce a tall and brilliant flame, which could be seen at a great distance. The furniture of this cabin was very poor, with the exception of a carved ebony casket, ornamented with the coat of arms and the cross of Malta, which treasure contrasted singularly with the modest appearance of this little habitation. A walnut chest contained a few marine books, quite eagerly sought after by the learned of our day, among others "The Guide of the Old Harbour Pilot" and "The Torch of the Sea." From the rough lime-plastered walls hung a cutlass, a battle-axe, and a wheel-lock musket.

Two coarse, illuminated engravings, representing St. Elmo, the patron of mariners, and the portrait of the grand master of the hospitable order of St. John of Jerusalem, then existing, were nailed above the ebony casket. To conclude the inventory of furniture, on the floor near the fireplace, where a large log of olive wood was slowly burning, a rush matting, covered over with an old Turkish carpet, formed a moderately good bed, for the inhabitant of this isolated retreat was not wholly indifferent to comfort.

The watchman on the cape of L'Aigle was attentively examining all the points of the horizon, with the aid of a Galileo spy-glass, at that time known by the name of long-view. The setting sun pierced the thick curtain of clouds, and with its last rays gilded the red trunk of the tall pine, the rough ridges of the little cabin walls, and the corners of the brown rock upon which the watchman was leaning.

The calm, intelligent face of this man was now lighted with intense interest.

His complexion, burned by the wind and tanned by the sun, was the colour of brick, and here and there showed deep wrinkles. The hood of his long-sleeved mantle, hiding his white hair, shaded his black eyes and eyebrows; his long, gray moustache fell considerably below his lower lip, where it mingled with a heavy beard, which covered the whole of his chin.

A red and green woollen girdle fastened his sailor trousers around his hips; straps supported his leather gaiters above his knees; a bag of richly embroidered stuff, hanging from his belt by the side of a long knife in its sheath, contained his tobacco, while his cachim-babaou, or long Turkish pipe with an earthen bowl, lay against the outer wall of his cabin.

For ten years Bernard Peyrou had been watchman on the cape of L'Aigle. He had recently been elected assignee of the overseer fishers of La Ciotat, who held their session every Sunday when there was matter for consideration. The watchman had served as patron seaman on the galleys of Malta for more than twenty years, never in all his navigations having left the Commander Pierre des Anbiez, of the venerable nation of Provence, and brother of Raimond V., Baron des Anbiez, who lived on the coast in the fortified house of which we have spoken. On each of these voyages to France the commander never failed to visit the watchman. Their interviews lasted a long time, and it was observed that the habitual melancholy of the commander increased after these conversations.

Peyrou, a lifelong sufferer from serious wounds, and unfit for active service on the sea, had been, at the recommendation of his old captain, chosen watchman by the council of the town of La Ciotat. When on Sunday he presided at the consultation of the overseers, an experienced sailor supplied his place at the sentry-box. Naturally endowed with a sense of right and justice, and living ten years in solitude, between the sky and the sea, Peyrou had added much to his intelligence by meditation. Already possessing the nautical and astronomical knowledge necessary to an officer on a galley of the seventeenth century, he continued to learn by a constant study of the great phenomena of nature always before his eyes.

Thanks to his experience, and his habit of comparing cause and effect, no one knew better than himself how to predict the beginning, the duration, and the end of the storms which prevailed on the coast.

He announced the calm and the tempest, the disastrous hurricanes of the *mistraon*, as the northwester was named in Provence, the gentle, fruitful rains of the *miegion*, or south wind, and the violent tornado of the *labechades*, or wind from the southwest; in fact, the form of the clouds, the soft or brilliant azure of the sky, the various colours of the sea, and all those vague, deep, and undefined noises which occasionally spring up in the midst of the silence of the elements were for him so many evident signs, from which he deduced the most infallible conclusions.

Never a captain of a merchantman, never a cockswain of a bark, put to sea without having consulted Master Peyrou.

Men ordinarily surround with a sort of superstitious reverence and halo those who live apart from the rest of the world.

Peyrou was no exception to the rule.

As his predictions about the weather were almost invariably realised, the inhabitants of La Ciotat and the environs soon persuaded themselves that a man who knew so much of the things in the sky could not be ignorant of the things on the earth.

Without passing exactly as a sorcerer, the hermit of the cape of L'Aigle, consulted in so many important circumstances, became the depositary of many secrets.

A dishonest man would have cruelly abused this power, but Peyrou took advantage of it to encourage, sustain, and defend the good, and to accuse, confound, and intimidate the wicked.

A practical philosopher, he felt that his opinion, his predictions, and his threats would lose much if their authority was not supported by a certain cabalistic display; hence, although he did so with reluctance, he accompanied each opinion with a mysterious formula.

The excellent spy-glass was a marvellous aid to his power of divination. Not only did he turn it to the horizon in order to discover the chebecs and piratical vessels of Barbary, but he directed it to the little town of La Ciotat,—on the houses, the fields, and the beach,—and thus surprised many secrets and mysteries, and by this means increased the reverence he inspired.

Peyrou, however, was altogether above the vulgar sorcerer by his entire disinterestedness. Had he some honest poverty to befriend, he ordered one of his wealthier clients to put a moderate offering in some secret spot which he indicated; the poor client, informed by Peyrou, went to the spot and found the mysterious alms.

Instigated by a blind zeal, the priests of the diocese of Marseilles wished to criminate the mysterious life of Peyrou, but the surrounding population immediately assumed such a menacing attitude, and the town council bore such testimony to the excellence of the watchman's character, that he was permitted to live his solitary life in peace.

His only companion in this profound retreat was a female eagle which, two years before, had come to lay her eggs in one of the hollows of the inaccessible rocks which bordered the coast. The male bird had no doubt been killed, as the watchman never saw him.

Peyrou gave food to the young eagles; by degrees the mother grew accustomed to the sight of him, and the year after, she returned in perfect confidence to lay in the nest which Peyrou had prepared for her in a neighbouring rock.

Often the eagle perched on the branches of the tall pine which shaded the watchman's house, and sometimes walked with a heavy and awkward step on the little platform.

Upon that day, Brilliant, for so the watchman had named the noble bird, seduced him from his reverie. She tumbled down from the topmost branch of the pine, and with half-open wings ran up to her friend with the ungraceful, waddling gait of a bird, of prey. Her plumage, black and brown on the wings, was ash-coloured and spotted with white on the body and neck; her formidable talons, covered with thick and shining scales, terminated in three claws and a sharp spur of smooth, black horn.

Brilliant looked up at the watchman, lifting high her flat, gray head, where glittered two bold round eyes, whose iris dilated in a transparent cornea, the colour of topaz.

Her beak, strong and bluish like burnished steel, disclosed, when it opened, a slender tongue of pale red.

To attract the watchman's attention, the eagle gently bit the end of his shoe, made of fawn leather.

Peyrou stooped and caressed Brilliant, who ruffled her feathers and uttered a discordant and broken cry.

But suddenly, hearing a step in the narrow foot-path which led to the cabin, the eagle lifted herself, uttered a long barking cry, stretched her powerful wings, hovered a moment over the colossal pine, and like an arrow shot into space. Soon nothing could be seen but a black spot on the deep blue sky.

CHAPTER IV. STEPHANETTE.

A young girl with light complexion, black eyes, white teeth, and a bright and mischievous smile, appeared, and stopped a moment on the last step of the stair of rocks which led to the house of the watchman.

She wore the graceful and picturesque costume of the girls of Provence: a brown petticoat and red waist, with wide basques and tight sleeves. Her little felt hat left visible the beautiful nape of her neck and long tresses of black hair rolled under a scarlet silk net.

Orphan and foster-sister to Mlle. Reine des Anbiez, Stephanette served her in the duties of a companion, and was treated more as a friend than a servant.

Stephanette's heart was good, true, and grateful, her conduct irreproachable. Her only fault was a mischievous village coquetry, which was the despair of the fishers and captains of small craft in the gulf of La Ciotat, nor will we except from the number of these interesting victims her betrothed, Captain Luquin Trinquetaille, captain of the polacre, *Holy Terror to the Moors, by the Grace of God*,—a long and significant appellation, inscribed at full length on the stern of Captain Trinque-taille's boat.

Gallantly armed with six swivel-guns, it was the business of the polacre to escort vessels from La Ciotat which, forced by their commerce to have free intercourse with the coasts of Italy, dreaded the attacks of pirates.

Stephanette shared the veneration that the watchman on the cape of l'Aigle inspired among the inhabitants of the neighbourhood. She trembled as she approached him with downcast eyes.

"May God keep you, my child!" said Peyrou, affectionately, for he loved her as he loved all who belonged to the family of his old captain, the Commander des Anbiez.

"May St. Magnus and St. Elzear aid you, Master Peyrou!" replied Stephanette, with her most beautiful curtsey.

"Thank you for your good wishes, Stephanette. How are monseigneur and Mlle. Reine, your young and beautiful mistress? Has she recovered from her fright of the other day?"

"Yes, Master Peyrou; mademoiselle is better, although she is still quite pale. But was ever such a miscreant seen? To dare kiss mademoiselle! and that, too, in the presence of monseigneur and her betrothed! But people say these Muscovites are barbarians. They are more savage and more of Antichrist than the Turks themselves, are they not, Master Peyrou? They will be damned twice in a doubly hot fire."

Without replying to Stephanette's theological argument, the watchman said to her: "Does not monseigneur resent this breach of good manners?"

"He! Why, Master Peyrou, as true as Rosseline is a saint in Paradise, the same day that monseigneur came so near falling into the chasm of Ollioules, he supped as merrily as if he had just returned from a patronal feast. Indeed, it is so,—and he drank two cups of Spanish wine to the health of the young miscreant! And would you believe it, Master Peyrou, he is never tired of boasting of the courage and agility of the Muscovite! Yes, he said: 'Manjour! instead of stealing the pin and kiss like a thief, why did he not ask for them,—my daughter Reine would have given him a kiss, and with a good heart too!' And ever since that day monseigneur is constantly saying, 'Really, these Muscovites are strange companions.' But for all that, M. Honorât de Berrol turns red with indignation whenever he hears this impudent fellow, who stole a kiss from his betrothed, mentioned. And another strange thing, Master Peyrou, is that monseigneur is not willing to get rid of that wicked little horse, Mistraon, that has been the cause of all the mischief; he rides it in preference to any other. Now say, Master Peyrou, don't you think that is tempting Providence?"

"Have these strangers departed from Marseilles?" asked the watchman, without replying to Stephanette.

"Yes, Master Peyrou, they say they have taken the route to Languedoc, after having made a visit to the Marshal of Vitry. They say, too, that this wicked duke is quite worthy of being acquainted with such rascals. Ah, if monseigneur had his way, the marshal would not be governor of Provence very long. The baron cannot hear him mentioned without flying into a passion,—such a passion! you have no idea of it, Master Peyrou."
"Yes, my child, I have seen the baron, at the time of the revolt of the Cascabeoux, act as his father did at the time of the revolt of the Razats, under Henry III., and again at the time of the rebellion of the Gascons against the Duke d'Epemon, under the last reign. Yes, yes; I know that Raimond V. hates his enemies as much as he loves his friends."

"You are right, Master Peyrou, and monseigneur's anger against the governor has increased since this recorder of the admiralty of Toulon, Master Isnard, who they say is so wicked, has been visiting the castles of the diocese by order of his Eminence, the cardinal. Monseigneur says these visits are an outrage upon the nobility, and that the Marshal of Vitry is a scoundrel. Between us, I am of the same opinion, since he protects shameless Muscovites who have the insolence to kiss young girls when they are not expecting it."

"My opinion is, Stephanette, that you are very severe upon young men who kiss young girls," said the old

man with mock gravity, “which proves that you are naturally ferocious,—but what do you want of me?”

“Master Peyrou,” said the girl, with an air of embarrassment, “I want to know if the weather promises a good passage to Nice, and if one could leave this port with safety.”

“You wish, then, to go to Nice, my child?”

“No, not I exactly, but a brave and honest sailor who—who—”

“Ah, I understand, I understand,” said the watchman, interrupting Stephanette’s stammering; “you mean young Bernard, patron of the tartan, the *Sacred Balm*.”

“No, no, Master Peyrou, I assure you I do not mean him,” said the girl, turning as red as a cherry.

“Come, come, you need not blush like that,” and the watchman added, in a lower tone: “Was the beautiful bouquet of green thyme, that he tied three days ago to your window bar with rose coloured ribbon, to your taste?”

“A bouquet of green thyme! What bouquet are you talking about, Master Peyrou?”

The watchman held up a threatening finger to Stephanette and said: “What! last Thursday, at daybreak, did not the patron Bernard carry a bouquet to your window?”

“Wait,—let me see, Master Peyrou,” said the young girl, with an air of recalling something to her memory; “was it then yesterday that, in opening my casement, I found something like a bundle of dried herbs?”

“Stephanette, Stephanette! you cannot deceive the old watchman. Listen; patron Bernard had hardly descended, when you came and untied the rose coloured ribbon, and put the bouquet in a pretty terra-cotta vase, and you have watered it every morning; yesterday was the only day you neglected it, and it has withered—”

The young girl stared at the watchman in utter amazement. This revelation seemed like sorcery.

The old man looked at her with a mischievous expression, and continued:

“So it is not the patron Bernard who is going to Nice?”

“No, Master Peyrou.” “Then it must be the pilot Terzarol.”

“The pilot Terzarol!” cried Stephanette, clasping her hands, “may Our Lady help me, if I know anything about this pilot going to sea.”

“Well, well, my child, I was mistaken about Bernard, for it is true that you have allowed his bouquet to wither, but I am not mistaken about Terzarol, because yesterday, from the height of the castle turret, you passed more than two hours looking at the bold pilot throwing nets.” “I, Master Peyrou, I?”

“Your very self, Stephanette, and at each cast of the net, Terzarol waved his cap in triumph, and you waved your handkerchief in congratulation; he ought to have made a good haul, so enthusiastically did he labour,—you come then to ask me if Terzarol will have a good voyage to Nice?”

This time Stephanette began to feel afraid, as she realised how much the watchman knew.

“Ah, my faith, Master Peyrou, you know everything!” cried she, innocently.

The old man smiled, shook his head, and replied in the words of the Provencal proverb, “*Experienco passo scienco*,—experience passes science.”

The poor child, fearing that the watchman’s marvellous discoveries concerning her innocent coquetry might give him a bad opinion of her, cried, with tears in her eyes, as she clasped her hands:

“Ah, Master Peyrou, I am an honest girl!”

“I know it, my child,” said the watchman, pressing her hand affectionately. “I know that you are worthy of the protection and affection which your noble and kind mistress shows you. It is only girlish mischief and love of fun which tempts you to turn the heads of these young men, and make poor Luquin Trinquetaille jealous, Luquin, who loves you so much and so faithfully. But listen, Stephanette, you know the proverb of the vinedressers in our valleys: *Paou vignose ben tengudos*,—have few vines and cultivate them well. Instead of scattering your coquetries, concentrate all your charms upon your betrothed, who will prove a good and honest husband for you,—that would be far better,—and then, you see, my child, these young men are quick, inflammable, and courageous; self-love comes in, rivalry exasperates, a combat follows, blood flows, and then —” “Ah, Master Peyrou, then I should die of despair. All of this is folly. I was wrong, I admit, to amuse myself with the admiring glances of Bernard and Terzarol, for I love Luquin and he loves me; we are going to be married the same day as Mlle, and M. Honorât de Berrol,—the baron desires it. Really, Master Peyrou, you, who find out everything, ought to know that I think of nobody but Luquin. It is about his voyage that I have come to consult you. Master Talebard-Talebardon, consul of La Ciotat, is about to send to Nice three tartans laden with merchandise. He has made a bargain with Luquin to escort them; do you think, Master Peyrou, the passage will be good? Can he put to sea with safety? Is there no pirate in sight? Oh, if a corsair is in sight, or a storm threatens, he will not depart!”

“Oh, so, so, my child, do you think you have so much influence over this bold artilleryman? You are mistaken, I think. What! keep him in port when there is danger in going out? You might as well try to anchor a ship with a thread from your distaff.”

“Oh, be quiet, Master Peyrou,” said Stephanette, regaining her composure; “to keep Luquin near me, I need not tell him of winds or tempests or of pirates. I will only tell him that I will give Bernard a ribbon to put on his lance at the next tilting-match, or that I will ask the pilot Terzarol for a good place at one of the windows of his mother’s house, that I may go with Dulceline, the housekeeper at Maison-Forte, to see the wrestling and leaping over the cross-bar in La Ciotat; then, I swear to you, Master Peyrou, Luquin will not go out of the gulf, not if the consul, Talebard-Talebardon, covered the deck of his polacre with pieces of silver.”

“Ah, what a cunning gipsy you are!” said the old man, smiling. “I would never have thought of such tricks. Alas, alas! *Buou viel fa rego drecho*,—the old ox makes a straight furrow. But come, now, Stephanette, make yourself easy; you need not rob your waist of a ribbon for Bernard nor ask for a window at the Terzarol house: the wind blows from the west, and if it does not change at sunset, and if Martin-Bouffo, the deep grotto of roaring waters in the gulf, says nothing tomorrow at daybreak Luquin will be able to go out of the gulf and

sail for Nice without fear; as to the passage, I will answer for that; as to the pirates, I am going to give you a charm that is sure in its effect, if not to confuse them entirely, at least to prevent their carrying off the *Holy Terror to the Moors, by the Grace of God.*"

"Ah, how thankful I will be, Master Peyrou!" said the young girl, as she assisted him to rise, for he walked with considerable pain.

The old man went into his cabin, took a little bag covered with cabalistic signs and gave it to Stephanette, instructing her to order Luquin to conform scrupulously to the directions he would find in it.

"How good you are, Master Peyrou! How shall I reward—"

"By promising me, my child, henceforth to allow Bernard's bouquets to dry on the bars of your window,—then, believe me, there will be no more of them, because a bouquet that is watered makes many others grow. Ah! and you must promise me, too, not to encourage pilot Terzarol's fishing, because to please you he would destroy all the fish in the bay, and he would finish by being called before the overseer fishers, and I would be obliged to condemn him. By the way, how goes on the discussion between monseigneur and the consuls, on the right of fishing in the cove,—does Raimond V. still keep his seines there?"

"Yes, Master Peyrou, and he will not take them away; he says that the right of fishing there belongs to him up to the rocks of Castrembaou, and that he will not yield that right to anybody."

"Listen, Stephanette: your mistress has her father's ear; do you persuade her to counsel him to arrange it amicably with the consuls: that will be the best for all parties."

"Yes, Master Peyrou, make yourself easy about it, I will mention it to Mlle. Reine."

"Very well, my child,—good-bye, and above all, no more coquetry,—do you promise me that?"

"Yes, Master Peyrou, only—only—"

"Well, say it"

"Only, you see, Master Peyrou, I would not like to make Bernard and Terzarol despair entirely,—not on my own account, Our Lady, no, but on account of Luquin, because I must have some means of keeping him in port, in case of great danger, you see, Master Peyrou,—and for that purpose, jealousy is worth more than all the anchors of his ship."

"That is right," said the watchman, with a significant smile, "you must think of Luquin above all things."

The young girl dropped her eyes and smiled, then said: "Ah, I was about to forget, Master Peyrou, to ask you if you thought that monsieur, the commander, and the Reverend Father Elzear would arrive here for the Christmas holidays, as the baron hopes. He is so anxious to see his two brothers again—do you know that Christmas has been twice celebrated at Maison-Forte without them?"

At the mention of the commander, the face of the watchman took on an expression of profound melancholy.

"If God grants my most earnest prayers, my child, they will both come, but, alas, Father Elzear has gone to redeem captives in Algiers, as a worthy and courageous brother of mercy, and the faith of those Barbary people is perfidious!"

"Yes, Master Peyrou, as Father Elzear learned by experience when he was kept in the convict-prison among slaves for one year! At his age, too, to suffer so much!"

"And without a murmur,—without losing his adorable saintliness—"

"Speaking of them, Master Peyrou, why is the commander's galley, instead of being white and gold like the gallant galleys of the king, and of monseigneur, the Duke of Guise, always painted in black like a coffin? Why are its sails and masts black? Really, nothing looks more solemn, and his sailors and his soldiers, they look as hard and severe as Spanish monks; and then the commander himself looks so sad. I never saw a smile on his pale face but once, and that was when he arrived at Maison-Forte and embraced monseigneur and my mistress. Yet, my God, what a melancholy smile! Is it not strange, Master Peyrou, and all the more so because Luquin told me, the other day, that when he was artilleryman on board *La Guisarde*, the admiral's galley, in the waters of the Levant, many a time he has seen the commanders and captains of Malta at Naples, and notwithstanding the severity of their order, they were as merry as other officers."

The watchman for some moments seemed as if he no longer heard the girl; his head had fallen upon his breast, he was lost in profound meditation, and when Stephanette bade him farewell, he responded only by an affectionate gesture of the hand. Some time after the departure of the young girl, he went into his cabin, opened the carved ebony box he found there, sprung the secret lock of a double bottom, and took out of it a little casket chased with silver; an embassed Maltese cross ornamented its cover.

For a long time he gazed at this casket with sorrowful attention; the sight of it seemed to awaken the most bitter memories. Then, assuring himself that this mysterious trust was still intact, he shut the doors of the ebony chest and, like a dreamer, returned to his seat at the door of his cabin.

CHAPTER V. THE BETROTHED.

Stephanette left the watchman with a light heart She was just about to quit the esplanade, when she saw, on the last steps of the stairway, the tall figure of Captain Luquin Trinquetaille. With an imperative sign the young girl ordered him to return by the way he had come.

The sailor showed an exemplary submission; he stopped, made a right-about, with the quickness and precision of a German grenadier, and gravely descended the steps he had just mounted.

Had the meeting been arranged by the lovers? We do not know, but certain it was that Stephanette, preceded by her obedient adorer, descended the narrow, winding flight of steps which conducted to the watchman's cabin, with the lightness of a gazelle.

Many times Luquin turned his head, to catch a sight of the neat ankle and little foot, which cleared the rough rocks so nimbly, but Stephanette, with a threatening gesture, and queen-like dignity, arrested the curiosity of the ex-artilleryman, who was compelled to accelerate his gait in obedience to the oft-repeated words:

"Go on, Luquin, go on!"

While the lovers are descending the escarpment of the cape of l'Aigle, we will say a few words about Luquin Trinquetaille. He was a robust fellow of thirty years, brown and sunburnt. He had a manly figure, a frank, ingenuous manner, somewhat vain; he wore a costume which marked both the soldier and the sailor,—a military coat, and Provencal breeches, fastened around his waist by the belt which held his broadsword.

The air was cold, and over his coat he wore a mantle, the seams of which were braided in red and blue wool; the hood half covered his forehead, and under it could be seen a forest of black curls.

When they had reached the foot of the mountain, Stephanette, in spite, of her agility, felt the need of rest.

Luquin, delighted with an opportunity for conversation, carefully sought a spot where she could be comfortably seated.

When he had found it, he gallantly took off his mantle and spread it out on the rock, so that Stephanette could have a seat with a back; then, crossing his hands on the head of his cane, and leaning his chin on his hands, he contemplated Stephanette with a calm and happy adoration.

When she had recovered from the effects of her precipitous descent, Stephanette turned to Luquin, and said, with the air of a spoiled child, and a woman sure of her despotic domination:

"Why, Luquin, did you come to the watchman's cabin for me, when I told you to wait for me at the foot of the mountain?"

Luquin, preoccupied with admiration for Stephanette's fine colour, which the walk had imparted, did not reply.

"Did ever anybody see the like?" cried she, with an impatient stamp of her little foot. "Do you hear what I say to you, Luquin?"

"No," said the captain, coming out of his reflective mood; "all that I know is that from Nice to Bayonne, from Bayonne to Calais, from Calais to Hambourg, from Hambourg to—"

"Have you finished your European trip, Luquin?"

"Indeed, from one pole to the other there is not a prettier girl than you, Stephanette."

"What! Did you make such an extensive voyage to arrive at that discovery, captain? I pity the privateers of the *Holy Terror to the Moors, by the Grace of God*, if the voyages of this poor old polacre have no better results!"

"Do not speak ill of my polacre, Stephanette; you will be glad to see its blue and white pavilion when I return from Nice, and how you will watch for my coming from the turret of Maison-Forte!"

Luquin's conceitedness disgusted Stephanette; she replied, with an ironical air:

"Well, well! I see that a watchman on the cape of L'Aigle is altogether unnecessary. All the young girls who wait impatiently for the return of Captain Trinque-taille, and all the jealous ones who watch his departure with their eyes fixed on the sea, will be sufficient to discover the pirates. There is nothing more to fear from corsairs."

Luquin took on an air of modest triumph, and said:

"By St. Stephen, my patron, I am too sure of your love, and too happy in it, Stephanette, to care if I am expected or regretted by other girls; and although Rose, the daughter of the haberdasher in La Ciotat,—who resembles the flower whose name she bears,—often tells me—"

"My faith! Thank you for your confidences, Luquin," said Stephanette, with a jealous impatience she could not dissimulate. "If I told you all that the patron Bernard or Master Terzarol said to me, it would take till evening."

Captain Luquin frowned when he heard the names of his rivals, and exclaimed:

"Thunder of heaven! If I knew that those two rascals dared even to look at your shoes as you pass, I would make a figurehead for my polacre of one, and a weather-cock for my mast of the other! But no! They know that Luquin Trinquetaille is your betrothed, and his name rhymes too well with battle for them to want an issue with me."

"Well, well, my fine bully!" replied Stephanette, recalling the watchman's advice, and fearing to excite the jealousy of the inflammable captain; "if Bernard and Terzarol talk to me ever so long, I shall reply that every one knows I am too much in love with the most wicked devil in La Ciotat But wait,—see here what Master Peyrou gave me for you. Read that, and do everything he orders. It is late; the sun is setting, and it is getting cold. Let us go back to Maison-Forte; mademoiselle will be anxious."

The two lovers hastened on their way, and, as they walked, Trinquetaille read the following instructions given by the watchman:

"Every morning at sunrise the captain will change the charge of his cannon, and will put on the ball one of the red flies affixed to this paper.

"After that, make a double cross on the ball with the thumb of the left hand. From sunrise to sunset, cabin-boys must relieve each other on the watch at the top of the mast; they will always look at the east and the south, and every five minutes repeat 'St Magnus.'

"Set the swords in order on the stem, three by three, point downward.

"Set the muskets on the right of the deck, three by three.

"On the day of departure, at the rising of the moon, carry on deck a vase filled with oil; throw in it seven grains of salt, saying with each grain 'St Elmo and St Peter.'

"Leave the vase on deck until the moon goes down. At that moment cover it over with a black veil, on which

write in vermilion the word ‘Syrakoe.’ Every morning at sunrise, rub the arms and the locks of the muskets with this oil.”

At this point, Captain Trinquetaille stopped and said to Stephanette:

“By St. Elmo, Master Peyrou is a sorcerer. Three months ago, if I had had these flies of magic paper, my swivel-guns, instead of resting mute on their pivots when I applied the match, would have replied sharply to that Tunis chebec which surprised our convoy, and we did not see until it was almost on us—”

“But, Luquin, do not your sentinels see at a distance?”

“No; and if, while they were watching, they had said ‘St. Magnus’ every five minutes, as Master Peyrou says in his sorcery, it is certain the virtue of St. Magnus would have prevented the pirates’ approach without being seen.”

“And would you have made use of this magic oil for the muskets, Luquin?”

“Without doubt, the day that my guns would not go off, I would have given all the oil which burns in the eternal lamp of the Chapel of Notre Dame de la Garde, for one drop of this oil with the seven grains of salt, and that formidable word ‘Syrakoe’ written on the cover.”

“Why so, Luquin?”

“My artillery was useless, and I wished to board the chebec with a grand reinforcement of musket-shot, but as wicked fate would have it, the arms were below, and the locks of the muskets were rusty; you see, then, Stephanette, if we had arranged the arms on deck, three by three, and had rubbed the musket locks with this magic oil of Syrakoe, we would have been able to resist, and perhaps capture this pirate chebec instead of flying before it, like a cloud of sparrows from a hawk!”

It is easy to see that, under these mysterious and cabalistic formulæ, the watchman on the cape of L’Aigle gave the best practical advice, and endeavoured to restore such nautical precautions and practices as had, through negligence or want of care, fallen into disuse.

The red flies, placed every morning on the balls with a sign of the cross, had no doubt a very negative virtue, but to perform this magical operation, it was necessary to change the charge of the artillery, often damaged by the water of the sea, which swept the deck, and thus the powder was kept dry and the guns ready for use.

The counsel of the watchman, followed exactly, prevented serious disaster, whether it pertained to the oil of Syrakoe, or the cries of “St Magnus,” or the arms arranged three by three on the deck.

In looking steadily toward the east and the south, points of crossing by the pirates, the sentinels of course could give warning of their approach.

In invoking St. Magnus every five minutes, they would not run the risk of sleeping at their posts.

In short, it was important to have always on deck arms in good condition and readiness. The watchman accomplished this by ordering them to be arranged in stacks of three, and carefully rubbed with oil, which would preserve them from the inclemency of the weather.

In formulating his recommendations in cabalistic phrase, he assured the execution of them.

After renewed praises of the watchman’s wisdom, Luquin and Stephanette arrived at Maison-Forte. Notwithstanding her air of gaiety, the young girl’s heart was deeply pained at the thought of her lover’s departure the next morning. Tears flowed down her cheeks; she extended her hand to Trinquetaille, and said, with a trembling voice:

“Good-bye, Luquin, every morning and evening I will pray God to keep you from meeting these wicked pirates. Oh, why do you not abandon this perilous calling, which gives me continual anxiety?”

“I will, when I have gained enough, so that Mlle. Trinquetaille”—only the nobility had the title of madame —“need not envy the richest citizen of La Ciotat.” “How can you talk so, Luquin?” said the young girl, reproachfully, as she wiped the tears from her eyes. “What matters finery and a little more comfort to me, when you are risking your life every day?”

“Do not be distressed, Stephanette, the watchman’s advice shall not be lost: with the help of St. Magnus, and the magic oil of Syrakoe, I can defy all the pirates of the regency. But, good-bye, Stephanette, good-bye, and think of Luquin.”

With these words, the worthy captain pressed Ste-phanette’s white hands, and hurried away, lest he should betray the emotion which filled his heart, as if it were a thing unworthy of him.

The young girl’s eyes followed her lover as long as possible, and at nightfall she entered Maison-Forte, the home of Raimond V., Baron des Anbiez.

CHAPTER VI. MAISON-FORTE

Maison-Forte, or Castle des Anbiez, stood upon the seashore. In the time of storm, the waves beat upon the terrace or rampart which stood out from the shore to protect the entrance into the port of La Ciotat, where were anchored a few fishing-boats, and the pleasure tartan of Raimond V., Baron des Anbiez.

The aspect of the castle presented nothing remarkable. Built in the middle of the fifteenth century, its architecture, or rather its construction, was massive. Two towers with pointed roof flanked the main body of the dwelling exposed to the south, and commanding a view of the sea. Its thick walls, built of sandstone and granite, were of reddish gray colour, and were irregularly cut by a few windows, which resembled loopholes for cannon.

The only framed windows of a gallery, which ran across the entire length of the castle, on the first floor, were large and bowed.

Three of them opened upon a balcony ornamented with a beautiful grating of hammered iron, in the middle of which was carved the baron's coat of arms. The same coat of arms showed upon the entablature of the principal door.

A short flight of steps descended to the terrace.

The necessities of civil and religious war, at the end of the last century, and the constant fear of pirates, had altered this terrace into an armed and embattled rampart, parallel with the façade of the castle, and joined to the foot of the turrets by two sides of a right angle.

A few old orange-trees with shining leaves testified to the ancient character of this esplanade, once a smiling flower garden, but two sentry-boxes for scouts, a few enclosures for cannon-balls, eight pieces of ordnance, two of which were mounted, and a long, turning culverin showed that Maison-Forte of the Baron des Anbiez was in a good state of defence.

The position of this castle was the more important as the little bay it commanded, as well as the Gulf of La Ciotat, offered the only place where vessels could anchor; the rest of the coast presenting a line of unapproachable rocks.

The façade of the Castle des Anbiez which looked north, and the surrounding land, were very picturesque.

Irregular buildings, added to the principal edifice according to the different requirements of successive proprietors, broke the monotony of its lines.

The stables, dog-kennels, sheepfolds, commons, and lodgings for labourers and farmers, formed the enclosure of an immense court, planted with two rows of sycamores. This court was reached by a drawbridge over a wide and deep ditch.

Every evening this bridge was removed, and a heavy door of oak, strongly supported on the inside, put the little colony in safely for the night.

Every window of these buildings opened upon the court, with the exception of a few dormer windows, solidly protected by iron grating, which looked out upon the plain.

Maison-Forte counted about two hundred persons among its dependents,—servants, farmers, labourers, and shepherds.

Among them were sixty men of from thirty to fifty years, accustomed to the use of arms during the civil wars in which the impetuous baron had taken part. Royalist and Catholic, Raimond V. had always mounted his horse when it was necessary to defend the ancient rights and possessions of Provence against governors or their deputies, for the kings of France were not kings of Provence, but counts.

The intendants of justice or presidents of courts, whose office it was to collect the taxes, and to announce to the assembled states the assessment of voluntary gifts which Provence owed to the sovereign, were almost always the first victims of these revolts against royal authority, made with the cry of "Long live the king!"

Under such circumstances Raimond V. was among the first to rebel. In the last rebellion of Cascaveoux,—so named from the word *cascavoeu*, the Provençal for little bell, which the insurgents fastened to the end of a leather strap, and rang as they cried, "Long live the king,"—none sounded the battle-cry, and shook his bell more violently, or made his dependents shake this signal of revolt, with more enthusiastic ardour than Raimond V.

In that, the baron showed himself the worthy son of his father, Raimond IV., one of the gentlemen most seriously compromised in the rebellion of the Razats, which name originated from the fact that the Provençals had been as spoiled of their possessions as if a razor had been employed. This rebellion broke out under Henry III., in 1578, and was suppressed with great difficulty by Marshal de Retz.

The baron looked with great impatience upon the growth of the power of Cardinal Richelieu, at the expense of the royal authority, and the disappearance of the sovereign beneath the shadow of the prime minister.

Similar movements of resistance manifested themselves in Languedoc and in Provence, in favour of Gaston of Orleans, brother of Louis XIII., whom the royalist faction opposed to the cardinal.

There is no doubt that the baron would never have taken an active part in these intrigues, but for the apprehension caused by the pirates along the coast, but, compelled to concentrate his forces in order to defend his house and estate, he declaimed violently against the cardinal, especially since the latter had given the government of Provence to the Marshal of Vitry.

These important functions had, up to that time, been filled by the Duke of Guise, admiral of the Levant, who, to the great delight of the Provençals, after many obstacles, had replaced the Duke d'Epernon.

"The young lion has devoured the old bear," said Cæsar of Nostradamus on this subject at the celebration of the nomination of the young Lorraine prince for this important post.

When the Marshal of Vitry was promoted to the position of Governor of Provence, the nobility gave vent to their indignation, because a member of the house of Lorraine was not considered worthy of this dignity, usually reserved for a prince of the blood.

When Louis Gallucio, marquis, was Duke of Vitry, it was remarked that the Cardinal de Retz, without otherwise blaming him for having been one of the murderers of the Marshal of Ancre, said simply of him: "He had little sense, but he was bold to temerity, and the part he had in the murder of the Marshal of Ancre gave him, in the eyes of the world, a certain air of business and execution." This speech gives us an idea of the times and manners.

The Baron des Anbiez, notwithstanding his fondness for independence and rebellion, was the best and most generous of men.

Adored by the peasants of his domain, and revered by the inhabitants of the little town of La Ciotat, who always found him ready to direct their troops and aid them with all his power to defend themselves from the pirates, he exercised a powerful influence throughout the neighbourhood.

Finally, his vigorous opposition to several orders of the Marshal of Vitry, which seemed to him to aim a blow at the rights of Provence, had been highly and generally approved in the country.

When Stephanette returned to Maison-Forte, the sun was just setting. The first care of the young girl was to go to Mlle. Reine des Anbiez. Reine was accustomed to occupy a chamber situated on the first floor of one of the turrets of the castle.

This room was round in shape, serving her as a cabinet for study, and was furnished with great care and expense.

The baron, loving his daughter to idolatry, had devoted to the interior arrangement of this room a considerable sum. The circular walls were covered with rich Flemish tapestry of deep green, with designs of a darker shade, enwrought with threads of gold.

Among other pieces of furniture was a walnut bookcase, curiously carved in the style of the renaissance, and encrusted with Florentine mosaic. A rich, thick Turkey carpet covered the floor. The spaces separating the beams of the ceiling were of azure blue, studded with arabesques of gold of delicate workmanship.

A silver lamp was suspended from the main girder by a chain of silver. The form of these lamps, still used in some villages of Provence, was very simple. They were made of a square of metal, the edges of which, an inch in height, contained the oil, and formed a sort of beak at each angle from which issued the wicks.

On a table with curved legs placed in the embrasure of the window lay a lute, a theorbo, and some pieces of unfinished tapestry.

Two portraits, one of a woman, the other of a man, in the costume of the reign of Henry III., were placed above this table, and lit up by oblique rays through little windows in leaden frames, which were set in the long and narrow casement.

To supply the want of a chimney a large copper coal-pan, curiously carved, and supported by four massive claws, stood in a corner of the room. It contained a bed of ashes and some embers, upon which were smoking some sprigs of fragrant broom.

Reine des Anbiez wore a dress of heavy brown Tours silk, with a train, and tight waist and sleeves; her cheeks were flushed, and her features expressed not surprise only but fright.

She seized her waiting-woman by the hand, and conducted her to the table, and said to her:

“Look!”

The object to which she called the attention of Stephanette was a little vase of rock crystal.

From its long and slender neck issued an orange-coloured lily, with an azure blue calyx, in which stood pistils of silvery whiteness. This brilliant flower exhaled a delicious odour which resembled the mingled perfume of vanilla, lemon, and jessamine.

“Oh, mademoiselle, what a beautiful flower! Is it a present from the Chevalier de Berrol?”

At the mention of her betrothed’s name, Reine turned pale and red by turns; then, without replying to Stephanette, she took up the vase with a sort of fear, and showed her a beautifully enamelled figure which she had discovered there, and the representation of a white dove with a rose-coloured beak, and extended wings, holding in its purplish bronze feet a branch of olive.

“Our Lady!” screamed Stephanette in fright. “It is the very picture of the enamelled pin that young miscreant robbed you of in the rocks of Ollioules, after he had saved monseigneur’s life.”

“But who brought this vase and flower here?” asked Reine.

“You do not know, mademoiselle?”

Reine turned pale and made a sign in the affirmative. “Holy Virgin, this must be sorcery!” cried Stephanette, setting the vase back on the table as if it had burned her hand.

Reine could scarcely control her emotion, but said to her:

“A little while ago, when I went out to see my father mount his horse, I promenaded until nightfall in the great walk by the drawbridge, and when I returned I found this flower on this table. My first thought, like yours, was that Chevalier de Berrol had sent it or brought it, although such a flower in this season would be a miracle; I asked if the chevalier had arrived at Maison-Forte, and was told he had not; besides, I had the key of this apartment with me.”

“Then, mademoiselle, it must be magic.”

“I do not know what to think. In examining the vase more attentively, I see the enamelled likeness of the pin that—”

Reine could not say more.

Her face and form betrayed the violent emotion which the memory of that strange day caused her, the day when the foreigner had dared approach his lips to hers.

“We must consult the chaplain or the watchman, mademoiselle,” exclaimed Stephanette.

“No, no, be silent. Do not noise abroad this mystery which frightens me in spite of myself. Let us examine this apartment well; perhaps we may discover something.”

“But this flower, this vase, mademoiselle!”

As a reply, Reine threw the flower in the coal-pan.

It almost seemed that the poor flower turned itself in pain upon the burning coals; the light hissing produced by the water which oozed out from the stem, seemed like plaintive cries.

Soon it was in ashes.

Then Reine opened the window which looked upon the esplanade, and threw out the crystal flagon. It broke with a noise upon the parapet, and its fragments fell into the sea.

At this moment sounded heavy steps, and click of spurs upon the flagstones of the staircase. The hoarse voice of Raimond V. called joyously to his daughter to come and see—that demon of a Mistraon!

“Not a word of this to my father,” said Reine to Stephanette, putting her finger on her lips.

And she descended to meet the good old gentleman.

CHAPTER VII. THE SUPPER.

Reine, hiding her emotion, joined her father. Raimond V. kissed his daughter's brow tenderly, then, taking her arm, descended the last steps of the staircase which led from the tower. He wore an old green military coat, braided with gold, somewhat tarnished, scarlet breeches, great boots of sheepskin covered with mud, and long spurs of rusty iron.

He held his gray cap in his hand, and although the weather was quite cold, the wrinkled and sunburnt brow of Raimond V. was covered with sweat.

By the light of a torch, a valet, holding by the bridle the treacherous and obstreperous Mistraon, whose flanks were foaming with perspiration, could be seen in the court of the castle.

A great black hunting dog with long hair, and a little yellow and white spaniel, were lying at the feet of the stallion from Camargne.

The dog was panting; his ears lying on his head, his mouth open and filled with foam, his eyes half closed, and the feverish palpitation of his sides, all announced that he had just run a rapid race. The sight of Mistraon added to Reine's annoyance by recalling the scene on the rocks. But the baron, preoccupied by the success of the chase, had not the penetration to discover the agitation of his daughter.

He detached a leather strap which held a large hare to the bow of his saddle, and proudly presented the game to Reine, as he said:

"Would you believe it, Eclair," and at the name the dog lifted his fine intelligent head, "caught this hare in thirteen minutes on the marshes of Savenol. It was old Genêt," and at this name the little spaniel lifted his head, "that put him on the track. Mistraon is so fleet that I did not lose sight of Eclair from the time I began to climb the hill of black stones. I made, I am sure, more than a league and a half."

"Oh, father, why will you ride this horse, after the frightful experience you have had with him?"

"Manjour!" cried the old gentleman, with an air of mock gravity, "never shall it be said that Raimond V. succumbed to one of the indomitable sons of Camargne."

"But, father—"

"But, my daughter, I yield no more on land than on sea, and I say that, because I have just been visiting the seines that those rascals in La Ciotat wish to prevent my laying beyond the rocks of Castrembaou. Just now, too, I met the consul Talebard-Talebardon on his nag, and he talked about it And he had the effrontery to threaten me with the tribunal of overseers, of which the watchman is the assignee! Manjour, I laughed so much, that this demon, Mistraon, took advantage of my distraction and flew like an arrow."

"More dangers, father; this horse will be the death of you!"

"Be easy, my child, although I have not such a vigorous fist as the half savage young Muscovite who so adroitly arrested Mistraon on the border of a precipice, the bridle and the spur and the whip know how to reason with a vicious horse and his pranks. But permit me, my beautiful lady of the castle, to offer you the foot of the animal that I have captured."

And the baron drew a knife from his pocket, cut off the right foot of the hare, and gallantly presented it to his daughter, who accepted, not without some repugnance, this trophy of the chase.

Mistraon was led back to the stable, but Eclair and Genêt, favourites of the baron, followed him side by side, as, leaning on the arm of his daughter, he made what he called his evening inspection, while waiting for the hour of supper.

The women and young girls were spinning at the wheel, the men mending their nets and cleaning implements of husbandry. Master Laramée, the old sergeant of the company raised by the baron during the civil troubles, and majordomo and commander of the castle garrison, exacted that all of the baron's tenants, who, in turn, performed the service of sentinel on the terrace which bordered the sea, should be armed in military style.

Others were engaged in decorating long lances, destined for jousts on the water, or to be used in jumping the cross-bar, the usual Christmas amusements, in the colours of the baron, red and yellow. Some, more seriously occupied, prepared the seed for late sowing; some were weaving, with great care, baskets out of rushes, to hold presents of fruit, made at Christmas.

These occupations were enlivened by songs peculiar to the country, sometimes accompanied by some marvellous legend, or terrible recital of the cruelties of pirates.

In an upper hall filled with fruit, children and old men were busy in examining long garlands of grapes, which hung from the rafters of the ceiling, or packing in baskets sweet-smelling figs, dried upon layers of straw.

Farther on was the laundry, where the washerwomen, under the supervision of a gentlewoman, Dulceline, the housekeeper, were occupied in perfuming the linen of the castle, by putting between its folds, whiter than snow, the leaves of aromatic herbs.

Often the sharp voice of Dulceline rose above the songs of the washerwomen, as she reprimanded some idlers.

By the side of the laundry was the pharmacy of the castle, where the peasants of the neighbourhood found all their remedies. This pharmacy belonged to the department of the baron's chaplain, Abbé Mascarolus, an old and excellent priest of angelic piety and rare simplicity. The chaplain had an extensive acquaintance with medical men and their attainments, and firmly believed in the strange pharmacy of that time.

In spite of the continual apprehension of a visit from the pirates, all the inhabitants of Maison-Forte shared

the traditional gaiety, so to speak, which the approach of Christmas, the most joyous and most important festival of the year, always brought to Provence.

Every evening before supper, the baron made, in company with his daughter, what he called his inspection; that is, he went through the whole theatre of the various occupations with which we have been entertaining the reader, chatting familiarly with everybody, listening to requests and complaints, often impatient and sometimes flying into a passion and scolding, but always full of justice and kindness, and so cordial in his good-humour that his bursts of irritation were soon forgotten.

Raimond V. kept a large part of his domain in good condition. He sat up a long time at night to talk with his principal shepherds, labourers, farmers, and vinedressers, convinced of the wisdom of the two Provençal proverbs, worthy of the watchman on the cape of l'Aigle: *Luci doou mestre engraisso lou chivaou*,—the eye of the master fattens the horse. *Bouen pastre, bouen ave*,—good shepherd, good flock.

The old gentleman usually completed his circuit by a visit to the pharmacy, where he found Abbé Mascarolus, who gave him a sort of hygienic statement of the health of the inhabitants of the domain Des Anbiez.

To-day, he passed by the laundry, going directly to the pharmacy, accompanied by Reine. Preparations for the Christmas holidays were going on all through the castle, but the most important solemnity of all was reserved for the care of the venerable Dulceline, who had entreated the abbé to enlighten her with his counsels.

This was the cradle or crib, a sort of picture placed every Christmas day in the most beautiful room of the habitation,—castle, cottage, or mansion.

This picture represented the birth of the infant Jesus; there were the stable, the ox, the ass, St Joseph, and the Virgin holding on her knees the Saviour of the world.

Every family, poor or rich, deemed it absolutely requisite to have a cradle as elegant as could be afforded, ornamented with garlands and tinsel, and illuminated with a circle of candles.

As Raimond V. passed the laundry, he was surprised not to see Dulceline, and asked where she was.

"Monseigneur," said a young girl with black eyes and cheeks the colour of a pomegranate, "Mile. Dulceline is in the chamber of the philters, with the abbé and Thereson; she is at work on the cradle, and forbids us to enter."

"The devil!" said the baron, "the supper-bell has rung, and the abbé must say grace for us."

He advanced to the door; it was fastened on the inside; he knocked.

"Come, come, abbé, supper is ready, and I am as hungry as the devil."

"One moment, monseigneur," said Dulceline, "we cannot open,—it is a secret."

"What, abbé, you have secrets with Dulceline?" said the old gentleman, laughing.

"Ah, monseigneur, God save us! Thereson is with us," screamed the old lady, offended at the baron's pleasantry. As she opened the door, she presented a pale, wrinkled face, framed in a ruff and cap, worthy of the pencil of Holbein.

The abbé, fifty years old, was dressed in a black robe and cap, which fit his head closely and displayed his gentle face to advantage.

Thereson, as soon as the baron entered, hid the cradle under a cloth. The baron approached, and was about to lift it, when Dulceline cried, in a beseeching tone:

"Oh, monseigneur! permit us the pleasure of surprising you; rest assured this will be the most beautiful cradle that has ever adorned the great hall of Maison-Forte, and it ought to be, by Our Lady, since the commander and Father Elzear are coming such a distance to assist at the Christmas festivity."

"Manjour! I shall be unhappy indeed if they do not come," said the baron: "two years have passed since my brothers have spent a night or a day in our father's house, and by St. Bernard, my patron, who assists me, the Lord will grant us a reunion this time!"

"God will hear you, monseigneur, and I join my prayers to yours," said the abbé. Then he added: "Monseigneur, did you have a successful hunt?"

"Very good, abbé, see for yourself!" and the baron took the hare's foot that Reine held in her hand, and showed it to the abbé.

"If mademoiselle does not desire to keep this foot," said the abbé, "I will ask her for it, for my pharmacy, and will monseigneur tell me if it is the right or the left foot of the animal?"

"And what are you going to do with it, abbé?"

"Monseigneur," said the good Mascarolus, pointing to an open volume on the table, "I have just received this book from Paris. It is the journal of M. de Maucaunys, a very illustrious and learned man, and I read here, page 317: 'Recipe for the gout. Lay against the thigh, between the trousers and the shirt, on the side affected, two paws of a hare killed between Lady Day of September and Christmas, but with the important restriction, that the hind left paw must be used if it is the right arm which is ailing, and the right fore paw if it is the leg or the left thigh which is ailing: on the instant the application is made, the pain will cease.'"

"Stuff!" cried the baron, laughing with all his might. "This is a wonderful discovery; now the poachers will claim to be apothecaries, and they will catch hares only to cure the gout."

The good abbé, quite embarrassed by the sarcasms of the baron, continued to read to keep himself in countenance, and added: "I see, baron, on page 177, wood-lice, given to dropsical nightingales, will cure them entirely."

Here the laughter of the good gentleman was more uproarious. Reine, notwithstanding her preoccupation, could not repress a smile, and finally laughed with her father.

The Abbé Mascarolus smiled softly, and bore these innocent railleries with Christian resignation, and no longer tried to defend an empiricism which, no doubt, may find analogies in medical books of the present day.

Raimond V. took leave of the pharmacy to find pleasure elsewhere, when Laramée, majordomo and master of ceremonies, came to announce that supper had been waiting a long time.

Laramée, the advance guard of the baron's escort through the gorges of Ollioules, had the physiognomy of a real pandour; his complexion reddened by wine-drinking, his rough voice, his white and closely cut hair, his long gray moustache, and his continual swearing, were by no means to the taste of Dulceline.

She received the entrance of the majordomo into the sanctuary of the abbé with a sort of muttered remonstrance, which at last changed to sharp and loud complaint, when she saw that Laramée had the indiscretion to approach the veil which covered the mysterious cradle and try to lift it.

"Well, well, Laramée," said the baron, "Manjour, do you claim more privileges than your master, and insist upon seeing the wonders that Dulceline is hiding from our eyes? Come, come, take this lamp and light onr way."

Then, turning to Mascarolus, Raimond V. said humorously: "Since, according to your fine book, wood-lice will cure dropsy in nightingales, you ought to try your remedy on this old scoundrel, who surely is threatened with dropsy, for he is a veritable old bottle, swollen with wine, ready to burst; as for the rest, like the nightingale, he will sing at night,—and the devil knows what songs!"

"Yes, monseigneur, and with a voice loud enough to wake the whole castle, and make the owls fly from the top of the old tower," added Dulceline.

"And just as true as I drank two glasses of Sauvechrétien wine this morning, screech owls know the owls, Dulceline, my dear," said the majordomo with a jocose manner as he passed, lamp in hand, before the superintendent of the laundry.

"Monseigneur," cried she, "do you hear the insolence of Master Laramée?"

"And you shall be avenged, my dear, for I will make him drink a pint of water to your health. Come, come, go on, majordomo, the soup will get cold."

The baron, Reine, and the abbé left the pharmacy and descended the stairs, and crossed the long and dark gallery which united the two wings of Maison-Forte; they entered a large dining-room, brilliantly lighted by a good fire of beech, olive roots, and fir-apples, which shed through the whole room the odour of balsam.

The immense chimney, with a large stone mantel, and andirons of massive iron, smoked a little, but by way of compensation, the windows latticed with lead, and the heavy doors of oak were not hermetically sealed, and the smoke found a way of escape through the numerous openings.

The north wind, entering these cracks, made a shrill whistle, which was victoriously combatted by the merry crackling of the beech and olive logs which burned in the fireplace.

The walls, simply plastered with lime, as well as the ceiling with its great projecting girders of black oak, had no other ornament than the skins of foxes and badgers and wolves, nailed at symmetrical distances by the careful hand of the majordomo.

In the spaces between the skins hung fishing-lines, weapons of the chase, whips, and spurs; and as curiosities, a Moorish bridle with its two-edged bit and top-not of crimson silk.

On an oak dresser, with a beautifully bowed front, stood an ancient and massive silver plate, whose richness contrasted singularly with the almost savage rusticity of the hall.

Great bottles of white glass were filled with the generous wines of Provence and Languedoc; smaller flagons contained Spanish wines, easily and promptly brought from Barcelona by coasting ships.

A few rustic valets, attired in cassocks of brown serge, served the table under the orders of the major-domo, the liveries with the colours of the baron never leaving the wardrobe except on feast-days.

The oblong table placed near the fireside rested on a thick carpet of Spanish broom or esparto. The rest of the hall was paved with flags of sandstone.

At the head of the table was the armorial chair of Raimond V.; at his right, the cover for his daughter, at his left, the cover for the stranger,—a custom of touching hospitality.

Below this place was the cover for the chaplain.

The table was delicately and abundantly served.

Around an enormous tureen of soup, made of the excellent sea eels of La Ciotat, and fragments of swordfish and sea dates, were fowls from the Pyrenees, which surrounded a perfectly roasted goose; on the other side, a saddle of lamb three months old, and the half of a kid one month old, justified by their appetising odour the culinary proverb: *Cabri d'un mes, agneou de tres,*—kid of one month, lamb of three; shell-fish of all kinds, such as oysters and mussels, having above all the flavour of the rock, as the Provençals say, filled the spaces left between substantial viands.

Side-dishes strongly salted and spiced, such as shrimps, lobsters, artichokes, celery, and tender fennel, formed a formidable reserve which Raimond V. called to his aid, when his appetite showed signs of exhaustion.

This profusion, which at first glance seemed so prodigal, was easily explained by the abundant resources of the country, the customary hospitality of the time, and the great number of persons a lord was expected to entertain.

Grace being said by the worthy Abbé Mascarolus, the baron, his daughter, and the chaplain sat down to the table, and Laramée took his usual post behind the chair of his master.

CHAPTER VIII. THE LOVER

The baron was scarcely seated, when he said:

“What in the devil is the matter with my head? Is Honorât not going to take supper with us?”

“He promised yesterday to do so,” said Reine.

“And do you allow your betrothed to break his word? What o’clock is it, Laramée?”

“Monseigneur, I have just posted the two sentinels on the rampart.”

“That is to say it is eight o’clock, is it not, captain?” merrily answered the baron to the majordomo, tending his glass.

“Yes, monseigneur, somewhat past eight.”

“Ah, that!” replied the old gentleman, replacing his glass on the table, not without having emptied it. “I hope nothing has happened to Honorat.”

“Father, why not send a messenger on horseback to Berrol at once?” said Reine, with keen interest.

“You are right, my child; at any rate, we would feel assured: there is not much to fear, but at night the road through the morasses of Berrol is not safe.”

“Whom shall I send for the chevalier, monseigneur?” said Laramée.

The baron was about to reply when the Chevalier de Berrol appeared, preceded by a valet who carried a lamp.

“Where in the devil do you come from, my son?” said the Baron des Anbiez, extending his hand to Honorat, whom he called son since he was to marry his daughter. “Did you meet the fairies in the quagmires of Berrol?”

“No, my father, I was at the house of Seigneur de Saint-Yves, and then—” Suddenly he approached the young girl, and said, “Excuse me, I pray, Reine, for being late.”

She extended her hand to him with charming grace, and said, with a penetrating, almost serious tone:

“I am happy, very happy to see you, Honorât, for we were anxious.”

There was in these few words, and in the look which accompanied them, such an expression of confidence, tenderness, and solicitude, that the chevalier started with delight.

“Come, come, sit down to the table, and as you have made your peace with Reine, tell us what detained you at the house of Seigneur de Saint-Yves.”

The chevalier handed his sword and cap to Laramée, and taking a seat by the side of the baron, replied: “The recorder of the admiralty of Toulon, who is making a tour of the province, accompanied by a scribe and two guards of the governor, has come by order of the latter to visit the castle of Seigneur de Saint-Yves.”

“Manjour!” cried the impetuous baron, “I am sure that it concerns some insolent command! This marshal, murderer of our favourites, never means to give us another; and they say this recorder is the most arrant knave that ever announced a decree.”

“Oh, father, control yourself,” said Reine.

“You are right; Vitry does not deserve a generous anger. But it is hard, nevertheless, for the Provençal nobility to see such a man hold functions which, heretofore, have always been given to princes of the blood. But we live in strange times. Kings are asleep, cardinals reign, and bishops wear the cuirass and the belt. Do you think that is very canonical, abbé?”

The good Mascarolus never liked to give a decided opinion, and he replied, humbly:

“Without doubt, monseigneur, the canons of Jean VIII. and the text of St. Ambrose forbid prelates to bear arms; but on the other hand the literal interpretation of the Council of Worms authorises them to do so—with the Pope’s approbation—when they possess domains independent of the Crown. Under Louis the Young, the Bishops of Paris went to battle. Hinemar and Hervien, Archbishops of Reims, led their troops under Charles the Bald, and under Charles the Simple; Tristan de Salazar, Archbishop of Reims, thoroughly armed, mounted on a good charger, a javelin in his hand—”

“Well, well, abbé,” interrupted the baron, “by the grace of the cardinal, we shall grow accustomed to the sight of bishops equipped as soldiers, with a helmet for mitre, a military coat as a stole, a lance instead of a cross, and shedding blood in the place of sprinkling holy water,—it is altogether proper. Some wine, Laramée! And you, Honorât, finish your story.”

“The fact is,” said the chevalier, “the recorder Isnard, who they say has no pity for poor people, came, in the company of lawyers, to inform himself of the number of arms and quantity of ammunition that Seigneur de Saint-Yves kept in his castle,—in short, to draw up an account of it, according to the orders of the Marshal of Vitry.”

The baron had just emptied his glass gloriously. He still held it between his thumb and the index finger of his right hand. When he heard these words he remained motionless, looking at Honorât with a bewildered expression, and wiping mechanically, with the back of his left hand, his white moustache, which was soaked in wine.

The chevalier, without remarking the baron’s astonishment, continued: “As the Seigneur de Saint-Yves hesitated to comply with the demand of the recorder, who insisted almost with threats, saying that he acted by order of the governor of the province, in the name of the cardinal, I wished to interpose between them, and—”

“What! Saint-Yves did not nail these crows by the feet and hands to the door of his manor, to serve as a scarecrow to the others!” cried the baron, purple with indignation, and setting his glass on the table so violently that it broke in pieces.

“Father!” said Reine, alarmed, as she saw the veins which furrowed the baron’s bald forehead, swollen to bursting, “Father, what does it matter to you? No doubt the Seigneur de Saint-Yves has acceded to the governor’s demands.”

“He! obey such orders!” shouted Raimond V., “he! if he could be guilty of such cowardice, and dared appear again at the next assembly of the nobility of Aix, I would seize him by the collar, and chase him out of the hall with blows of my sword-belt. What! a recorder must enter our houses to take account of our arms, our powder, and our balls, as a bailiff takes account of a merchant’s goods! Manjour! if it were the express and signed order of the King of France, our count, I would reply to such an order with good shots from musket and cannon.”

“But, sir,—” said Honorât.

“Visit our castles!” cried the baron, more and more exasperated. “Ah, it is not enough to have placed at the head of the old nobility of Provence a Vitry!—a hired assassin,—but this cardinal—may hell confound him; pray for him, abbé, for he has devilish need of it—must impose upon us the most humiliating obligations! Visit our houses, forsooth! Ah, Vitry, you wish to know how we can fire our muskets and cannon, and, by God’s death, come and lay siege to our castles and you shall know!” Then turning with eagerness to Honorât, he asked: “But what has Saint-Yves done?”

“Sir, at the time I left him, he was proposing to enter into an agreement to draw up, himself, the inventory demanded, and send it directly to the marshal.”

“Laramée,” said the baron, rising abruptly from the table, “have Mistraon saddled, mount five or six of my men and arm them well, and get ready yourself to follow me.”

“In the name of Heaven, father, what are you going to do?” cried Reine, taking one of the baron’s hands in her own.

“Prevent that good man, Saint-Yves, committing a cowardice which would dishonour the nobility of Provence. He is old and feeble, and he has not many persons around him; he will suffer himself to be intimidated. Laramée, my arms, and to horse, to horse!”

“This black night, over such bad roads—surely you will not dream of it,” said Honorât, taking the other hand of the baron.

“Did you hear me, Laramée!” shouted Raimond V.

“But, sir,—” said Honorât.

“Eh, Manjour, my young master, I do what you ought to have done! At your age, I would have thrown the recorder and his guards out of the window. God’s death! the blood of your fathers does not run in the veins of you young men! Laramée, my arms, and to horse!”

Honorât made no response to the baron’s reproaches. He looked at Reine and shook his head to make her understand her father’s injustice to his conduct.

The young girl understood the situation, and while Laramée was occupied in taking down his master’s arms from one of the panoplies which ornamented the dining-hall, she said:

“Laramée, have my nag saddled too; I will accompany monseigneur.”

“To the devil with such folly!” said the baron, shrugging his shoulders.

“Folly or not, I intend to accompany you, father.”

“No, no, a hundred times no. You shall not go with me; such roads, and at such an hour!”

“I will follow you, father. You know I am wilful and obstinate.”

“Certainly, as a goat, when you set your mind to it; but this time I hope you will yield to me.”

“I am going down-stairs to prepare for my departure,” said Reine. “Come, Honorât.”

“To the devil with such nonsense! She is capable of doing it as well as saying it Ah, there it is, I have been too good; I have been too indulgent to her; she abuses it!” cried the old gentleman, stamping his foot with anger. Then taking a milder tone, he said: “Let us see, Reine, my daughter, my dear daughter, be reasonable; just one dash of a gallop, and I am with Saint-Yves in time to drive away these wretches with blows of my whip, and I return.”

Reine made a step toward the door.

“But you may join me, Honorât; you are as unmoved as a worm.”

“Ah, father, do you forget that just now you stigmatised as cowardice his firm and prudent conduct in this affair?”

“He, Honorât, my son, a coward? I would cut anybody in the face who would dare say it If I said that, I was wrong,—it was anger that carried me away. Honorât, my son—”

Raimond V. opened his arms to Honorât, who embraced him, and said:

“Believe, me, sir, do not undertake this journey. My God! you will see these people only too soon.”

“What do you mean by that?”

“To-morrow morning, without doubt, they will be here,—not one house of the nobility will be exempt from this measure.”

“They will be here to-morrow!” cried the baron, with an expression of joy difficult to portray. “Ah, the recorder will be here to-morrow, he who has condemned poor devils to the galleys for the crime of smuggling. Ah, he will be here to-morrow! As God lives, it fills my heart with joy. Laramée, do not have the horses saddled, no, no, only to-morrow at daybreak prepare twenty good poles from hazel-trees, because I hope we will break a good many; then arrange a seesaw above the moat, and—but I will tell you to-night when I go to bed. Some wine, Laramée, some wine; give me my father’s cup and Spanish wine, I must drink with solemnity to such a piece of news; some wine of Xeres, I tell you,—wine of Lamalgue to the devil! since the minions of the petty tyrant of Provence will be here to-morrow, and we will be able to lash them soundly with the straps that ought to be laid on Vitry.”

Having said this, the baron sat down again in his armchair; each one took his place, to the great delight of the poor abbé, who, during this scene, had not dared to utter a word.

The supper, interrupted by this incident, was finished with a certain constraint.

Raimond V., preoccupied with the reception that he was preparing for the agents, stopped every few moments to whisper something in Laramée's ear; it was easy to guess the subject of these secret conferences, by the air of profound satisfaction with which the old soldier received the instructions of his master.

Like all soldiers, Laramée cherished an instinctive hatred of men of the law, and he did not dissimulate his joy at the thought of the reception awaiting the recorder and his scribe the next day.

Reine and Honorât exchanged glances of distress; they knew the obstinate and irascible temper of the baron, his taste for rebellion, and aversion to Marshal of Vitry.

The young girl and her lover feared, not without reason, that the baron might become involved in some serious difficulty. Recent and terrible examples had proven that Richelieu desired to put an end to the independence of the lords, and absorb their feudal privileges in the power of the king.

Unfortunately, they could not dream of preventing Raimond V., when once he determined upon any course of action, and his dependents were only too willing to second his dangerous projects.

The good Abbé Mascarolus ventured to say a few words on obedience,—that the lords owed it to themselves to set the example; but a severe glance from the eye of the baron cut short the chaplain's moralising, and he dared not defend the marshal as he had defended the warlike bishops.

Reine was not a little frightened at the baron's extravagant bursts of merriment and laughter, as he talked aside with Laramée.

When supper was over, according to the ancient and invariable usage of hospitality, the baron took a lamp, and himself conducted Honorât de Berrol to the chamber he was to occupy.

As upon previous occasions, the young man wished to spare the baron this ceremonial, arguing that his position as a betrothed lover rendered it unnecessary, but the old gentleman replied that not until after the festivities of Christmas, when the marriage rite was to be celebrated, could he be treated with less formality; until then, he must receive all the attention due a gentleman who slept under his roof.

Reine entered her chamber, followed by Stephanette. Her apartment was near that of her father, and listening she discovered to her great regret that Laramée remained with him longer than was his habit, and that the baron continued to make plans for the discomfiture of the recorder and officers. At a late hour of the night, she heard the majordomo order some of the baron's servants to carry invitations.

Distressed by these indications, she dismissed Stephanette, and returned to her chamber.

A new object of astonishment, almost of terror, awaited her there.

CHAPTER IX. THE PICTURE

After having shut the door which communicated with her father's rooms. Reine walked mechanically to the table standing in the embrasure of the window. What was her astonishment to see on this table a little picture encased in a frame of filigree, set with precious stones.

Her heart beat violently; she recalled the crystal vase, and a secret presentiment told her that this picture had some mysterious connection with the adventure among the rocks of Ollioules.

She approached it, trembling.

The perfection of this picture, painted on vellum, in imitation of ancient manuscripts, was incredible.

It represented the scene in the gorges of Ollioules at the very moment when the baron, embracing his daughter, had extended his hand to the young stranger; at a distance on the rock, Pog and Trimalcyon, the two foreign personages of whom we have spoken, appeared to command the scene.

Although Reine had seen these two men but a moment, the likeness in the picture was so striking that she recognised them. She shuddered involuntarily at the sinister expression of Fog's face, easily known by his long red beard and the bitter smile which contracted his lips.

The features of the baron, as well as those of Reine, were rendered with surprising fidelity and perfect art, although the faces were scarcely larger than the nail of the little finger. They were drawn with a delicacy which was marvellous.

Notwithstanding the inimitable skill displayed in this ravishing picture, an odd, extravagant thing destroyed its harmony and effect.

The pose, person, and costume of Erebus—the strange young man—were perfectly portrayed; but his head disappeared beneath a small cloud, in the centre of which was represented the enamelled dove already portrayed on the crystal vase.

This omission was strange, and perhaps cleverly calculated, inasmuch as Reine, in spite of her fear and astonishment, could not help calling memory to her aid in order to complete the portrait of the stranger.

She saw it in her own mind, instead of on the vellum which she held in her hand.

There was, besides, on the part of the stranger, a sort of delicacy in thus effacing his own features under a symbol which represented to his mind the most precious memory of that day; or he may have adopted this means to quiet the scruples of the young girl, should she decide to keep the picture.

In order to comprehend the struggle between the desire to keep the picture and the resolve to destroy it, which rose in the young girl's mind, we must say a few words about Reine's love for Honorât de Berrol, and her own sentiments after the adventure in the gorges of Ollioules.

Honorât de Berrol was an orphan and distant relative of Raimond V. He had considerable fortune, his estates lying near those of the baron, and community of interest as well as other ties bound the chevalier and

the old gentleman.

For two or three years Honorât came almost every day to Maison-Forte. The chevalier was the impersonation of rectitude, sincerity, and honour. His education, without being extraordinary, was superior to that of most young men of his age.

He was actively occupied in the management of his estates; his order and his economy were remarkable, although, when an opportunity presented itself, he knew how to be generous.

His mind was not unusual, but he had plenty of good sense and reason, and his character, naturally charming, could be firm and decided when circumstances demanded it.

His predominating characteristic was a love of justice. Little given to enthusiasm or exaggeration, and supremely happy in his position, he looked forward to his marriage with the baron's daughter with a pure and serene joy.

There was no romantic aspect to this love. Before allowing himself to fall in love with Reine, Honorât had frankly expressed his intentions to the baron, and asked him to learn his daughter's feelings.

The good gentleman, who never temporised or resorted to half-measures, replied to Honorât that the alliance would be agreeable to him, and at once told Reine of the chevalier's proposal.

Reine was then sixteen years old; she was pleased with the appearance and bearing of the Chevalier de Berrol, for the manners of most of the country gentlemen who visited Maison-Forte suffered much by comparison with those of her amiable relative.

Reine accepted the baron's plans, and the baron wrote at length to his brothers, the commander and Father Elzear, without whose advice he did nothing, concerning the happy betrothal.

Their response was favourable to Honorât, and the marriage was fixed for the Christmas celebration which would follow the young girl's eighteenth birthday.

Thus passed two years in the midst of sweet hopes and a pure, calm love.

Honorât, serious and gentle, began at once his part as mentor, and by degrees acquired a great ascendancy over the mind of Reine.

Raimond V. loved his daughter so foolishly and idolatrously, that the happy influence of Honorât saved her from her father's weakness.

The girl had lost her mother when she was in the cradle, and had been reared under the eyes of the baron by Stephanette's mother, an excellent woman, and, although happily endowed with good instincts, had been permitted to indulge her caprice at will.

Her lively imagination exaggerated sympathy and antipathy, and she often received the wise and reasonable suggestions of Honorât with mischievous irony and even resentment.

Legend and romance were the mental food she craved, and often in thought she pictured herself as the heroine of some strange adventure. Honorât would dissipate these fantastic visions by a breath, and not infrequently reproached Reine, with as much good-humour as gaiety, for these vagabond imaginations.

But these little differences were soon forgotten. Reine would confess her wrong-doing with adorable frankness, and the beautiful affection of the two lovers seemed only to increase.

Unconsciously, Reine began to feel the influence of Honorât more and more in her daily life, and instead of indulging herself in vague reveries and foolish imaginations, occupied her mind with graver thoughts. She recognised the nothingness of her former dreams, and every step of this wise and happy way served to establish her love for Chevalier de Berrol.

Her mind and character had undergone such a complete transformation under the influence of Honorât, that her father, sometimes, when he had gone beyond the limits of temperance, would say in jest that Reine was becoming insupportably serious.

The sentiment of Reine for Honorât was by no means a passionate love, nourished by difficulties and uncertainties, but a calm, sincere, and reasonable affection, in which the young girl recognised, with a sort of tender veneration, the superior reason of her betrothed.

Such were the sentiments of Mlle, des Anbiez when the fatal meeting in the rocks of Ollioules took place.

The first time that she saw Erebus, placed her under the influence of a profound sentiment of gratitude; he had just saved the baron's life.

Reine, perhaps, might never have observed the surprising beauty of the stranger, but for the startling circumstances by which he was presented to her.

The fact that he had just delivered her father from a frightful danger was the most powerful fascination that Erebus could offer.

No doubt the charm was broken when, after the few words uttered by his companions, his countenance and manner changed, and he had the audacity to press his lips to hers. The features of the stranger, that a moment before possessed a beauty so pure, and an amiability so lovely, seemed suddenly to disappear under the mask of an insolent libertine.

Since that day, Erebus appeared to her always under these two different physiognomies.

Sometimes she tried to banish from her memory all thought of an audacious stranger, who had insolently robbed her of what she would have given to her father's saviour with reluctance. Again, she would dream, with a deep sentiment of gratitude, that her father owed his life to this same stranger who at first seemed so courageous and so timid.

Unhappily for Reine's repose of mind, Erebus united and justified, so to speak, these two distinct natures, and in her thought she gave him sometimes her admiration, and sometimes her contempt.

So she wavered between these two sentiments.

Thus the natural exaggeration of her character, rather suppressed than destroyed, was excited by this singular adventure.

The unknown one seemed to her the genius of good and the genius of evil.

Involuntarily, her excitable mind tried to penetrate the secret of this double power.

Reine herself was made aware of her morbid mental condition only by the tender reproaches of Honorât, who accused her of distraction. For the first time, then, Reine realised with horror the empire that the unknown person had gained over her mind; she resolved to escape from it, but the resistance with which she endeavoured to drive Erebus from her mind, only made her think of him the more.

In her vexation she shed bitter tears, and sought refuge and diversion in the calm and wise conversation of Honorât.

Nothing could make her forget the past. Notwithstanding his goodness and kindness, her betrothed seemed to weary her, and even wound her.

She dared not open her heart to him. The baron, too, was the best of fathers, yet absolutely incapable of comprehending the unaccountable anguish of his daughter.

Concentrated by silence, and overexcited by solitude, a sentiment mingled with curiosity, admiration, and almost hatred, began to take deep root in the heart of Reine.

Many times she shuddered to see that the gravity of Honorât oppressed her. In her thought she reproached him for having nothing in his career that was adventurous or romantic.

She compared his peaceful and uniform life with the mystery which surrounded the stranger.

Then, ashamed of such thoughts, she sought to fix her hopes upon her approaching union with Honorât,—a union so sacred that, in the fulfilment of its duties, every foolish dream and imagination would be effaced.

Such was the state of Reine’s heart when, by an inexplicable mystery, she found in the same day two objects, the sight of which redoubled her anguish and excited every power of her imagination.

This stranger, or one of his agents, was then near her, though invisible.

She could not suspect the servants within the walls of Maison-Forte of being in collusion with the stranger. All of them were old servants, grown gray in the service of Raimond V.

Reared, so to speak, by them, she was too well acquainted with their life and morality to believe them capable of underhand manoeuvres. The fact that the picture was placed on her praying-stool in her chamber, disquieted her above all.

She was on the point of going to her father and telling him all, but an instinctive love of the marvellous restrained her; she feared to break the charm. Her romantic character found a sort of pleasure, mingled with fear, in this mystery.

Inaccessible to superstition, of a firm and decided mind, and recognising the fact that, after all, there was nothing really dangerous in allowing this strange adventure to take its course, Reine reassured herself, after searching her chamber and the connecting one very carefully.

She took up the picture again, looked at it for some time, then, after dreaming awhile, she threw it into the fire.

She followed the destruction of this little masterpiece with a melancholy gaze.

By a strange chance the vellum, detached from the frame, caught first on both sides.

Thus the figure of Erebus burned the last and was outlined a moment on the burning embers,—then a light flame leaped upon it, and all disappeared.

Reine remained a long time gazing in the fireplace, as though she still saw there the picture which had been consumed.

The clock of Maison-Forte struck two in the morning; the young girl returned to her senses, went to bed, and, for a long time, tried to fall asleep.

CHAPTER X. THE RECORDER

The day after the occurrence of the events we have just related, a group of several persons, some on foot, and others on horseback, skirted the edge of the sea, and seemed to direct their course toward the Gulf of La Ciotat.

The most important personage of this little caravan was a man of considerable corpulence, with a solemn and formal countenance, wearing a travelling-cloak over his habit of black velvet.

He had a chain of silver around his neck, and rode a little horse with an ambling gait.

These personages were no other than Master Isnard, recorder of the admiralty of Toulon, and his clerk or scribe, who, mounted on an old white mule, carried behind enormous bags filled with bundles of papers, and two large registers in their boxes of black shagreen.

The clerk was a little middle-aged man, with a pointed nose, a pointed chin, high cheek-bones, and sharp eyes. This nose, this chin, and these cheek-bones, and these eyes were very red, thanks to the very keen wind from the north.

A valet, mounted on another mule, laden with wallets, and two halberdiers, dressed in green and orange-coloured cassocks trimmed with white lace, accompanied the recorder and his clerk.

It was evident that the two officers of justice did not enjoy an unmarred serenity.

Master Isnard, especially, betrayed his bad humour, from time to time, by imprecations upon the cold, the weather, the roads, and particularly upon his mission.

The clerk responded to these complaints with a humble and pitiful air.

“On my oath!” cried the recorder, “here I am only two days on my circuit, and it is far from promising anything agreeable. Hm! the nobility takes this census of arms ordered by the Marshal of Vitry very ill; they receive us in their castles like Turks—”

“And we are happy to be received at all, Master Isnard,” said the clerk; “the lord of Signerol shut his door in our faces, and we were obliged to draw up our report by the light of the moon. The lord of Saint-Yves received us reluctantly.”

“And all these resistances, open or mute, to the orders of his Eminence, the cardinal, will be duly recorded, clerk, and bad intentions will be punished!”

“Fortunately, the reception given by the Baron des Anbiez will indemnify us for these tribulations, Master Isnard. They say the old lord is the best of men. His jovial nature is as well known throughout the country as the austerity of his brother, the commander of the black galley, or the charity of Father Elzear of the Order of Mercy, his other brother—”

“Hm! Raimond V. does well to be hospitable,” growled the recorder; “he is one of those old strife-stirrers, always ready to draw his sword against any established power; but patience, clerk, good courage, the reign of men of peace and justice has come, thank God! All these arrogant disputants, with long rapiers and spurs, will keep as quiet in their strong castles as wolves in their dens, or, on my oath, we will rase their houses to the ground and sow salt on them. However,” added Master Isnard, as if he wanted to give himself artificial courage, “we are always sure of the support of the cardinal; just let them touch a hair of our heads,—why, you see, clerk, that it would be the same as pulling a hair out of the beard of his Eminence!”

“Which would be dreadfully injurious to the said Eminence, Master Isnard, as they say he has a regular cat’s beard,—thin and sharp.”

“You are an ass!” said the recorder, shrugging his shoulders, and giving his horse a thrust of the spur.

The clerk lowered his head, said no more, and blew through his fingers by way of keeping in countenance.

The little caravan followed the road for some time along the beach, the sea on the right, and interminable rocks on the left, when they were joined by a traveller modestly seated on a donkey.

The tawny complexion of this man, with his overcoat of leather, his red cap, from which escaped a forest of black hair, curled and standing on end, and a little portable forge, fastened to one side of the pack-saddle on the back of his donkey, proved him to be one of those strolling Bohemians who go from farm to village, offering their services to housekeepers as repairers of household utensils.

Notwithstanding the cold, the legs and feet of this man were naked. His delicate and nervous limbs, and his expressive face, scarcely shaded by a black and distinctly marked beard, presented the type peculiar to the men of his race.

His donkey was quiet and tractable, and had neither bit nor bridle,—he guided it by means of a stick which he held to the animal’s left eye, if he wished to go to the right, and to the right eye if he wished him to go to the left. As he approached the recorder and his attendants, the Bohemian took the donkey by one of his long, pendent ears, and stopped him suddenly.

“Can you tell me, sir,” said the Bohemian to the recorder, respectfully, “if I am still far from La Ciotat?”

The recorder, thinking, doubtless, the man unworthy of a reply from him, made a disdainful gesture, and said to his scribe:

“Answer him, clerk,” and rode on.

“The mouth is the mistress, the ear is the slave,” said the Bohemian, bowing himself humbly before the clerk.

The clerk inflated his thin cheeks, assumed a haughty air, seated himself on his mule with triumphant dignity, and said to the valet who followed him, as he pointed to the Bohemian:

“Lackey, reply to him,” and passed on.

Little John, more compassionate, told the wanderer that he could follow the caravan, as it was on its way to a place quite near the town of La Ciotat.

The two halberdiers were a short distance in the rear, and, joining the principal group, all continued to move forward on the beach. The sun soon made its influence felt; although it was in the month of December, its rays became so warm that Master Isnard felt the need of relieving himself of his cloak. He tossed it to his clerk, saying:

“Are you sure, clerk, that you recognise the route to Maison-Forte, the castle of Raimond V., Baron des Anbiez? For we are to stop first at his dwelling. It is from that point that I will begin the census of arms in this diocese. Eh, eh, clerk, the morning air and salt odour of the beach gives me an appetite! They say the baron has the good cheer of an abbé, and the hospitality of the good King René. So much the better, on my oath! so much the better, clerk. Instead of putting up for fifteen days at some paltry hostelry of La Ciotat, eh, eh! I will make my winter quarters at Maison-Forte of Raimond V., and you will follow me, clerk,” said the recorder, giving himself airs. “Instead of your bacon with garlic and beans, and your codfish seasoned with oil for high days, you will only have to choose between fowl, venison, and the best fish of the gulf. Eh, eh! for a starved wretch like you, it is a rare windfall, so, clerk, you can get a big mouthful—”

The poor scribe made no reply to these coarse pleasantries, by which he felt humiliated, and only said to the recorder: “I recognise the road easily, Master Isnard, because there is a post bearing the escutcheon of Raimond V., and a milestone which marks the land belonging to the house of Baux.”

“The lands of Baux!” cried the recorder, with indignation. “Another one of the abuses that his Eminence will destroy, on my oath! It is enough to make one insane to try to find his way out of-this labyrinth of feudal privileges!” Then, passing from grave to gay, the recorder added, with a loud laugh, “Eh, eh! it would be as difficult a task as for you to distinguish the wine of Xeres from the wine of Malaga, accustomed as you are to drink the second pressing of the grape like a fish, and then taste a glass of Sauve-chrétien, to put a good taste in your mouth.”

“And happy when this grape-water does not fail us, Master Isnard,” said the poor clerk, with a sigh.

“Eh, eh! then the river never fails, and asses can drink at their ease,” replied the recorder, insolently.

His unhappy victim could only hang his head in silence, while the recorder, proud of his triumph, put his hand above his eyes, hoping to discover the roof of Maison-Forte des Anbiez, as his appetite was growing clamorous.

The Bohemian, who rode behind the two talkers, had heard their conversation.

Although his features were common, they showed much penetration and intelligence. His little, piercing, changing black eyes constantly moved from the recorder to the clerk with an expression by turns ironical and compassionate. When Master Isnard had finished conversation by his coarse witticism on asses, he contracted his eyebrows into a severe frown, and seemed about to speak, but whether he feared the recorder, or was afraid of saying too much, he remained silent.

“Tell me, clerk,” cried the recorder, stopping short before a post, painted with a coat of arms, which marked a division of the road, “is not this the route to Des Anbiez?”

“Yes, Master Isnard, but we must leave the shore. This is the road to Maison-Forte; it is about two hundred steps from here; this rock hides it from you,” answered the clerk, as he pointed to a sort of little promontory which thrust itself into the sea, and thus interfered with a view of the castle.

“Then, clerk, go on before,” said the recorder, checking his own horse, and giving a blow of his switch to the scribe’s mule.

The clerk rode on in advance, and the little band ventured into a precipitous road which wound its way across the rocks on the coast.

After a quarter of an hour’s travel, the road became level, and wooded hills, vines, olive-trees, and sown fields succeeded the rocks. Master Isnard at last saw, to his great joy, the imposing pile of Maison-Forte. It stood out at the end of an immense avenue, planted with six rows of beeches and sycamores, which conducted to the vast court of which we have spoken.

“Eh, eh!” said the recorder, expanding his nostrils, “it is about midday; it ought to be the dinner-hour of Raimond V., for these country lords follow the old Provençal custom: they take four meals; every four hours,—breakfast at eight o’clock, dine in the middle of the day, lunch at four o’clock, and sup at eight.” “Indeed, then they must eat nearly all day long,” said the clerk, with a sigh of envy, “for they often sit three or four hours at table.”

“Eh, eh! you are licking your lean lips already, clerk; but do you not see a thick smoke on the side of the kitchens?”

“Master Isnard, I do not know where the kitchens are,” said the clerk. “I have never been inside Maison-Forte, but I do see a thick smoke above the tower which looks toward the west.”

“And you do not detect the odour of fish-soup, or roast? On my oath, in the house of Raimond V. it ought to be Christmas every day. Come, can’t you scent something, man?”

The clerk held his nose in the air like a dog on the scent, and replied, with a shake of the head: “Master, I scent nothing.”

When the recorder had arrived a few steps from the court of Maison-Forte, he was astonished to see no one outside of this large habitation, at an hour when domestic duties always require so much commotion.

As we have said, the court formed a sort of parallelogram.

At the farther end of this parallelogram rose the main dwelling.

On each side could be seen its wings at right angles, and the buildings occupied by persons in the employ of the castle.

On the first plane rose a high wall, pierced with loopholes for cannon, in the middle of which opened a massive door. In front of this wall stretched a wide and deep ditch, filled with water, which was crossed by means of a movable bridge, built directly in front of the door.

The recorder and his retinue arrived at the entrance of the bridge, where they found Master Laramée.

The majordomo, solemnly clothed in black, bore in his hand a white rod, a distinctive mark of office.

The recorder descended from his horse with an important air, and, turning to Laramée, said: “In the name of the king, and his Eminence, the cardinal, I, Master Isnard, recorder, have come to take census and catalogue of the arms and ammunition of war, retained here in this castle of Maison-Forte, belonging to Sir Raimond V., Baron des Anbiez.”

Then turning to his train, which the Bohemian had joined, he said: “All of you follow me.”

Laramée made a profound bow, and with a sly expression of face said to the recorder, as he indicated the road: “If you will follow me, Master Recorder, I will show you our magazine of arms and artillery.” Encouraged by this reception, Master Isnard and his retinue crossed the bridge, leaving their horses outside, tied to the parapet, according to the instruction of the majordomo.

As they entered the court planted with trees, the recorder said to Laramée: “Is your master at home? We are very hungry and very thirsty, friend.”

The majordomo looked up at the recorder, lifted his cap, and replied: “You condescend, sir; you call me friend; you honour me too much, Master Recorder.”

“Oh, go on! I am as kind as a prince. If the baron is not at table, conduct me first to him; if he is at table, conduct me to him all the sooner.”

“Monseigneur has just been served, Master Recorder. I am going to open the door of honour for you, as is proper.”

As he said these words, Laramée disappeared through a narrow passage.

The recorder, his clerk, his valet, the Bohemian, and the two halberdiers remained in the court, staring at the great portal of the castle, expecting every moment to see its massive doors open for their reception. They did not see that two men had removed the bridge, beyond the ditch, on the side of the fields, thus cutting off

all retreat from the men of the law.

CHAPTER XI. TAKING THE CENSUS

On the side of the court, as on the side of the sea, three windows of the gallery, which extended the full length of the edifice, opened upon a balcony which was over the principal door of the castle.

The recorder began to realise that it required much ceremony to introduce him to the baron, when suddenly the windows were opened, and ten or twelve gentlemen, in handsome hunting-suits, booted and spurred, holding a glass in one hand and a napkin in the other, rushed out on the balcony, shouting and laughing at the top of their voices.

At their head was Raimond V.

It was easy to see by the flushed cheeks of these joyous companions that they had just arisen from the table, and had emptied more than one bottle of Spanish wine.

The convivial friends of Raimond V. belonged to the nobility of the neighbourhood, and were all known for their hatred of Marshal of Vitry, and open or secret opposition to Cardinal Richelieu.

Honorât de Berrol and Reine, utterly powerless to dissuade the baron from his dangerous projects, had retired into one of the apartments in the tower.

The recorder began to think he was mistaken in counting on a favourable reception from the baron; he even feared that he might be made the victim of some infernal trick, as he saw the clamorous gaiety of the guests of Maison-Forte, especially when he recognised among the number the old lord of Signerol, who had rudely refused him entrance into his castle.

However, he tried to put a good face on the matter, and followed by his clerk, who was trembling in every limb, he advanced to the balcony with his two halberdiers at his heels.

Addressing himself to Raimond V., who was leaning over the balcony railing and looking contemptuously on the company below, he said:

“In the name of the king and his Eminence, the cardinal—”

“The cardinal to the devil! Let his infernal Eminence return to the place he came from!” shouted several gentlemen, interrupting the recorder’s speech.

“Beelzebub, at this moment, is making a red brass hat for his Eminence,” said the lord of Signerol.

“The girdles of his Eminence ought to be good rope for hanging!” said another.

“Let the recorder have his say, gentlemen,” said the baron, turning to his guests, “let him speak, my friends,—it is not by a single note that you recognise the bird of the night. Come on, Manjour! speak, recorder, speak, read out your scrawl!”

The clerk, completely demoralised, and doubtless meditating a retreat, turned his head away from the door, and discovered with dismay that the bridge had been withdrawn.

“Master Isnard,” whispered he, with broken voice, “we are caught in a mouse-trap; they have carried away the bridge.”

Notwithstanding the self-possession he affected, the recorder looked over his shoulder, and said, in a low voice: “Clerk, order the halberdiers to approach without attracting attention.”

The clerk obeyed; the little band concentrated in the middle of the court, with the exception of the Bohemian.

Standing at the foot of the balcony, he seemed to contemplate with curiosity the gentlemen gathered there.

Master Isnard, anxious to accomplish his task, and seeing that he had been mistaken in presuming upon the hospitality of Raimond V., read, not without hesitation, the judicial summary.

“In the name of his Majesty, our sire, King of France and of Navarre, and Count of Provence, and of his Eminence, the cardinal, I, Thomas Isnard, recorder of the admiralty of Toulon, sent by the king’s attorney to the seat of the said admiralty, make here in this Maison-Forte the census and catalogue of the arms and ammunitions of war therein enclosed, in order to draw up a statement, on which statement his Excellence, the Marshal of Vitry, Governor of Provence, will decide to the end that we may be advised as to what quantity of arms and ammunition ought to be left in the said Maison-Forte; accordingly, I, Thomas Isnard, recorder of the admiralty of Toulon, here present myself in person to the said Raimond V., Baron des Anbiez, praying him of necessity to obey the orders signified. Made at Maison-Forte des Anbiez, dependent of the diocese of Marseilles, and the jurisdiction of Aix, December 17,1632.” The old baron and his friends listened to the recorder with perfect calmness, exchanging frequent glances of contempt. When Master Isnard had concluded, Raimond V. leaned over the railing of the balcony and replied:

“Worthy recorder, worthy deputy of the worthy Marshal of Vitry, and of the worthy Cardinal Richelieu,—God save the king, our count, from his Eminence,—we, Raimond V., Baron des Anbiez, and master of this poor mansion, we authorise you to complete your mission. You see that door there on the left, on which is nailed the sign-board, ‘Arms and Artillery,’—open it, and perform the duties of your office.”

As he said these words the old gentleman and his guests sat with their elbows on the balcony railing, as if they had prepared themselves for the enjoyment of an interesting and unusual spectacle.

Master Isnard had followed with his eyes the gesture of the baron, which indicated to him the mysterious magazine.

It was a door of medium size, on which could easily be read the newly painted words, “Arms and Artillery.” This door was situated in the middle of the left wing, which was largely made up of rooms for the servants.

Without being able to account for his repugnance, the recorder looked at the door of the magazine with suspicion, and said to Raimond V., with an air almost arrogant:

“Send some one of your people to open that door!” The old gentleman’s face became purple with anger; he was on the point of flying into a passion, but restrained himself and replied:

“One of my people, Master Recorder? Alas, I do not have them any longer. The good old man who received you is my only servant; the taxes imposed by your worthy cardinal, and the tribute he exacts from us, have reduced the Provençal nobility to beggary, as you see! You are accompanied by two companions with halberds, and a fellow with a serge mantle,”—here the clerk made a respectful bow,—“your own people are more than enough to put your orders in execution.”

Then, seeing the Bohemian at the foot of the balcony, Raimond called to him: “Eh, you man there with the red cap, who in the devil are you? What are you doing there? Do you belong to this band?”

The wanderer approached the balcony, and said: “Monseigneur, I am a poor travelling artisan, who lives by his work. I come from Bany. I was on my way to La Ciotat, and I entered to see if I could get work at the castle.”

“Manjour!” exclaimed the baron, “you are my guest; do not stay in the court.”

At this remarkable invitation, the men of the law looked frightened, and at the same instant the Bohemian, with a wonderful agility, climbed up one of the granite pillars which supported the balcony, as quick as a wildcat, and seated himself at the feet of the baron, outside of the balustrade, on a little slab projecting from the balcony floor.

The ascension of the Bohemian was so rapid, and done so cleverly, that it excited the admiration of the guests.

The baron, laughingly seizing one of his long black locks of hair, said to him: “You climb too well to travel in the main road; it is my opinion, fellow, that windows are your doors, and roofs serve you as a place to promenade. Come in the house, boy; Laramée will give you something to drink.”

With a light bound the Bohemian jumped over the railing of the balcony, and entered the gallery, which served as dining-room on important occasions, where he found the remains of the abundant dinner of which the baron’s guests had just partaken.

The recorder remained in the court with his escort, not knowing upon what course to resolve.

He looked at the unlucky door with a vague disquietude, while the old gentleman and his friends betrayed some impatience as they waited for the end of this scene.

Finally, Master Isnard, wishing to get out of an embarrassing position, turned to the baron and said, with a solemn air:

“I call to witness the people who accompany me if anything unbecoming happens to me, and you will answer, sir, for any dangerous and secret ambuscade which could hurt the dignity of the law or of justice, or our honourable person.”

“Eh, Manjour! what are you crowing about? Nobody here wishes to interfere with your office; my arms and my artillery are there: enter, examine, and count; the key is in the door!”

“Yes, yes, go in, the key is in the door,” repeated the chorus of guests, with a sneer which seemed a sinister omen to the recorder. Exasperated beyond measure, but keeping himself at a respectful distance from the door, the recorder said to his scribe:

“Clerk, go and open this door; let us make an end of—”

“But, Master Isnard—”

“Obey, clerk, obey,” said the recorder, still drawing back.

The poor scribe showed the register which he held in one hand, and the pen that he held in the other.

“My hands are not free. I must be ready to draw up an official report. If some sorcery bursts out of that door, ought I not, on the very instant, enter it upon my verbal process?”

These reasons appeared to make some impression on the recorder.

“Little John, open that door,” said he to the lackey.

“Oh, master, I dare not,” replied Little John, getting behind the recorder.

“Do you hear me, you wretch?”

“Yes, sir, but I dare not; there is some sorcery there.”

“But, on my oath, if you—”

“If the salvation of my soul depended on it, sir, I would not open it,” said Little John, in a resolute tone.

“Come, come!” said the recorder, overcome with vexation, as he addressed the halberdiers, “it will be said, my brave fellows, that you alone acted as men in this stupid affair! Open that door, and put an end to this ridiculous scene.”

The two guards retreated a step, and one of them said:

“Listen, Master Isnard, we are here to give you assistance as far as we are able, if any one rebels against your orders, but no one forbids you to enter. The key is in the door; enter alone, if you wish to do so.”

“What, an old pandour like you afraid!”

The halberdier shook his head, and said:

“Listen, Master Isnard, halberds and swords are worth nothing here; what we need is a priest with his stole, and a holy water sprinkler in his hand.”

“Michael is right, Master Isnard,” said the other guard; “it is my opinion that we will have to do what was done to exorcise the dolphins that infested the coast last year.”

“If that dog of a Bohemian had not run away like a coward,” said the recorder, stamping his foot with rage, “he might have opened the door.”

Then, happening to turn his head, the recorder discovered several men and women standing at the windows of Maison-Forte; they were partially hidden by the basement, but were looking curiously into the court.

More from self-esteem than courage, Master Isnard, seeing that he was observed by so many persons, walked deliberately to the door, and put his hand on the key.

At that moment his heart failed him.

He heard in the magazine a rumbling noise and extraordinary excitement, which he had not detected before.

The sounds were harsh, with nothing human in them.

A magic charm seemed to fasten the recorder's hand to the key in the door.

"Come, recorder, my boy, go on! there you are! go on!" cried one of the guests, clapping his hands.

"I wager he is as warm as if it were the month of August, although the wind is blowing from the north," said another.

"Give him time to invoke his patron and make a vow," said a third.

"His patron is St. Coward," said the lord of Signerol; "no doubt he is making a vow never to brave another danger if he delivers him from this one."

Pushed to extremity by these jeers, and reflecting that, after all, Raimond V. was not so cruel as to force him into real danger, the recorder opened the door, and suddenly jumped back.

At that moment he was roughly overthrown by the onset of two Camargnan bulls, that rushed from the stable, head downward, and uttering a peculiar and stifled bellowing, for they were muzzled.

The two animals were not of very large size, but were full of vigour.

One was tawny, streaked with dark brown; the other was black as jet.

The first use they made of their liberty was to bound over the court, paw the earth with their fore feet, and try to divest themselves of their muzzles.

The appearance of the two bulls was greeted with hurrahs and bravos by the guests of the baron.

"Eh, well, recorder, your inventory?" cried Raimond V., holding his sides, and giving full vent to his hilarity. "Come, clerk, enter upon your official report my bulls, Nicolin and Saturnin. Ah! you demand the arms that I possess,—there they are. It is with the horns of these fellows from Camargne that I defend myself. Eh, Man-jour! I see by your fear that you recognise them as arms, serious and offensive. Come, recorder, label Nicolin, and draw up Saturnin."

"God's death!" cried the lord of Signerol, "these bulls look as if they would like to make an inventory of the clerk's and recorder's breeches!"

"By Our Lady, in spite of his corpulence, the recorder made a leap then that would do honour to a toreador!" "And the clerk,—how he winds around the trees! He is equal to a frightened weasel!"

"Christmas! Christmas! Nicolin has a piece of his cloak!"

It is needless to say that these different exclamations described the phases of the improvised race with which Raimond V. entertained his friends.

The bulls were in hot pursuit of the recorder and his clerk, whom they wished first to attack. The halberdiers and Little John had prudently availed themselves of the protection of the wall.

Thanks to the trees planted in the court, the recorder and his clerk were able for some time to escape the attacks of the bulls by running from tree to tree.

But after awhile their strength was exhausted. Fear paralysed their energies, and they were about to be trampled under foot by these ferocious animals. Be it said to the praise of Raimond V. that, notwithstanding the brutality of his savage pleasantry, he would have been distressed beyond measure if a tragedy had ended this adventure.

Happily one of the halberdiers screamed:

"Master Isnard,—climb a tree,—quick, quick, before the bull gets back."

The corpulent recorder followed the halberdier's counsel, and throwing himself upon the trunk of a sycamore, he held on with knees, feet, and hands, making unheard-of efforts in his clumsy ascent.

The baron and his guests, seeing that the man was no longer in real danger, again began their jests and laughter. The clerk, more nimble than the recorder, was now safely seated in the top of a sycamore.

"Master Bruin has come at last! Take care, beware!" cried Raimond, laughing till the tears came in his eyes at the efforts of the recorder, who was trying to straddle one of the largest branches of the tree he had climbed with so much difficulty.

"If the recorder looks like an old bear climbing his pole," said another, "the clerk looks like an old, shivering monkey,—see his jaws chatter."

"Come, come, clerk, get to your task; where is your pen and your ink, and your register? You are safe, now, —scribble your scrawl," cried the old lord of Signerol.

"Attention, attention, the tournament has begun!" cried one of the guests. "It is Nicolin against a halberdier."

"Largess, largess for Nicolin!"

Seeing the two men of the law safe from their horns, the bulls had turned upon the halberdiers.

But one of the halberdiers, throwing himself against the wall, pricked the animal so sharply in the nose and the shoulder, that the bull dared not make another attack, and bounded off into the middle of the court.

Seeing the courage of the halberdier, the baron cried:

"Have no fear, my brave fellow, you shall have ten francs to drink his health, and I will furnish the wine gratis."

Then addressing the invisible Larmaée, the old gentleman ordered: “Tell the shepherd to send his dogs, and drive these bulls back into the stable. The dance of the recorder and the clerk has lasted long enough.”

The baron had hardly finished speaking, when three shepherd dogs of large size came out of a half-open door and ran straight after the bulls. After a few flourishes, the animals ended the farce by galloping into the stable, the magazine of arms and artillery of Maison-Forte, as the treacherous sign-board had announced.

The recorder and his clerk, seeing themselves delivered from danger, still did not dare descend from their impregnable position. In vain Laramée, bearing two glasses of wine on a silver plate, came offering the stirrup-cup from the baron, and telling them, what was true, that the bridge had been replaced, and their horses and mules were waiting for them outside.

“I go from here only that my clerk may draw up an official statement of the grievous outrage by which the baron, your master, has rendered himself amenable,” cried the recorder, almost breathless, wiping the sweat from his brow, which literally ran with water, in spite of the cold weather. “Perhaps you are reserving some other bad treatment for us, but the governor, and if necessary the cardinal himself, will avenge me, and on my oath, there shall not remain one stone on another of this accursed house—may Satan confound it—”

Raimond V., holding in his hand a long hunting-whip, descended into the court, gave the ten francs to the halberdier who had so bravely combatted the bull, and went up to the tree from which the recorder was fulminating his threats.

“What is that you say, you scoundrel?” said the baron, cracking his whip.

“I say,” shouted the recorder, “I say that the marshal will not leave this offence unpunished, and that on my arrival in Marseilles, I will tell him all, I—”

“Eh, Manjour!” cried the baron, with another crack of the whip, “I hope you will tell him all. I have received you in this way that you may tell him, indeed, that he may learn in what light I hold his orders,” cried the old gentleman, unable to restrain his anger; “the Provençal nobility has known how, in the last century, to drive from its province the insolent Duke d’Epernon and his Gascons, as unworthy of governing it, and shall we not drive away a Vitry, a wretched assassin, who acts like an Italian bandit, who leaves our coasts without defence, who obliges us to protect ourselves, and then comes to take away from us the means of resisting the pirates! Get out of here, you rogue, and go to draw up your scrawls elsewhere than in my house!”

“I will not get down!” cried the recorder.

“Do you want me to smoke you out of the tree like a badger in the trunk of a willow?”

Believing Raimond V. capable of anything, Master Isnard slowly descended the tree. His clerk, who had remained silent, imitated his example, and reached the ground at the same time with his master.

“Stop!” said the baron, putting a few pieces of silver in the scribe’s hand. “You can drink to the health of the king, our count. All this is not your fault, clerk.” “I forbid you to accept one coin!” cried the recorder. “You shall be obeyed, Master Isnard,” said the scribe. “These are two silver crowns, and not one coin,” and he pocketed the present.

“And I will add in my report, sir, that you tried to corrupt my agents,” said the recorder.

“Out of here, out, out, you stinking beast!” cried the baron, cracking his whip.

“You give people strange hospitality, Baron des Anbiez,” said the recorder.

This reproach seemed to touch Raimond deeply; he said: “Manjour! all the country knows that the lord and the peasant have found free refuge and loyal hospitality in this house. But I am and will be without pity for the petty tyrants of a tyrant cardinal. Out of here, I say, or I will whip you like a bad dog!”

“It will sound well,” cried the recorder, purple with rage, and walking backward toward the bridge, “It will sound well that you have attempted the life of an officer of the king’s justice, and that you have driven him away from your house with blows of the whip, instead of allowing him to execute peaceably the orders of his Eminence, the cardinal, and of the marshal.”

“Yes, yes, you can tell all that to your marshal, and you can add that, if he comes here, although my beard is gray, I engage to prove to him, sword in hand and dagger in fist, that he is nothing but a hired assassin, and that his master, the cardinal,—God preserve the king from him,—is only a sort of Christian pacha, a thousand times more a despot than the Turk. You can tell him, too, to beware of pushing us to extremes, because we can remember a noble prince, brother of a good and noble king, blinded for the moment by this false priest, cousin of Beelzebub. You can tell him, too, that the nobility of Provence, worn out by so many outrages, would rather have for their sovereign Count Gaston of Orleans, than the King of France, since at this time the King of France is Richelieu.”

“Take care, baron,” whispered the lord of Signerol, “you are going too far.”

“Eh, Manjour!” cried the impetuous baron, “my head can answer for my words; but I have an arm, thank God, able to defend my head. Out of here, you knave! Open your long ears well, and shut them well to keep what you hear. As for our cannon and ammunition, you will see nothing of them. We will renounce our arms when the dogs beg the wolves to cut off their paws and pull out their teeth. Out of here, I say; and repeat my words, and worse, too, if it seems good to you!”

The recorder, having reached the gate, rapidly crossed the bridge, followed by his clerk and his guards, and as he mounted his horse, hurled a thundering anathema at the house of the baron.

Raimond V., delighted with the success of his trick, entered with his guests, and sat down to the table, as the hour of luncheon had just arrived.

The end of the long day passed away in joy, in the midst of gay conversation arising from this adventure.

From one of the windows of the castle, Honorât de Berrol had witnessed this scene. Knowing the obstinacy of his future father-in-law, he had not attempted remonstrance, but he could not repress his fear when he thought of the imprudent words Raimond V. had uttered on the subject of Gaston of Orleans.

CHAPTER XII. THE BOHEMIAN

Many days had elapsed since Master Isnard had been driven so unceremoniously from Maison-Forte des Anbiez.

The conduct of the baron toward the deputy of the marshal, the Duke of Vitry, had been generally approved by the nobility of the neighbourhood.

A very small number of gentlemen had submitted to the orders of the governor.

Master Isnard, established in a hostelry of La Ciotat, had despatched a messenger to Marseilles for the purpose of informing the marshal of the lively resistance he had encountered upon the subject of the census of arms.

The citizens generally ranged themselves on the side of the nobility and the clergy, who defended Provençal rights and privileges.

The three estates—the holy clergy, the illustrious nobility, and the Provençal republic and communities, as Cæsar de Nostradamus names them in his history of Provence—sustained themselves against a common enemy, which is to say, against any governor who attacked their privileges, or, in the opinion of the Provençals, was unworthy of governing their country.

Nevertheless, transient divisions occurred between the nobility and the citizens when particular interests became involved.

Master Isnard had arrived in La Ciotat at a time when some feeling of resentment against Raimond V. was being manifested.

One of the consuls of the town, Master Talebard-Talebardon, sustained in the name of the citizens a lawsuit against the baron, upon the subject of certain fishing-nets, which he claimed the lord of Anbiez had laid without legal right in a bay outside his privilege, and thereby was injuring the interests of the town.

Although the inhabitants of La Ciotat had, on many occasions, found aid and support from the baron, although at the last descent of the pirates he had, at the head of his own household servants, fought valiantly, and almost saved the city, the gratitude of the citizens did not extend to an absolute submission to the will of Raimond V.

The consul Talebard-Talebardon, a personal enemy of the baron, always exaggerating the faults of this nobleman, had so envenomed the question, that great disaffection was already being manifested among the citizens.

Arriving at this time, Master Isnard excited these dissensions, fanned the fire, and spoke at length of his cruel reception at Maison-Forte. Although he was not of the country, he succeeded in making the outrage done him appear as a question between the nobility and the citizens.

The recorder induced the consuls to withdraw within the limits of their dignity, and, instead of continuing the amicable negotiations already initiated, to insist upon the baron’s appearance before the tribunal of overseers.

This malevolent disposition once gaining ground, the malcontents did not stop there. They forgot the real services that Raimond V. had rendered to the city, his generous hospitality, the good that he was doing in the neighbourhood, to remember that he was abusive, hotheaded, and always ready to lift his rod.

They exaggerated the havoc made by his dogs in the chase; they spoke of the brutal manner in which he had treated the citizens at the time of their complaint concerning the fishing-nets; in short, after the appearance of the recorder in La Ciotat, they began to speak of the Baron des Anbiez as a veritable feudal tyrant.

While the storm was gathering on that side, the most perfect tranquillity reigned in Maison-Forte.

Raimond V. drank and hunted in the finest style, going through his domains almost every day, with an unequalled activity; he visited his neighbours at their country-seats, in order to preserve, as he said, the sacred fire, or, rather, the general opposition to the Marshal of Vitry, demanding from each one his signature, appended to a supplication addressed to the king.

In this manifesto, or public declaration, the Provençal nobility formally demanded the recall of the marshal, reminding Louis XIII. that his father, of glorious memory, the great Henri, had, under similar circumstances, recalled the Duke d’Epernon, in order to redress the just complaints of the country.

Finally, the nobility expressed, in this act, their respectful regrets not to be able to submit to the orders of the cardinal, in renouncing their right to arm their houses, inasmuch as their own safety required that they should always be in a state of defence.

Redoubling his activity, the baron regained, as he said, the legs and arms of twenty years, in this crusade against Marshal of Vitry.

Such was the moral aspect of Maison-Forte some days after the event of which we have spoken.

We have not forgotten the Bohemian, who, arriving in the train of the recorder, had, upon the baron’s invitation, scaled the balcony in so agile and surprising a manner.

To make use of a particular and modern expression, the vagabond Bohemian had become quite the fashion in the rustic and warlike habitation of Raimond V.

In the first place, he had mended numerous household utensils with remarkable skill.

Then Eclair, the favourite greyhound of the baron, put her paw out of joint, whereupon the Bohemian went up on the mountain and gathered certain herbs by the light of the moon, and carefully wrapped the sick member in them, and the next day Eclair was able to stretch her legs on the rosy heather of the baronial plains and valleys.

That was not all. Mistraon, the favourite horse of Raimond V., was wounded in the frush of his foot by a

sharp stone; by means of a thin layer of iron deftly inserted in the slope of the shoe, the Bohemian made a sort of Turkish horseshoe, which ever after preserved the invalid foot of Mistraon from all injury.

The baron doted on the Bohemian. Dame Dulceline herself, notwithstanding her holy horror of this unbeliever, who, never having been baptised, could not bear the name of Christian, relented somewhat when the unbeliever gave her marvellous recipes for colouring pieces of glass, stuffing birds, and making excellent cordials.

The good Abbé Mascarolus was not less under the charm, thanks to some pharmaceutic specifics of which the Bohemian had given him the secret. The only regret of the worthy chaplain was to find the vagabond so obstinate and shy upon the subject of his conversion.

Such was the serious side of the Bohemian's qualifications. To that he united the most versatile and agreeable accomplishments. He had in a little cage two beautiful pigeons, which showed an almost superhuman intelligence; his ass astonished the household of Maison-Forte by the grace with which he walked on his hind legs; besides, the Bohemian played with iron balls and daggers as well as the best juggler from India; he was as good a marksman as the most accomplished carabineer; and, finally, to conclude the enumeration of this vagabond's wonderful attractions, he sang charmingly, as he accompanied himself on a sort of Moorish guitar with three strings.

It was doubtless to this talent that he owed the nickname of the "Singer," by which he was known among his comrades.

Stephanette was the first to inform her mistress of the new troubadour; in fact, although he was rather ugly than handsome, the flexible and expressive features of the Bohemian seemed almost charming when he sang his soft and melancholy songs.

One must understand the calm, monotonous life of the inmates of Maison-Forte, to comprehend the success of the Bohemian.

Reine, beset by the entreaties of Stephanette, finally consented to hear him.

Honorât de Berrol, together with his betrothed, had made a visit to Marseilles, without the knowledge of Raimond V., to learn the results of the complaints entered by the recorder.

In case the baron had aught to fear from these complaints, Honorât was immediately to inform Reine, and employ the influence of one of her relatives, who was a friend of Marshal of Vitry, to subdue the resentment raised by the imprudent conduct of the baron.

Reine hoped to find some distraction to her sad thoughts, by listening to the songs of the Bohemian.

The image of the unknown hero haunted her more and more. The fantastical, mysterious circumstances, which had so strangely excited her memory, interested and frightened her at the same time; in the meanwhile, desiring, or, rather, thinking to put an end to this romantic adventure, she had, to the great joy of Honorât, fixed her marriage on the day following the festivity of Christmas, and yet, the nearer the day approached, the more she repented of her promise.

In the very depths of her heart she would ask herself with a vague fear if she no longer loved her betrothed as in the past. But this question remained unanswered; the young girl did not dare, so to speak, to listen to the response made by her conscience.

Reine was seated in sad meditation in the little turret which served her as a drawing-room, when Stephanette entered and said to her mistress:

"Mademoiselle, here is the Singer; he is in the passage, shall I ask him to enter?"

"For what purpose?" said Reine, with indifference. "For what purpose, mademoiselle? Why, to distract you from these witchcrafts which torment you. What a pity this unbeliever is an unbeliever! Really, mademoiselle, since he has left off his leather jerkin, and monseigneur has made him a present of a scarlet doublet, he looks like a gendarme, and more, too, he has a golden tongue, I answer for it. And I was obliged, if you please, to give him the flame-coloured ribbon I always wore around my head to fasten his collar, you see. Without that he would not dare, so he said, to present himself before mademoiselle."

"I see, my dear, that you have sacrificed yourself," said Reine, smiling in spite of herself. "I doubt if Luquin will congratulate you very much on this disinterested devotion. But where is this brave captain, and when will he return?"

"This evening or to-morrow morning, mademoiselle; the fishermen met him near Trefus. He was obliged to lessen the speed of his tartan to accommodate the large ships that he was escorting from Nice."

"And do you think that he would like to have you give ribbons to this strolling singer?"

"By Our Lady! whether he likes it or not does not matter to me. If it is necessary to obtain some amusement for my dear mistress I would not hesitate for a cheap piece of ribbon."

"Ah, Stephanette, Stephanette! you are a real coquette. I have seen the sharp black eyes of this vagabond looking into yours more than once."

"That shows, mademoiselle, that he approves of Lu-quin's taste, and my captain ought to feel flattered by it," answered Stephanette, smiling.

"You are wrong; you will make your betrothed angry," replied Reine, with a more serious expression.

"Ah, my dear mistress, cannot one love her betrothed faithfully and tenderly, and amuse herself with the flatteries of a vagabond foreigner, as you call him?"

Reine took this response, to which Stephanette had attached no significance, as an allusion to her own thoughts.

She looked at her attendant sternly, and said, with an imperious air, "Stephanette!"

The pretty, innocent face of the young girl suddenly assumed an expression of such sadness as she raised her large eyes, in which a tear glittered, full of a grieved surprise to her mistress, that Reine extended her hand to her and said:

"Come, come, you are a foolish but a good and honest girl."

Stephanette, smiling through her tears, kissed the hand of her mistress with affectionate gratitude, and said, as she wiped her eyes with the end of her slender fingers: “Shall I tell the Singer to come in, mademoiselle?”

“Yes, go and tell him, since you wish it; let the sacrifice of your flame-coloured ribbon do some good at least.”

Stephanette smiled with an mischievous air, went out, and returned followed by the Bohemian.

CHAPTER XIII. THE GUZIAC OF THE EMIR.

Notwithstanding the humility of his position, the Bohemian did not appear to be much intimidated in the presence of Reine.

He saluted her with a sort of easy respect as he took a sharp and rapid survey of the objects which surrounded her.

As Stephanette had remarked, the Singer’s exterior had greatly improved; his slender and well-formed figure looked wonderfully well in the scarlet doublet, the present from the baron; his collar was fastened with the flame-coloured ribbon, a present from Stephanette; he wore wide trousers of coarse white stuff; his dark blue gaiters, embroidered with red wool, reached above his knees. His black hair enframed a thin, sunburnt but intelligent face.

He held in his hand a kind of guitar with a neck of ebony expensively inlaid with gold and mother-of-pearl; at its upper end the neck formed a sort of palette, in the middle of which was a small, round plate chased with gold, resembling the lid of a medallion.

We emphasise the costliness of this instrument because it seemed very strange that a strolling Bohemian should be its possessor.

Stephanette herself was struck with it, and cried:

“Why, Singer, I never saw that beautiful guitar before!”

These words attracted the attention of Reine, and, as surprised as her maid, she said to the Bohemian:

“Really, this is a very expensive instrument for a travelling artisan.”

“I am poor, mademoiselle, sometimes I have wanted bread, but ah! I would rather die of hunger than sell this guzla. My arms are weak, but they would become as strong as brass to defend this guzla. They would only take it from me after my death. It is my most precious treasure; I hardly dare to play it. But the rose of Anbiez wishes to hear me; all that I now desire is that my song may be worthy of the instrument and of her who listens to me.”

The Bohemian spoke French quite purely, although he had something guttural in his Arabian accent.

Reine exchanged a glance of surprise with her attendant, as she heard this florid Oriental speech, which contrasted singularly with the condition of the wanderer.

“But this guzla, as you call this instrument, how did you come to possess it?”

The Bohemian shook his head sadly, and replied:

“That is a sad story, mademoiselle; there are more tears than smiles in it.”

“Tell us,—tell us!” exclaimed Reine, deeply interested in the romantic turn the incident had taken. “Relate to us how this guzla came into your hands. You seem to be above your present condition.”

The Bohemian uttered a profound sigh, fixed a piercing look on Reine, and struck a few chords which vibrated a long time under the arched roof of the turret.

“But tell me the story of this guzla,” said Reine, with the impatience of a young girl.

The wanderer, without replying, made a supplicating gesture. He began to sing, accompanying himself with taste, or, rather, playing softly some air of tender melancholy, while, with a sweet and grave tone, he recited the following stanzas.

Although it lacked rhythm and rhyme, the language had a certain strange charm; he rendered in a sort of recitative the words:

“Far is the country where I was born; the sands of the desert surround it like an arid sea.

“I lived there with my mother: she was poor, she was old, she was blind.

“I loved my mother, as the unhappy love those who love them.

“My mother was sad, sad, very sad, after she had lost her sight.

“I went into the valley to look for flowers.

“She tried to console herself for not seeing their smiling faces by inhaling their perfume.

“The voice of a son is always sweet to the ear of a mother.

“I spoke to her; sometimes she smiled.

“But never to see! never to see! that filled her with sorrow.

“She sank by degrees into a mute despair.

“Before sinking into this despair, leaning on my arm, she went out; she loved to go at set of sun and sit under the orange-trees in the garden of the young and brave emir of our tribe.

“The gentle warmth of the sun revived my mother.

“She loved to listen to the murmur of the cascades, which seemed to sing as they fell into the basin of marble.

“One day, when she lamented more bitterly than ever the loss of her sight, she refused to go out.

“I prayed her; I wept; she was inflexible.

“Seated in the most solitary corner of our dwelling, her venerable head wrapped in her black mantle, she remained motionless.

“She no longer desired to eat; she wished to die.

“For one long, for one long night, she refused everything.

“In vain I said: ‘My mother, my mother, like you also I shall die.’

“She remained silent and gloomy.

“I took her hand, her hand already frozen. I tried to warm it with my breath: she wished to withdraw her hand.”

In saying these words, the voice of the Bohemian had such an expression of sadness, and the sounds that he drew from his guzla were so melancholy, that Reine and Stephanette silently exchanged glances suffused with tears. The Bohemian continued without perceiving the emotion he had excited:

“It was night.

“And yet a beautiful night Through the open window of our house one saw the starlit sky; the moon covered the plain with silver; one heard no noise.

“Yes, oh, yes! one heard the fevered breathing of my poor mother.

“Suddenly in the distance, far, very far, a light noise sounded.

“It was like the soft and gentle echo of a voice singing in the sky.

“Soon a gentle breeze, burdened with the perfume of the citron-tree, wafted sounds more distinct.

“I was still holding the icy hand of my mother. I felt her tremble.

“This celestial voice approached—approached.

“The chords of a melodious instrument accompanied it, and gave it an inexpressible charm.

“My mother started again; she raised her head; she listened. For the first time in many hours she gave signs of life.

“As the enchanting sounds approached my mother seemed bom again.

“I felt her hand grow warm again; I felt her hand press mine.

“I heard her voice at last; her voice till then so mute.

“‘My child, these songs sink in my soul; they calm me! Tears, oh, tears! Yes, tears at last! I had so much need to weep.’

“And I felt two burning tears fall on my brow.

“‘Oh, my mother, my mother!’ ‘Silence, my child, be silent!’ said she, putting one of her hands upon my mouth, and pointing to the window with the other. ‘Listen to the voice! listen! there it is! there it is!’”

Reine, deeply moved, pressed the hand of Stephanette as she shook her head with a touching expression of pity.

The Bohemian continued:

“The moon of my country shines as the sun of this country.

“In its light slowly passed the young emir, mounted on Azib, his beautiful white horse.

“Azib, gentle as a lamb, courageous as a lion, white as a swan.

“The emir let his reins fall on the neck of Azib. Happy, he sang of a happy love, and accompanied himself on his guzla.

“His songs were not joyous: they were tender; they were melancholy.

“He passed, singing.

“‘Silence, child, silence!’ whispered my mother, pressing my hand convulsively. ‘That voice divine does me so much good!’

“Hélas! by degrees the voice died away; the emir had passed; the voice was gone; then one heard nothing more,—nothing more; not a sound.

“‘Ah, I fall back in the dreadful horror of my night,’ said my mother. ‘This celestial music seemed to dissipate the darkness. Alas! alas!’ and she wrung her hands in despair.

“Alas! all night she wept.

“The morrow her despair increased; her reason grew feeble. In her delirium she called me a wicked son. She accused me of silencing this voice. If she heard this voice no more, she must die.

“She was, indeed, going to die. For many hours she refused all nourishment. What could I do? What could I do?

“The emir of our tribe was the most powerful of emirs.

“If he raised his djerid ten thousand cavaliers mounted horse.

“His palace was worthy of the sultan, his treasures immense. Alas! how could I dare conceive the thought of saying to him, ‘Come, and by your songs snatch an old and despairing woman from death?’

“And yet that I dared. My mother had perhaps but a few more hours to live. I went to the palace.”

“And the emir?” cried Reine, deeply moved and interested, while Stephanette, not less excited than her mistress, clasped her hands in admiration.

The Bohemian gave the two young girls a glance of indescribable sadness, and said, interrupting this kind of improvising, and laying his instrument on his knees: “‘My mother was a woman,’ said the emir to me, and he came.”

“He came!” exclaimed Reine, with enthusiasm. “Ah, the noble heart!”

“Oh, yes, the most noble of noble hearts,” repeated the Bohemian, with transport; “he deigned, he so grand, he so powerful, to come, for five days, every evening into our poor dwelling. How shall I tell you of his touching, almost filial kindness? Alas, if my mother had not been stricken with a mortal disease, the songs of the emir would have saved her, for the effect they produced on her was wonderful. But she died at last without suffering, in a profound ecstasy. This guzla, it once belonged to the emir; he gave it to me. Thanks to it the last moments of my mother were peaceful,—poor mother!”

A tear glittered a moment in the black eye of the Bohemian; then, as if he wished to drive away these painful memories, he took up his guzla quickly and recited these other stanzas in a proud and excited voice, as he made his sonorous instrument resound:

“The name of the emir is sacred in his tribe; let him but speak and we will die.

“Not one is more brave; not one is more beautiful; not one is more noble.

“He is hardly twenty years old, and his name is already the terror of other tribes.

“His arm is delicate like that of a woman, but it is strong like that of a warrior.

“His face is smiling, is beautiful like that of the spirit who appears in the dreams of young girls; but it is sometimes terrible like that of the god of battles.

“His voice charms and seduces like a magic philter, but sometimes it bursts forth like a clarion.”

In his enthusiasm, the Bohemian approached Reine and said to her, as he opened the medallion set into the neck of the guzla: “See! see if he is not the most beautiful of mortals!”

The young girl looked at the portrait, and uttered a cry of surprise, almost of terror. The portrait was that of the stranger in the rocks of Ollioules, who had saved the life of her father!

At that moment the door of Reine’s drawing-room was opened, and she saw before her Honorât de Berrol, followed by Captain Luquin Trinquetaille, who had just arrived from Nice on the tartan, *The Holy Terror of the Moors, by the Grace of God*.

CHAPTER XIV. JEALOUSY

When Honorât de Berrol entered Reine’s apartment, Stephanette wished to retire so as to leave the two lovers alone.

She took one step toward the door, but Reine said to her, quickly, in a voice full of emotion, “Remain.”

Then, scarcely able to control her feelings, she bowed her head and hid her face in her hands.

Honorât, astonished beyond expression, did not know what to think.

The Bohemian had closed the medallion containing the portrait of Erebus, and had placed it on the table.

The captain of the *Holy Terror to the Moors* vainly tried to catch Stephanette’s eye, but she seemed as anxious to avoid his glance.

Luquin Trinquetaille was the more sensible of her conduct inasmuch as he recognised on the Bohemian’s collar the flame-coloured ribbon, which was the exact counterpart of what Stephanette wore on her waist.

This observation on his part, together with several perfidious insinuations made by Master Laramée, who had just been taking a glass with Luquin, suddenly aroused the lover’s jealousy.

He looked at the Singer angrily, then, meeting Ste-phanette’s eyes by chance, he executed a most complicated pantomime with his left hand, which was meant to ask the young girl why the Singer had a ribbon like the one hanging from her ruff.

As this pantomimic performance made it necessary for the worthy captain to put his hand to his collar quite often, Stephanette whispered to him, with the most innocent tone in the world, “Are you suffering from a sore throat, M. Luquin?”

These words of the mischievous girl, while they excited the captain’s anger, seemed also to arouse Honorât from the astonishment produced by the strange reception of his betrothed.

He approached her, and said: “I am just from Marseilles, Reine, and I must speak to you on some very serious things concerning your father. Trinquetaille comes from La Ciotat and tells me that the affair of the fishery is threatening; the citizens seem to be irritated. In order to talk of all this we must be alone.”

At these words Reine raised her face bathed with tears, and with a sign ordered Stephanette to go out The girl obeyed, casting a sad look at her mistress.

Trinquetaille followed his betrothed with a very ungracious air, and the Bohemian accompanied them.

“Reine, in the name of Heaven, what is the matter with you?” cried Honorât, as soon as he was alone with Mlle, des Anbiez.

“Nothing,—nothing is the matter with me, my friend.”

“But you are weeping, your face is all tear-stained. What has happened, pray?”

“Nothing, I tell you,—mere childishness. The Bohemian sang a romance of his country for us; it was

pathetic, and I allowed myself to be affected by it. But do not let us talk of this nonsense; let us talk of father. Is there any danger? Has his angry treatment of the recorder irritated the marshal? And what does Luquin say about the fishery? Honorât! Honorât! do answer me!”

“Listen to me, Reine; although those matters have assumed a grave, if not a dangerous aspect, let me first speak of what is above everything else,—my love for you.”

“Oh, Honorât! Honorât! what of my father?”

“Be calm, there is no immediate danger threatening the baron. The marshal has despatched two of his men to make inquiries about the facts.”

“But what does Luquin say about the fishery?”

“He comes to tell you that the consuls have returned the question with your father on the right of fishery to the overseers; so you see, Reine, that this news, although serious, has nothing threatening or alarming in it, and—”

“How do you think the marshal will consider my father’s conduct?” said Reine, hurriedly, again interrupting Honorât.

Her lover looked at her with as much surprise as sorrow.

“My God, Reine, what does that signify? Are we not to be united in a few days? at Christmas? Is it tiresome to you to hear me speak of my love for you?”

Reine uttered a sigh, and looked down without replying.

“Listen, Reine,” cried Honorât, with bitterness; “for a month now, there is something in you which is inexplicable; you are no longer the same, you are distracted, preoccupied, taciturn; when I speak to you of our approaching marriage, of our plans, of our future, you answer me with constraint. Again I say, this is not natural. What have you to reproach me for?”

“Nothing—oh, nothing, nothing, Honorât, you are the best, the noblest of men!”

“But, indeed, only eight days ago, you yourself formally announced to your father your desire that our marriage should take place at Christmas, even if circumstances should prevent the attendance of your uncles, the commander and Father Elzear!”

“That is true.”

“Well, then, have you changed your mind? Do you wish to postpone it? You do not answer me. My God! what does that mean? Reine, Reine! Ah, I am unhappy indeed!”

“My friend, do not despond so; have pity on me. Wait, I am foolish. I am unworthy of your affection. I annoy you,—you are so good, so noble!”

“But tell me what is the matter with you? What do you wish?”

“I do not know. I suffer—I—Wait, I tell you. I am foolish and weak and very miserable, believe me.” She hid her face in her hands. Honorât, at the height of astonishment, looked at her with an expression of distress.

“Ah,” cried he, “if I were less acquainted with the purity of your heart, if evidence even did not prevent the least suspicion, I would believe that a rival had supplanted me in your affection. But no, no, if that were true, I know your sincerity,—you would confess it to me without a blush, because you are incapable of making an unworthy choice. But then, what is it? A month ago, you loved me so much, so you said,—what have I done in one month to deserve such punishment from you? Ah, it is enough to make one insane!”

And Honorât de Berrol, a prey to violent grief, plunged almost into despair, walked up and down the room in silence.

Reine, overwhelmed, did not dare utter a word. She was almost on the point of confessing all to Honorât, but shame restrained her, and besides, she could not distinctly understand her own impressions.

The recital by the Bohemian, the wonderful accident which had just placed the portrait of the unknown before her eyes, increased the curiosity and romantic interest that she felt concerning the stranger, in spite of herself.

But was this sentiment love? Again, who was this man? The Bohemian called him the emir of his tribe, but at Marseilles, he and his two companions had passed for Muscovites; how could the truth be unveiled among so many mysteries? And then, would she ever see him again? Was it not idolatry? Was the pathetic incident related by the Bohemian true?

Lost in this chaos of confused thoughts, Reine could not find one word to reply to Honorât.

What good could be accomplished by confessing this inexplicable secret? If she had felt her affection for her betrothed diminish or change, with her usual fidelity she would not have hesitated to have told him, but she felt for him the same calm, gentle tenderness, the same confidence, the same timid veneration.

If sometimes when he was leaving Maison-Forte, Honorât, encouraged by Raimond V., would press his lips upon the young girl’s brow, she would smile without giving the slightest evidence of annoyance.

Nothing in her manner betrayed a change in her attachment to Honorât, and yet she saw the day of her marriage approach with distrust and even distress.

Doubtless this want of confidence in Honorât was censurable, but she divined with true feminine instinct the danger and uselessness of telling her betrothed the strange restlessness of her heart.

Honorât appeared to be deeply grieved. Reine reproached herself for not being able to utter a word to cheer him. Once she was about to obey the inspiration of her compassion for him and tell him all in perfect confidence, but his irritated manner arrested the words on her lips.

In his vain effort to discover the cause of the coldness and capricious conduct of Reine, and suddenly struck by some vague memories, as he recalled that, for a month past, the Seigneur de Signerol had been visiting Maison-Forte more frequently than was his habit, Honorât foolishly suspected this man to be the object of Reine’s preference.

This idea was all the more absurd, as the young girl, in talking with her betrothed the day of the recorder’s

adventure, had blamed the Seigneur de Signerol in almost contemptuous terms, accusing him of exciting the impetuous temper of her father. As for Seigneur de Signerol, he had never had a conversation with Mile, des Anbiez.

Honorât, however, in his state of irritation and distress, welcomed any suspicion which seemed to explain the strange attitude of Reine.

Once admitting this suspicion into his heart, he then became indignant at the contemptuous manner in which she had spoken of this man, seeing in her language nothing but the most perfidious dissimulation.

Then, Reine was doubly culpable in his eyes. Why did she not frankly reject his hand, instead of keeping him in doubtful hope? Accepting this false theory, Honorât de Berrol found only too many reasons to induce him to ponder the caprices which he had observed in the conduct of Reine for some time. He even went so far as to imagine that the Bohemian was an emissary of M. de Signerol.

The recent agitation of his betrothed at the time he entered her drawing-room confirmed him in this absurd opinion. Not being able to hide this impression, he said to her, suddenly:

“Confess, mademoiselle, that it is at least rather strange that you should receive a vagabond Bohemian in your apartment; it seems to me that if he had only come to sing, you would not have been so embarrassed, so excited when I entered here.”

Honorât, in his anger, made this remark at random, and as soon as the words were uttered, felt ashamed of them. But what was his astonishment, his vexation, his distress, to see Reine blush and cast down her eyes without saying a word.

She was thinking of the portrait of the unknown hero, and the adventure connected with him; she was ignorant of Honorât’s allusion.

The embarrassment of the young girl confirmed the chevalier in his suspicions, and he exclaimed, with bitterness:

“Ah, Reine, never could I have believed you capable of forgetting yourself so far as to compromise your dearest interests by trusting them to such a contemptible creature!”

“What do you mean, Honorât? I do not understand you. This is the first time I have ever heard you utter such words.”

“It is the first time that I have had the assurance that I was your plaything!” cried he, unable to restrain his anger.

“Really, you do not mean what you say!”

“I mean, yes, I mean that now I can explain your hesitation, your constraint, your embarrassment; but what I cannot explain, is that you could have the cruelty to play this disgraceful rôle toward a man who has devoted his entire life to you.”

“Why, Honorât, you are losing your senses! I do not deserve your reproaches.”

“One of two things: either a month ago you thought of our marriage, or you think no longer of it. If you think no longer of it, you have played with the love of an honest man; if you still intend to fulfil it, in spite of the love which you have now in your heart, why, it is detestable!”

Although Honorat’s suspicions were absurd, Reine, struck by these words, which offered some solution to the situation, kept silent.

Honorât interpreted this silence as a confession of her duplicity.

“You answer nothing,—you cannot answer! I was not mistaken then! This Bohemian is the secret emissary of M. de Signerol.”

“Of M. de Signerol!” exclaimed Reine. “But you cannot think it I have never addressed a word to that man except in the presence of my father. Besides, you know very well the opinion that I have expressed of him.” “The better to dissimulate this beautiful preference, no doubt.”

“M. de Signerol! M. de Signerol! indeed, you are silly!”

“Let us discontinue this comedy, mademoiselle. My eyes have not left you for a moment I observed your embarrassment, your blushes even, when I spoke of the Bohemian to you. Let us discontinue this comedy, I tell you!”

Either pride, distress, or vexation that she could not explain the cause of her embarrassment, or the pain that she felt at the bitter words of Honorât, incited Reine to hold up her head with dignity and say to her betrothed: “You are right, Honorât, let us discontinue such a discussion; it is little worthy of you or of me. Since you judge me so unjustly, since upon the most foolish suspicions you base the most dishonouring accusation, I give your promise back to you, and take back mine.” “Ah! that was your intention, no doubt, mademoiselle. All this has been necessary to force me to give you back your freedom. Ah, well, let it be so! Let all the plans of happiness upon which I have staked my whole life be forgotten; let the dearest wishes of your father and your family be trampled under foot! You have enough influence over the baron to make him yield to your designs. I assure you I will not in any way oppose them.”

At this moment, they heard the spurred heels of Raimond V., who precipitately entered, holding a paper in his hand.

CHAPTER XV. THE SUMMONS

Raimond V. was far too angry to notice the expression of sadness and grief that was depicted on the countenances of the two betrothed. Addressing Honorât, he said, in a loud voice:

“Manjour! do you know, forsooth, what Trinquetaille has just informed me? Would you believe, my son, that the citizens of La Ciotat, those vile swine that have fattened on my bounty and that I have saved from the teeth of Barbary dogs, wish to summon me, to-morrow morning, before the overseers of the port, on the matter of our fishery contest! And the abbé pretends that—” Then, returning to the door, the baron called out:

“But come on, abbé, where in the devil have you hid yourself?”

The good chaplain showed his tall form among the folds of the portière, for he had been discreetly waiting in the antechamber.

“The abbé,” continued Raimond V., “pretends that this fine tribunal is sovereign, if you please,—a tribunal composed of old man Cadaou, a fish vender, and some other triton garlic eaters, who hardly own, among them all, one boat or net. Manjour! my children, think of my being placed under a ban by those old scoundrels!” “Monseigneur,” said Abbé Mascarolus, “the decision of the overseers of the port on all matters pertaining to the fisheries is supreme, and without appeal. It has been confirmed by the patent letters of Henry II. in 1537, by Charles IX. in 1564, and by the king, our count, in 1622. It is one of the oldest customs of the Provençal community. There is no instance of a nobleman, priest, or citizen who has set it aside, and, monseigneur—”

“Enough, abbé, enough!” rudely interrupted the baron. “If they have the impudence to summon me, I shall not have the weakness to obey their summons, even when it is made in virtue of all the kings the abbé has just declared to us. As to the patents of the kings, I will oppose titles and privileges conceded by other kings to my house for services rendered to them, as an offset, and my seines and nets will stay where they are, and, by the devil, I will take care that they do stay!”

“Monsieur, permit me,” said Honorât.

“Monsieur? Eh! Why in the devil do you call me monsieur? Am I not your father?” cried the baron, looking at Honorât.

Honorât cast a distressed look at Reine, as if to make her understand that it was due to her that he could no longer call the baron by the tender name of father.

Honorât replied, in a voice trembling with emotion, “Ah, well, since you wish it, my father—”

“Ah, come now, what is the matter, pray?” asked the astonished baron of his daughter. “Eh! Of course I wish you to call me father, since you are, or will be, my son in a few days.”

Reine blushed, looked down, and remained silent. “Ah, well, come, speak now, I pray you,” said the old gentleman to Honorât. “What have you to tell me?”

“From what I have learned,” answered Honorât, “the consuls, excited by the recorder Isnard, have manifested some hostility to you, father; do you not fear that the citizens and fishers may join these wicked people, when they see that you refuse to appear, and—”

“I, afraid of those scoundrels! Why, I laugh at them as I would at a broken spur,” cried the old gentleman, impetuously. “I have, from father to son, the right to lay my seines and nets in the cove of Castrembaou. I will maintain my right, even if all the fishers on the coast, from here to Sixfours, oppose it.”

“The fact is, monseigneur,” said the abbé, “that however much they may contest it, you have the right. Your titles and privileges of fishery date back to the year 1221, the 14th day of February, under the reign of Philippe, King of France, and your claims have been registered by Bertrand de Cornillon.”

“Eh! what do I want with the authority of Bertrand de Cornillon!” cried the baron. “Power makes the right, and I have the force to sustain the right. Man-jour! did ever one see such trickery? What rascals! I, who have always helped them, and defended them! Ah, just let them come and talk to me!”

“Ah, my dear father, they would find you still, as they have always found you, generous and kind and—” “I believe it, certainly; how could I revenge myself on such boobies, if it was not by showing them that a gentleman is of better stock than they?”

“Ah! I recognise all that very well, monseigneur,” said the abbé. “If the overseers could only examine your titles—”

“What, examine my titles! I have driven away with my whip a recorder sent by a duke and a peer, a marshal of France, and I must go and submit to the arbitration of those old tar-jackets, who will descend from their wretched boats to mount their tribunal? I must go and take off my hat before those old scoundrels, who the very morning of their audience have cried in the port, ‘Buy—buy—soup—fish—buy—buy,’—a people that my family has loaded with benefits. In his last voyage to Algiers to redeem captives, did not my brave and good brother, Elzear, bring back from Barbary five inhabitants of La Ciotat? Did not my brother, the commander, three years ago, chase away with his black galley five or six chebecs from the coast, because they were interfering with these fishermen, and make them fly before him like a cloud of sparrows before a falcon? And these are the people who accuse me! Let them go to the devil! Let them send me their recorder, and they will see how I shall receive him. I have just had a new lash put on my whip! But enough of these miseries. Give me your arm, my daughter. The weather is fine; we will promenade. Come with us, Honorât.”

“You will excuse me, father; I am needed at home, and I shall not be able to accompany you.”

“So much the worse. Go, then, quick, so as to come back quicker still. I fear nothing from these idiot sheep penned up in La Ciotat, but if they make any attempts upon my fishing-nets, I shall need you to keep me from making Laramée hang several of them over my nets as scarecrows!”

Then the baron, yielding to his changing and impetuous moods, altered his tone, and said, gaily, to the abbé, “Now, abbé, if I had some of these insolent rascals hanged, it would be serious, because I do not think you have in all your pharmacy a remedy for hanging.”

“I beg your pardon, monseigneur, but I have been told that if you make the patient, before his execution, drink a great quantity of iron water, which, so to speak, envelopes and saturates the vital principle, and if, on the other hand, the patient will apply to his naked skin some large magnetic stones, or a loadstone, the power of the said stone is such that, in spite of the hanging, he will retain the vital principle in his body, for reason

of the irresistible power of attraction possessed by this metal. I would not dare affirm it, but I have been recently told of this remedy."

"By Our Lady, that is a wonderful remedy, eh! Who informed you of it, abbé?"

"A poor man, who gives very little thought to the welfare of his soul, but who knows many beautiful recipes,—it is the Bohemian who healed your greyhound, monseigneur."

"The Singer, Manjour! I imagine he occupies himself with the hanged and with hanging; he thinks of his future, you see. Each one preaches his own saint, does he not, abbé?—which does not prevent this vagabond being a skilful man. Never a better farrier lifted the foot of a hunting-horse than this same Bohemian," added Raimond V.

When she heard the vagabond mentioned, Reine blushed again, and Honorât could scarcely repress a gesture of indignation.

Raimond V. continued:

"Dame Dulceline is enchanted with him; she tells me that, thanks to him, she will have a magnificent cradle for Christmas. But you have heard him sing, my daughter, what do you think of it? Because I am a bad judge, I am not acquainted with any songs but those the abbé sings, and our old Provençal refrains. Is it true that this wanderer has a wonderful voice?"

Wishing to put an end to a conversation which, for many reasons, was painful to her, Reine replied to her father:

"No doubt, he sings very well. I have scarcely heard him. But if you wish to do so, father, we will take our promenade; it is two o'clock already, and the days are short."

The baron descended, followed by his daughter. In passing through the court, he saw through the half-open door of the coach-house the ancient and heavy carriage he always used when he attended service in the parochial church of La Ciotat, at the solemn festivals of the year, although he had his own chapel at Maison-Forte.

Knowing the kind of antipathy which prevailed against him in the little city, the bold and obstinate old baron took the ingenious idea of braving public opinion by going to church next day with a certain pomp.

Reine's astonishment was unspeakable when she heard her father order Laramée to have this, carriage ready next day at midday, the hour of high mass.

To every question of his daughter, the baron replied only by a persistent silence.

Now let us return to less important actors.

As she left the apartment of her mistress with Luquin, Stephanette had disdained to reply to the jealous suspicions of the captain, and had shut herself up in her dignity and her chamber. The windows of this chamber looked out into the court. The young girl saw through the windows the preparation of the old carriage, and, too, Luquin Trinquetaille, as he walked back and forth in a very agitated state of mind.

Was it curiosity to know what extraordinary event induced the baron to go out in this carriage, or was it a desire to obtain an interview with the captain? Whatever it was, Stephanette descended into the court She first addressed Master Laramée.

"Is monseigneur going out in this carriage?"

"All I know is, that monseigneur ordered me to have this old Noah's ark ready. And, speaking of Noah's ark," added Laramée, with a sneering, satirical air, "if you have an olive-branch in your pretty little rose-coloured beak, you ought to bear it as a sign of peace to that Abrave captain you see there measuring the court with his long legs like he was possessed. They say that he is at open war with the Bohemian, and the olive-branch is a symbol of peace that would flatter the worthy Captain Luquin."

"I did not ask you anything about that, Master Laramée," said Stephanette, with a dry tone. "Where is monseigneur going in that carriage? Is it to-day or to-morrow that he wishes to use it?"

"To-morrow will be to-day, and after to-morrow will be to-morrow, mademoiselle," bluntly replied the majordomo, offended by the imperious manner of Stephanette, and he added, between his teeth: "There is a dove transformed into a speckled magpie."

During this conversation, Luquin Trinquetaille had approached Stephanette. The captain tried to assume a cold, dignified, and disdainful air.

"My dear little one," said he, in a very careless tone, "do you not think flame colour a very pretty colour?" Stephanette turned her head, and, looking behind her, said to Luquin:

"Your dear little one? If you are talking to Jeannette, the laundress, that I see down there, you had better speak louder."

"I am not speaking to Jeannette, do you understand?" cried Luquin, losing patience. "Jeannette, laundress as she is, would not have the boldness, the effrontery, to give a ribbon to a vagabond Bohemian."

"Ah, that is it, is it?" said the mischievous girl. "Really, this ribbon has the same effect on you, that a scarlet streamer has on a bull from Camargne."

"If I were a bull from Camargue, with double horns, this vagabond would feel the point of them. But no matter, this miscreant shall pay for his insolence; may I die, if I do not cut off his ears and nail them to the mast of my tartan!"

"It is his tongue, rather, that you ought to be jealous of, my poor Luquin, for never a troubadour of the good King René sang more sweetly."

"I will tear out his tongue, then,—a hundred thousand devils!"

"Come, do not do anything absurd, Luquin. The Bohemian is as courageous and expert as a gendarme." "Many thanks for your pity, mademoiselle, but I do not fight with dogs, I beat them."

"Yes, but sometimes the dog has good teeth which bite very hard, I warn you."

"Curse me, if you are not the most diabolical creature I ever knew!" cried Trinquetaille. "I believe, by St.

Elmo, my patron, that if I were to fight to-morrow in camp with this copper face, you would say: ‘Our Lady for the Bohemian!’”

“Without doubt, I would say it.”

“You would say it?”

“Why, yes. Ought I not to take the part of the weak against the strong,—the small against the great? Ought I not at least to encourage the poor man who would dare challenge the formidable, unconquerable arm of the captain of *The Holy Terror to the Moors?*”

“Holy Cross! you are jesting, Stephanette, and I have no desire for it now.”

“That is very evident.”

“Where is this good-for-nothing fellow, this vagabond?”

“Do you wish me to go at once and find out? No inquiry would be more agreeable to me.”

“This is too much, you are making sport of me. Ah, well, good-bye! All is over, you understand, all is over between us.”

Stephanette shrugged her shoulders, and said, “Why do you talk nonsense like that?”

“What, nonsense?”

“Without a doubt, mere imagination and pretence.”

“Pretence! Ah, you think so? Pretence! Ah, well, you will see. Do not think you can take me with your cajoleries. I know them,—crocodile tears.”

“Do not say that, Luquin. I am going to force you to get on your knees before me and ask my pardon for your stupid jealousy.”

“I, on my knees! I, ask your pardon! Ah, that would be pretty! Ah, ah, I on my knees before you!” “On both knees, if you please.”

“Ah, ah, the idea is a pleasant one, on my word!”

“Come, come, this very instant,—here, on this spot.”

“Mademoiselle, you are crazy.”

“M. Luquin, in your own interest, do it now, I pray you.”

“Fiddlesticks!”

“Take care.”

“Ta, la, la, la, la,” said the captain, singing between his teeth, and keeping time by rising on his toes and falling back on his heels.

“Once, twice, will you get on your knees and ask my pardon for your stupid jealousy?”

“I would rather, you can understand, strangle myself with my own hands.”

“Luquin, you know that when I wish a thing, I wish it. If you refuse what I ask, I will be the one to say good-bye to you. And I will not come back, either, remember that.”

“Go, go; perhaps you will meet the Bohemian on the way.”

Stephanette did not answer a word, but turned around abruptly and walked away.

Luquin was very brave for a few moments, then his courage failed him, and at last, seeing that the young girl walked with a firm, resolute step, he followed her and called, in a supplicating voice:

“Stephanette!”

The young girl walked faster.

“Stephanette, Stephanette, do be reasonable, you know very well that I love you.”

Stephanette continued to walk.

“A thousand devils! Is it possible for me to ask your pardon for my jealousy, when I have seen that—” Stephanette quickened her step.

“Stephanette, ah, well, come now, in truth you bewitch me. You make me do all that you wish.” Stephanette slackened her step a little.

“To come to the point, no, a thousand times no, I am weaker than a child.”

Stephanette began to run.

The captain of *The Holy Terror to the Moors* was obliged to exercise his long, heron-like legs to catch up with her, as he said, with a stifled voice, “Ah, well, come now, diabolical creature that you are,—one must do as you wish,—here I am on my knees,—only stop a moment. Ah, well, yes, I was wrong. Are you satisfied? Is it possible to be so base?” murmured Luquin, in parenthesis; then he said, aloud: “Ah, well, yes, I was wrong to be jealous of—of—But at least stop, will you not? I cannot run after you on my knees. I was wrong, I tell you.”

Stephanette slackened her gait a little, then stopped still, and said to Luquin, without turning her head:

“On your knees.”

“Well, I am; I am on my knees. Fortunately for my dignity as a man, that corner of the wall hides me from the eyes of that old gossip of a majordomo,” said Luquin to himself.

“Repeat after me.”

“Yes, but do turn your head, Stephanette, so I can see you; that will give me courage.”

“Repeat, repeat first; come, say, ‘I was wrong to be jealous of that poor Bohemian.’”

“Humph! I was wrong to be jealous of—that—humph—of that scoundrel of a Bohemian.”

“That is not it,—‘of that poor Bohemian.’”

“Of that poor Bohemian,” repeated Luquin, with a profound sigh.

“‘It was a very innocent thing for Stephanette to give him a ribbon.’”

“It was—humph—it was a very innocent thing for Stephanette—humph!”

These words seemed to strangle the captain, who coughed violently,—“Humph, humph!”

“You have a very bad cold, my poor Luquin. Repeat now: ‘It was a very innocent thing for Stephanette to give him a ribbon.’”

“To give him a ribbon.”

“Very well; ‘because I have her heart. And all this is only a young girl’s folly, and I know well that she loves nobody but her Luquin,’” said Stephanette, rapidly.

Then, without giving her betrothed time to rise and repeat these sweet words, Stephanette turned around quickly while he was still on his knees, and gave him a kiss on the forehead, and then disappeared through a passage in the court before the worthy captain, as delighted as surprised, had been able to take a step.

CHAPTER XVI. THE OVERSEERS OF THE PORT

At the instigation of Master Isnard, still implacable, for reason of the inhospitable reception given to him by Raimond V., the consul, Talebard-Talebardon, on Saturday evening despatched a clerk to Maison-Forte des Anbiez, for the purpose of informing the baron that he was to appear the next day, Sunday, before the overseers of the port.

Raimond V. made the trembling clerk sit down to the table and take supper with him, but every time the man of the law opened his mouth to ask the baron to appear before the tribunal, the old gentleman would cry out, “Laramée, pour out some wine for my guest!”

Then he had the clerk taken back to La Ciotat somewhat intoxicated.

Interpreting the conduct of the baron according to their own view, Master Isnard and the consul saw in his refusal to answer their summons the most outrageous contempt.

The next day, which was Sunday, after the mass, at which, notwithstanding his resolution the evening before, the baron did not appear, the consuls and the recorder went through the houses of the principal citizens, exciting public sentiment against Raimond V., who had so openly braved and insulted the privileges of Provençal communities.

Much artifice, much deceit, and a great deal of persistence on the part of Master Isnard were necessary to make the inhabitants of La Ciotat share his hostility against the lord of Maison-Forte, because the instinct of the multitude is always in sympathy with the rebellion of a lord against a lord more powerful than himself; but on account of recent disputes about fishing privileges, the recorder succeeded in arousing the indignation of the multitude.

As we have said, it was Sunday morning; after mass the overseers of the port held their sessions in the large town hall, situated near the new harbour. It was a massive, heavy building, constructed of brick, and had many small windows.

On each side rose the dwellings of the wealthiest citizens.

The site of the town hall was separated from the port by a narrow little street.

A noisy crowd of citizens, fishermen, sailors, artisans, and country people were pressing into the yard, and many had already seated themselves at the door of the town hall, so as to be present at the session of the overseers.

The citizens, instructed by the recorder, circulated in groups among the multitude, and spread the news that Raimond V. despised the rights of the people by refusing to appear before the overseers.

Master Talebard-Talebardon, one of the consuls, a large man, corpulent and florid, with a shrewd, sly look, wearing his felt hood and official robe, occupied with the recorder the centre of one of these animated groups of which we have spoken, and which was composed of men of all sorts and conditions.

“Yes, my friends,” said the consul, “Raimond V. treats Christians as he treats the dogs he hunts with. The other day he threatened this respectable Master Isnard whom you see here with his whip after having exposed him to the fury of two of the fiercest bulls from Camargne; it was a miracle that this worthy officer of the admiralty of Toulon escaped the awful peril that threatened his life,” said the consul, with an important air.

“A real miracle, for which I return thanks to Our Lady of la Garde,” added the recorder, devoutly. “I never saw such furious bulls.”

“By St Elmo, my patron!” said a sailor, “I would gladly have given my new scarf to have been a witness of that race. I have never seen bull-fights except in Barcelona.”

“Without taking into account that recorder-toreadors are very rare,” said another sailor.

Master Isnard, deeply wounded at inspiring so little interest, replied, with a doleful air, “I assure you, my friends, that it is a terrible, a formidable thing to be exposed to an attack from these ferocious animals.”

“Since you have been pursued by bulls,” asked an honest tailor, “do tell us, M. Recorder, if it is true that angry bulls have the tail curled up, and that they shut their eyes when they strike?”

Master Talebard-Talebardon shrugged his shoulders, and replied, sternly, to the inquirer:

“You think then, cut-cloth, that a person amuses himself by looking at a bull’s tail and eyes, when he is charging on him?”

“That is true, that is true,” replied several assistants. “Certain it is,” continued the consul, wishing to move the crowd to pity the recorder, and irritate it against the baron, “certain it is that this officer of justice and of the king narrowly escaped being a victim to the diabolical wickedness of Raimond V.”

“Raimond V. destroyed two litters of wolves’ whelps that ravaged our farm, to say nothing of the present he made us of the heads of the wolf and the whelps, which are nailed to our door,” said a peasant, shaking his head.

“Raimond V. is not a bad master. If the harvest fails, he comes to your aid; he replaced two draught-oxen that I lost through witchcraft.”

“That is true, when one holds out a hand to the lord of Anbiez, he never draws it back empty,” said an artisan.

“And at the time of the last descent of the pirates in this place, he and his people bravely fought the miscreants; but for him, I, my wife, and my daughter, would have been carried off by these demons,” said a citizen.

“And the two sons of the good man Jacbuin were redeemed and brought back from Barbary by good Father Elzear, the brother of Raimond V. But for him they would still have been in chains galling enough to damn their souls,” replied another.

“And the other brother, the commander, who looks as sombre as his black galley,” said a patron of a merchant vessel, “did he not keep those pagans in awe for more than two months while his galley lay soaked in the gulf? Come, a good and noble family is that of Anbiez. After all, this man of law is not one of us,” and pointed to the recorder. “What does it matter to us if he is or is not run through by a bull’s horn?”

“That is true, that is true; he is not one of us,” repeated several voices.

“Raimond V. is a good old gentleman who never refuses a pound of powder and a pound of lead to a sailor, to defend his boat,” said a sailor.

“There is always a good place at the fireside of Maison-Forte, a good glass of Sauve-chrétien wine and a piece of silver for those who go there,” said a beggar.

“And his daughter! An angel! A perfect Notre Dame for the poor people,” said another.

“Well, who in the devil denies all that?” cried the consul. “Raimond V. kills wolves because he is fond of the chase. He does not mind a piece of silver or a pound of powder or a glass of wine, because he is rich, very rich; but he does all this to hide his perfidious designs.”

“What designs?” asked several auditors.

“The design of ruining our commerce, ravaging our city, in short, doing worse than the pirates, or the Duke d’Eperaon with his Gascons,” said the consul, with a mysterious air.

All this, which he did not believe, the consul had uttered as an experiment, and the alarming disclosure of some hidden design, exciting the curiosity of the crowd, was at last listened to with attention.

“Explain that to us, consul,” said all, with one voice.

“Master Isnard, who is a man of the law, is going to explain this tissue of dark and pernicious schemes,” said Talebard-Talebardon.

The recorder came forward with an anxious air, raised his eyes to heaven, and said:

“Your worthy consul, my friends, has told you nothing but what is, unfortunately, too true. We have proofs of it.”

“Proofs!” repeated several hearers, looking at each other.

“Give me your attention. The king, our master, and monseigneur the cardinal have only one thought,—the happiness of the French people.”

“But we are not French, we are quite another thing,” said a Provençal, proud of his nationality. “The king is not our master, he is our count.”

“You talk finely, my comrade, but listen to me, if you please,” replied the recorder. “The king, our count, not wishing to have his Provençal communities exposed to the despotic power of the nobles and lords, has ordered us to disarm them. His Eminence remembers too well the violences of the Duke d’Epernon, of the lords of Baux, of Noirol, of Traviez, and many others. He desires now to take away from the nobility the power of injuring the people and the peasantry. Thus, for instance, his Eminence wished,—and these sovereign orders will be executed sooner or later,—he wished, I repeat, to remove from Maison-Forte, the castle of Raimond V., the cannon and small pieces of ordnance which guard the entrance of your port, and which can prevent the going out of the smallest fishing-boat.”

“But which can also prevent the entrance of pirates,” said a sailor.

“No doubt, my friends, the fire bums or purifies; the arrow kills the friend or the enemy, according to the hand which holds the crossbow. I should not have had any suspicion of Raimond V., if he had not himself unveiled to me his perfidious designs. Let us put aside his cruelty to me. I am happy to be the martyr of our sacred cause.”

“You are not a martyr, as you are still living,” said the incorrigible sailor.

“I am living at this moment,” replied the recorder, “but the Lord knows at what price, with what perils, I have bought my life, or what dangers I may still be required to meet. But let us not talk of myself.”

“No, no, do not talk of yourself,—that does not concern us,—but tell us how you obtained proof of the wicked designs Raimond V. has against our city,” said an inquirer.

“Nothing more evident, my friends. He has fortified his castle again, and why? To resist the pirates, say some. But never would the pirates dare attack such a fortress, where they would gain nothing but blows. He has made a strong fort in his house, from which the cannon can founder your vessels and destroy your city. Do you know why? In order to tyrannise over you for his profit, and tread Provençal customs under foot with impunity. Wait; let me give you an instance. He has, contrary to all law, established his fishing-nets outside of his legal boundary.”

“That is true,” said Talebard-Talebardon; “you know he has no right to do it. What injury that does to our fisheries, often our only resource!”

“That is evident,” answered a few hearers; “the seines of Raimond V. have injured us, especially now when the supply of fish is smaller. But if it is his right?”

“But it is not his right!” shouted the recorder.

“We will know to-day, as the suit is to be decided by the overseers of the port,” said an auditor.

The recorder exchanged a glance of intelligence with the consul, and said:

“Doubtless the tribunal of overseers is all-powerful to decide the question, but it is exactly on this point that my doubts have arisen. I fear very much that Raimond V. is not willing to refer to this popular tribunal. He is capable of refusing to obey that summons, made, after all, by poor people, on a high and powerful baron—”

“It is impossible! it is impossible! for it is our special right. The people have their rights, the nobility have theirs. Freedom for all!” cried many voices.

“I hold Raimond V. to be a good and generous noble,” said another, “but I shall regard him as a traitor if he refuses to recognise our privileges.”

“No, no, that is impossible,” repeated several voices.

“He will come—”

“He is going to appear before the overseers—”

“God grant it!” said the recorder, exchanging another glance with the consul. “God grant it, my friends; because, if he despises our customs enough to act otherwise, we must think that he put his house in a state of such formidable defence only to brave the laws.”

“We repeat that what you are saying, recorder, is impossible. Raimond V. cannot deny the authority of the overseers, nor can he deny the authority of the king,” said an auditor.

“But, first, he denies the authority of the king,” cried Master Isnard, triumphantly; “and, since I must tell you, I believe, even after what your worthy consul has told me, that he will deny, not only the royal power, but the rights of the community also; in a word, that he will positively refuse to appear before the overseers, and that he wishes to keep his seines and nets where they are, to the detriment of the general fishery.”

A hollow murmur of astonishment and indignation welcomed this news.

“Speak, speak, consul; is it true?”

“Raimond V. is too brave a nobleman for that.”

“If it is true, yet—”

“They are our rights, after all, and—”

Such were the various remarks which rapidly crossed each other through the restless crowd.

The consul and recorder saw themselves surrounded and pressed by a multitude which was becoming angrily impatient.

Talebard-Talebardon, in collusion with the recorder, had prepared this scene with diabolical cunning.

The consul replied, hoping to increase the dissatisfaction of the populace:

“Without being absolutely certain of the refusal of Raimond V., I have every reason to fear it; but the recorder’s clerk, who carried the summons to Maison-Forte yesterday, and who has been obliged to go to Curjol on business, will arrive in a moment, and confirm the news. Our Lady grant that it may not be what I apprehend. Alas! what would become of our communities, if our only right, the only privilege accorded to us poor people, should be snatched away from us?”

“Snatched away!” repeated the recorder; “it is impossible. The nobility and the clergy have their rights. How dare they rob the people of the last, the only resource they have against the oppression of the powerful!”

Nothing is more easily moved than the mind of the populace, and especially of the populace on Mediterranean shores. This crowd, but a moment before controlled by their gratitude to the baron, now forgot almost entirely the important services rendered to them by the family of Anbiez, at the bare suspicion that Raimond V. wished to attack one of the privileges of the community.

These rumours, circulated among different groups, singularly irritated the minds of the fishermen. The recorder and the consul, thinking the moment had arrived in which they could strike a final blow, ordered one of their attendants to go in quest of the recorder’s clerk, who ought, they said, to have returned from his journey, although, in fact, he had not left La Ciotat.

At this moment, the five overseers of the port and their syndic, having met after mass under the porch of the church, passed through the crowd to enter the town hall, where they were to hold their solemn audience.

The new circumstances gave additional interest to their appearance; they were saluted on all sides with numerous bravos, accompanied with the cries:

“Long live the overseers of the port!”

“Long live the Provençal communities!”

“Down with those who attack them!”

The crowd, now greatly excited, pressed hard upon the steps of the overseers, so as to be present at the session.

Then the clerk arrived. Although he said much in protest of the interpretation given to his words by the recorder and the consul, those men continued to exclaim with hypocritical lamentations.

“Ah, well, ah, well, consul,” cried one of the crowd, “is Raimond V. coming? Will he appear before the tribunal?”

“Alas! my friends,” replied the consul, “do not question me. The worthy recorder has predicted only too well. The tyrannical, imperious, irascible character of the baron has been again made manifest.”

“How? How?”

“The clerk was charged yesterday to notify Raimond V. to appear before the tribunal of overseers; he has returned and—”

“There he is! Ah,—well, come to the point!”

“Ah!”

“Ah, well!”

“Ah, well, he has been overwhelmed with the cruel treatment of Raimond V.”

“But,” whispered the clerk, “on the contrary, the baron made me drink so much wine that I—”

Master Isnard seized the clerk so violently by his smock-frock, and threw such a furious glance on him, that the poor man did not dare utter a word.

“After having overwhelmed him with cruel treatment,” continued the consul, “Raimond formally declared to him that he would make straw of our privileges, that he intended to keep his seines, and that he was strong enough to overcome us, if we dared act contrary to his will, and that—”

An explosion of fury interrupted the consul.

The tumult was at its height; the most violent threats burst out against Raimond V.

“To the fishing-nets! the fishing-nets!” cried some.

“To Maison-Forte!” cried others.

“Do not leave one stone upon another!”

“To arms! to arms!”

“Let us make a petard to blow up the gate of the moat on the land side!”

“Death, death to Raimond V.!”

Seeing the fury of the populace, the recorder and the consul began to fear that they had gone too far, and that they would find it impossible to control the passions they had so imprudently unchained.

“My friends,—my children!” cried Talebard-Tale-bardon, addressing the most excited of the speakers, “be moderate. Run to the fishing-nets,—that you may do, but make no attack upon Maison-Forte, or upon the life of the baron!”

“No pity!—no pity! You yourself have told us, consul, that Raimond was going to fire on the city and the port and do worse than the Duke d’Epernon and his Gascons.”

“Yes, yes. Let us destroy the old wolfs den and nail him to his door!”

“To Maison-Forte!”

“To Maison-Forte!”

Such were the furious cries which met the tardy words of moderation, which the consul now tried to make the excited people heed.

The more peaceable inhabitants pressed around the town hall, so as to enter the room of the tribunal where the overseers were already seated. Others, divided into two bands, were preparing, in spite of the entreaties of the consul, to destroy the fishing-nets and attack Maison-Forte des Anbiez, when an extraordinary incident struck the crowd with amazement, and rendered it silent and motionless.

CHAPTER XVII. THE JUDGMENT

The general astonishment was very natural.

Slowly descending the street, in the direction of the public square, was seen the heavy ceremonial carriage of Raimond V.

Four of his men, armed and on horseback, preceded by Laramée, opened the march; then came the carriage, with a crimson velvet canopy, somewhat worn; the retinue, as well as the body of the carriage, which was without windows, yet bore conspicuously the baron’s coat of arms, showed the red and yellow colours of the livery of Raimond V.

Four strong draught-horses, yoked with rope traces, laboriously dragged this rude and massive vehicle, in the depth of which sat the baron majestically enthroned.

Opposite him sat Honorât de Berrol.

Inside the coach, near the doors, two small stools were placed. On one sat Abbé Mascarolus, with a bag of papers on his knees. The steward of the baron occupied the other.

The imperfect construction of this ponderous vehicle permitted no place for a coachman. A carter, dressed for the occasion in a greatcoat, with the baron’s livery, walked at the head of each pair of horses, and conducted the equipage as he would have managed a farm-wagon.

Finally, behind the carriage came four other armed men on horseback.

Although rude, this equipage and retinue inspired profound admiration among the inhabitants of the little town; the sight of a coach, however inelegant, was always to them a novel and interesting thing.

As we have said, the crowd stood silently looking on. They knew that Raimond V. never used this carriage except on important occasions, and a lively curiosity suspended for a time their most violent passions.

They whispered among each other concerning the direction the carriage would take: was it to the church, or was it to the town hall?

This last supposition became probable as Raimond V., having turned the corner of the street, took the road which led to the edifice where the overseers of the port were assembled.

Soon doubt changed to certainty, when they heard the stentorian voice of Laramée cry:

“Room! make way for monseigneur, who is going to the tribunal of the overseers!”

Theae words, passing from mouth to mouth, finally reached the ears of the consul and the recorder, whose disappointment and vexation were extreme.

“Why, what have you said, recorder?” cried the men who surrounded him, “here is Raimond V.; he is coming to present himself before the tribunal of overseers.”

“Then he has not resolved to make straw of our privileges?”

“He intends to appear, yes, he intends to appear without doubt,” said Master Isnard, “but he is coming with a retinue of armed men; who can tell what he is going to say to those poor overseers of the port?”

“Doubtless he wishes to intimidate them,” said the consul.

“He wishes to make his refusal to recognise their jurisdiction all the more contemptuous by coming to tell them so himself,” said the recorder.

“An armed retinue?” said a hearer. “And what do these men with carbines intend to do against us?”

“The consul is right. He is coming to insult the overseers,” said one of the most defiant citizens.

“Come now, Raimond V., as bold as he is, would never dare do that,'' replied a third.

“No, no; he recognises our privileges,—he is a good and worthy lord,” cried several voices. “We were wrong to distrust him.”

In a word, by one of those sudden changes so common in popular excitements, the mind of the people at once turned over to the favour of Raimond V. and to hostility toward the recorder.

Master Isnard put both his responsibility and his person under cover, and, in so doing, did not hesitate to expose his unfortunate clerk to the anger of the people.

Instead of manifesting hostility to the baron, several of the citizens now assumed a threatening attitude toward the recorder for having deceived them.

“It is this stranger,” said they, “who has excited us against Raimond V.”

“This good and worthy noble who has always stood for us!”

“Yes, yes, that is so; he told us that Raimond wished to destroy our privileges, and, on the contrary, he respects them.”

“Without doubt, monseigneur did well in delivering him to the bulls of Camargne,” cried a sailor, shaking his fist at the recorder.

“Permit me, my friends,” said the recorder, painfully realising the absence of the consul, who had prudently escaped to the town hall, where he would appear as a plaintiff against the baron, “permit me to say that, although nothing could make me put faith in the baron’s good intentions, I do not hesitate to say that good may come out of all this. Perhaps my clerk has been mistaken; perhaps he has exaggerated the extent of the remarks made by the Baron des Anbiez. Come now, clerk,” said he, turning to the scribe with a severe and haughty air, “do not lie. Have you not deceived me? Recall your experience. Perhaps you were frightened into wrong. I know you are a coward. What did the baron say to you? Zounds! clerk, woe to you if you have deceived me, and if by your folly I, myself, have deceived these estimable citizens!”

Opening his large eyes to their utmost, and utterly confounded by the audacity of the recorder, the poor clerk could only repeat, in a trembling voice: “Monseigneur told me nothing; he made me sit down at his table, and every time I tried to tell him of the summons from the overseers Master Laramée came with a big glass of Spanish wine, that I was, to speak reverently, obliged to swallow at one draught.”

“Zounds!” cried the recorder, in a thundering voice. “What! this is the bad treatment you complained of! Forgive him, gentlemen, he was certainly drunk, and I am sorry to see that he has deceived us about the designs of Raimond V. Let us hasten to the town hall, where we can assure ourselves of the reality of certain facts, for the baron’s carriage has stopped there, I see.”

Thus speaking, and without appearing to hear the threatening murmurs of the crowd, the recorder hurried away, accompanied by the unfortunate clerk, who in the retreat received several thrusts, evidently addressed to Master Isnard.

The large audience-chamber of the town hall in La Ciotat formed a long parallelogram lighted by tall, narrow windows, with panes set in frames of lead.

On the walls opposite the windows—bare walls, white with a coating of lime—were displayed several flags captured from Barbary pirates.

Projecting rafters of unpolished wood crossed each other beneath the ceiling. At the extremity of this immense hall and opposite the large door of entrance could be seen, upon a stage, the tribunal of the overseers of the port. Before them was a long table roughly cut at right angles.

The judges were four in number, presided over by the watchman from the cape of l’Aigle, who had temporarily resigned his ordinary functions into the hands of Luquin Trinquetaille.

According to custom, these fishermen wore black breeches, a black doublet, and a black mantle, with a white band; on their heads they wore hats with a wide brim. The youngest of these judges was not less than fifty years old. Their attitude was simple and serious; their sunburnt faces and long white or gray hair shone with a Rembrandt light under the sudden ray of sunshine shooting from the narrow windows, and were distinctly outlined on the shadowy light which reigned in the body of the hall.

These five old seamen, elected by their corporation on St. Stephen’s Day, justified the choice of their companions. Brave, honest, and pious, they assuredly represented the best of the maritime population of the town and the gulf.

The tribunal and the place reserved for those who were to appear before them were separated from the crowd by a rude barrier of wood.

We quote from the work, “Voyage and Inspection of M. de Séguiran,” already cited in the preface: “The jurisdiction of the overseers was very simple. Whoso wishes to enter a complaint before these overseers can

be heard, but not before he has deposited two sous and eight farthings in the common purse, after which he can demand the party against whom he enters a complaint. The said party is obliged to make the same deposit, and both are heard; and at the end of the argument the eldest of these overseers pronounces judgment according to the counsel of his colleagues."

The secretary of the community called in a loud voice the plaintiffs and defendants.

Never had a session excited so much interest in the public mind.

Before the arrival of Raimond V. the greater part of those who filled the hall were still ignorant of the baron's intentions, whether or not he would appear before the tribunal. The smaller number, however, hoped that he would respect the privileges of the community.

But when they learned from the curious ones outside that the gentleman's carriage of state was already in the square, they eagerly watched every movement of the constantly increasing multitude.

The crier was obliged to elevate his voice to its utmost to command silence, and Peyrou, the watchman, as assignee of the overseers, at last administered a severe rebuke to the clamorous crowd, and order finally prevailed.

The tribunal then regulated some business of little importance, but with as much care and deliberate circumspection, and as much attention to detail, as if one of the first lords of Provence was not expected every moment to appear before them.

The multitude was compact when Raimond V. presented himself at the door, and he had great difficulty in entering the large hall with Honorât de Berrol.

"Make way, make way for monseigneur!" cried several eager voices.

"Have the overseers called me, my children?" said Raimond V., affectionately.

"No, monseigneur."

"Then I will wait here with you. It will be time to make way for me when I am called before the tribunal."

These simple words, uttered with as much kindness as dignity, had a tremendous effect upon the crowd. The veneration inspired by the old gentleman, who but a moment before had been so menaced, was so great that the people formed a sort of circle of solemnity around him.

An officer took great pains to inform the secretary that the baron had entered the hall, and that it would be proper to call his case before others on the docket. The secretary, profiting from a short interval, submitted this suggestion to Peyrou, the assignee or syndic.

The latter simply replied: "Secretary, what is the next name on your list?"

"Jacques Brun, pilot, versus Pierre Baif, sailmaker."

"Then call Jacques Brun and Pierre Baif."

Peyrou owed much to the baron's family. He was warmly attached to the house of Anbiez. In thus acting, he did not wish to make a display of his rights and exaggerate their importance. He was only obeying the spirit of justice and independence found in popular institutions.

It was without hesitation, and without the least intention to offend Raimond V., that the watchman said, in a loud and firm voice:

"Secretary, call another plaintiff."

The dispute between Jacques Brun, the pilot, and the sailmaker, Pierre Baif, was of little importance. It was promptly, but carefully, decided by the overseers in the midst of the general preoccupation, and the cause of the baron immediately followed.

Notwithstanding the presence of the Baron des Anbiez, it was not known that he intended to appear before the tribunal. Naturally, the crowd remembered the insinuations of Master Isnard. The latter insisted that the baron was capable of manifesting his contempt for the tribunal in a very startling manner.

At last the secretary called, in an excited voice: "Master Talebard-Talebardon, consul of the city of La Ciotat, versus Raimond V., Baron des Anbiez."

A long murmur of satisfied impatience circulated around the hall.

"Now, my children," said the old gentlemen to those who surrounded him, "make way, I pray you, not for the baron, but for the suitor who is going before his judges."

The enthusiasm inspired by these words of Raimond V. proved that, in spite of their instinctive thirst for equality, the people always had an immense liking for persons of rank who submitted to the common law.

The crowd, dividing on each side, made a wide avenue, in the middle of which Raimond V. walked with a grave and majestic step.

The old gentleman wore the sumptuous costume of the time: a doublet with points, a short mantle of brown velvet, richly braided with gold, wide trousers of the same material, which formed a sort of skirt descending below the knee. His scarlet silk stockings disappeared in the funnel of his short boots made of cordovan leather, and equipped with long gold spurs. A costly shoulder-belt sustained his sword, and the white plumes of his black cap fell over his collar of Flanders lace.

The countenance of the old gentleman, habitually joyous, showed at that moment a lofty expression of nobility and authority.

A few steps from the tribunal the baron took off his hat, which he had kept on until then, although the crowd was uncovered. One could not help admiring the dignity of the face and bearing of this noble old man with long hair and gray moustache.

Soon Master Talebardon arrived.

Notwithstanding his usual assurance, and although he had the recorder Isnard at his heels, he could not conquer his emotion, and carefully avoided the baron's glances.

Peyrou rose, as well as the other overseers; he kept his hat on.

"Bernard Talebard-Talebardon, come forward," said he.

The consul entered the enclosure.

“Raimond V., Baron des Anbiez, come forward.”

The baron entered the enclosure.

“Bernard Talebard-Talebardon, you demand, in the name of the community of La Ciotat, to be heard by the overseers of the port, against Raimond V., Baron des Anbiez.”

“Yes, syndic,” replied the consul.

“Deposit two sous and eight farthings in the common purse, and speak.”

The consul put the money in a wooden box, and, advancing near the tribunal, stated his grievance in these terms:

“Syndic and overseers, from time immemorial the fishery of the cove of Camerou has been divided between the community of the city and the lord of Anbiez; the said lord can lay his nets and seines from the coast to the rocks called the Seven Stones of Castrembaou, which form a sort of belt, about five hundred steps from the coast. The community hold the right from the Seven Stones of Castrembaou to the two points of the bay; before you, syndic and overseers, I affirm on oath that this is the truth, and I adjure Raimond V., Baron des Anbiez, here present and called by me, to say if such is not the truth.”

Turning to the gentleman, Peyrou said to him:

“Raimond V., Baron des Anbiez, is what the plaintiff says true? Has the right of fishery always been thus divided between the lords of Anbiez and the community of the city of La Ciotat?”

“The fishery has always been thus divided. I recognise it,” said the baron.

The perfect agreeableness with which the baron made his reply left no doubt as to his submission to the ability of the tribunal.

A murmur of satisfaction circulated through the hall. “Continue,” said Peyrou to the consul.

“Syndic and overseers,” pursued Talebard-Talebardon, “in spite of our rights and our custom, instead of confining himself to the space between the rocks of the Seven Stones of Castrembaou and the coast, Raimond V., Baron des Anbiez, has laid his nets beyond the rocks of the Seven Stones toward the high sea, and consequently has injured the rights of the community which I represent. He fishes in the part reserved for the said community. These facts, which I affirm on oath, are known, besides, to everybody, as well as yourselves, syndic and overseers.”

“The syndic and the overseers are not in this suit,” replied the watchman to the consul, severely. Then turning to the gentleman, he said to him:

“Raimond V., Baron des Anbiez, do you admit that you have thrown your nets on this side of the Seven Rocks, and toward the high sea, in the part of the cove reserved for the community of La Ciotat?”

“I have had my nets thrown this side of the Seven Rocks,” said the baron.

“Plaintiff, what do you demand from Raimond V., Baron des Anbiez?” said the syndic.

“I require,” answered Talebard-Talebardon, “the tribunal to forbid the lord of Anbiez henceforth to fish or to lay seines beyond the rocks of Castrembaou; I require that the said lord be commanded to pay to the said community, under the claim of damages and restitution, the sum of two thousand pounds; I require that the said lord be notified that, if he again lay nets and seines in that part of the cove which does not belong to him, the said community shall have the right to remove and destroy by force the said nets and seines, making the lord of Anbiez alone responsible for the disorders which may follow the exercise of this right.”

As they heard the consul formulate so clearly his charge against Raimond V., the spectators turned to look at the baron.

He remained calm and unmoved, to the great astonishment of the public.

The violent and impetuous character of the baron was so well known that his calmness and self-possession inspired as much admiration as astonishment.

Peyrou, addressing the old lord, said, in a solemn tone:

“Raimond V., Baron des Anbiez, what have you to reply to the plaintiff? Do you accept his requisitions from you as just and fair?”

“Syndic and overseers,” replied the baron, bowing respectfully, “yes, that is true. I have had my nets laid outside of the Seven Rocks of Oastrembaou, but, in order to explain my act, I will state that which all of you know.”

“Raimond V., Baron des Anbiez, we are not in this suit,” said Peyrou, gravely.

In spite of his self-control and his affection for the watchman, the old gentleman bit his lip, but soon regained his calmness and said:

“I will say to you, syndic and overseers, what every one knows: for several years the sea has fallen to such a degree that the part of the cove in which I had the right to fish has become dry. The sea broom has pushed its way there to the utmost, and my greyhound Eclair started a hare there the other day; honestly, syndic and overseers, to make any use of the part of the cove which belongs to me, I should need, now, horses and guns, instead of boats and nets.”

The baron’s reply, delivered with his usual good humour, amused the crowd; even the overseers could not repress a smile.

The baron continued:

“The retreat of the sea has been so great that there is hardly six feet of water in the spot around the Seven Rocks, where my fishing-place ends and that of the community begins. I have believed I had the right to lay my nets and my seines five hundred steps beyond the Seven Rocks, since there was no more water on this side, supposing that the community, following my example, and the movement of the water, would also advance five hundred steps toward the high sea.”

The moderation manifest in the baron’s tone, his reasons, which were really plausible, made a very great

impression on the spectators, although the greater part of them had a common cause with the consul, who represented the interest of the town.

Addressing the consul, the syndic said:

“Talebard-Talebardon, what have you to reply?”

“Syndic and overseers, I reply that the cove of Castrembaou has no more than six hundred steps to begin from the Seven Rocks, and that if the lord of Anbiez is adjudged five hundred, there will hardly remain one hundred steps for the community to throw its nets; now, every one knows that fishing for tunnies is profitable only in the bay. No doubt the waters, retiring, have left all the fishing domain of the lord of Anbiez dry, but that is not the fault of the community, and the community ought not to suffer from it.”

For a long time this grave question was in litigation. As we have said, the rights and opinions were so divided, that the consuls could have arranged everything amicably for the baron, but for the perfidious counsel of Master Isnard, the recorder.

The honest seamen, who composed the tribunal, almost invariably showed excellent sense; their judgments, based on the practice of an avocation which they had followed from infancy, were simple and righteous. Nevertheless, on this occasion, they were not a little embarrassed.

“What have you to answer, Raimond V., Baron des Anbiez?” said Peyrou.

“I have only to answer, overseers and syndic, that neither is it my fault that the waters have retired; by my title I possess the right of fishing over half the bay; owing to the retreat of the waters, I can go dry-shod over my piscatorial domain, as my chaplain says; now I ought not, I think, to be the victim of a circumstance which is the result of a superior force.”

“Raimond V.,” said one of the overseers, an old tar with white hair, “do you hold, by your title, the right to fish from the coast to the Seven Rocks, or the right to fish over an extent of five hundred steps?”

“My title claims the right to fish from the coast to the Seven Rocks,” replied the baron.

The old seaman whispered a few words to his neighbour.

Peyrou rose, and said, “We have heard enough, we will proceed to give judgment.”

“Syndic and overseers,” replied the baron, “whatever may be your decision, I submit to it beforehand.” Peyrou then said, in a loud voice: “Talebard-Talebardon, Raimond V., Baron des Anbiez, your cause is heard. We, overseers and syndic, will now consider it.” The five fishermen rose, and retired into the embrasure of a window. They seemed to be arguing very animatedly, while the crowd awaited their decision in profound and respectful silence; the lord of Anbiez talked in a low voice with Honorât de Berrol, who was much impressed by the scene.

After about a half-hour’s discussion, the syndic and overseers resumed their places, and stood with their hats on, while Peyrou read from a large book of registration the following formal statement, which always preceded the decree of this tribunal:

“This day, 20th day of December, in the year 1632, being assembled in the town hall of La Ciotat, we, syndic and overseers of the port, having made Talebard-Tale-bardon, consul of the city, and Raimond V., Baron des Anbiez, appear before us, and having heard the aforesaid in their accusation and defence, aver what follows:

“The demand of Talebard-Talebardon seems to us a just one. According to the title of Raimond V., his right of fishery does not extend indifferently over a space of five hundred steps, but over the space lying between the coast and the Seven Rocks of Castrembaou. The waters have retired from the part which belonged to him; that is the will of the Almighty, and Raimond must submit to it. If, as in the Gulf of Martignes, the sea had advanced on the coast, the fishery of Raimond V. would have been so much increased, and the community could not have exceeded their limits beyond the Seven Rocks; the opposite has taken place, which, no doubt, is unfortunate for the lord of Anbiez, but the community cannot surrender its rights of fishery. God controls the waters as pleases him, and we must accept what he sends. Our conscience and our reason then decide that henceforth Raimond V. can lay no more nets or seines outside of the Seven Rocks; but we also decide, in order to prove the gratitude of this city to the said Raimond V., who has always been her good and courageous protector, that he has the right to ten pounds of fish for every hundred pounds of fish which are caught in the bay. We know the good faith of our brother fishermen, and are sure that they will honestly fulfil this condition. The provost and other officers of the city are hereby notified to execute our judgment pronounced against Raimond V., Baron des Anbiez. In case the said lord of Anbiez opposes our judgment, he will be required to pay one hundred pounds forfeit, of which one-third goes to the king, one-third to the hospital of St. Esprit, and the other third to the said community. The hearing of the said misdemeanours and disputes of fishery being by the letters patent of Henry II. prohibited to Parliament and all other magistrates, their Majesty decreeing that suits brought before them on the question of the fishery shall be referred to the said overseers to be heard and judged by them, in consequence of which the decisions of the said overseers have always been declared without appeal. Made in town hall of La Ciotat, etc.”

The reason and good sense of this decision were wonderfully appreciated by the crowd; they applauded the judgment repeatedly, crying:

“Long live the overseers! Long live Raimond V.!”

The session being ended, the crowd dispersed. Raimond V. remained a few minutes in the hall, and said to the watchman of the cape of l’Aigle, as he grasped him by the hand:

“Righteously judged, my old Peyrou.”

“Monseigneur, poor people like us are neither lawyers nor scribes, but the Lord inspires the honest with a sense of justice.”

“Honest man,” said the baron, looking at him with keen interest, “will you dine with me at Maison-Forte?” “My sentry-box is waiting for me, monseigneur, and Luquin Trinquetaille is getting weary of it.”

“Come, come, then, I will see you at Maison-Forte with my brothers; they will arrive soon.”

“Have you any news from the commander?” asked Peyrou.

“I have some from Malta; it was good, and informs me again of his return here for Christmas, but his letter is sadder than ever.”

The watchman looked down and sighed.

“Ah, Peyrou,” said the baron, “how grievous is this melancholy, whose cause I do not know!”

“Very distressing,” replied the watchman, absorbed in his own thoughts.

“You, at least, know the cause of it,” said the baron, with a sort of bitterness, as if he had suffered from his brother’s reticence.

“Monseigneur!” said Peyrou.

“Cheer up! I do not ask you to unveil this sad secret to me, since it is not your own. Come, good-bye, my honest fellow. After all, I am very glad that our dispute was judged by you.”

“Monseigneur,” said Peyrou, who seemed to wish to escape from the recollections awakened by the baron’s questions about the commander, “it was rumoured that you would not come before the tribunal.”

“Yes, at first I resolved not to go there. Talebard-Talebardon could have come to an amicable settlement; in the first moment of anger I thought of sending all of you to the devil.

“Monseigneur, it was not the consul only who decided to bring the case before us.”

“I thought so, and for that reason I reconsidered it; instead of acting like a fool, I have acted with the wisdom of a graybeard. It was that scoundrel from the admiralty of Toulon that I whipped, was it not?”

“They say so, monseigneur.”

“You were right, Honorât,” said the baron, turning around to M. de Berrol. “Come, we shall see you soon, Peyrou.”

Upon going out of the large hall, the baron saw his carriage, which was drawn up in the town hall square, surrounded by the crowd.

They saluted him with acclamation and he was deeply moved by this reception.

Just as he was about to enter the carriage he saw Master Isnard, the recorder, standing within the embrasure of a door.

The man of law seemed quite melancholy over the result of the session. His perfidious designs had miscarried.

“Ho! Master Recorder,” cried the baron, half-way up his carriage steps, “do you return soon to Marseilles?” “I return there immediately,” answered he, peevishly. “Ah, well, just say to the Marshal of Vitry that, if I threatened you with my whip it was because you brought from him insulting orders to the Provençal nobility; you see that I am quite willing to appear before the popular tribunal whose decisions I respect. As to the difference of my conduct under the two circumstances, you, recorder, can explain it to the marshal. I shall always resist by force the iniquitous orders of tyrants, sent by a tyrant cardinal, but I shall always respect the rights and privileges of the ancient Provençal communities. The nobility is to the people what the blade is to the hilt. The communities are to us what we are to them; do you understand, you rascal? Tell that to your Vitry.” “Monseigneur, these words—” said the recorder, quickly.

But Raimond V., interrupting him, continued:

“Tell him, in short, that if I keep my house fortified, it is that I may be useful to the city, as I have been. When the shepherd has no dogs, the flock is soon devoured; and, Manjour, the wolves are not far off.”

As he uttered these words, Raimond V. entered his carriage and slowly departed, followed by the prolonged shouts and acclamations of the multitude.

The old gentleman, notwithstanding his candour and bluntness of speech, had, with great deftness and a shrewd policy, ranged the populace on his side in the event of a possible collision with the power of the marshal.

CHAPTER XVIII. the telescope.

After the session, during which, in his function of syndic of the overseers of the port, he had declared the condemnation of Raimond V., the watchman of Cape l’Aigle returned to his sentry-box, temporarily entrusted to the care of the brave Luquin Trinquetaille.

Peyrou was sad; the last words of the Baron des Anbiez on the subject of the commander had awakened the most painful memories.

But as he ascended the steep fortifications of the promontory, his heart expanded. Too much accustomed to solitude to find enjoyment in the society of men, the watchman was happy only when he was on the summit of his rock, where he listened in sweet meditation to the distant roaring of the sea and the terrible bursts of the tempest.

Nothing is more absolute, nothing is more imperious, than the habit of isolation, especially among those who find inexhaustible resources in their own power of observation or in the varied extravagance of their own imagination.

It was with a profound feeling of satisfaction that the watchman set foot upon the esplanade of Cape l’Aigle.

He approached his sentry-box, and there found the worthy Luquin fast asleep.

Peyrou’s first act was to scan the horizon with an anxious look, then to examine it with the aid of his telescope. Happily, he saw nothing suspicious, and his countenance took on rather a cheerful than a severe expression, when, roughly shaking the captain of *The Holy Terror to the Moors*, he called to him, in a loud voice:

“Wake up, wake up! the pirates!”

Luquin made a bound and stood on his feet, rubbing his eyes.

“Ah, well, my boy,” said the watchman, “so your great activity has fallen asleep. To hear you talk, one would think a doree or a mullet could not have made a leap in the sea without you knowing it. Ah, young man, young man, the old Provençal proverb, *Proun paillou, prou gran*,—Much straw, little grain.”

Luquin looked at the watchman with a bewildered expression, and was hardly able to collect his faculties; finally, reeling like a drunken man, he said, stretching his arms: “It is true, Master Peyrou, I slept like a cabin-boy on the watch, but I did keep my eyes open with all my strength.”

“That is the reason, my boy, sleep got into them so easily. But I am here now, and you can go down into the city. There will be more than one bottle of wine emptied without your help at the tavern of the Golden Anchor.”,

Luquin had not entirely come to himself, and he stood staring at the watchman with a stupid air.

Peyrou, no doubt, trying to wake the captain entirely from his condition of torpor, added: “Come, come now, Stephanette, your betrothed, will be engaged to dance with Terzarol, the pilot, or with the patron Bernard, and you will not have her hand once the whole day long.”

These words produced a magic effect on the captain; he straightened himself on his long legs, shook himself, tried to keep his equilibrium, and, finally stamping on the ground several times, said to the watchman:

“Listen, Master Peyrou, if I were not sure of having swallowed only one glass of sauve-chrétien with that devil of a Bohemian, to make peace with him, because Stephanette wanted me to do it,—a base weakness for which I cannot forgive myself,—I should certainly think I was drunk,” said the captain.

“That is strange, you drank only one glass of sauve-chrétien with the Bohemian, and you are overcome by it?”

“Only one glass, and that only half full, because what you drink with a miscreant like him tastes very bitter.” “Is this Bohemian always at Maison-Forte, pray?” asked Peyrou, with a thoughtful and serious air.

“Always, Master Peyrou, for everybody there dotes on him, from monseigneur to Abbé Mascarolus. He is in high favour with the women, from Mlle. Reine to old Dulceline, without speaking of Stephanette, who gave him a flame-coloured ribbon—flame-coloured ribbons, indeed!” exclaimed Luquin, with indignation. “It is a ribbon woven by the rope-maker that this wretch needs! But what can you do? All the women have their heads turned. And why? Because this vagabond strums, good and bad together, in some sort of fashion, an old guitar, so hoarse that it sounds like the pulleys of my tartan, when they hoist the big sail.”

“Did not the Bohemian arrive at Maison-Forte the day Raimond V. had the recorder chased by a bull?” “Yes, Master Peyrou, it was on that fatal day that this stray dog set foot in Maison-Forte.”

“That is strange!” said the watchman, talking to himself. “Then I was mistaken.”

“Ah, Master Peyrou, I am often seized with a desire to conduct this vagabond out to the cove beach, and exchange pistol-shots with him until either he or I come to our death.”

“Come, come, Luquin, you are foolish, jealousy makes you wild, and you are wrong. Stephanette is a good and honest girl, I can tell you. As to this vagabond—”

Then interrupting himself, as if he wished to keep what he was about to say secret from Luquin, he added: “Come, come, my boy, do not lose your time with a poor old man, while your young and pretty betrothed is waiting for you. Do not neglect her; be with her often, and marry her as soon as possible. There is another Provençal proverb: *A boueno taire bouen labourraire*,—A good labourer for good soil.”

“Wait, Master Peyrou, you put balm in my blood,” said the captain. “You are almost as good as a sorcerer. Everybody respects you and loves you; you take Stephanette’s part, so she must deserve it.”

“By Our Lady, she deserves it without a doubt. Did she not come before your departure for Nice, and ask me if you could undertake the voyage with safety?”

“That is true, Master Peyrou, and thanks to you and your cabalistic papers that I put on my bullets, and to your oil of Syrakoe, not less magical, with which I rubbed my muskets and cannon, I gave a hot chase to a corsair that came near, indiscreetly near, the Terror to the Moors and the vessels she was escorting. Ah, you are a great man, Master Peyrou.”

“And those who heed my counsels are wise and sensible,” replied the watchman, smiling. “Now the wise never allow their betrothed to grow weary of waiting.”

After having thanked the watchman again, Luquin Trinquetaille decided to profit by the advice given with regard to Stephanette, and went in all haste to Maison-Forte.

Finding himself alone, Peyrou breathed a sigh of content, as if he felt again that he was master of his little kingdom.

Although he received those who came to consult him with kindly courtesy, he saw them depart with a secret pleasure.

He entered his little cell and sighed deeply after having contemplated for some time the costly piece of ebony furniture which always seemed to awaken painful memories in his mind; then, as night came on, he wrapped himself in his thick hood and coat.

Thus well protected from the north wind which was blowing, Peyrou lit his pipe, and surveyed with sadness the immense horizon which was spread out before him.

As we have said, the house of Maison-Forte could be distinctly seen from the western side of the summit of Cape l’Aigle.

It was about three o’clock, and the watchman thought he saw a ship in the distance. He took up his telescope, and for a long time followed the uncertain point with his eyes, until it became more and more distinct.

He soon recognised a heavy merchant vessel whose aspect presented nothing of menace.

Following the manoeuvres and progress of this vessel with the aid of his telescope, he unconsciously turned it upon the imposing mass of Maison-Forte, the home of Raimond V., and on one part of the beach which was absolutely bare, at the point where it touched the rocks upon which the castle stood. He soon distinguished Reine des Anbiez mounted on her nag and followed by Master Laramée. The young girl was going, doubtless, in advance of the baron into the road.

Several huge rocks intervened, cutting off the view from the beach, and Peyrou lost sight of Mlle. Anbiez.

Just at this moment the watchman was startled by a loud noise; he felt the air above him in commotion, and suddenly his eagle fell at his feet. She had come, no doubt, to demand her accustomed food, as her hoarse and impatient cries testified.

The watchman sat caressing the bird abstractedly, when a new incident awakened his interest.

His sight was so penetrating that, in watching the spot on the coast where Mlle, des Anbiez would be likely to appear, he distinguished a man who seemed to be cautiously hiding himself in the hollow of the rock.

Turning his telescope at once on this man, he recognised the Bohemian.

To his great astonishment, he saw him draw from a bag a white pigeon, and attach to its neck a small sack, into which he slipped a letter.

Evidently the Bohemian thought himself protected from all observation, as, owing to the form and elevation of the rock where he was squatting, it was impossible for him to be seen either from the coast or from Maison-Forte.

Only from the prodigious height of Cape l’Aigle, which commanded the entire shore of the bay, could Master Peyrou have discovered the Bohemian.

After having looked anxiously from one side to the other, as if he feared he might be seen in spite of his precautions, the vagabond again secured the little sack around the neck of the pigeon, and then let it fly.

Evidently the intelligent bird knew the direction it was to take.

Once set at liberty, it did not hesitate, but rose almost perpendicularly above the Bohemian, then flew rapidly toward the east. As quick as thought, Peyrou took his eagle and tried to make her perceive the pigeon, which already appeared no larger than a white speck in space.

For a few seconds the eagle did not seem to see the bird; then, suddenly uttering a hoarse cry, she violently spread her broad wings, and started in pursuit of the Bohemian’s emissary.

Either the unfortunate pigeon was warned by the instinct of danger which threatened it, or it heard the discordant cries of its enemy, for it redoubled its swiftness, and flew with the rapidity of an arrow.

Once it endeavoured to rise above the eagle, hoping perhaps to escape its pursuer by disappearing in the low, dark clouds which veiled the horizon; but the eagle, with one swoop of her powerful wings, mounted to such a height, that the pigeon, unable to cope with its adversary, rapidly fell within a few feet of the surface of the sea, grazing the top of the highest waves.

Brilliant still followed her victim in this new manoeuvre.

The watchman was divided between the desire to see the end of the struggle between the eagle and the pigeon, and the curiosity to watch the countenance of the Bohemian.

Thanks to his telescope, he saw the Bohemian in a state of extraordinary excitement as he followed with intense anxiety the diverse chances of destruction or safety left to his messenger.

Finally, the pigeon attempted one last effort; realising, no doubt, that its destination was too far to be reached, it tried to return and come back to the coast, and thus escape its terrible enemy.

Unfortunately, its strength failed; its flight became heavy, and, approaching too near the waves, it was swept by foam and water.

The eagle availed herself of the moment when the pigeon was painfully resuming its embarrassed flight to fall upon it with the rapidity of a thunderbolt. She seized the pigeon in her strong claws, rose swiftly in the direction of the promontory, and came with her prey to take refuge in her eyrie, on a rock not far from the watchman’s sentry-box.

Peyrou rose quickly to take the pigeon from her; he could not succeed. The natural ferocity of Brilliant was in the ascendency; she bristled her feathers, uttered sharp and fierce cries, and showed herself disposed to defend her prey with her life.

Peyrou feared to offend her, lest she might fly away and hide in some inaccessible rock; he allowed her to devour the pigeon in peace, having observed that the little sack tied around the neck of the bird consisted of two silver plates fastened by a small chain of the same material.

He did not, after that discovery, fear the destruction of the letter which he knew was enclosed therein.

While the eagle was devouring the Bohemian’s messenger in peace, Peyrou returned to the door of his cell, took up his telescope, and vainly examined the rocks on the coast, in order to discover the Bohemian; he had disappeared.

While he was occupied with this new investigation, the watchman saw on the shore the carriage of Raimond V. The baron had mounted Laramée’s horse, and was riding by the side of Reine, and doubtless accompanied her to Maison-Forte.

Thinking the eagle had finished her feast, the watchman directed his steps to her eyrie.

Brilliant was no longer there, but among the bones and feathers of the pigeon he saw the little sack, opened it, and found there a letter of a few lines written in Arabic.

Unfortunately, Peyrou was not acquainted with that language. Only, in his frequent campaigns against the Barbary pirates, he had noticed in the letters of marque of the corsairs the word Reis, which means captain, and which always followed the name of the commander of the vessels.

In the letter which he had just captured, he found the word Reis three times.

He thought the Bohemian was possibly the secret emissary of some Barbary pirate, whose ship,

ambuscaded in one of the deserted bays along the coast, was waiting for some signal to land her soldiers. The Bohemian probably had left this ship in order to come to Maison-Forte, bringing his pigeons with him, and it is well known with what intelligence these birds return to the places they are accustomed to inhabit.

As he raised his head to obtain another view of the horizon, the watchman saw in the distance, on the azure line which separated the sky from the sea, certain triangular sails of unusual height, which seemed to him suspicious. He turned his telescope on them; a second examination confirmed him in the idea that the chebec in sight belonged to some pirate.

For some time he followed the manoeuvres of the vessel.

Instead of advancing to the coast, the chebec seemed to run along broadside, and to beat about, in spite of the increasing violence of the wind, as if it were waiting for a guide or signal.

The watchman was trying to connect in his thought the sending of the pigeon with the appearance of this vessel of bad omen, when a light noise made him raise his head.

The Bohemian stood before him.

CHAPTER XIX. THE LITTLE SATCHEL

The little satchel and the open letter were lying on the watchman’s knees. With a movement more rapid than thought, which escaped the observation of the Bohemian, he hid the whole in his girdle. At the same time he assured himself that his long Catalonian knife would come out of its scabbard easily, for the sinister countenance of the vagabond did not inspire confidence.

For some moments these two men looked at each other in silence, and measured each other with their eyes.

Although old, the watchman was still fresh and vigorous.

The Bohemian, more slender, was much younger, and seemed hardy and resolute.

Peyrou was much annoyed by this visit. He wished to watch the manoeuvres of the suspicious chebec; the presence of the Bohemian constrained him.

“What do you want?” said the watchman, rudely.

“Nothing; I came to see the sun go down in the sea.”

“It is a beautiful sight, but it can be seen elsewhere.”

As he said these words, the watchman entered his cell, took two pistols, placed one in his girdle, loaded the other, took it in his hand, and came out.

By that time the chebec could be distinguished by the naked eye.

The Bohemian, seeing Peyrou armed, could not repress a movement of surprise, almost of vexation, but he said to him, in a bantering tone, as he pointed to the pistol:

“You carry there a strange telescope, watchman!”

“The other is good to watch your enemy when he is far off; this one serves my purpose when he is near.”

“Of what enemy are you speaking, watchman?”

“Of you.”

“Of me?”

“Of you.”

After exchanging these words, the men were silent for some time.

“You are mistaken. I am the guest of Raimond V., Baron des Anbiez,” said the Bohemian, with emphasis.

“Is the venomous scorpion, too, the guest of the house he inhabits?” replied Peyrou, looking steadily in his eyes.

The eyes of the vagabond kindled, and, by a muscular contraction of his cheeks, Peyrou saw that he was gnashing his teeth; nevertheless, he replied to Peyrou, with affected calmness:

“I do not deserve your reproaches, watchman. Raimond V. took pily on a poor wanderer, and offered me the hospitality of his roof—”

“And to prove your gratitude to him, you wish to bring sorrow and ruin upon that roof.”

“I?”

“Yes, you,—you are in communication with that chebec down there, beating about the horizon.”

The Bohemian looked at the vessel with the most indifferent air in the world, and replied:

“On my life, I have never set foot on a ship; as to the communication which you suppose I have with that boat, that you call a chebec, I believe,—I doubt if my voice or my signal could reach it.”

The watchman threw a penetrating glance on the Bohemian, and said to him:

“You have never set foot on the deck of a ship?”

“Never, except on those boats on the Rhone, for I was born in Languedoc, on the highway; my father and mother belonged to a band of Bohemians which came from Spain, and the only recollection that I have of my childhood is the refrain so often sung in our wandering clan:

“‘Cuando me pario Mi madre la gitana.’

“That is all I know of my birth,—all the family papers I have, watchman.”

“The Bohemians of Spain speak Arabic also,” said Peyrou, observing the vagabond attentively.

“They say so. I know no other language than the one I speak,—very badly, as you see.”

“The sun is setting behind those great clouds down there; for one who is fond of that sight you seem to be quite indifferent to it,” answered the watchman, with an ironical air. “No doubt the chebec interests you more.”

“To-morrow evening I can see the sun set; to-day I would rather spend my time in guessing your riddles, watchman.”

During this conversation, the syndic of the overseers had not lost sight of the vessel, which continued to beat about, evidently waiting for a signal.

Although the appearance of this vessel was suspicious, Peyrou hesitated to give the alarm on the coast by kindling the fire. To set the whole seashore in excitement unnecessarily was a dangerous precedent, because some other time, in case of real danger, the signal might be taken for a false alarm.

While the watchman was absorbed in these reflections, the Bohemian looked around him uneasily; he was trying to discover some traces of the eagle, as from the rock where he had been squatting, he had seen Brilliant alight in this direction.

For a moment he thought of getting rid of Peyrou, but he soon renounced this idea. The watchman, strong and well-armed, was on his guard.

Peyrou, notwithstanding the anger that the presence of the vagabond inspired in him, feared to see him descend again to the castle of Maison-Forte, as Raimond V. did not suspect this wretch. Besides, seeing his wicked designs discovered, the villain might attempt some diabolical scheme before he left the country.

However, it was impossible to abandon his sentry-box under such serious circumstances, in order to warn the baron. Night was approaching, and the Bohemian was still there.

Happily, the moon was almost full; in spite of the densely piled clouds, her light was bright enough to reveal all the manoeuvres of the chebec.

The Bohemian, his arms crossed on his breast, surveyed Peyrou, with imperturbable coolness.

“You see the sun has set,” said this old seaman, “the night will be cold; you had better return to Maison-Forte.”

“I intend to spend the night here,” replied the vagabond.

The watchman, made furious by the remark, rose, and walking up to the Bohemian with a threatening air, said:

“And by Our Lady, I swear that you shall descend to the beach this instant!”

“And suppose I do not wish to go.”

“I will kill you.”

The Bohemian shrugged his shoulders.

“You will not kill me, watchman, and I will remain.”

Peyrou raised his pistol, and exclaimed: “Take care!”

“Would you kill a defenceless man, who has never done you any harm? I defy you,” said the vagabond, without moving from the spot.

The watchman dropped his arm; he revolted at the thought of murder. He replaced his pistol in his belt, and walked back and forth in violent agitation. He found himself in a singular position,—he could not rid himself of this persistent villain by fear or force; he must then resolve to pass the night on guard.

He resigned himself to this last alternative, hoping that next day some one might appear, and he would be able to rid himself of the Bohemian.

“Very well, let it be,” said he, with a forced smile. “Although I have not invited you to be my companion, we will pass the night by the side of each other.”

“And you will not repent it, watchman. I am not a sailor, but I have a telescope. If the chebec annoys you, I will assist you in watching it.”

After some moments of silence, the watchman seated himself on a piece of the rock.

The wind, increasing in violence, blew with irresistible force. Great clouds from time to time veiled the pale disc of the moon, and the door of the sentry-box, left open, was flapping with a loud noise.

“If you wish to be of some use,” said Peyrou, “take that end of the rope there on the ground, and fasten the door of my cell, because the wind will continue to rise.” The Bohemian looked at the watchman with an astonished air, and hesitated to obey for a moment.

“You wish to shut me up in there. You are cunning, watchman.”

Peyrou bit his lips, and replied:

“Fasten that door on the outside, I tell you, or I will take you for a bad fellow.”

The Bohemian, seeing nothing disagreeable in satisfying the watchman, picked up the rope, passed it through a ring screwed to the door, and tied it to a cramp-iron fixed in the wall.

The watchman, seated, was attentively watching the movements of his companion. When the knot was tied, Peyrou approached it, and said, after examining it a moment:

“As sure as God is in heaven, you are a sailor!”

“I, watchman?”

“And you have served on board those corsairs from Barbary.”

“Never! Never!”

“I tell you that one who has not sailed with the pirates of Algiers or Tunis cannot have the habit of making that triple knot that you have just made. Only pirates fasten tie anchor to the ring in that manner!”

The Bohemian now, in his turn, bit his lips until they bled, but, regaining his self-possession, he said:

“Come now, you have a sharp eye; you are both right and wrong, my lord watchman, this knot was taught me by one of our people, who joined us in Languedoc, after having been made a slave on a corsair from

Algiers.”

Losing all patience, and furious at the villain’s impudence, the watchman cried:

“I tell you that you are lying. You came here to prepare some villainous scheme. Look at this!”

And the watchman held up the little satchel The Bohemian, struck with amazement, uttered a curse in Arabic in spite of himself.

If the watchman had felt the least doubt concerning the character of the Bohemian, this last exclamation, which had so often met his ears in his combats with the pirates, would have sufficed to prove the truth of his suspicions.

The eyes of the Bohemian flashed with rage.

“I see all,” said he, “the eagle came here to devour the pigeon! From the beach I saw her alight in these rocks. That satchel or your life!” cried the villain, drawing a dagger from his doublet, and rushing upon the watchman. The pistol on Peyrou’s breast recalled the fact to him that his enemy was more formidably armed than himself.

Stamping his foot with rage, the vagabond cried:

“Eblis (*Eblis is the Arabic for devil*) is with him!”

“I was sure of it, you are a pirate. That chebec is waiting for your instructions, or your signal to approach the coast or retire from it. Your rage is great to see all your wicked designs discovered, you villain!” said the watchman.

“Eblis touched me with his invisible wingt so that I was about to forget the only means of repairing everything,” suddenly cried the Bohemian.

With one joyous bound he disappeared from the astonished eyes of the watchman, and hastily descended the precipitous road which led to the shore.

CHAPTER XX. THE SACRIFICE

The night passed without another incident.

At the rising of the sun the chebec was no longer in sight.

Peyrou waited with impatience the arrival of the young seaman who was accustomed to relieve his watch.

He was anxious to warn Raimond V. of the wicked designs he attributed to the Bohemian.

About two o’clock, Peyrou was astonished to see Mile, des Anbiez, accompanied by Stephanette.

Reine approached him with evident embarrassment.

Without sharing the superstitious ideas of the inhabitants of the gulf, in reference to the watchman on Cape l’Aigle, she felt irresistibly impelled to consult him upon a subject which she could not think of without sadness. The young girl had received new evidences of the remembrance cherished by Erebus, through the same unknown and mysterious way.

All her efforts, and all of Stephanette’s, had proved unavailing in discovering the source of these strange communications.

Through an unpardonable obstinacy, and a foolish love of the marvellous, Reine had concealed everything from her father and Honorât.

Honorât had left Maison-Forte, in a fit of jealousy as painful as it was unreasonable.

On the evening of the day the overseers of the port held their session, Reine, as she knelt before her praying-desk, had found a rosary of sandalwood of the most marvellous workmanship.

The clasp by which it was to be attached to her belt again bore the enamelled imprint of the little dove of which we have spoken,—the symbol of the remembrance and the love of the unknown.

Since the singing of the Bohemian, Reine’s imagination, excited beyond degree, had indulged in a thousand dreams concerning the adventurous life of the young emir, as the vagabond had named him.

Either by design or chance, the singer had left his guzla in Reine’s apartment, after the departure of Honorât de Berrol.

The young girl, curious to see the face of the unknown again, took the guitar and opened the medallion, and, to her great surprise, the portrait, insecurely fastened, came off in her hands.

Dame Dulceline entered. Reine blushed, closed the medallion and hid the portrait in her bosom, intending to restore it to its place. Evening came, and Stephanette, without informing her mistress, returned the guitar to the Bohemian. The lid of the medallion was fastened, and neither the singer nor the servant discovered the absence of the picture.

The next day Reine sent for the Bohemian in order to return the portrait to him. He had disappeared, the flight of the pigeon demanding his attention.

Reine had the courage to break the crystal vase, and to burn the miniature on vellum, but she had not the courage to destroy the portrait or the rosary that she found in her oratory.

In spite of her struggles, in spite of her prayers, in spite of her resolve to forget the events of the day in the rocks of Ollioules, the memory of the unknown took possession of her heart more and more.

The songs of the Bohemian on the young emir, whom he called Erebus, had profoundly moved her feelings.

Those contrasts of courage and kindness, of power and pity, recalled to her mind the singular combination of audacity and timidity which had impressed her in the scene which transpired in the gorges of Ollioules.

She counted on the restitution of the portrait as the first step to another conversation with the Singer about the emir.

Unfortunately, the Bohemian had disappeared.

To the great astonishment of the inmates of Maison-Forte, he did not return in the evening. Raimond V., who liked him, ordered his men who guarded the bridge to be prepared to lower it when the Bohemian appeared, notwithstanding the regulations of the castle.

Morning came, and still the vagabond was absent. They supposed that, after drinking, he had fallen asleep in some tavern of La Ciotat. They were still more astonished not to find the two pigeons in the cage where he kept them ordinarily closely confined.

Greatly disturbed by these strange happenings, which had been transpiring for some time, Reine, half through curiosity and half through conviction, finally yielded to the entreaties of Stephanette, who had the most wonderful ideas of the watchman's abilities and knowledge, and decided to consult the old seaman on the mysteries of which Maison-Forte was the theatre.

So many extraordinary things had been told of Master Peyrou's predictions, that Reine, although little given to superstition, felt the influence of the general opinion.

She was going to interrogate Peyrou, when, to her amazement, he accosted her with a question about the Bohemian.

"Mademoiselle, did the vagabond enter Maison-Forte last night?" said Peyrou, quickly.

"No; my father is much concerned about him. They think that he must have spent the night drinking in some tavern in La Ciotat."

"That would be astonishing," added Stephanette, "for the poor fellow seems to be of exemplary sobriety."

"This poor fellow," exclaimed the watchman, "is a spy of the pirates."

"He!" exclaimed Reine.

"Yes, he, himself, mademoiselle; a chebec was cruising a part of the night in view from the gulf, waiting, no doubt, for a signal from this vagabond to disembark."

In a few words the watchman acquainted Reine with the adventure of the pigeon, informing her on what indisputable grounds he suspected the Bohemian of having communication with the pirates; showed her the satchel and letter, and gave them to her, that the baron might have the writing translated by one of the brother monks in La Ciotat, who, having been a slave in Tunis for a long time, was familiar with Arabic.

When she learned the odious suspicions which attached to the Bohemian, without accounting to herself for her fear, Reine dared not confide the object of her visit to the watchman.

Stephanette looked at her mistress, utterly confounded, and cried:

"Our Lady! who would have believed that this unbeliever, who sang so well, could be such an abominable scoundrel? And to think I pitied him enough to give him a flame-coloured ribbon! Ah, my dear mistress, and the portrait of—"

Reine by an imperious sign forbade Stephanette to continue.

"Good-bye, good watchman," said Mlle, des Anbiez, "I am going back to Maison-Forte at once, to warn my father to be on his guard."

"Do not forget, Stephanette, to send Luquin Trinquetaille here. I must make arrangements with him to have one more young watchman," said Peyrou. "I have not slept the whole night. This dangerous knave is perhaps wandering about these rocks, and may come and assassinate me at the setting of the moon. The pirates are somewhere in the gulf, hidden in some one of the coves where they often ambuscade, to wait for their prey; for, alas! our coasts are not protected."

"Be easy, Master Peyrou, Luquin is coming with his two cousins; just tell him that you are watching for the Bohemian, and he will not delay to come as fast as his long legs can bring him. And to think I gave a ribbon to a pirate!" added Stephanette, clasping her hands. "Perhaps he is one of those brigands who ravaged all this coast last year."

"Go, go, my girl, and hurry. I must confer with the captain about a little cruise he can undertake even to-day with his polacre. We must warn the consuls to arm some fishing-boats immediately, with sure and determined men. We must give the alarm all along the shore, arm the entrance into the gulf, which is defended only by the cannon of Maison-Forte, and be prepared for any surprise, for these brigands rush on the coast like a hurricane. So Luquin must come on the instant Do you hear, Stephanette? The safety of the city depends on it."

"Be easy, Master Peyrou, although it breaks my heart to know that my poor Luquin is going to run such danger. I love him too much to advise him to be a coward."

During this rapid conversation between the watchman and her servant, Reine, lost in deep reverie, had descended a few steps of the path which conducted to the platform upon which stood the sentry-box.

This path, which was very steep, wound around the outside of the promontory, and formed at this spot a sort of comice, whose projection reached considerably over the base of this immense wall of rocks, more than three hundred feet above the level of the sea.

A young girl less habituated to walks and to mountain climbing would have feared to venture on this narrow passage. From the side of the sea, its only parapet was a few asperities of rock, more or less pronounced. Reine, accustomed to brave these perils from her infancy, thought nothing of danger. The emotion that agitated her since her interview with the watchman absorbed her entirely.

Her gait, sometimes slow, sometimes hurried, seemed to share the nature of her tumultuous emotions.

Stephanette soon joined her. Surprised at the pallor of her mistress, she was about to ask the cause of it, when Reine said to her, in an altered voice, with a gesture which did not admit of a reply, "Walk in front of me, Stephanette, do not concern yourself whether I follow you or not."

Stephanette preceded her mistress at once, directing her steps in all haste toward Maison-Forte.

The agitation of Reine des Anbiez was extreme. The relations which seemed to exist between the Bohemian and the unknown were too evident for her not to have the most painful suspicions of this young man whom the vagabond called the emir.

Many circumstances, which had not impressed her at the time, now made Reine believe that the Bohemian was an emissary of the unknown. No doubt it was the vagabond who had placed in her chamber the various objects which had caused her so much surprise. Adopting this hypothesis, there was, however, one objection which presented itself to her mind,—she had found the crystal vase and the miniature on vellum before the arrival of the vagabond.

Suddenly a ray of light entered her mind; she remembered that one day, in order to display his agility to Stephanette, the Bohemian had descended to the terrace by the balcony, upon which opened the window of her oratory, and that he had remounted by the same way. Another time he had slid down from the terrace on the rocks, which lined the shore, and had remounted from the rocks to the terrace, by the aid of the asperities of the wall and the plants which had taken root there.

Although he arrived for the first time at the castle with the recorder, might not this vagabond, before that day, have been hidden in the environage of La Ciotat? Could he not have entered Maison-Forte twice during the night, then, to avoid suspicion, returned in the recorder’s train, as if he had met it by chance?

These thoughts, reinforced by recent observations, soon assumed incontrovertible certainty in the mind of Reine. The stranger and his two companions were, without doubt, pirates, who, with false names and false credentials, had given out that they were Muscovites, and had thus imposed upon the credulity of the Marshal of Vitry.

The first idea of Reine, then,—an idea absolute and imperious,—was to forget for ever the man upon whom rested such terrible suspicion.

Religion, duty, and the will of her father were so many insurmountable and sacred obstacles which the young girl could not think of braving.

Up to that time, her youthful and lively imagination had found inexhaustible nourishment in the strange adventure of the rocks of Ollioules.

All the chaste dreams of her young girlhood were, so to speak, concentrated and realised in the person of Erebus, that unknown one, brave and timid at the same time, audacious and charming, who had saved the life of her father.

She could not help being touched by the delicate and mysterious persistence with which Erebus had always tried to recall himself to her memory. Doubtless she had never heard the voice of this stranger; doubtless she was ignorant of his mind and character, whether or not they responded to the graces of his person. But in these long reveries in which a young girl thinks of him who has fascinated her, does she not invest him with the most excellent qualities? does she not make him say all that she desires to hear?

Thus had Reine thought of Erebus. First she wished to banish him from her thought, but, unfortunately, to yield to a sentiment against which we have struggled is only to render it all the more powerful and irresistible.

Reine then loved Erebus, perhaps unconsciously, when the watchman’s fatal revelation showed the object of her love in such unattractive colours.

The grandeur of the sacrifice that she was required to make enlightened her as to the power of the affection with which she had, so to speak, played until the fatal moment arrived.

For the first time this sudden revelation taught her the depth of her love.

Impenetrable mysteries of the human heart! During the first phases of this mysterious love she had regarded her marriage with Honorât as possible.

From the moment in which she knew who the unknown one was, from that moment she felt that, notwithstanding the voice of duty ordered her to forget him, the memory of Erebus would henceforth dominate her whole existence, and she could never marry the chevalier.

She recognised the truth with terror, that, notwithstanding her efforts to master her feelings, her heart belonged to her no longer, and she was incapable of deceiving Honorât.

She wished to make a last sacrifice, to give up the rosary and portrait which she possessed, imposing this resolution upon herself as a sort of expiation of her reserve and reticence toward her father.

The young girl suffered much before she was able to fulfil this resolution.

In this mental struggle, Reine was walking on the edge of the comice formed by the rocks above the beach on which the waves of the sea were breaking.

She wore over her dress a sort of brown mantle with a hood turned up on the shoulders. This hood allowed her bare head to be seen, as well as her long brown curls that floated in the wind. Her countenance had an expression of sweet and resigned melancholy; sometimes, however, her blue eyes shone with a new brightness, and she lifted up her noble, beautiful head with an expression of wounded pride.

She loved passionately, but without hope, and she was going to throw to the winds the feeble tokens of this impossible love.

At her feet, far, far below her, broke the raging waves of the sea.

She drew the rosary from her bosom, looked at it a moment with bitterness, pressed it to her heart, then, extending her white and delicate hand above the abyss, she held it motionless a moment, and the rosary fell into the waves below.

She tried to follow it with her eyes, but the edge of the cornice was too sharp to allow her a view.

She sighed profoundly, took the portrait of the unknown, and contemplated it a long time in sad admiration. Nothing could be purer or more enchanting than the features of Erebus; his large brown eyes, soft and proud at the same time, reminded her of the look, full of purity and dignity, which he cast upon Raimond V. after having saved his life. The smile of this portrait, full of serenity, had nothing of that satirical smile and bold

expression which had so startled her on the eventful day.

For a few moments she struggled with her resolution, then reason asserted her empire; blushing, she pressed her lips to the medallion, then on the brow of the portrait, and then—threw it suddenly into space.

This painful sacrifice accomplished, Reine felt less oppressed; she believed that she would have committed a wrong in preserving these memorials of a foolish love.

Then she felt free to abandon herself to the thoughts locked in the depths of her heart.

She walked a long time on the beach, absorbed in these thoughts.

On returning to Maison-Forte she learned that Raimond V. had not yet returned from the chase.

Night was fast falling, and Reine, followed by Stephanette, entered her apartment What was her amazement, her terror—

She found on the table the portrait and rosary that two hours before she had thrown into the depths of the sea.

CHAPTER XXI. OUR LADY OF SEVEN SORROWS

We will abandon for awhile Maison-Forte of the Baron des Anbiez, and the little city of La Ciotat, in order to conduct the reader on board the galley of the commander Pierre des Anbiez.

The tempest had forced this vessel to take refuge in the little port of Tolari, situated on the east of Cape Corsica, a northerly point of the island of the same name.

The bell of the galley had just sounded six o’clock in the morning.

The weather was gloomy and the sky veiled with black and threatening clouds; frequent and violent squalls of wind were raising a strong swell within the port.

On whichever side one might turn, nothing could be seen but the barren, solemn mountains of Cape Corsica, at the feet of which the steep road wound its way.

The sea was heavy in the interior of the basin, but it seemed almost calm when compared to the surging waves which beat upon a girdle of rocks at the narrow entrance of the port.

These rocks, almost entirely submerged, were covered with a dazzling foam, which, whipped by the wind, vented itself in a soft white mist.

The sharp cries of sea-gulls and sea-mews scarcely rose above the thundering noise of the sea in its fury, as it rushed into the channel which it was necessary to cross in order to enter the road of Tolari.

A few wretched-looking fishermen’s huts, built on the beach where their dried boats were moored, completed the wild and solitary scene. Tossed by this heavy swell, *Our Lady of Seven Sorrows*, sometimes rising on the waves, would strain her cables almost to breaking, and sometimes seemed to sink into a bed between two billows.

Nothing could be severer or more funereal than the aspect of this galley painted like a cenotaph.

A hundred and sixty-six feet long, eighteen feet wide, narrow, slender, and scarcely rising above the level of the sea, she resembled an immense black serpent, sleeping in the midst of the waves. In front of the parallelogram which constituted the body of the galley, was scarfed a sharp and projecting beak-head, six feet in length.

At the rear of the same parallelogram was a rounded stern, the roof of which inclined toward the prow.

Under this shelter, called the stem carriage, lodged the commander, the patron, the prior, and the king of the chevaliers of Malta.

The masts of the galley, hauled down at its entrance into harbour, had been placed in the waist, a narrow passage which ran through the entire length of the galley.

On each side of this passage were ranged the benches of the galley-slaves. Below the stem carriage, attached to a black staff, floated the standard of religion, red, quartered with white, and below the standard a bronze beacon designated the grade of the commander.

It would be difficult, in our day, to comprehend how these slaves, composing the crew of a galley, could live, chained night and day to their benches,—at sea, lying on deck without shelter; at anchor, lying under a tent of coarse, woollen stuff, which scarcely protected them from the rain and the frost.

Let one picture to himself about one hundred and thirty Moorish, Turk, or Christian galley-slaves, dressed in red jackets and brown woollen hooded mantles, on this black galley, in cold, gloomy weather.

These miserable creatures shivered under the icy blast of the tempest and under the rain, which deluged them notwithstanding the awning.

To warm themselves a little they would press close to each other on the narrow benches, to which they were chained, five and five.

All of them preserved a morose silence, and often threw an uneasy and furtive glance on the convict-keepers and the overseers.

These contemptible officers, clothed in black, and armed with a cowhide, would go through the waist of the galley, on each side of which were the benches of the crew.

There were thirteen benches on the right, and twelve on the left.

The galley-slaves, constituting the palamente, or the armament of rowers, belonging to *Our Lady of Seven Sorrows*, had been, as was the custom, recruited from Christians, Turks, and Moors.

Each one of these types of slaves had his peculiar physiognomy.

The Turks, sluggish, dejected, and indolent, seemed to be a prey to a morbid and contemplative apathy.

The Moors, always excited, uneasy, and of ungovernable temper, appeared to be continually on the alert to break their chains and massacre their keepers.

The Christians, whether condemned or enrolled of their own will, were, in their way, more indifferent, and some of them were occupied in weaving straw, by which they hoped to reap a profit.

Finally, the negroes, captured from Barbary pirate vessels where they rowed as slaves, remained in a sort of torpor, a stupid immobility, with their elbows on their knees and their heads in their hands.

The greater part of these blacks died of grief, while the Mussulman and Christians grew accustomed to their fate.

Among these last, some were horribly mutilated, as they belonged to the class recaptured in their efforts to escape.

In order to punish them for attempting to escape, according to the law, their noses and ears had been cut off, and even more than this, their beards, heads, and eyebrows were completely shaven; nothing could be more hideous than the faces so disfigured.

In the fore part of the galley, and confined in a sort of covered guard-house, called rambade, could be seen a battery,—the five pieces of artillery belonging to the vessel.

This place was occupied by the soldiers and gunners.

These never formed a part of the crew, but composed, if such a thing may be said, the cargo of the vessel impelled by the oars of the galley-slaves.

About twenty sailors, free also, were charged with the management of the sails, with the anchorage, and other nautical manoeuvres.

The soldiers and gunners, considered as lay brothers and servants, wore coats of buff-skin, hoods, and black breeches.

Sheltered by the roof of the rambade, some, seated on their cannon, busied themselves in cleaning their arms; others, wrapped in their hoods, lay on the deck asleep, while others still—a rare thing even among the soldiers of religion—were occupied in pious reading, or in telling their rosaries.

With the exception of the galley-slaves, the men on board this galley, carefully chosen by the commander, had a grave and thoughtful countenance.

Almost all the soldiers and sailors were of mature age; some were approaching old age. By the numerous scars with which the greater number were marked, it was evident that they had served a long time.

More than two hundred men were assembled on this galley, and yet the silence of the cloister reigned through it.

If the crew remained silent through terror of the whip of the keepers and overseers, the soldiers and sailors obeyed the pious customs maintained by the commander Pierre des Anbiez.

For more than thirty years that he had commanded this galley of religion, he had tried always to preserve the same equipment, replacing only the men that he had lost.

The severity of discipline established on board Our Lady of Seven Sorrows was well known at Malta. The commander was perhaps the only one of the officers of the religion who exacted a strict observance of the rules of the order. His galley, on board of which he received only men who had been proven, became a sort of nomadic convent,—a voluntary rendezvous for all sailors who wished to assure their salvation by binding themselves scrupulously to the rigorous requirements of this hospitable and military confraternity.

It was the same with the officers and young caravan-iflits.

Those who preferred to lead a joyous and daring life—which was the immense majority—found the greater part of the captains of the religion disposed to welcome them, and to forget everything in their union against the infidels, as their mission of monk-soldiers was at the same time that of saint and warrior.

On the contrary, the very small number of young chevaliers who loved, for its own sake, this pious and austere life in the midst of great perils, sought with eagerness the opportunity to embark on the galley of the commander Pierre des Anbiez.

There nothing offended, nothing prevented their religious customs. There they could give themselves up to their holy exercises without fear of being ridiculed, or of becoming perhaps weak enough to blush for their own zeal.

The master gunner, or captain of the mast of the galley, an old sunburnt soldier, wearing a black felt jacket with a white cross, was seated in the guard-house of the prow, or rambade, of which we have spoken.

He was talking with the captain of the sailors of *Our Lady of Seven Sorrows*, whose name was Simon. The first speaker was Captain Hugues, who, with his companion, had always sailed with the Commander des Anbiez.

Captain Hugues was polishing with care a collar of steel net. Captain Simon from time to time was looking through the opening of the rambade, examining the sky and the sea, so as to prognosticate the end or the increase of the storm.

“Brother,” said Hugues to Simon, “the north wind blows strong; it will be several days before we arrive at La Ciotat. Christmas will be past, and our brother commander will be grieved.”

Captain Simon, before replying to his comrade, consulted the horizon again, and said, with a serious air:

“Although it is not proper for man to seek to divine the will of the Lord, I think we may hope to see the end of this tempest soon: the clouds seem not so low or so heavy. Perhaps to-morrow our ancient companion, the old watchman on Cape l’Aigle, will signal our arrival in the Gulf of La Ciotat.”

“And that will be a day of joy in Maison-Forte, and to Raimond V.,” said Captain Hugues.

“And also on board *Our Lady of Seven Sorrows*,” said Captain Simon, “although joy appears here as rarely

as the sun during a westerly wind."

"Look at this furbished collar," said the gunner, regarding his work with an air of satisfaction. "It is strange, Brother Simon, how blood will stick to steel. I have rubbed in vain: you can always distinguish these blackish marks on the mesh!"

"Which proves that steel loves blood as the earth loves dew," said the sailor, smiling sadly at his pleasantry.

"But do you know," said Hugues, "that it will soon be ten years since the commander received this wound in his combat with Mourad-Reis, the corsair of Algiers?" "I remember it as well, brother, as that with one blow of the battle-axe I struck down the miscreant who had almost broken his kangiar on the breast of the commander, who was fortunately defended by that coat of mail. But for that, Pierre des Anbiez would be dead."

"So he still keeps this collar, and I am going to carry it to him now."

"Stop," said the sailor, seizing the gunner by the arm, "you have chosen an unfortunate time,—the brother commander is in one of his bad days."

"How?"

"The head cook told me this morning that Father Elzear wished to enter the commander's chamber, but there was crape on the door."

"I understand, I understand; that sign suffices to prevent the entrance of any person in the commander's chamber before he gives the order to do so."

"Yet to-day is neither Saturday nor the seventeenth day of the month," said Captain Hugues with a thoughtful air.

"That is true, for it is only upon the return of these days that his fits of despondency seem to overwhelm him the most," said Captain Simon.

Just at this moment a deep, hollow murmur was heard outside among the crew.

There was nothing ominous of evil in this noise; on the contrary, it was only an expression of satisfaction.

"What is that?" asked the gunner.

"Doubtless Reverend Father Elzear has just appeared on deck. At the very sight of him the slaves think their lot less miserable."

CHAPTER XXII. THE BROTHER OF MERCY

Elzear des Anbiez, brother of the sacred order, royal and military, of Our Lady of Mercy, for the redemption of captives, had in fact just appeared on the deck of the galley.

The slaves welcomed his presence with a murmur of hope and satisfaction, for he always had some word of pity for these unhappy men.

The recognised discipline of the galley was so severe, so inflexible, and of such relentless justice, that Father Elzear, notwithstanding the tender attachment which bound him to his brother, the commander, would not have dared ask the pardon of an offender. But he never spared encouragement and consolation to those who were to undergo punishment.

Father Elzear advanced with a slow step into the middle of the narrow passage which separated the two rows of benches on the galley.

He wore the habit of his order: a long white cassock, with a mantle of the same material caught up on the shoulders. A rope girded his loins, and notwithstanding the cold, his bare feet had no other protection than leather sandals. In the middle of his breast showed the coat of arms belonging to his order, an escutcheon diapered with gold and gules, surmounted with a silver cross.

Father Elzear resembled Raimond V. His features were noble and majestic, but the fatigues and austerities of his holy, self-abnegating profession had stamped upon them an expression of constant suffering.

The top of his head was shaven, and a crown of white hair encircled his venerable brow.

His pale, emaciated face, his hollow cheeks, made his soft, serene black eyes appear larger still, and a sweet, sad smile gave an expression of adorable benevolence to his countenance.

He stooped a little in walking, as if he had contracted this habit by bending over the chained captives. His weak wrists were marked with deep and ineffaceable scars. Captured in one of the numerous voyages he made from France to Barbary for the ransom of slaves, he had been put in chains, and so cruelly treated that he bore all his life the marks of the barbarity practised by pirates.

Having been ransomed by his own family, he voluntarily went into slavery again in order to take the place in an Algerian prison of a poor inhabitant of La Ciotat, who could not pay his ransom, and whom a dying mother called to France.

In forty years he had ransomed more than three thousand slaves, either with the money of his own patrimony, or with the fruit of his collections from other Christians.

With the exception of a few months passed, every two or three years, in the house of his brother Raimond V., Father Elzear, noble, rich, learned, with an independent fortune, which he had devoted to the ransom of slaves, had been travelling continually, either on land for the purpose of collecting alms, or on sea, on his way to deliver captives.

Sacredly vowed to this hard and pious mission, he had always refused the positions and rank that his birth, his virtues, his courage, and his angelic piety would have conferred upon him in his order.

His self-abnegation, his simplicity, which possessed an antique grandeur, struck all minds with respect and

admiration.

Endowed naturally with a noble and lofty spirit, he had directed all the powers of his soul toward one single aim, that of giving consolation, by imparting to his language that irresistible charm which won and comforted the afflicted.

And what a triumph it was for him, when his tender, sympathising words gave a little hope and courage to the poor slaves chained to their oars, when he saw their eyes, hard and dry from despair, turn to him moist with the sweet tears of gratitude.

We are overwhelmed with admiration when we reflect upon those lives so unostentatiously devoted to one of the most exalted and most sacred missions of humanity. We are lost in wonder when we think of the sublime fortitude of these men, voluntarily placed under the very cutlasses of cruel pirates. We are speechless with amazement when we think of the men who risked their lives every day in order to exhort the slaves, whom barbarians oppressed with labours and tormented with blows, to patience and resignation. What unbounded self-sacrifice and long suffering were demanded of those Brothers of Mercy who went and ransomed, in the midst of the greatest perils, people whom in all probability they were never to see again.

The priest and the missionary enjoy, for a time at least, the good which they have accomplished, the gratitude of those whom they have instructed, relieved, or saved; but the men who devoted themselves to the redemption of slaves held by pirates, were hardly acquainted with the captives whom they delivered, inasmuch as they left them for ever, after having given them the most precious of all boons, liberty!

Nevertheless, it was a joyous day for the Brothers of Mercy when those whom they had ransomed embarked for Marseilles, and there in the church offered solemn thanks to Heaven for their deliverance.

Little children clothed in white, holding green palms in their hands, accompanied them, and their tender hands removed the chains from the captives, a touching symbol of the mission of the Brothers of Mercy.

When Father Elzear appeared on the deck of the galley, all the chained slaves turned to him with a simultaneous movement.

At every step he took, the captives, Moor, Turk, or Christian, leaning beyond their benches, tried to seize his hands and carry them to their lips.

Although Father Elzear was accustomed to receive these evidences of respect and affection, he was never able to prevent tears coming to his eyes.

Never, perhaps, had his pity been more excited than to-day.

The weather was cold and gloomy, the horizon charged with tempest, the environage wild and solitary, and these poor creatures, the greater number of them accustomed to the hot sun of the Orient, were there half naked, shivering with cold, and chained perhaps for life to their benches.

Although the compassion of Father Elzear was equally divided among all, he could not help bestowing most pity upon those whose lots seemed to him the most desperate.

Since his departure from Malta, where he had joined his brother with ten captives that he had carried back to La Ciotat, he had observed a Moorish slave about forty years old, whose countenance betrayed an incurable sorrow.

No man of the crew fulfilled his painful task with more courage or more resignation. But as soon as the hour of rest arrived, the Moor crossed his vigorous arms, bowed his head on his breast, and thus passed the hours in which his comrades tried to forget their captivity, in gloomy silence.

The captain of the mast on the galley, knowing the interest that this gentle and peaceable captive inspired in Father Elzear, approached the priest, and told him the Moor was about to suffer the usual punishment for insubordination.

That morning, this Moor, plunged in his profound and habitual reverie, had not responded to the commands of the overseer.

The officer reprimanded him sharply, and still the Moor sat in gloomy silence.

Incensed by this indifference, which he construed into an insult or a refusal to submit to service, the overseer struck him over the shoulders with the cowhide.

The Moor jumped up, uttered a savage roar, and threw himself on the overseer to the full length of his chain, throwing him down in the violence of his rage, and, but for several sailors and soldiers, would have strangled him.

The captive who raised his hand against one of the officers of the galley was subjected to terrible punishment.

He was to be stretched half naked on one of the largest cannon in the rambade, called the chase-gun, and two men, armed with sharp thongs, were to lash him until he lost consciousness.

This sentence had been pronounced that morning on the Moor by the commander. Knowing the inflexible character of his brother, Elzear did not think of asking mercy for the offender; he only desired to soften the cruelty of the sentence by informing the captive himself.

The Moor had but recently embarked, and was utterly ignorant of the fate which awaited him. Father Elzear feared that, by informing him suddenly or sternly of the punishment he was about to undergo, the poor captive might give way to another outburst of fury, and thus incur additional suffering. Approaching him, he found him in that condition of torpor and melancholy into which he always sank when not in the exercise of his painful tasks. He wore, like the other galley-slaves, a mantle of gray stuff with a hood, and linen drawers; an iron band encircled one of his naked legs, and the chain by which he was fastened reached the length of an iron bar from the side of the bench. His hood, drawn over the fez or red wool cap which he wore, threw a transparent shade over his sunburnt face; he held his arms crossed over his breast; his fixed and open eyes seemed to look without seeing; his features were delicate and regular, and his whole exterior announced nothing except a man habituated to fatigue and hard labour.

Father Elzear, as did the greater number of the Brothers of Mercy, spoke Arabic fluently. He approached the captive gently, and, touching him lightly on the arm, woke him from his reverie.

As he recognised Father Elzear, who had always had for him a consoling word, the Moor smiled sadly, took the hand of the priest, and pressed it to his lips.

“My brother is always absorbed in his sorrows?” said Father Elzear, seating himself on the extremity of the bench, and taking the two hands of the slave in his own trembling, venerable hands.

“My wife and my child are far away,” replied the Moor, sadly; “they do not know that I am a captive; they are waiting for me.”

“My dear son must not lose all hope, all courage. God protects those who suffer with resignation. He loves those who love their own; my brother will see his wife and child again.”

The Moor shook his head, then, with a sadly expressive manner, he lifted his right hand and pointed to the sky.

Father Elzear comprehended the mute gesture, and said:

“No, it is not up there that my brother will see again those whom he longs for. It will be here,—on the earth.”

“I shall die too soon, father, so far from my wife and child; I shall not live to see them again.”

“We ought never to despair of the divine mercy, my brother. Many poor slaves have said, like you, ‘I shall never see my loved ones again,’ yet at this moment they are with their own, peaceful and happy. Often the galleys of religion exchange their captives; why, my brother, should you not be included some day in these exchanges?”

“Some day! Perhaps! That is my only hope,” said the Moor, despondently.

“Poor, unhappy man! then why will you say ‘never’?”

“My father is right. Never,—never—oh, that would be too horrible! Yes,—perhaps,—some day!”

And a pathetic smile played upon the lips of the Moor.

Father Elzear hesitated to make the fatal confidence. Yet the hour was approaching and he resolved to speak.

“My brother has won the confidence of all by his gentleness and courage; why, then, this morning did he—”

Father Elzear could not continue.

The Moor looked at him, astonished.

“Why, this morning, instead of obeying the overseer’s orders, did my brother strike him?”

“I struck him, father, because he struck me without cause.”

“Alas! no doubt you were, as a little while ago, absorbed in your sad reflections; they prevented your hearing the overseer’s orders.”

“Did he give me orders?” asked the Moor, with a startled air.

“Twice, my brother; he even reprimanded you for not performing them. Taking your silence for an insult, he then struck you.”

“It must be as you say, father. I repent having struck the overseer. I did not hear him. In dreaming of the past, I forgot the present. I saw again my little home in Gigeri; my little Acoub came to meet me. I was listening to his voice, and, raising my eyes, I saw his mother opening the blinds of our balcony.”

Then, with these words, returning to his former position, the Moor bowed his head in heaviness and despondency, and two tears flowed down his bronzed cheeks, as he said, with a heartrending expression: “And then, nothing more,—nothing more.”

At the aspect of this man, already so unhappy, the good brother shuddered at the thought of what he must tell him; he was on the point of giving up the painful mission, but he took courage, and said;

“I am very sorry that my brother was so absorbed this morning, because I know he did not mean to strike the overseer. But, alas, discipline demands that he must be punished for it.”

“Pardon me, father, that I was not able to repress my first movement. Since my captivity, it was the first happy dream I have had. The blows of the whip tore me away from this cherished dream. I was furious, not with pain, but with sorrow. Besides, what matters it? I am a slave here; I will endure the punishment.”

“But this punishment is cruel, my poor, unfortunate brother,—it is so cruel that I will not leave you during its execution; it is so cruel that I will be near you, and I will pray for you, and my loving hands at least shall clasp your hands contracted in agony.”

The Moor looked at Father Elzear intently, then said, with an accent of resignation, almost of indifference:

“Shall I have, then, to suffer so much?”

The priest, without replying to him, pressed his hands more strongly in his own, and fixed his tearful eyes on his face.

“Yet I did my duty as a slave, the best that I could possibly do. But what matters it!” said the Moor, sighing; “God will bless you, father, for not forsaking me. And when am I to suffer?”

“To-day—presently—”

“What must I do, good old father? Bear it, and bless God that he has sent you to me in this fatal moment.”

“Poor creature!” cried Father Elzear, profoundly moved by this resignation, “you do not know, alas, what you will have to suffer!”

And, with a trembling voice, the priest explained to him in a few words the nature of the suffering he was to endure.

The Moor shuddered a little, and said: “At least, my wife and child will know nothing of it.”

At this moment the captain of the mast and four soldiers, wearing cassocks of black felt with white crosses, approached the bench to which the Moor was chained.

“Hugues,” said Father Elzear to the captain, “suspend the execution, I pray you, until I have spoken with

my brother.”

The discipline established on the galley was so severe, so absolute, that the gunner looked at the priest with an undecided air, but, thanks to the respect that Father Elzear inspired, he did not dare refuse his request.

The father hastened to the chamber of the commander, in order to intercede with him for the unhappy Moor.

After having crossed the narrow passage which conducted to his brother’s apartment, he saw the key of the door enveloped in crape.

This sign, always respected, announced that the commander forbade absolutely and to all the entrance to his chamber.

Nevertheless, the Moor inspired such interest that Father Elzear, although well-nigh convinced of the futility of his effort, desired to make one last trial.

He entered the commander’s chamber.

CHAPTER XXIII. THE COMMANDER

The spectacle which met the eyes of Father Elzear was both frightful and solemn.

The chamber, which was very small, and lighted only by two narrow windows, was hung with black.

A coffin of white wood, filled with ashes, and fastened to the floor by screws, served as a bed for Commander Pierre des Anbiez.

Above this funereal bed was suspended the portrait of a young man wearing a cuirass, and leaning on a helmet. An aquiline nose, a delicate and gracefully chiselled mouth, and large, sea-green eyes gave to this face an expression which was, at the same time, proud and benevolent.

Below the frame, on a tablet, was written distinctly the date December 25,1613; a black curtain hanging near the picture could be drawn over it at pleasure.

Weapons of war, attached to a rack, constituted the sole ornaments of this gruesome habitation.

Pierre des Anbiez had not observed the entrance of his brother. On his knees before his praying-desk, the commander was half covered with a coarse haircloth, which he wore night and day; his shoulders were bare. By the drops of coagulated blood, and by the furrows which veined his flesh, it could be seen that he had just inflicted upon himself a bloody discipline. His bowed head rested on his two hands, and now and then convulsive shudders shook his lacerated shoulders, as if his breast heaved under the agony of suppressed sobs. The praying-desk, where he was kneeling, was placed below the two small windows, which admitted an occasional and doubtful light into this chamber.

In the midst of this dim light the pale face and long white vestments of Father Elzear contrasted strangely with the wainscoting hung with black; he looked like a spectre. He stood there as if petrified; he had never believed his brother capable of such mortifications, and, lifting his hands to Heaven, he uttered a profound sigh.

The commander started. He turned around quickly, and, seeing in the shadow the immovable figure of Father Elzear, cried, in terror:

“Are you a spirit? Do you come to ask account of the blood I have shed?” His countenance was frightful. Never remorse, never despair, never terror impressed its seal more terribly upon the brow of guilt!

His eyes, red with weeping, were fixed and haggard; his gray, closely shaven hair seemed to bristle upon his brow; his bluish lips trembled with fear, and his scraggy, muscular arms were extended before him as if they entreated a supernatural vision.

“My brother! my brother!” exclaimed Elzear, throwing himself upon the commander. “My brother, it is I; may God be with you!”

Pierre des Anbiez stared at the good brother as if he did not recognise him; then, sinking down before his praying-desk, he let his head fall on his breast, and cried, in a hollow voice:

“The Lord is never with a murderer, and yet,” added he, raising his head half-way and looking at the portrait in terror, “and yet, to expiate my crime, I have placed the face of my victim always under my eyes! There, on my bed of ashes, where I seek a repose which flies from me, at every hour of the day, at every hour of the night, I behold the unrelenting face of him who says to me unceasingly, ‘Murderer! Murderer! You have shed my blood! Be accursed!’”

“My brother, oh, my brother, come back to your senses,” whispered the father. He feared the voice of the commander might be heard outside.

Without replying to his brother, the commander withdrew himself from his arms, rose to the full height of his tall stature, and approached the portrait.

“For twenty years there has not passed a day in which I have not wept my crime! For twenty years have I not tried to expiate this murder by the most cruel austerities? What more do you wish, infernal memory? What more do you ask? You, also,—you, my victim, have you not shed blood,—the blood of my accomplice? But alas! alas! this blood, you could shed it, you,—vengeance gave you the right, while I am the infamous assassin! Oh, yes, vengeance is just! Strike, strike, then, without pity! Soon the hand of God will strike me eternally!”

Overcome by emotion, the commander, almost deprived of consciousness, again fell on his knees, half recumbent upon the coffin which served him as bed.

Father Elzear had never discovered his brother's secret. He knew him to be a prey to profound melancholy, but was ignorant of the cause, and now was frightened and distressed at the dreadful confidence betrayed in a moment of involuntary excitement.

That Pierre des Anbiez, a man of iron character, of invincible courage, should fall into such remorseful melancholy and weakness and despair, argued a cause that was terrible indeed!

The intrepidity of the commander was proverbial; in the midst of the most frightful perils, his cool daring had been the wonder of all who beheld it. His gloomy impassibility had never forsaken him before, even amid the awful combats a seaman is compelled to wage with the elements. His courage approached ferocity. Once engaged in battle, once in the thick of the fight, he never gave quarter to the pirates. But this fever of massacre ceased when the battle-cries of the combatants and the sight of the blood excited him no longer. Then he became calm and humane, although pitiless toward the least fault of discipline. He had sustained the most brilliant engagements with Barbary pirates. His black galley was tie terror as well as the constant aim of attack among the pirates, but, thanks to the superiority of equipment, *Our Lady of Seven Sorrows* had never been captured, and her defeats had cost the enemy dear.

Father Elzear, seated on the edge of the coffin, sustained the head of his brother on his knees. The commander, as pale as a ghost, lay unconscious, his brow wet with a cold sweat At last he regained his consciousness, and looked around him with a sad and astonished air; then, throwing a glance upon his arms and naked shoulders, scarcely covered by the haircloth, he asked the priest, abruptly:

"How came you here, Elzear?"

"Although there was crape on your door, Pierre, I thought I could enter. The matter which brought me to you is a very important one."

An expression of keen dissatisfaction was depicted on the commander's countenance, as he cried:

"And I have been talking, no doubt?"

"The Lord has been moved to pity by your words, but I have not understood them, my brother. Besides, your mind was distracted; you were under the domination of some fatal illusion."

Pierre smiled bitterly. "Yes, it was an illusion,—a dream," said he. "You know, I am sometimes overcome by dreadful imaginations, and become delirious,—that is why I wish to be alone in these periods of madness. Believe me, Elzear, then the presence of any human being is intolerable to me, for I fear even you."

As he said these words, the commander entered a closet adjoining his chamber, and soon came out dressed in a long robe of black woollen cloth, on which was quartered the white cross of his order.

The figure of Pierre des Anbiez was tall, erect, and robust. His thin, nervous limbs showed, in spite of age, an uncommon vigour. His features were severe and warlike; thick, black eyebrows shaded his deep-set, hollow, burning eyes, which seemed always to glow with the sombre fire of a fever; a deep scar divided his brow, and furrowed his cheek until it was lost in his gray, short, and bushy beard.

Returning to his chamber, he walked back and forth, his hands crossed behind his back, without saying a word to his brother.

Finally he paused and extended to the priest his hand, which had been painfully torn by a gunshot, and said:

"The sign which I had attached to my door ought to have assured my solitude. From the first officer to the last soldier on my galley, no one dares enter here after seeing that sign. I thought myself alone, as much alone as in the depth of a cloister, or the most hidden cell of the great penitentiary of our order. So, my brother, although you have seen, although you have heard, permit me to ask you never to say a word on this subject. Let what has passed here be forgotten,—as sacred as a confession made by a dying man under the seal of the confessional."

"It shall be as you desire, Pierre," replied Father Elzear, sadly. "I think of it only with pain that I cannot help you in the sorrows which have burdened you so long."

"Reassure yourself. It is not given to the power of man to console me," replied the commander. Then, as if he feared to wound the affection of his brother, he added:

"Yet your fraternal friendship and that of Raimond Digiare very dear to me; but, alas, although the dews of May and the sweet rains of June may fall in the sea, they can never sweeten the bitterness of its deep waters. But what did you come to ask me?"

"Pardon for a poor Moor condemned this morning to the chase-gun."

"That sentence has been executed, and it could not be, my brother, that I should ever grant you this pardon." "Thank God, the sentence has not been executed; there is still some hope left me, Pierre."

"The hour-glass stands at two. I gave order to the captain of the mast to tie the Moor to the chase-gun at one o'clock; the slave ought to be now in the hands of the surgeon and chaplain,—may God save the soul of this pagan, if his body has not been able to endure the punishment."

"At my earnest request, the captain of the mast suspended the execution, my brother."

"You cannot say what is not true, Elzear, but this moment you have made a fatal gift to the captain of the mast."

"Pierre, remember that I alone am responsible. Pardon, I pray—"

"Holy Cross!" cried the commander, impetuously, "for the first time since I have commanded this galley, shall I pardon, in the same day, two of the gravest faults that can be committed: the revolt of a slave against a subordinate officer, and the want of discipline in the subordinate officer toward his chief? No, no, that is impossible!" The commander took a whistle from his belt and blew a shrill note through the little silver tube.

A page clothed in black appeared at the door.

"The captain of the mast!" said the commander, abruptly. The page went out.

"Ah, my brother, will you be altogether without pity?" cried Elzear, in a tone of sad reproach.

"Without pity?" and the commander smiled bitterly, "yes, without pity for the faults of others, as for my own

faults.”

The priest, remembering the terrible chastisement that his brother had just inflicted upon himself, realised that such a man must be inexorable in the observance of discipline, and bowed his head, renouncing all hope.

The captain of the mast entered.

“You will remain eight nights in irons on the rambade,” said the commander.

The sailor bowed respectfully, without uttering a word.

“Let the chaplain and surgeon be informed that the Moor is to be chastised on the chase-gun.”

The captain of the mast bowed more profoundly still and disappeared.

“I, at least, will not abandon this poor wretch!” cried Father Elzear, rising hurriedly in order to accompany him.

The good brother went out, and Pierre des Anbiez resumed his slow promenade in his chamber.

From time to time his eyes were attracted, in spite of himself, by the fatal portrait of the man for whose murder he suffered such remorse.

Then his steps became irregular and his face became sad and gloomy again.

For the first time perhaps in many years, he felt a thrill of pain at the thought of the cruel suffering the Moor was about to undergo.

This punishment was just and deserved, but he remembered that the unhappy captive had been, up to that time, gentle, submissive, and industrious. Yet such was the inflexibility of his character that he reproached himself for this involuntary pity, as a culpable weakness.

Finally the solemn flourishes of the trumpets of the galley announced that the execution was finished. He heard the slow and regular step of the soldiers and sailors, who were breaking ranks after having assisted at the punishment.

Soon Father Elzear entered, pale, dismayed, his eyes bathed in tears, and his cassock stained with blood.

“Ah, my brother! my brother! if you assisted at these executions, never in your life could you have the heart to order them.”

“And the Moor?” asked the commander, without replying otherwise to his brother.

“I held his poor hands in mine; he endured the first blows with heroic resignation, closing his eyes to arrest the tears, and saying nothing but, ‘My good father, do not abandon me’. But when the pain became intolerable, when the blood began to gush out under the thongs, the unhappy man seemed to concentrate all his powers upon one thought, which might give him courage to endure this martyrdom. His face took on an expression of painful ecstasy; then he seemed to conquer pain, even to defy it, and cried, with an accent which came from the very depths of his paternal heart, ‘My son! my son! Acoub, my beloved child!’”

As he told of the punishment and last words of the Moor, Father Elzear could no longer restrain his tears; he wept as he continued:

“Ah, Pierre, if you had heard him—if you only knew with what passionate feeling he uttered those words, ‘My son! my beloved child,’ you would have had pity on this poor father, whom they have carried off in a state of unconsciousness.”

What was the astonishment of Father Elzear, when he saw the commander, overwhelmed with emotion, hide his head in his hands and cry, sobbing convulsively:

“A son! a son! I, too, have a son!”

CHAPTER XXIV. THE POLACRE

The day after the execution of the sentence on the Moor, the north wind was blowing with increasing violence.

The waves hurled themselves with fury against the girdle of rocks through which opened the narrow passage which led into the road of Tolari.

About eleven o’clock in the morning, Captain Simon, mounted on the platform of the rambade, was talking with Captain Hugues about the punishment which occurred the day before, and of the courage of the Moor.

Suddenly they saw a polacre, her sails almost torn away, flying before the tempest with the rapidity of an arrow, and about to enter the dangerous pass of which we have spoken.

Sometimes the frail vessel, rising on the crest of the towering waves, would show the edge of her keel running with foam like the breast of a race-horse.

Again, sinking in the hollow of the waves, she would plunge with such violence that her stem would be almost perpendicular.

Soon they could distinguish on the deluged deck two men enveloped in brown mantles with hoods, who were employing every possible effort to hold the whip-staff of the rudder.

Five other sailors, squatting at the prow, or holding on to the rigging, awaited the moment to aid in the manoeuvre.

So, by turns carried to the top of the waves and plunged in their depths, the polacre was hastening with frightful speed to tie narrow entrance of the channel, where the waves were dashing with fury.

“By St Elmo!” cried Captain Simon, “there’s a ship gone to destruction!”

“She is lost,” replied Hugues, coldly; “in a few minutes her rigging and hull will be nothing but a wreck, and her sailors will be corpses. May the Lord save the souls of our brothers!”

“Why did he dare venture in this passage at such a time?” said the gunner.

“If a man is to be shipwrecked it is better to perish with a feeble hope. When a man hopes, he prays, and dies a Christian; when he despairs, he blasphemes, and dies a pagan.

“Look, look, Simon, there is the little boat going into the breakers; it is all up with her!”

At that moment the commander, who had been informed of the approach of the vessel and of her desperate condition, appeared on deck with all the chevaliers, officers, and others who manned the galley.

After carefully examining the polacre and the breakers, Pierre des Anbiez called out, in a loud and solemn voice:

“Let the two long-boats be ready and equipped to gather the corpses on the beach: no human power can save this unfortunate ship. Only God can help her.” While the overseers superintended the execution of this order, the commander, turning to the chaplain, said:

“My brother, let us say the prayers for the dying, for these unfortunate men. Brothers, on your knees. Let the crew uncover.”

It was a grand and imposing spectacle.

All the chevaliers, clothed in black, were kneeling bareheaded on the deck; the bell for prayer dolefully tolled a funeral knell amid the wild shrieks of the tempest.

The slaves were also on their knees and uncovered.

In the rear, in the middle of a group of chevaliers dressed in black, Father Elzear in his white cassock could be distinguished.

Prayers for the dying were said with as much solemnity as if they were being recited in a church on land, or in a cloister.

It was not a mere form; these monk-soldiers were sad and contemplative. As sailors they saw a vessel without hope; as Christians they prayed for the souls of their brothers. In fact the polacre seemed in danger of going down every moment. The furious waves, rushing into the channel on their way to the sea, broke the current and whirled and tossed in every direction. Her sails, by which she might have made steady headway, were blown under the enormous rocks; her rudder was useless, and she was at the mercy of the wind and waters which rushed back and forth in unabating rage.

The prayers and chants continued without cessation.

Above all the other voices could be heard the manly, sonorous voice of the commander. The slaves on their knees looked in sullen apathy on this desperate struggle of man against the elements.

Suddenly, by an unhoped-for chance, either because the polacre was of such perfect construction, or because she responded finally to the action of her rudder, or because the little triangular sail that she hoisted caught some current of the upper air, the gallant little vessel steadied herself, resumed her headway, and cleared the dangerous passage with the rapidity and lightness of a sea-gull.

A few minutes after she was out of danger, calmly sailing the waters of the road.

This manoeuvre was so unforeseen, so wonderful, and so well executed, that for a moment astonishment suspended the prayers of the chevaliers.

The commander, amazed, said to the officers, after a few moments of breathless silence:

“My brothers, let us thank the Lord for having heard our prayers, and let us sing a song of thanksgiving.”

While the galley resounded with this pious and solemn invocation, the polacre, *The Holy Terror to the Moors*, for it was she, was beating about in the road with very little sail, in order to approach the black galley.

She was but a little distance from her when a cannon-shot, sent from the rambade of *Our Lady of Seven Sorrows*, signalled her to hoist her flag and lie to.

A second cannon-shot ordered her to send her captain on board the black galley. Whatever interest this vessel inspired in the commander when she was in danger, her perils past, she must conform to the established rules for visiting ships.

Soon the polacre lay to, and her little boat, equipped with two rowers and steered by a third sailor, approached the stem of the galley.

The man who was at the helm left the whip-staff, slowly climbed the stairs of the first seat of rowers, and stood before the commander and his chevaliers, who had gathered together in the rear of the galley. The sailor in question was no other than our old acquaintance, the worthy Luquin Trinquetaille. His hooded mantle, his boots, and his breeches of coarse wool were running with water.

As he set foot on the deck of the galley he respectfully allowed his hood to fall back on his shoulders, and it could be easily seen that his good, honest face was still excited by the terrible experience through which he had just passed.

The commander, in his visits to Maison-Forte, had often seen Luquin, and was agreeably surprised to recognise a man who could give him some news of his brother, Raimond V.

“The Lord has rescued your ship from a great peril,” said the commander to him. “We have already prayed for your soul, and the souls of your companions.‘’

“May all of you be blessed, M. Commander; we had need of it, for our situation was awful; never since I have been at sea did I ever take part in such a frolic.”

The commander replied to the captain, sternly, “The trials that the Lord sends us are not frolics. How is my brother Raimond?”

“Monseigneur is well,” replied Trinquetaille, a little ashamed of having been reproved by the commander. “I left him in good health, day before yesterday, when I left Maison-Forte.”

“And how is Mlle, des Anbiez?” asked Father Elzear, who had come near.

“Mlle, des Anbiez is very well, father,” replied Luquin.

“Where did you sail from, and where are you going?” asked the commander.

“M. Commander, yesterday I came out of La Ciotat, with three fishing-boats, all armed, in order to cruise two or three leagues from the coasts to discover the pirates.”

“The pirates?”

“Yes, M. Commander. A pirate chebec appeared three days ago; Master Peyrou discovered it. All the coast is alarmed; they expect a descent from the pirates, and they are right, because a tartan from Nice, that I met before this squall, told me that on the east of Corsica had been seen three vessels, and one of them is the *Red Galleon* of Pog-Reis, the renegade.”

“Pog-Reis!” exclaimed the commander.

“Pog-Reis!” repeated the chevaliers, who surrounded the commander.

“Pog-Reis!” again said Pierre des Anbiez, with an expression of savage satisfaction, as if at last he was about to meet an implacable enemy he had long sought, but who, by some fatality, had always escaped him.

“What were you going to do at Tolari?” asked the commander of Trinquetaille.

“To speak truly, M. Commander, I was not going for pleasure. Surprised by the squall yesterday, I was beating about as I could, but the weather became so violent, and thinking my polacre doomed, I made a vow to Our Lady of Protection, and risked entering the pass, that I was acquainted with, for I have anchored there many a time, coming from the coasts of Sardinia.”

“The Lord grant that this north wind may stop blowing!” said the commander; then, addressing his expert pilot, he said, “What do you think of the weather, pilot?”

“M. Commander, if the wind increases until sunset, there is a chance that it will cease at the rising of the moon.”

“If that is so, and you can put out to-night without danger,” said the commander to Trinquetaille, “go to La Ciotat and inform my brother of my arrival.”

“And that will be a great joy to Maison-Forte, M. commander, although your arrival there may be useless, for a vessel from Marseilles, that I met, told me that soldiers had been sent to La Ciotat with the captain of the company of the guards attending the Marshal of Vitry. They said that these troops were to be sent to Maison-Forte, in consequence of the affair of the recorder Isnard.”

“And what is that?” asked the commander of Luquin.

The captain then told how Raimond V., instead of submitting to the orders of the Governor of Provence, had had his emissary chased by bulls.

As he listened to the narration of this imprudent pleasantry on the part of Raimond V., the commander and Father Elzear looked at each other sadly, as if they deplored the foolish and rash conduct of their brother.

“Go below to the refectory, and the head waiter will give you something to warm and strengthen you,” said the commander to Luquin.

The captain obeyed this order with gratitude, and returned to the prow, followed by a few curious sailors, anxious to learn all the news of Provence.

The commander entered his chamber with his brother, and said to him:

“As soon as the weather will permit, we will depart for Maison-Forte. I fear much that Raimond may be the victim of his rashness concerning the creatures of the cardinal. The Lord grant that I may meet Pog-Reis, and that I may be able to prevent the evil which he is no doubt preparing for this shore, which is so defenceless, and for the unfortunate city of La Ciotat.”

CHAPTER XXV. THE RED GALLEON AND THE SYBARITE

About the same time that *The Holy Terror to the Moors* was making her marvellous entrance into the road of Tolari, and the sad and black galley of Malta was standing toward her, three vessels of very different character were anchored in Port Mage, quite a good road situated on the northeast of the island of Port-Cros, one of the smallest of the Hyères islands.

Port-Cros, about six or seven leagues from La Ciotat, was at this time of year thickly populated, inasmuch as the season for tunnies and sardines brought many fishermen there who made it a temporary home.

Two galleys and a chebec were at anchor in the bay of which we speak. The tempest had not diminished in violence, but the waters of Port Mage, protected by the high lands on the northwest side, were very tranquil, and reflected in their calm azure the brilliant colours which shone from the *Red Galleon* of Pog-Reis and the green galley of Trimalcyon. The chebec, commanded by Erebus, had nothing remarkable in its exterior.

The fears of the watchman and the suspicions of Reine were only too well founded. The three unknown men of the gorges of Ollioules were no other than pirate captains, not natives of Barbary, but renegades.

During one of their cruises, they got possession of a Holland vessel, and found on board a Muscovite lord, his son, and preceptor. After having sold them as slaves in Algiers, they took their papers and had the audacity to disembark at Cette, and, coming to Marseilles by land, to present themselves to the Marshal of Vitry under borrowed names. The marshal, deceived by the very boldness of this artifice, received them hospitably.

After a sojourn quite profitably employed in making inquiries concerning the departures and arrivals of vessels of commerce, the three corsairs returned to Cette, and at that point were not distant from the coast of Provence.

They contemplated an important attack on this seashore, and had been keeping themselves sometimes in

one of the numerous bays of the island of Corsica, and sometimes in one of the little deserted harbours on the coasts of France or of Savoy; for, at this period, the shores were so badly guarded that pirates risked such positions without fear, and too often without danger.

There was as much difference in the aspect of the two pirate galleys of which we speak, and that of the commander, as there could be between a solemnly attired nun and a silly Bohemian girl glittering in satin and spangles. One was as silent and somber as the others were gay and blustering.

We prefer to conduct the reader on board the *Sybarite*, a galley of twenty-six oars commanded by Trimalcyon, and anchored a few cable lengths from the *Red Galleon* of Pog-Reis.

The construction of the pirate galleys resembled very much that of the galleys of Malta; but the ornamentation and splendour of the furniture and accommodation inside differed greatly from them.

The crew was composed of slaves, whether Christians, negroes, or even Turks, as the renegades took little pains as to the manner of recruiting the service of their vessels.

Although they were chained to their benches, as were the crews on the galleys of Malta, the slaves of the *Sybarite* seemed to partake of the joyous atmosphere which surrounded them.

Instead of having a ferocious, morose, or dejected air, their countenances expressed a vulgar indifference or a cynical insolence. They appeared robust and capable of enduring the severest fatigue, but the fear inspired by their undisciplined character could be seen in the heroic appointments of repression which surrounded them.

Two pieces of ordnance and several blunderbusses on pivot, constantly turned on the crew, were disposed in such a manner that they could sweep the galley from one end to the other.

The spahis, or select soldiers charged with superintending the crew, always wore long pistols in their belts, and carried a battle-axe in their hands.

The uniform of these spahis consisted of red mantles, gaiters of embroidered morocco, and a coat of mail underneath a jacket which was trimmed with yellow lace.

Their scarlet fez was surmounted by a turban of coarse white muslin, loosely rolled in the antique style which, it was said, ran back to the time of the soldiers of Hai-Keddin-Barberousse.

The costume of the crew was not uniform, as plunder and pillage were the principal means by which worn-out garments were replaced. Some of them wore breeches and doublets upon which could be seen the marks of the gold or silver lace which had once adorned them, and which had been removed for the profit of the *reis* or the captain. Others were clothed in the coats of soldiers, and some even wore the black felt garments taken from the soldiers of religion.

Notwithstanding the heterogeneous appearance of the crew, the galley of Trimalcyon-Reis was kept with scrupulous cleanliness. Its sea-green colour, relieved with fillets of purple, was, at the stern, richly set off in gold, and, in fact, a red flag, on which was embroidered in white the two-edged scimitar, called Zulfekar, was the only sign by which the *Sybarite* could be recognised as a pirate vessel.

Not far distant lay at anchor the *Red Galleon* of Pog-Reis, which had a severer and more warlike appearance, and near the entrance of the bay the *Tsekedery*, or light vessel commanded by Erebus, carried the same standard.

The coasts of France were then, as we have said, in such a deplorable state of defence that these three vessels had been able, without the slightest obstacle, to put into port, in order to escape the storm which raged the day before.

If the exterior of the *Sybarite* was splendid, her interior offered all the refinements of the most elaborate luxury, in which there was a happy combination of the customs of the West and the East.

A dwarf negro, fantastically attired, had just struck three resounding blows on a Chinese gong placed at the stem near the helm. At this signal a band of musical instruments performed some martial airs. It was the dinner-hour of Trimalcyon, and the chamber of the stem had been converted temporarily into a dining-room.

The partitions were hidden under rich tapestries of poppy-coloured Venetian brocatelle with handsome designs in green and gold.

Pog and Trimalcyon were seated at table.

Trimalcyon had the same characteristic corpulence, the same bright complexion, shrewd eye, joyous countenance, and red, sensual lips. His long, soft cloak of blue velvet disclosed, in opening, a buff-skin of extreme elasticity, covered over with a steel net so finely wrought that it was as flexible as the thinnest material. This habit of wearing continually a defensive armour proved in what confident security the captain of the *Sybarite* was accustomed to live.

Pog-Reis, sitting opposite his companion, had also the same haughty, sarcastic manner. He wore an Arabian yellek of black velvet embroidered with black silk, on which hung at full length his heavy red beard; his green and red cap of the Albanian fashion covered half his white forehead, which was deeply furrowed with wrinkles.

Two female slaves of great beauty, one a mulattress, the other a Circassian, dressed in light, thin gowns of Smyrna material, performed, with the aid of the dwarf negro, the table service of Trimalcyon.

On revolving shelves were displayed magnificent pieces of plate, unmatched and incomplete it is true, but of the most beautiful workmanship, some of silver, some of gilt, and others of gold set with precious stones. In the midst of this plate, the fruit of robbery and murder, were placed, in sacrilegious derision, sacred vessels, carried away either from the churches on the seashore or from Christian ships.

A very penetrating and very sweet perfume burned in a censer hanging from one of the rafters of the ceiling. Seated on a luxurious divan, the captain of the *Sybarite* said to his guest:

“Excuse this poor hospitality, my comrade. I would prefer to replace these poor girls with Egyptian slaves, who, equipped with ewers of Corinthian metal, would sprinkle, as they sang, rose-scented snow-water on our hands.”

“You do not lack vases and ewers, Trimalcyon,” said Pog, throwing a significant glance at the sideboard.

“Ah, well, yes, there are vases of gold and silver, but what is that compared to the Corinthian metal of which antiquity speaks: a metal made of a mixture of gold, silver, and bronze, and so marvellously wrought that a large ewer and basin only weighed one pound? By Sardanapalus! comrade, some day I must make a descent on Messina. They say that the viceroy possesses several antique statuettes of that precious metal. But take some of this partridge pudding spiced with wild aniseed; I had it served on its silver gridiron burning hot. Or do you prefer these imitations of pea-fowl eggs? You will find there, instead of the yellow, a very fat tit-lark, well yellowed, and, instead of the white, a thick sauce of cooked cream.”

“Your fine vocabulary of gormandising ought to win for you the esteem of your cook. You appear to me to be made, both of you, for the purpose of understanding each other,” said Pog, eating with disdainful indifference the delicate dishes served by his host.

“My cook,” replied Trimalcyon, “understands me well enough, in fact, although sometimes he has his discouragements; he regrets France, from which country I carried him off unawares. I have tried to console him, for a long time, with everything,—silver, money, attention,—nothing succeeds however, so I have finished where I ought to have begun, with a severe bastinado, and am quite well satisfied with it, and he is too, I suppose, since he cooks wonderfully, as you see. Give us something to drink, Orangine!” called Trimalcyon to the mulattress, who poured out a glorious glass of Bordeaux wine. “What is that wine, Crow-provender?” asked he of the negro dwarf, holding his glass up to his eyes to judge its colour.

“My lord, it was taken, in the month of June, from a Bordeaux brigantine on its way to Genoa.”

“H’m, h’m,” said Trimalcyon, tasting it, “it is good, very good, but there is the inconvenience of supplying ourselves as we do, friend Pog: we never have the same quality, so if we get accustomed to one kind of wine, we meet with cruel disappointments. Ah! our trade is not a bed of roses. But you do not drink! Fill Seigneur Fog’s glass, Swan-skin,” said Trimalcyon, to the white Circassian, pointing to his guest’s cup.

Pog, as a refusal, placed his finger over his glass.

“At least, let us drink to the success of our descent upon La Ciotat, comrade.”

Pog replied to this new invitation by a movement of contemptuous impatience.

“As you please, comrade,” said Trimalcyon, without the slightest indication of being offended by the refusal and haughty manner of his guest, “it is just as well not to trust myself to your invocations; the devil knows your voice, and he always thinks you are calling him. But you are wrong to disdain that ham, it is from Westphalia, I think,—is it not, you scoundrel?”

“Yes, my lord,” said the dwarf, “it came from that Dutch fly-boat, arrested as it sailed out of the strait of Sardinia. It was destined for the Viceroy of Naples.” At that moment the flourishes of the musicians ceased; a noise, at first quite indistinct, but increasing by degrees, soon became loud and threatening. The clanking of chains and complaints of the galley-slaves could be heard, and, finally, rising above the tumult, the voices of the spahis and the cracking of the coxswain’s whip.

Trimalcyon seemed so accustomed to these cries, that he continued to drink a glass of wine that he was carrying to his lips, and carelessly remarked, as he set his glass on the table:

“There are some dogs that want to bite; fortunately their chains are good and strong. Crow-provender, go and see why the musicians have stopped playing. I will have them given twenty blows of the cowhide if they stop again, instead of blowing their trumpets. I am too good. I love the arts too much. Instead of selling these do-nothings in Algiers, I have kept them to make music, and that is the way they behave! Ah! if they were not too feeble for the crew, they should find out what it is to handle the oar.”

“They are certainly too weak for that, my lord,” said the negro dwarf; “the comedians that you captured with them on that galley from Barcelona are still at the house of Jousouf, who bought them. He cannot get two pieces of gold for a single one of the singing, blowing cattle.”

Pog-Reis seemed thoughtful and oblivious of what was passing around him, although the murmurs of dissatisfaction increased to such violence that Trimalcyon said to the dwarf:

“Before you go out, place here by me, on the divan, my pistols and a stock of arms. Well, now go and see what is the matter. If it is anything serious, let Mello come and tell me. At the same time, inform those blowers of trumpets that I will make them swallow trumpets and buccinæ if they stop playing a moment.”

“My lord, they say they have not wind enough to play two hours together.”

“Ah, they lack wind, do they! Ah, well, tell them that if they give me that reason again I will have their stomachs opened, and by means of a blacksmith’s bellows put them in such a condition that they will not lack wind.”

At this coarse and brutal pleasantry, Orangine and Swan-skin looked at each other in astonishment.

“You can tell them besides,” added Trimalcyon, “that as they are not worth one piece of gold in the slave market, and as it costs me more to keep them than they are worth, I shall think nothing of gratifying my caprice on them.”

The negro went out.

“What I like in you,” said Pog, slowly, as he awakened from his reverie, “is that you are a stranger to every sentiment, I will not say of virtue, but of humanity.”

“And what in the devil do you say that to me for, friend Pog? You see that, as inhuman as I am, I do not forget who you are, and who I am. You say ‘tu’ to me, and I answer ‘vous’ to you.”

Just then two shots were fired and resounded through the galley.

“The devil! there is Mello who is also saying ‘tue,’” added Trimalcyon, smiling at his odious play upon words and looking toward the door with imperturbable calmness. The two women slaves fell on their knees with signs of agonising terror.

Suddenly the trumpets burst forth with an energy which doubtless violated all the laws of harmony, but which proved at least that the threats conveyed by the negro dwarf had taken effect, and that the unhappy

musicians believed Trimalcyon capable of torturing them.

After two more shots, there was a cry,—a terrible roar uttered by all the slaves at once.

The tumult was then succeeded by a profound silence. “It seems it was nothing after all,” said the captain of the *Sybarite*, addressing Pog, who had again fallen into a reverie. “But tell me, comrade,” continued he, “in what do you discover that I have nothing human in me? I love the arts, and letters and luxury. I plunder with discretion, taking only what suits me. I enjoy to the utmost all of the five senses with which I am provided. I fight with care, preferring to attack one who is weaker rather than one who is stronger than myself, and my commerce consists in taking from those who have with the least possible chance of loss. Yes, once again I ask you, comrade, where in the devil do you see inhumanity in that?”

“Come, you excite my shame as well as my pity. You have not even the energy of evil. There is always in you the pedantry of the college.”

“Fie, fie upon you, my comrade; do not talk of the college, of that sad time of meagre cheer and privations without number. I would be at this moment as dry as a galley mast, if I had continued spitting Latin, while now,” said the insolent knave, striking his stomach, “I have the rotundity of a prebendary; and all that, thanks to whom? To Yacoub-Reis, who, twenty years ago, made me a slave as I was going by sea to Civita-Vecchia, to try my clerical fortune in the city of the clergy. Yacoub-Reis gave me mind, activity, and courage. I was young, he taught me his trade. I renounced my religion, I took the turban, and so from one thing to another, from pillage to murder, I came at last to be commander of the *Sybarite*. Commerce goes well! I expose myself in extreme cases, and when it is necessary I fight like another, but I take care of my skin, it is true, because I intend before long to retire from business, and repose from the fatigues of war in my retreat in Tripoli, with several Madames Trimalcyon. Again I ask, is not all that very human?”

These words appeared to make little impression on the silent companion of the captain of the *Sybarite*, who contented himself with saying, with a shrug of the shoulders:

“The wild boar to his lair!”

“Sardanapalus! speaking of wild boars, how I would like to have those that figured in the epic feasts of Trimalcyon, my patron!” cried the unmannerly boor, without appearing to take offence at the contempt of his guest. “Those were worthy wild boars, that they served whole with caps on their heads, and insides stuffed with puddings and sausages imitating the entrails, or perhaps enclosing winged thrushes that would fly up to the ceiling. Those are luxuries I shall realise some day or other. Sardanapalus! I have worked twenty years just to give myself some day a feast worthy of Roman antiquity!”

The negro dwarf opened the door.

The pirate then thought only of the tumult which had so suddenly ceased.

“Ah, well, rascal, what about that noise? Why did not Mello come? Was it, then, nothing?”

“No, my lord, a Christian quarrelled with an Albanian slave.”

“And then?”

“The Albanian stabbed the Christian.”

“And then?”

“The Christians cried ‘Death to the Albanian,’ but the Christian who was wounded knocked the Albanian down and almost killed him.”

“And then?”

“Then the Albanians and the Moors, in their turn, roared against the Christians.”

“And then?”

“To prevent the crew killing each other, and to satisfy everybody, patron Mello blew the wounded Christian’s and the wounded Albanian’s brains out.”

“And then?”

“My lord, seeing that, everybody became quiet.”

“And the musicians?”

“My lord, I spoke to them about the blacksmith’s bellows, and before I had finished my sentence, they blew so hard on their trumpets and shells, I became almost deaf. I was about to forget, my lord, that Mello signalled the long-boat of Seigneur Erebus, who is coming now to the galley.”

Pog started.

Trimalcyon cried, “Quick, Swan-skin, Orangine, a cover for the most beautiful youth who ever captured poor merchant ships.”

CHAPTER XXVI. POG AND EREBUS

Before continuing this narrative, some explanation is necessary concerning Erebus and Seigneur Pog, the silent and sarcastic man.

In the year 1612, twenty years before the period of which we write, a Frenchman, still young, arrived at Tripoli, with one servant.

The captain of the vessel which brought him to Tripoli had frequent opportunity to observe that his passenger was very expert in matters pertaining to navigation; he concluded finally that the traveller was an officer on the vessels and galleys of the king, and he was not mistaken.

Seigneur Pog—we continue to give him this assumed name—was an excellent sailor, as we shall soon see.

Upon his arrival at Tripoli, Pog, after having, according to the custom of Barbary, bought the protection of Bey Hassan, hired a house in the suburbs of the city, not far from the sea. He lived there during one year with his valet in profound solitude.

Some French merchants, established at Tripoli, exhausted their powers of conjecture on the singular taste of their compatriot, who came, as they thought, through mere caprice, to inhabit a wild and deserted coast.

Some attributed this eccentricity to a violent, desperate grief; others saw, if not an unpardonable folly, a monomania, at least, in his strange determination.

These last suppositions did not lack foundation.

At certain periods of the year, Pog, it was said, was subject to such attacks of despair and rage that belated herdsmen, passing his solitary house at night, would hear furious and frantic cries.

Three or four years passed in this manner.

To distract his mind from gloomy thoughts, and to recuperate his health, Pog made long voyages at sea in a small vessel, but a very smooth and swift-sailing ship which he himself managed with rare skill. His crew consisted of two young slave Moors.

One day, one of the most famous and cruel corsairs of Tripoli, named Kemal-Reis, came near perishing with his galley, which ran aground on the Coast a short distance from the house of Pog.

Pog was just returning from one of his voyages. Recognising the galley of Kemal-Reis, he set sail toward her, and rendered her the most efficient aid.

One of Pog’s slaves reported later that he had heard him say, “Man would be too happy if all the wolves and tigers were destroyed.” So the saving of Kemal-Reis, dreaded for reason of his cruelties, was due to the bitter misanthropy of Pog. Instead of yielding to an impulse of natural generosity, he desired to preserve to humanity one of its most terrible scourges.

A short time after this event Kemal-Reis visited the isolated house of the Frenchman, and, by degrees, a sort of intimacy was established between the pirate and the misanthrope.

One day the newsmongers of Tripoli learned with astonishment that Pog had embarked on board the galley of Kemal-Reis. They supposed the Frenchman to be very rich, and that he had freighted the Tripolitan vessel in order to take a voyage of pleasure on the coast of Barbary and Egypt and Syria.

To the great astonishment of the public, Kemal-Reis returned a month after his departure, with his galley filled with French slaves, captured from the coasts of Languedoc and Provence, and the rumour was current in Tripoli that the favourable results of this audacious enter-prise were owing to the information and advice given by Pog, who knew better than any one else the weak points on the seashore of France. This rumour soon acquired such probability that our consul at Tripoli deemed it his duty to inform against Pog, and to instruct the ministers of Louis XIII. of what had happened.

And here we make the statement, once for all, that in 1610, as well as in 1630 and in 1700, the abduction of inhabitants from our coasts by the regencies of Barbary was almost never considered a cause for a declaration of war against these powers. Our consuls assisted at the disembarking of the captives and generally acted as mediators for their ransom.

If any measures were taken against Pog, it was because he had, as a Frenchman, assisted with his own hand in an attack upon his country.

The information given by the consul was in vain, to the great scandal of our compatriots and of Europeans established at Tripoli. Pog made a solemn abjuration, renounced the cross, assumed the turban, and henceforth remained unmolested.

Kemal-Reis had everywhere proclaimed that the new renegade was one of the best captains whom he had ever known, and that the regency of Barbary could not have made a more useful acquisition. From that moment Pog-Reis equipped a galley and directed his operations solely against French vessels, and especially against the galleys of Malta, commanded by the chevaliers of our nation. Several times he ravaged the coasts of Languedoc and Provence with impunity. It must be said, however, that this fury for plunder and destruction only seized Pog, so to speak, periodically, and by paroxysms, and his rage seemed to reach its height about the end of the month of December.

During that month he showed himself without pity, and it is related, with a shudder of horror, that several times he had the throats of a great number of captives cut,—a frightful and bloody holocaust which he offered, doubtless, on some painful and dreaded anniversary. The month of December passed, his mind, obscured by a bloodthirsty madness, became more calm, when, returning to Tripoli, and shutting himself up in his solitude, he remained sometimes two or three months without putting to sea. Then, his desperate soul again possessed by some bitter resentment, he equipped his galley anew, and recommenced his atrocious career.

Among the French captives whom he had taken in his first expedition with Kemal-Reis, and whom he had generously abandoned to this corsair, upon the sole condition that liberty should never be restored to them, was one whom he retained,—a child of four or five years carried away from the coast of Languedoc, with an old woman who died during the passage. This child of unparagoned beauty was Erebus.

Pog named him thus, as if he wished by the fatal name to predestinate the unfortunate child to the career to which his evil designs devoted him.

In the intensity of his hatred of the human race, Pog had the infernal desire to destroy the soul of this unfortunate child, by giving him the most pernicious education. He devoted himself to this task with abominable perseverance. As Erebus advanced in years, Pog, without reason for his absurd eccentricities, alternately expended upon the boy a furious aversion and cruelty, and impulsive demonstrations of solicitude, —these last being the only sentiments af kindness he had felt for many years. By degrees, these spasmodic expressions of sympathy discontinued, and Pog soon included Erebus in the common execration with which he pursued mankind, and adhered to his fatal resolution with deadly persistence. Far from leaving the boy’s mind uneducated, he took particular pains in developing it. Among the numerous slaves which his avocation

of rapine brought in his way, Pog-Reis easily found professors and teachers of all sorts, and what he failed to find he purchased from other corsairs or obtained by other means.

For instance, having learned that a celebrated Spanish painter, named Juan Pelieko, lived in Barcelona, he employed every stratagem to draw him out of the city, and at last succeeded in capturing him and taking him to Tripoli. When this artist had perfected Erebus in his art, Pog had him put in chains, in which servitude he remained until he died.

In his impious and cruel course of experiment, Pog, desiring to force his victim through every degree in the scale of iniquity, from vice to crime, took pleasure in making the child acquainted with all kinds of sin, and in giving him opportunities for culture and accomplishments. He argued that with ordinary intelligence a man was only an ordinary villain, but that various resources enabled him to achieve the most wonderful results in audacious wickedness. Through this abominable system, the arts, instead of elevating the soul of Erebus, were designed to develop a passion for sensual pleasures, and to materialise an otherwise exalted nature.

When the wonders of painting and music do not lift the soul into the infinite realm of the ideal, when one seeks only a melody more or less agreeable to the ear, or a form more or less attractive to the eye, then the arts deprave rather than ennoble mankind.

Surely, Pog must have had a terrible vengeance to wreak upon humanity, his misanthropy must have partaken of the nature of madness, that he could have been guilty of the sacrilegious cruelty of thus degrading a pure young soul!

No scruple or regret made him hesitate. As a tender father would seek to guard his child’s mind from dangerous thoughts, and to encourage in his young heart all noble and generous instincts, Pog, on the other hand, left no means untried to corrupt this unhappy child, and to excite his bad passions.

It is with certain moral organisations as with physical natures,—they can be injured and enfeebled, but not completely ruined, so healthy and vigorous is their vital germ. Thus it was with Erebus. By a special providence, the pernicious teachings of Pog had not yet, so to speak, essentially altered the heart of the poor boy.

The singular instinct of contradiction peculiar to youth saved him from many dangers. The very facility with which he could, scarcely adolescent, have yielded to every excess, the odious temptations they dared set before him, sufficed to preserve him from precocious dissipations.

In a word, the natural exaltation of his sentiments urged him to cultivate the sweet, pure, and noble emotions from which they endeavoured to remove him, but unfortunately the fatal influence of Pog had not been absolutely vain. The ardent character of Erebus retained a sad evidence of the perversity of his education.

If in some moments he had passionate yearnings toward good, if he struggled against the detestable counsels of his tutor, the habit of a warlike and adventurous life which he had led from the age of twelve or thirteen years, the impetuosity of his character, and the transport of his passions, often dragged him into grievous excess. From his earliest youth, Pog had taken him along in the various incursions into the shore, and the courage and natural daring of Erebus had been valiantly exhibited in several combats.

Instructed by experience and by practice, he had learned with great facility the avocation of sailor and mariner, and the constant aim of Pog had been to inculcate in him a profound and relentless hatred of the chevaliers of Malta, who were represented to him as the murderers of his family, and the secret of this murder Pog had faithfully promised to reveal to him some day.

Yet nothing was more false. Pog had no knowledge of the parents of the child, left an orphan at such an early age, but he wished to perpetuate in his victim his own hatred of the chevaliers of religion.

Erebus renewed his vows, and an ardent desire for vengeance developed in his young soul against the soldiers of Christ, whom he believed to be the murderers of his family. In other respects, Erebus gave less satisfaction to Pog. Cruelty in cold blood was revolting to him, and sometimes he was deeply moved at the sight of human suffering. Pog had often observed that irony and sarcasm were a powerful and infallible arm in combating the natural nobility of the youth’s character, and by comparing him to a clergyman, or a tonsured Christian, or accusing him of weakness and cowardice, he often provoked the unhappy boy to culpable acts.

The scene in the rocks of Ollioules, where Erebus saw Reine for the first time, is a striking proof of that constant struggle between his natural inclinations and the bad passions that Pog excited in his heart.

The first impulse of Erebus was to hasten to the rescue of Raimond V. and to respond with almost filial veneration to the old man’s outburst of gratitude,—in fact, to believe himself rewarded for his generous conduct by the satisfaction of his conscience and the grateful looks of the young girl; but a bitter sarcasm from Pog, a coarse jest from Trimalcyon, changed these noble emotions into sensual desire and a profound disdain for the courageous action by which he had just honoured himself.

Yet, in spite of the cynical bantering of the two pirates, the enchanting beauty of Reine made a profound impression upon Erebus.

He had never loved, his heart had never taken part in the coarse pleasures which he had sought among the slaves that the hazard of war had thrown into his hands.

Pog and Trimalcyon were not long in perceiving a certain change in the character of Erebus.

Some indiscreet words enlightened Pog as to the powerful influence of this first love upon the young man, and he began to fear the consequences of this passion, in elevating the heart of Erebus,—a love which would make the young man blush for the abominable life he was leading, and awaken in him the most generous sentiments. Pog, therefore resolved to kill this love by possession, and proposed to Erebus to abduct Reine by force.

He encountered a lively resistance in the young pirate. Erebus thought the proposed abduction atrocious; he wished to be loved or to make himself loved.

Pog then suggested another plan. He flattered the self-love of Erebus beyond measure, by proving to him

that he must have made a profound impression on the heart of the young girl, but that it was necessary, by mysterious means, to preserve and increase the remembrance that she would necessarily hide from the knowledge of her father. Then, when he was sure of being loved, he was to appear, offer to carry her away, and withdraw if she did not accept his proposal.

This plan, which Pog intended to modify at its conclusion, satisfied Erebus. We have seen how it was partly executed at Maison-Forte.

A Moor who had accompanied the young pirate at sea from his childhood, and who was warmly attached to him, was to introduce himself secretly into the castle of Anbiez.

This man was the Bohemian whom we have seen at Maison-Forte. He had accompanied Erebus at the time of the audacious journey of the three pirates in Provence. When they reached the port of Cette again, where they had left their chebec, they embarked and rejoined their galleys, which were anchored in the islands of Majorca, then open to all the pirates of the Mediterranean.

There, Erebus, Pog, Trimalcyon, and Hadji—such was the name of the Bohemian—contrived their plans.

The day of the adventure in the gorges of Ollioules Hadji had described the old gentleman whom Erebus had just saved, and the young girl, to his hosts in Marseilles, who gave him the name of Raimond V. and his young daughter, for the Baron des Anbiez was well known in Provence.

During his sojourn at Majorca, Erebus, who in his leisure occupied himself in the art of painting, made as a souvenir the miniature of which we have spoken, and a skilful goldsmith enamelled the little dove on some objects intended for Reine. Finally, Erebus added a portrait of himself, which was placed in the medallion ornamenting the guzla of the Bohemian.

These preparations completed, the Moor departed, taking with him, as a means of correspondence with the two pirates, two pigeons raised on board the chebec of Erebus, and habituated to seek and to recognise this vessel, which they regained with a jerk of the wing as soon as they perceived it, at a distance beyond the power of the eye of man.

At the end of fifteen days, the two galleys and the chebec began to cruise and beat about in view of the coasts of Provence.

As we have said, the month of December was Pog’s gloomy month, the period in which his cruel instincts were exasperated to a ferocious monomania.

He had dared present himself under an assumed name to the Marshal of Vitry, only to examine at leisure the state of the coast and the fortifications of Marseilles, as he had the audacious design of surprising and ravaging the city, and burning the port. He counted on his understanding with some Moors established in Marseilles, to make himself master of the boom of the harbour.

However absurd or impossible it may appear, this attack, or rather this surprise, might have been successful. Pog did not despair of it If the arrangements that he had manipulated failed at his signal, he was sure at least of being able to lay waste a coast which was without defence, and the little city of La Ciotat, for reason of its proximity to Maison-Forte, must in this case share the fate of Marseilles.

In the tumult of the battle, Reine des Anbiez could easily be carried off.

We have seen that the manoeuvres of the Bohemian succeeded.

A long time hidden among the rocks which bordered upon Maison-Forte, he had several times seen Reine in the balcony of the window of her oratory, and had observed that this window often remained open. Thanks to his agility, the Bohemian had introduced himself there twice in the evening,—the first time with the crystal vase containing a Persian amaryllis, a bulbous plant which blooms in a few days; the second time with the miniature.

Certain of having established these mysterious antecedents sufficiently well to excite the curiosity of Reine, and thus force her to think of Erebus, Hadji, thinking he could present himself at Maison-Forte without awakening suspicion, was returning to the house of Raimond V., and on the way met the recorder Isnard and his retinue.

Fifteen days after his arrival at Maison-Forte, the chebec, at the setting of the sun, began to cruise at large. Hadji then sent one of the pigeons as the bearer of a letter, informing Erebus that he was loved, and Pog where he could attempt a landing, in case he should be compelled to renounce his intention of surprising Marseilles.

The watchman’s eagle intercepted this correspondence by devouring the messenger. Unhappily, Hadji had another emissary. The next day, at sunset, the chebec appeared again, and a letter carried by the second pigeon announced to Erebus that he was loved, and to Pog that the most favourable moment for a descent upon La Ciotat was Christmas Day, a time when all the Provençals were occupied with their family feasts and merrymaking.

The tempest began to blow the very evening of the day on which Erebus received this intelligence. He rejoined the two galleys which were cruising off the coast of Hyères; the weather becoming more and more violent, the three vessels put into Port Mage, on the island of Port-Cros. As we have said, they had been anchored there since the day before, impatiently waiting for the wind to change, as the celebration of Christmas would occur the day after the morrow. Before attempting anything at La Ciotat, Pog wished to assure himself that his enterprise on Marseilles was not possible.

Now that we are acquainted with the fatal ties which bound Erebus to Pog, we will follow the young adventurer on the galley of Trimalcyon.

He slowly ascended on board the *Sybarite* and entered the apartment where dinner was being served.

CHAPTER XXVII. CONVERSATION

He wore the simple sailor costume which greatly enhanced his grace and beauty.

“Here comes our bashful lover, our modest wooer,” said Trimalcyon, seeing him.

As a reply, the young sailor, appreciative of this pleasantry, threw off his mantle, embroidered in jet-black silk, gave a kiss to Swan-skin, caressed Orangine’s chin, and, taking up a silver goblet from the table, extended it to Trimalcyon as he exclaimed:

“To the health of Reine des Anbiez, the future favourite of my harem!”

Pog threw a piercing glance on Erebus, and said, in a measured, hollow voice:

“These words come from his lips, his heart will give the lie to his language.”

“You are mistaken, Captain Pog; only land your demons on the beach of La Ciotat, and you will see if the brightness of the flames which will broil the French in their hole will prevent my following Hadji to the castle of that old Provençal.”

“And once in that castle, what will you do, my boy?” said Trimalcyon, with a mocking air. “Will you ask if the beautiful girl has not a skein of silk to wind, or if she will permit you to hold her mirror while she combs her hair?”

“Be quiet, Full-Bottle, I will employ my time well. I will sing for her the song of the emir, a song worthy of Beni-Amer, which that fox, Hadji, made her listen to so well.”

“And if the old Provençal finds your voice disagreeable, he will give you a leather strap, as if you were a badly taught child, my boy,” said Trimalcyon.

“I will reply to the old gentleman by seizing his daughter in my arms, and singing to him those verses of Hadji:

> *“‘Till sixteen years old, the daughter belongs to her father.*
>
> *“At sixteen years old, the daughter belongs to the lover.’”*

“And if the good man insists, you will give him, for your last word, your kangiar to end the conversation?” “That comes of course, Empty-Cup. Who carries off the daughter, kills the father,” added Erebus, with an ironical smile.

Trimalcyon wagged his head, and said to Pog, who seemed more and more absorbed in his gloomy thoughts: “The young peacock is laughing at us, he is jesting, he will do some shepherd-swain nonsense with that girl.” “Has the French spy returned from the islands?” asked Pog of Erebus.

“Not yet, Captain Pog,” replied the young sailor; “he departed with his stick and his wallet, disguised as a beggar. He will be here, without doubt, in an hour. I waited for him in vain. Seeing that he did not arrive, I came in my long-boat; the barge which landed him on the shore will bring him back here. But shall we attack La Ciotat or Marseilles, Captain Pog?”

“Marseilles, unless the report of the spy makes me change my opinion,” said Pog.

“And on our return, shall we not stop a moment at La Ciotat?” asked Erebus. “Hadji is expecting us.”

“And your beautiful maiden also, my boy. Ah! ah! you are more impatient to see her beautiful eyes than the gaping mouths of the cannon of the castle,” said Trimalcyon, “and you are right, I do not reproach you for it.”

“By the cross of Malta, which I abhor!” cried Erebus, with impatience, “I would rather never see that lovely girl in the cabin of my chebec than not to sound my war-cry at the attack of Marseilles. Captain Pog knows that in all our combats with the French or with the galleys of religion, my arm, although young, has dealt some heavy blows.”

“Be quiet! whether we attack Marseilles or not, you will be able to approach La Ciotat with your chebec and carry off your maiden. I will not allow you to lose this new chance of damning your soul, my dear child,” said Pog, with a sinister laugh.

“My soul? You have always told me, Captain Pog, that I had no soul,” replied the unhappy Erebus, with a bantering indifference.

“You do not see, my boy, that Captain Pog is jesting,” said Trimalcyon, “as far as the soul is concerned; but as for your beauty, by Sardanapalus! we will carry her off; the pains of Hadji and your mysterious gallantries shall not be lost, although, in my opinion, you were wrong to make yourself as romantic as an ancient Moor of Grenada, just to please this Omphale. A few more abductions, my dear child, and you will realise that it is far better to break a wild filly with violence than to tame her by dint of sweetness and petting. But your young palate requires milk and honey yet awhile. Later you will come to the spices.”

“You flatter me, Trimalcyon, by comparing me to a Moor of Grenada,” said Erebus, with bitterness. “They were noble and chivalrous, and not real robbers like us.” “Robbers? Do you hear him, Captain Pog? He is yet not more than half out of his shell, and he comes talking of robbers! And who in the devil told you we were robbers? That is the way they impose upon youth, the way they deceive it and corrupt it. Why, speak to him, I pray you, Captain Pog! Robbers! Give me something to drink, Swan-skin, to help me swallow that word! Zounds! Robbers!”

Erebus seemed very little impressed by the grotesque anger of Trimalcyon.

Captain Pog raised his head slowly and said to the young man, with bitter irony:

“Well, well, my dear child, you are right to blush for our profession. Upon my return to Tripoli, I will buy you a shop near the port,—it is the best mercantile quarter. There you can sell in peace and quietness white morocco-leather, Smyrna carpets and tapestry, Persian silks and ostrich feathers. That is an easy and honest calling, my dear child. You will be able to amass some money and afterward go to Malta, and establish yourself in the Jewish quarter. There you can lend your money at fifty per cent, to the chevaliers who are in debt. Thus you can avenge yourself on those who cut your father’s and mother’s throats, by pocketing their

money. It is more lucrative and less dangerous than taking your revenge in blood."

"Captain!" cried Erebus, his cheeks flaming with indignation.

"Captain Pog is right," said Trimalcyon, "the vampire that sucks the blood of his sleeping prey with impunity is better than the bold falcon that attacks him in the sun."

"Trimalcyon, take care!" cried the young man, in anger.

"And who knows," continued Pog, "if chance may not cause the chevalier who massacred your poor mother and noble father to fall under your usurious hand?"

"And see the avenging hand of Providence!" cried Trimalcyon. "The orphan becomes the creditor of the assassin! Blood and murder! Death and agony! This son, the avenger, at last gluts his rage by making the murderer of his family put on the yellow robe of insolvent debtors!"

At this last sarcasm, the anger of Erebus exceeded all bounds, and he seized Trimalcyon by the throat and drew on him a knife that he had taken from the table. But for the iron grasp of Pog, which held the youth's hand like a vice, the fat pirate would have been dangerously wounded, if not killed.

"By Eblis and his black wings! Captain, take care! If you are provoked at the blow I was about to give that hog, then I will address myself to you!" cried Erebus, trying to free himself from Pog's hands.

Swan-skin and Orangine escaped, shrieking with terror.

"See what it is to spoil children," said Pog, with a disdainful smile, as he released the hand of Erebus.

"And to allow them to play with knives," replied Trimalcyon, picking up the knife that Erebus had let fall in the struggle.

A look from Pog warned him that he must not push the young man too far.

"Do you wish to kill the one who has brought you up, dear child?" said Pog, sarcastically. "Come, you have your dagger in your belt, strike."

Erebus looked at him with a surly air, and said, with an angry sneer:

"It is in the name of gratitude, then, that you ask me to spare your life? Then why have you preached to me the forgetfulness of benefits and the remembrance of injuries?"

Notwithstanding his impudence, Trimalcyon looked at Pog in amazement, not knowing how his companion would reply to that question.

Pog gave Erebus a look of withering contempt, as he said to him:

"I wished to test you, when I spoke of gratitude. Yes, the truly brave man forgets all benefits, and only remembers injuries. I offered you the most outrageous insult, I told you that you did not have the courage to avenge the death of your parents. You ought to have struck me at once,—but you are a coward."

Erebus quickly drew his dagger and raised it over the pirate before Trimalcyon could take a step.

Pog, calm and unmoved, opened his breast without a sign of emotion.

Twice Erebus raised his arm, twice he let it fall again. He could not make up his mind to strike a defenceless man. He bowed his head with a sorrowful air.

Pog sat down again and said to Erebus, in a severe and imperious voice:

“Child, do not quote maxims whose meaning perhaps you may comprehend, but which your weak heart will not let you put in practice. Listen to me, once for all. I received you without pity. I feel as much hatred and contempt for you as I do for all other men. I have trained you to pillage and murder, as I would have amused myself in training a young wolf for slaughter, that some day I might be able to hurl you against my enemies. I have killed all the chevaliers of Malta who have fallen into my hands, because I have a terrible vengeance to wreak on that order. I have taught you that your family was massacred by them, in the hope of exciting your rage, and turning it against those whom I execrate. You have already served my purpose; you have killed two

caravanists with your own hand, in one combat. I know you had no pleasure in it, you thought you were avenging your father and mother. I deal with you as a man deals with his war-horse; as long as he serves him, he spurs him and urges him to the fray; when he becomes feeble, he sells him. Do not feel bound in any respect to me; kill me if you can. If you dare not strike before my face, act as a traitor,—you will succeed, perhaps."

As Erebus heard these frightful words, he seemed to be in a dream.

If he had never been deceived as to the tenderness of Pog, he believed that the man had at least an interest in him, the interest that a poor, abandoned child always inspires in one who has the care of him. The brutal confession of Pog left him no longer in doubt. These detestable maxims he had just uttered were too much in accord with the rest of his life to allow the young man to question their reality.

The feelings of his own heart were inexplicable. He seemed to have fallen into some deep and bloody abyss. The thoughts which rushed upon him drove him to frenzy. His tender and generous instincts thrilled painfully, as if an iron hand had torn them from his heart.

After the first moment of dejection, the detestable influence of Pog regained the ascendency. Erebus wished to vie with this man in cynicism and barbarity. He lifted up his pale face, and said, as a sarcastic smile played upon his lips:

"You have enlightened me, Captain Pog; until now, the hatred of the soldiers of Christ had never entered into my heart; until now, I only wished their death because they had killed my father and mother; if I showed them no mercy, I fought them, sword to sword, galley to galley. But now, captain, armed or disarmed, young or old, fairly or basely, I will kill as many as I can kill,—do you know why, captain? Say, do you know why, captain?"

"He is out of his head!" whispered Trimalcyon.

"No, he says what he feels," replied Pog. "Ah, well, then, my child, tell me why?" added he.

"Because in making me an orphan, they put me in your power, and you have made me what I am."

There was in the expression of the features of Erebus something which revealed a hatred so implacable, that Trimalcyon whispered to Pog:

"There is blood in his look!"

Erebus, although exasperated beyond measure by the contemptuous hatred of Pog, did not dare avenge himself, because he was dominated by an involuntary sentiment of gratitude toward the man who had reared him, and with an air of desperation he went out of the chamber.

"He is going to kill himself!" cried Trimalcyon.

Pog shrugged his shoulders.

Some moments after, while the two companions sat in gloomy silence, they heard the sound of oars striking the water.

"He is going back to his chebec," said Trimalcyon.

Without replying, Pog went out of the chamber and walked to the prow.

It was late. The wind had grown somewhat calm; the galley-slaves were sleeping on their benches.

Nothing was heard but the regular step of the spahis who walked their rounds on the vessel.

Pog, leaning over the guards, looked at the sea in silence.

Trimalcyon, in spite of his depravity, had been moved by this scene. Never had the cruel monomania of Pog shown itself in such a horrible light. He felt a certain embarrassment in engaging in conversation with his silent friend. At last, approaching him with several "Hem—Hems," and numerous hesitations, he said: "The weather is very fine this evening, Captain Pog."

"Your remark is full of sense, Trimalcyon."

"Come to the point now, and shame to the devil! I do not know what to say to you, Pog, but you are a terrible man; you will make that poor starling insane. How in the devil can you find pleasure in tormenting the young fellow so? Some fine day he will leave you."

"If you were not a man incapable of understanding me, Trimalcyon, I would tell you that what I feel for this unfortunate youth is strange," said Pog. "Yes, it is strange," continued he, talking to himself. "Sometimes I feel furious anger rising in me against Erebus, a resentment as implacable as if he were my most deadly enemy. Again I have the indifference of a piece of ice. Other times I feel for him a compassion, I would say affection if that sentiment could enter my soul. Then, the sound of his voice—yes, especially the sound of his voice—and his look awaken in me memories of a time which is no more."

As he uttered these last words, Pog spoke indistinctly. Trimalcyon was touched by the accent of his usually morose companion. The voice of Pog, ordinarily hard and sarcastic, softened almost to a lamentation.

Trimalcyon, amazed, approached Pog to speak to him; he recoiled in fright as he saw him suddenly raise his two fists toward Heaven in a threatening manner, and heard him utter such a painful, despairing cry that there seemed nothing human in it.

"Captain Pog, what is the matter with you? What is the matter with you?" cried Trimalcyon.

"What is the matter with me!" cried Pog, in a delirium, "what is the matter with me! Then you do not know that this man who stands here before you, who roars with pain, who pushes cruelty to madness, who dreams only of blood and massacre; that this man was once blessed with all, because he was good, kind, and generous. You do not know, oh, you do not know the evil that must have been done to this man to excite in him the rage which now possesses him!"

Trimalcyon was more and more amazed at this language, which contrasted so singularly with the habitual character of Pog.

He tried to enlighten himself by carefully examining the countenance of his old comrade.

After a long silence he heard the dry, strident laugh of the pirate ring through the galley. "Eh, eh!

comrade," said Pog, in the tone of irony natural to him, "it is quite right to say that at night mad dogs bark at the moon! Have you understood one word of all the nonsense I have just uttered to you? I would have been a good actor, on my faith I would; do you not think so, comrade?"

"I have not understood much, to tell the truth, Captain Pog, except that you have not been always what you are now. We are alike in that. I was a servant in a college before being a pirate."

Pog, without making a reply, made a gesture of his hand commanding silence. Then, listening with attention on the side next to the sea, he said: "It seems to me I hear a boat."

"Without doubt," said Trimalcyon.

One of the watchmen on the rambade uttered three distinct cries, the first separated from the two last by quite a long interval; the last two, however, were close together.

The patron of the boat replied to this cry in the opposite manner; that is to say, he uttered at first two short, quick cries, followed by a prolonged cry.

"Those are persons from the chebec, and the spy, no doubt," said Trimalcyon.

In fact the long-boat was already at the first seat of the rowers. The spy climbed to the deck of the galley.

"What news from Hyères?" said Pog to him.

"Bad for Marseilles, captain; the galleys of the Marquis de Brézé, coming from Naples, anchored there yesterday."

"Who told you that?" asked Pog.

"Two bargemasters. I entered a hostelry to beg an alms, and these bargemasters were talking about it. Some mule-drivers, coming from the west, heard the same thing at St. Tropez."

"And what rumour on the coast?"

"They are alarmed at La Ciotat."

Pog waved his hand, and the spy retired.

"What is to be done, Captain Pog?" cried Trimalcyon. "There are only blows to be gained at Marseilles; the squadron of the Marquis de Brézé protects the port. To attack an enemy unseasonably is to do him good instead of harm; we can do nothing at Marseilles."

"Nothing," said Captain Pog.

"Then La Ciotat invites us; the swine, those citizens, are alarmed, it is true, but, Sardanapalus! what does that matter? The little birds tremble when they see the hawk ready to pounce upon them; but do their terrors make his claws any the less sharp, or his beak less cutting? What do you say to it, Captain Pog?"

"To La Ciotat, to-morrow at sunset, if the wind ceases. We will surprise these people in the midst of a feast; we will change their cries of joy into cries of death!" said Pog, in a hollow voice.

"Sardanapalus! these citizens, they say, have hens on golden eggs hidden in their houses. They say that the convent of the Minimes brothers is filled with costly wines, without counting the money of the farm-rent that the farmers bring to these rich do-nothings at Christmas. We will find their cash-box well furnished."

"To La Ciotat," said Pog; "The wind may change in our favour. I am going to return on board the *Red Galleon*; at the first signal, follow my manoeuvre."

"So be it, Captain Pog," replied Trimalcyon.

While the pirates, ambushed in that solitary bay, are preparing to surprise and attack the inhabitants of La Ciotat, we will return to Cape l'Aigle, where we left the watchman occupied in drawing up the defence of the coast.

CHAPTER XXVIII. HADJI

Christmas had at last arrived.

Although the fear of the Barbary pirates had kept the city and the coast in alarm for several days, the people began to feel safe from attack.

The north wind had lasted so long and had blown with such violence that they did not suppose the pirate vessels dared put to sea in such weather, and it seemed still less probable that they would anchor in a harbour on their seashore, which was exactly what Pog and Trimalcyon had done.

The security felt by the inhabitants was fatal to them.

Forty hours at least were required for the galley of the commander to sail from Cape Corsica to La Ciotat. The tempest had ceased only the evening before, and Pierre des Anbiez had been compelled to wait until Christmas morning to put to sea.

On the contrary, the galleys of the pirates were able to reach La Ciotat in three hours; the island of Port-Cros, where they had taken refuge, was only about six leagues distant.

But, as we have said, fear was no longer felt along the coast; besides, they reckoned upon the well-known vigilance of the watchman, Master Peyrou.

He would give the alarm in case of danger; two signals, corresponding with the sentry-box on Cape l'Aigle, had been established, one at a point opposite the bay, the other on the terrace of Maison-Forte.

At the slightest alarm all the men of La Ciotat, capable of bearing arms, were to assemble in the town hall, there to take orders from the consul, and hasten to the point which might be attacked.

A chain had been extended across the entrance of the port, and several large fishing-boats, armed with

swivel-guns, were anchored a short distance from this chain. Finally, two coxswains of a long-boat, occupied a whole morning in exploring the environage, had upon their return increased the general feeling of security by announcing that not a sail was to be seen for a distance of three or four leagues.

It was about two hours after midday. A sharp wind from the east had taken the place of the north wind of the preceding days. The sky was clear, the sun bright for a winter day, and the sea beautiful, although there was a gentle swell.

A child carrying a basket on his head began to climb, singing all the while, the steep rocks which led to the house of the watchman.

Suddenly, hearing the moaning of a dog, the child stopped, looked around him with curiosity, saw nothing, and went on his way.

The cry was repeated, and this time it seemed nearer and more pitiful.

Raimond V. had been hunting all day on that side, and thinking that one of the baron’s dogs had fallen into some quagmire, the child set his basket down on the ground, climbed up a large piece of a huge rock which projected some distance over the road, and listened with attention.

The cries of the dog grew fainter, yet sounded more plaintive than before.

The child hesitated no longer. As much to do something which would please his master as to merit a small recompense, he began diligently to search for the poor animal, and soon disappeared among the tall rocks.

The dog seemed sometimes nearer, and sometimes more distant; at last the cries suddenly ceased.

The child had left the path. While he was listening, calling, crying, and whistling, Hadji, the Bohemian, appeared behind a rock.

Thanks to his skill as a juggler, he had imitated the cries of the dog, so as to distract the child from his duty and take him away from his basket. For three days he had been wandering in the midst of this solitude. Not daring to appear again at Maison-Forte, he was expecting every day the arrival of the pirates, who had been instructed by his second message.

Knowing that every morning provisions were carried to Peyrou, Hadji, who had been watching some hours for the purveyor, employed, as we have said, this stratagem to make him abandon his basket.

The Bohemian opened the bottle-case carefully provided by the majordomo Laramée, took out a large bottle covered with straw, and poured in it a small quantity of a white powder,—a powerful soporific, whose effects had already been felt by the worthy Luquin Trinquetaille.

The Bohemian had lived for two days on the small amount of food he had carried away from Maison-Forte; but, fearing to excite suspicion, he had the courage not to touch the appetising viands intended for the watchman. He restored the bottle to its place and disappeared.

The child, after having searched for the stray dog in vain, returned, took up his basket, and finally arrived at the summit of the promontory.

Master Peyrou passed for such a formidable, mysterious being, that his young purveyor did not dare say a word about the cries of the dog; he deposited the basket on the edge of the last stone of the steps, and saying, in a trembling voice, “The good God keep you, Master Peyrou,” descended as fast as his legs could carry him, holding his cap in both hands.

The watchman smiled at the child’s fear, rose from his seat, went for the basket, and set it down near him. The provisions inside smacked of the Christmas festivity.

First, there was a very fine roast turkey, a necessary dish at the solemn feast of Christmas; then a cold fish pie, some honey cakes and oil, and a basket of grapes and dried fruit done up in the style of a Christmas present; finally, two loaves of white bread with a golden brown crust, and a large bottle, containing at least two pints of the finest Burgundy wine from the cellar of Raimond V., completed his repast.

The good watchman, lonely philosopher as he was, did not appear insensible to these good things. He entered his house, took his little table, set it before his door, and there placed his preparations for his Christmas feast. Yet he was saddened by melancholy thoughts.

By the unusual clouds of smoke rising above the town of La Ciotat, it could be seen that the inhabitants, rich or poor, were making joyous preparations to unite family and friends at their tables. The watchman sighed as he thought of the exile which he had imposed upon himself. Already old, without relatives and family ties, he was liable to die on this rock, in the midst of this imposing solitude.

Another cause brought sadness to the heart of Peyrou. He had vainly hoped to signal the arrival of the commander’s galley. He knew with what joy Raimond V. would have embraced his two brothers, especially at this season, and he also knew that the gloomy sadness of Pierre des Anbiez found some relief, some consolation in the midst of sweet family happiness and festivity.

And in fact, there was still another reason, not less important, which made the watchman desire most earnestly the return of the commander.

He had been for more than twenty years the guardian of a terrible secret, and of the papers which were connected with it. His retired life and his fidelity, which had endured every test, were sufficient warrants for the security of this secret. But the watchman desired to ask the commander to deliver him from this grave responsibility, and to entrust it henceforth to Raimond V.

In fact, Peyrou realised that he might at any time die a violent death; his scene with the Bohemian proved to what dangers he was exposed in this remote and isolated spot.

All these reasons made him look anxiously for the coming of the black galley, and for the last time, before sitting down to the table, he examined the horizon attentively.

The sun was just beginning to set, and although the watchman descried nothing in the distance, he did not lose all hope of seeing the galley before nightfall, and to be able to signal the galley more readily, he resolved to dine outside.

The sight of a good dinner drove some of the wrinkles from his brow. He began by holding the flagon of

Burgundy wine to his lips. After having swallowed several draughts, he wiped his mouth with the back of his hand, as he quoted the Provençal proverb, "*A Tousan tou vin es san*,—On All Saints' Day all wine is good for the health."

"Raimond V. has not forgotten how to judge," added he, smiling. Then he carved the turkey.

"Well, well, for an old man, old wine. I feel my heart already rejoice, and my hopes of seeing the commander's galley are a good deal brighter."

At this moment, Peyrou heard a rustling in the air; one of the branches of the old pine cracked, and Brilliant alighted with a heavy wing on the stone roof of the sentry-box; then from the roof she descended to the ground.

"Ah, ah! Brilliant," said the watchman, "you come to get your part of the Christmas present, do you? Take this!" and he handed her a piece of the turkey, which the eagle refused.

"Ah! cruel wretch, you would not disdain that morsel if it was bloody. Do you want some of this pie? No? Ah! you will not find every day such a treat as the pigeon of that accursed Bohemian. Never shall I forget the service you rendered me, my courageous bird, although your taste for blood went for much in your fine action. But, no matter, Brilliant, no matter; it smells of ingratitude to be looking for the motive of a deed by which we have profited. I ought to have thought of you and given you a fine quarter of mutton for your Christmas feast. But to-morrow I will not forget For you, as for a great many men, the treat makes the festivity, and it is not the holy day or saint they glorify."

Master Peyrou finished his dinner, sometimes chatting with Brilliant, and sometimes embracing the baron's bottle.

Twilight was slowly descending upon the town.

The watchman, wrapping himself in his cloak, lit his pipe, and sat down to contemplate the approach of the beautiful winter night, in a sort of meditative beatitude.

Although the night was falling, he again examined the horizon with his telescope, and discovered nothing. Turning his head mechanically on the side of Maison-Forte, with the thought that all hope of seeing the commander arrive was not yet lost, he saw, to his great astonishment, a company of soldiers, commanded by two men on horseback, rapidly marching up the beach toward the house of Raimond V.

He seized his telescope, and, in spite of the gathering darkness, recognised the recorder Isnard, mounted on his white mule. The recorder was accompanied by a cavalier, whose hausse-col, or metal collar, jacket of buff-skin, and white scarf marked him as a captain of infantry.

"What does that mean?" cried the watchman, recalling with alarm the animosity of Master Isnard. "Are they going to arrest the Baron des Anbiez by virtue of an order from the Marshal of Vitry? Ah! I have too much reason to fear it, and what I fear more is the resistance of the baron. My God! how is all this going to end? What a sad Christmas if things are as I fear!"

Greatly disturbed, the watchman stood with his eyes fixed on the shore, although night was now too far advanced to permit him to distinguish any object.

Soon the moon rose bright and clear, flooding the rocks, the bay, the shore, and the castle of Maison-Forte with her brilliant light.

In the distance the city, immersed in fog, showed many a luminous point through the cloudy, vapourous mass, and its sharp-pointed roofs and belfries cut a black silhouette on the pale azure of the sky.

The sea, perfectly calm, was like a peaceful lake, and its soft murmurs were scarcely audible. The waves seemed to sleep. A line of darker blue marked the curve of the horizon.

The watchman looked anxiously at the windows of Maison-Forte, which were all brilliantly illuminated.

By degrees, his eyelids grew heavy.

Attributing the sensation of heaviness in his head to the wine, which he had partaken of in moderation, he began to walk about briskly, but, notwithstanding his persistent efforts, he felt a sort of lassitude stealing through all his limbs. His sight began to grow dim; he was obliged to return and sit down on his bench.

For some minutes he struggled with all his might against this numbness which was gradually taking possession of all his faculties.

Finally, although his reason commenced to share this state of general stupor, he had the presence of mind to go in his cabin and plunge his head in a basin of ice-cold water.

This immersion seemed for some moments to restore to him the use of his senses.

"Miserable creature I am! What have I done!" cried he. "I have made myself drunk—"

He took a few more steps, but was obliged to sit down again.

The soporific, thwarted in its effect for a moment, redoubled its power over him. Leaning back against the wall of his cabin, he retained perception enough to be the witness of a spectacle which overwhelmed him with rage and despair.

Two galleys and a chebec appeared at the eastern point of the bay,—a point which he alone was able to discover from the height of Cape l'Aigle. These vessels were slowly doubling the promontory with the utmost precaution. With one last effort he straightened himself up to his full height, and cried, in a feeble voice, "Pirates!" He stumbled as he tried to walk to the pile where were collected all sorts of combustible material ready to be kindled at a moment's notice. The moment he reached it he fell, deprived of consciousness.

The Bohemian, who had been watching his every movement, then appeared just where the foot-path entered the esplanade, and advanced with the greatest circumspection. Hiding himself behind the cabin, he listened, and heard only the laboured breathing of the watchman. Certain of the effect of his soporific, he approached Peyrou, stooped down, and touched his hands and his forehead and found that they were cold.

"The dose is strong," said he, "perhaps too strong. So much the worse, I did not wish to kill him."

Then advancing to the edge of the precipice, he saw distinctly the three pirate vessels in the distance. Moving slowly and cautiously, for fear of being discovered, they made use of oars to reach the entrance of the

port, where the Bohemian was to join them.

The practised eye of Hadji recognised in front of the two galleys certain luminous points or flames, which were nothing else than torches designed to burn the city and the fishing-boats.

“By Eblis! they are going to smoke these citizens like foxes in their burrows. It is time, perhaps, for this old man to go to sleep for ever; but we must visit his cabin. I will have time to descend. I will be on the beach soon enough to seize a boat and join Captain Pog, who expects me before he begins the attack. Let us enter; they say the old man hides a treasure here.”

Hadji took a brand from the fireplace and lit a lamp.

The first object which met his eye was a trunk or box of sculptured ebony placed near the watchman’s bed.

“That is a costly piece of furniture for such a recluse.”

Not finding a key, he took a hatchet, broke open the lock, and opened the two leaves of the door; the shelves were empty.

“It is not natural to lock up nothing with so much precaution; time presses, but this key will open everything.” He took up the hatchet again, and in a moment the ebony case was in pieces.

A double bottom fell apart.

The Bohemian uttered a cry of joy as he perceived the little embossed silver casket of which we have spoken, and on which was marked a Maltese cross. This casket, which was quite heavy, was fastened no doubt by a secret spring, as neither key nor lock could be discovered.

“I have my fine part of the booty, now let us run to help Captain Pog in taking his. Ah, ah!” added he, with a diabolical laugh, as he beheld the bay and the city wrapped in profound stillness, “soon Eblis will shake his wings of fire over that scene. The sky will be in flames, and the waters will run with blood!” Then, as a last precaution, he emptied a tunnel of water on the signal pile, and descended in hot haste to join the pirate vessels.

CHAPTER XXIX. CHRISTMAS

While so many misfortunes were threatening the city, the inhabitants were quietly keeping Christmas.

Notwithstanding the uneasiness the opinion of the watchman had given, notwithstanding the alarm caused by terror of the pirates, in every house, poor or rich, preparations were being made for the patriarchal feast.

We have spoken of the magnificent cradle which had long been in course of preparation through the untiring industry of Dame Dulceline.

It was at last finished and placed in the hall of the dais, or hall of honour in Maison-Forte.

Midnight had just sounded. The woman in charge was impatiently awaiting the return of Raimond V., his daughter, Honorât de Berrol, and other relations and guests whom the baron had invited to the ceremony.

All the family and guests had gone to La Ciotat, to be present at the midnight mass.

Abbé Mascarolus had said mass in the chapel of the castle for those who had remained at home.

We will conduct the reader to the hall of the dais, which occupied two-thirds of the long gallery which communicated with the two wings of the castle.

It was never opened except on solemn occasions.

A splendid red damask silk covered its walls. To supply the place of flowers, quite rare in that season, masses of green branches, cut from trees and arranged in boxes, hid almost entirely the ten large arched windows of this immense hall.

At one end of the hall rose a granite chimneypiece, ten feet high and heavily sculptured.

Notwithstanding the season was cold, no fire burned in this vast fireplace, but an immense pile, composed of branches of vine, beech, olive, and fir-apples, only waited the formality of custom to throw waves of light and heat into the grand and stately apartment.

Two pine-trees with long green branches ornamented with ribbons, oranges, and bunches of grapes, were set up in boxes on each side of the chimney, and formed above the mantelpiece a veritable thicket of verdure.

Six copper chandeliers with lighted yellow wax candles only partially dissipated the darkness of the immense room.

At the other end, opposite the chimney, rose the dais, resembling somewhat the canopy of a bed, with curtains, hangings, and cushions of red damask, as were, too, the mantle and gloves, a part of the equipment of office.

The red draperies covered, with their long folds, five wooden steps, which were hidden under a rich Turkey carpet.

Ordinarily the armorial chair of Raimond V. was placed on this elevation, and here enthroned, the old gentleman, as lord of the manor, administered on rare occasions justice to high and low. On Christmas Day, however, the cradle of the infant Jesus occupied this place of honour.

A table of massive oak, covered over with a rich oriental drapery, furnished the middle of the gallery.

On this table could be seen an ebony box handsomely carved, with a coat of arms on its lid. This box contained the book of accounts, a sort of record in which were written the births and all other important family events.

Armchairs and benches of carved oak, with twisted feet, completed the furniture of this hall, to which its size and severe bareness gave an imposing character.

Dame Dulceline and Abbé Mascarolus had just finished placing the cradle under the dais. This marvel was a picture in relief about three feet square at the base and three feet high. The faithful representation of the stable where the Saviour was born would have been too severe a limitation to the poetical conceptions of the good abbé.

So, instead of a stable, the holy scene was pictured under a sort of arcade sustained by two half ruined supports. In the spaces between the stones, real little stones artistically cut, were hung long garlands of natural vines and leaves, most beautifully intertwined.

A cloud of white wax seemed to envelope the upper part of the arcade. Five or six cherubs about a thumb high, modelled in wax painted a natural colour, and wearing azure wings made of the feathers of humming-birds, were here and there set in the cloud, and held a streamer of white silk, in the middle of which glittered the words, embroidered in letters of gold: Gloria in Jezcelriir.

The supports of the arcade rested on a sort of carpet of fine moss, packed so closely as to resemble green velvet, and in front of this erection was placed the cradle of the Saviour of the world; a real, miniature cradle, covered over with the richest laces. In it reposed the infant Jesus.

Kneeling by the cradle, the Virgin Mary bent over the Babe her maternal brow, the white veil of the Queen of Angels falling over her feet and hiding half of her azure coloured silk robe.

The paschal lamb, his four feet bound with a rose coloured ribbon, was laid at the foot of the cradle; behind it the kneeling ox thrust his large head, and his eyes of enamel seemed to contemplate the divine Infant.

The ass, on a more distant plane, and half hidden by the posts of the arcade, behind which it stood, also showed his meek and gentle head.

The dog seemed to cringe near the cradle, while the shepherds, clothed in coarse cassocks, and the magi kings, dressed in rich robes of brocatelle, were offering their adoration.

A fourth row of little candles, made of rose-scented wax, burned around the cradle.

An immense amount of work, and really great resources of imagination, had been necessary to perfect such an exquisite picture. For instance, the ass, which was about six thumbs in height, was covered in mouse-skin which imitated his own to perfection. The black and white ox owed his hair to an India pig of the same colour, and his short and polished black horns to the rounded nippers of an enormous beetle.

The robes of the magi kings revealed a fairy-like skill and patience, and their long white hair was really veritable hair, which Dame Dulceline had cut from her own venerable head.

As to the figures of the cherubs, the infant Jesus, and other actors in this holy scene, they had been purchased in Marseilles from one of those master wax-chandlers, who always kept assorted materials necessary in the construction of these cradles.

Doubtless it was not high art, but there was, in this little monument of a laborious and innocent piety, something as simple and as pathetic as the divine scene which they tried to reproduce with such religious conscientiousness.

The good old priest and Dame Dulceline, after having lit the last candles which surrounded the cradle, stood a moment, lost in admiration of their work.

“Never, M. Abbé,” said Dame Dulceline, “have we had such a beautiful cradle at Maison-Forte.”

“That is true, Dame Dulceline; the representation of the animals approaches nature as closely as is permitted man to approach the marvels of creation.”

“Ah, M. Abbé, why did it have to be that the accursed Bohemian, who they say is an emissary of the pirates, should give us the secret of making glass eyes for these animals?”

“What does it matter, Dame Dulceline? Perhaps some day the miscreant will learn the eternal truth. The Lord employs every arm to build his temple.”

“Pray tell me, M. Abbé, why we must put the cradle under the dais in the hall of honour. Soon it will be forty years since I began making cradles for Maison-Forte des Anbiez. My mother made them for Raimond IV., father of Raimond V., for as many years. Ah, well! I have never asked before, nor have I even asked myself why this hall was always selected for the blessed exposition.”

“Ah, you see, Dame Dulceline, there is always, at the base of our ancient religious customs, something consoling for the humble, the weak, and the suffering, and also something imposing as a lesson for the happy and the rich and the powerful of this world. This cradle, for instance, is the symbol of the birth of the divine Saviour. He was the poor child of a poor artisan, and yet some day he was to be as far above the most powerful of men as the heavens are above the earth. So you see, Dame Dulceline, upon the anniversary day of the redemption, the poor and rustic cradle of the infant Saviour takes the place of honour in the ceremonial hall of the noble baron.”

“Ah, I understand, M. Abbé, they put the infant Jesus in the place of the noble baron, to show that the lords of this world should be first to bow before the Saviour!”

“Without doubt, Dame Dulceline, in thus doing homage to the Lord through the symbol of his power, the baron preaches by example the communion and equality of men before God.”

Dame Dulceline remained silent a moment, thinking of the abbé's words, then, satisfied with his explanation, she proposed another question to him, which in her mind was more difficult of solution.

“M. Abbé,” asked she, with an embarrassed air, “you say that at the base of all ancient customs there is always a lesson; can there be one, then, in the custom of Palm Sunday, when foundling children run about the streets of Marseilles with branches of laurel adorned with fruit? For instance, last year, on Palm Sunday,—I blush to think of it even now, M. Abbé,—I was walking on the fashionable promenade of Marseilles with Master Tale-bard-Talebardon, who was not then the declared enemy of monseigneur, and, lo! one of the unfortunate little foundlings stopped right before me and the consul, and said, with a sweet voice, as he kissed our hands, ‘Good morning, mother! good morning, father!’ By St Dulceline, my patron saint, M. Abbé, I turned purple with shame, and Master Talebard-Talebardon did, too. I beg your pardon, respectfully, for alluding to the coarse jokes of Master Laramée, who accompanied us, on the subject of this poor foundling’s

insult! But this Master Laramée has neither modesty nor shame. I could not help repulsing with horror this nursling of public charity, and I pinched his arm sharply, and said to him: 'Will you be silent, you ugly little bastard?' He felt his fault, for he began to weep, and when I complained of his indecent impudence to a grave citizen, he replied to me: 'My good lady, such is the custom here; on Palm Sunday foundlings have the privilege of running through the streets, and saying, 'father and mother,' to all whom they may meet."

"That is really the custom, Dame Dulceline," said the abbé.

"Well, it may be the custom, M. Abbé, but is that not a very impertinent and improper custom, to permit unfortunate little children without father or mother to walk up and say 'mother' to honest, discreet persons like myself, for example, who prefer the peace of celibacy to the disquietudes of family? As to the morality of this custom, I pray you explain it, M. Abbé. I look for it in vain with all my eyes. I can see nothing in it but what is outrageously indecent!"

"And you are mistaken, Dame Dulceline," said Abbé Mascarolus; "this custom is worthy of respect, and you were wrong to treat that poor child so cruelly."

"I was wrong? That little rascal comes and calls me mother, and I permit it? Why, then, thanks to this custom, there would—"

"Thanks to this custom," interrupted the abbé, "thanks to the privilege that these little unfortunates have, of being able to say, one day in the year, 'father and mother' to those they meet,—those dear names that they never pronounce, which, perhaps, may have never passed their lips—alas! how many there are, and I have seen them, who say these words with tears in their eyes, as they remember that, when that day is past, they cannot repeat the blessed words! And sometimes it happens, Dame Dulceline, that strangers, moved to pity by such innocence and sorrow, or being touched by the caressing words, have adopted some of these unfortunates; others have given abundant alms, because this innocent appeal for charity is almost always heard. You see, Dame Dulceline, that this custom, too, has a useful end,—a pious signification."

The old woman bowed her head in silence, and finally replied to the good chaplain:

"You are a clever man, M. Abbé; you are right. See what it is to have knowledge! Now I repent of having repulsed the child so cruelly. Next Palm Sunday I will not fail to carry several yards of good, warm cloth, and nice linen, and this time, I promise you, I will not act the cruel stepmother with the poor children who call me mother! But if that old sot, Laramée, makes any indecent joke about me, as sure as he has eyes I will prove to him that I have claws!"

"That would prove too much, Dame Dulceline. But, since monseigneur does not yet return, and since we are discussing the customs of our good old Provence, and their usefulness to poor people, come, now, what have you observed on the day of St Lazarus, concerning the dance of St Elmo?"

"What do you want me to tell you, M. Abbé? Now I distrust myself; before your explanation I railed against the custom of foundlings on Palm Sunday, now I respect it."

"Say always, Dame Dulceline, that the sin of ignorance is excusable. But what is your opinion concerning the dance of St Elmo?"

"Bless me, M. Abbé, I understand nothing about it! I sometimes ask myself what is the good, the day of the feast of St. Elmo, of dressing up, at the expense of the city or community, all the poor young boys and girls as handsomely as possible. That is not all. Not content with that, these young people go from house to house, among the rich citizens and the lords, asking to borrow something. This one wants a gold necklace, that one a pair of diamond earrings, another a silver belt, another a hatband set with precious stones, or a sword-belt braided in gold. Ah, well! in my opinion,—but I may change it in an hour,—M. Abbé, it is wrong to lend all these costly articles to poor people and artisans who have not a cent."

"Why so? Since the feast of St. Lazarus has been celebrated here, have you ever heard, Dame Dulceline, that any of those precious jewels have been lost or stolen?"

"Good God in Heaven! Never, M. Abbé, neither here, nor in Marseilles, nor in all Provence, I believe. Thank God, our youth is honest, after all! For instance, last year Mlle. Reine loaned her Venetian girdle, which Stephanette says cost more than two thousand crowns. Ah, well! Thereson, the daughter of the miller at Pointe-aux-Cailles, who wore this costly ornament during all the feast, came and brought it back before sunset, although she had permission to keep it till night. And for this same feast of St. Lazarus, monseigneur loaned to Pierron, the fisherman of Maison-Forte, his beautiful gold chain, and his medallion set with rubies, that Master Laramée cleans, as you told him to do, with teardrops of the vine."

"That is true; and if one can mix with these teardrops of the vine a tear of a stag killed in venison season, Dame Dulceline, the rubies will shine like sparks of fire."

"Ah, well, M. Abbé, Pierron, the fisherman, brought back faithfully that precious chain even before the appointed hour. I repeat, M. Abbé, our youth is an honest youth, but I do not see the use of risking the loss, not by theft, but by accident, of beautiful jewels, for the pleasure of seeing these young people dance the old Provençal dances in the streets and roads, to the sound of tambourines and cymbalettes and flutes, that play the national airs, oubados and bedocheos, until you are deaf."

"Ah, well, Dame Dulceline," said Mascarolus, smiling sweetly, "you are going to learn that you were wrong not to see in this custom, too, a lesson and a use. When mademoiselle loaned to Thereson, the poor daughter of a miller, a costly ornament, she showed a blind confidence in the girl; now, Dame Dulceline, confidence begets honesty and prevents dishonesty. That is not all; in giving Thereson the pleasure of wearing this ornament for one day, our young mistress showed her at the same time the charm and the nothingness of it, and then, as this pleasure is not forbidden to the poor people, they do not look on it with jealousy. This custom, in fact, establishes delightful relations between rich and poor, which are based on probity, confidence, and community of interest What do you think now of the dance of St. Elmo, Dame Dulceline?"

"I think, M. Chaplain, that, although I have no jewels but a cross and a gold chain, I will lend them with a good heart to young Madelon, the best worker in my laundry, on the next feast of St. Lazarus, because every time I take this gold cross out of its box the poor girl devours it with her eyes, and I am sure that she will be wild with joy. But I am getting bewildered, M. Abbé; I brought some pure oil to fill the two Christmas lamps,

which mademoiselle is to light, and I was about to forget them."

"Speaking of oil, Dame Dulceline, do not forget to fill well with oil that jug in which I have steeped those two beautiful bunches of grapes. I wish to attempt the experiment cited by M. de Maucaunys."

"What experiment, M. Abbé?"

"This erudite and veracious traveller pretends that by leaving bunches of grapes, gathered on the day which marks the middle of September, in a jug of pure oil for seven months, the oil will acquire such a peculiar property that whenever it burns in a lamp whose light is thrown on the wall or the floor, thousands of bunches of grapes will appear on this wall or floor, perfect in colour, but as deceptive as objects painted on glass." Dame Dulceline was just about to testify her admiration for the good and credulous chaplain, when she heard in the court the sound of carriage and horses, which announced the return of Raimond V.

She disappeared precipitately. The door opened, and Raimond V. entered the gallery with several ladies and gentlemen, friends and their wives, who had also been present at the midnight mass in the parochial church of La Ciotat.

The baron and the other men were in holiday attire, and the women in that dress which going and coming on horseback rendered necessary, inasmuch as carriages were very rare.

Although the countenance of Raimond V. was always joyous and cordial when he welcomed his guests at Maison-Forte, an expression of sadness from time to time now came over his features, for he had relinquished all hope of seeing his brothers at this family festival.

The guests of the baron all admired the cradle Dame Dulceline had prepared with so much skill, and the chaplain received the praises of the company with as much modesty as gratitude.

Honorât de Berrol appeared more melancholy than ever.

Reine, on the contrary, realising the necessity for making him forget the refusal of her hand, which she had at last decided upon, by means of various evidences of kindness and friendship, treated the young man with cousinly esteem and affection.

Nevertheless, she was conscious of a painful embarrassment; she had not yet informed the baron of her determination not to marry Honorât de Berrol. She had only obtained her father's consent to have the nuptials delayed until the return of the commander and Father Elzear, who, from what was implied in their last letters, might arrive at any moment.

Eulogies on the cradle seemed inexhaustible, when the baron, approaching the company of admiring guests, said: "My opinion is, ladies, that we had better begin the *cachofué*, for this hall is very damp and cold, and the fire is only waiting to blaze!"

The *cachofué*, or *feu caché*, was an old Provençal ceremony, which consisted of bringing in a Christmas log and lighting it every evening until the New Year. This log was lighted and extinguished, so that it would last the given time.

"Yes, yes, the *cachofué*, baron!" exclaimed the ladies, gaily. "You are to be the actor in the ceremony, so the time to begin depends on you."

"Alas! my friends, I hoped indeed that this honoured ceremony of our fathers would have been more complete, and that my brother the commander would have brought with him my good brother Elzear. But that is not to be thought of for this night at least."

"The Lord grant that the commander may arrive soon with his black galley," said one of the ladies to the baron. "These wicked pirates, whom we all dread, would not dare make a descent if they knew he was in port." "The pirates to the devil, good cousin!" cried the baron, gaily. "The watchman is spying them from the height of Cape l'Aigle; at his first signal all the coast will be in arms. The port of La Ciotat is armed; the citizens and fishermen are keeping Christmas with only one hand, they have the other on their muskets; my cannon and small guns are loaded, and ready to fire on the entrance to the port, if these sea-robbers dare show themselves. Manjour! my guests and cousins, if I had obeyed the Marshal of Vitry, at this hour my house would be disarmed and out of condition to defend the city."

"And you did very bravely, baron," said the lord of Signerol, "to act as you did. Now the example has been given and the marshal will meddle no longer with our affairs."

"Manjour! I hope so indeed. If he does, we will meddle with his," said the baron. "But where is my young comrade of the *cachofué?*" added he. "I am the eldest, but I must have the youngest to go for the Christmas log."

"Here is the dear child, father," said Reine, leading a beautiful boy of six years, with large blue eyes, rosy cheeks, and lovely curls, up to the baron. His mother, a cousin of the baron, looked at the boy with pride, not unmixed with fear, for she suspected that he might not be equal to the complicated rôle necessary to be played in this patriarchal ceremony.

"Are you sure you understand what is to be done, my little Cæsar?" asked the baron, bending over the little boy.

"Yes, yes, monseigneur. Last year, at grandfather's house, I carried the Christmas log," replied the child, with a capable and resolute air.

"The linnet will become a hawk, I promise you, my cousin," said the baron to the mother, delighted with the child's self-confidence.

Raimond V. then took the little fellow by the hand, and, followed by his guests, he descended to the door of Maison-Forte, which opened into the inner court, before beginning the ceremony of the *cachofué*.

All the inmates and dependents of the castle, labourers, farmers, fishermen, vine-dressers, servants, women, children, and old men, were assembled in the court.

Although the light of the moon was quite bright, a large number of torches, made of resinous wood fastened to poles, illuminated the court and the interior buildings of Maison-Forte.

In the middle of the court were collected the combustibles necessary to kindle an immense pile of wood,

which was to be set on fire the same moment that the *cachofué* in the hall of the dais was lighted.

Raimond V. appeared before the assembly attended by four lackeys in livery, who walked before him, bearing candlesticks with white wax candles. He was followed by his family and his guests.

At the sight of the baron, cries of “Long live monseigneur!” resounded on all sides.

In front of the door on the ground lay a large olive-tree, the trunk and branches. It was the Christmas log.

Abbé Mascarolus, in cassock and surplice, commenced the ceremony by blessing the Christmas log, or the *calignaou*, as it was called in the Provençal language; then the child approached, followed by Laramée, who, in his costume of majordomo, bore on a silver tray a gold cup filled with wine.

The child took the cup in his little hands and poured, three times, a few drops of wine on the *calignaou*, or Christmas log, and recited, in a sweet and silvery voice, the old Provençal verse, always said upon this solemn occasion:

“‘Allègre, Diou nous allègre,

Cachofué ven, tou ben ven,

Diou nous fague la grace de veire l’an que ven,

Se si an pas mai, que signen pas men.’”

“Oh, let us be joyful, God gives us all joy;

Cachofué comes, and it comes all to bless;

God grant we may live to see the New Year;

But if we are no more, may we never be less!”

These innocent words, recited by the child with charming grace, were listened to with religious solemnity.

Then the child wet his lips with the wine in the cup, and presented it to Raimond V., who did likewise, and the cup passed from hand to hand, among all the members of the baron’s family, until each one had wet his lips with the consecrated beverage.

Then twelve foresters in holiday dress lifted the calignaou, and carried it into the hall of the dais, while, in conformity to the law of the ceremony, Raimond V. held in his hand one of the roots of the tree, and the child held one of the branches; the old man saying, “Black roots are old age,” and the child answering, “Green branches are youth,” and the assistants adding in chorus, “God bless us all, who love him and serve him!”

The log, borne into the hall on the robust shoulders of the foresters, was placed in the immense fireplace, whereupon the child took a pine torch, and held it to a pile of fir-apples and boughs; a tall white flame sparkled in the vast, black hearth, and threw a joyous radiance to the farther end of the gallery.

“Christmas, Christmas!” cried the guests of the baron, clapping their hands.

“Christmas! Christmas!” repeated the vassals assembled in the interior court.

At the same moment, the pile of wood outside was kindled, and the tall yellow flames mounted in the midst of enthusiastic shouts, and whirls of a Provençal dance.

One other last ceremony was to take place, and then the guests would gather around the supper-table.

Reine advanced to the cradle, and Stephanette brought to her a wooden bowl filled with the corn of St. Barbara, which was already green. For it was the custom in Provence, every fourth of December, St Barbara’s day, to sow grains of corn in a porringer filled with earth frequently watered. This wet earth was exposed to a very high temperature, and the com grew rapidly. If it was green, it predicted a good harvest, if it was yellow, the harvest would be bad.

Mlle, des Anbiez placed the wooden bowl at the foot of the cradle, and on each side of this offering lit two little square silver lamps, called in the Provençal tongue the lamps of Calenos, or Christmas lamps.

“St Barbara’s corn, green; fine harvests all the year!” cried the baron: “so may my harvests and your harvests be, my guests and cousins! Now to the table, yes, to the table, friends, and then come the Christmas presents for friends and relations!”

Master Laramée opened the folding doors which led to the dining-room, and announced supper. It is needless to speak of the abundance of this meal, worthy in every respect of the hospitality of Raimond V.

What, however, we must not fail to remark, is that there were three table-cloths, in conformity to another ancient custom.

On the smallest, which was in the middle of the table, in the style of a centre-piece, were the presents of fruits and cakes that the members of the family made to their head.

On the second, a little larger and lapping over the first, were arranged the national dishes of the simplest character, such as bouillabaisse, a fish-soup, famous in Provence, and broiled salt tunny.

Lastly, on the third cloth, which covered the rest of the table, were the choicest dishes in abundance, and artistically arranged.

We will leave the guests of Raimond V. to the enjoyment of a patriarchal hospitality as they discussed old customs, and grew excited over arguments relating to freedom and ancient privileges, always so respected and so valiantly defended by those who remain faithful to the pathetic and religious traditions of the olden time.

That happy, peaceful evening was but too soon interrupted by the events to which we will now introduce the reader.

CHAPTER XXX. THE ARREST

While Raimond V. and his guests were supping gaily, the company of soldiers seen by the watchman, about fifty men belonging to the regiment of Guitry, had arrived almost at the door of Maison-Forte.

The recorder Isnard, followed by his clerk, as usual, said to Captain Georges, who commanded the detachment:

“It would be prudent, captain, to try a summons before attacking by force, in order to take possession of the person of Raimond V. There are about fifty well-armed men in his lair behind good walls.”

“Eh! what matters the walls to me?”

“But, besides the walls, there is a bridge, and you see, captain, it is up.”

“Eh! what do I care for the bridge? If Raimond V. refuses to lower it—ah, well, zounds! my carabineers will assault the place; that happened more than once in the last war! If necessary, we will attach a petard to the door, but let it be understood, recorder, that, whatever happens, you are to follow us to make an official report.”

“Hum! hum!” grunted the man of law. “Without doubt, I and my clerk must assist you; I shall be able, even under that circumstance, to note the good conduct and zeal of the aforesaid clerk in charging him with this honourable mission.”

“But, Master Isnard, that is your office, and not mine!” said the unhappy clerk.

“Silence, my clerk, we are here before Maison-Forte. The moments are precious. Do you prepare to follow the captain and obey me!”

The company had, in fact, reached the end of the sycamore walk, which bordered the half-circle.

The bridge was up, and the windows opening on the interior court were brilliant with light, as the baron’s guests had departed but a little while.

“You see, captain, the bridge is up, and more, the moat is wide and deep, and full of water,” said the recorder.

Captain Georges carefully examined the entrances of the place; after a few moments of silence, he pulled his moustache on the left side violently,—a sure sign of his disappointment.

A sentinel, standing inside the court, seeing the glitter of arms in the moonlight, cried, in a loud voice:

“Who goes there? Answer, or I will fire!”

The recorder jumped back three steps, hid himself behind the captain, and replied, in a high voice:

“In the name of the king and the cardinal, I, Master Isnard, recorder of the admiralty of Toulon, command you to lower this bridge!”

“You will not depart?” said the voice. At the same time a light shone from one of the loopholes for guns which defended the entrance. It was easy to judge that the sentinel was blowing the match of his musket.

“Take care!” cried Isnard. “Your master will be held responsible for what you are going to do!”

This warning made the soldier reflect; he fired his musket in the air, at the same time crying the word of alarm in a stentorian voice.

“He has fired on the king’s soldiers!” cried the recorder, pale with anger and fright “It is an act of armed rebellion. I saw it. Clerk, make a note of that act!”

“No, recorder,” said the captain, “he has barked, but he has not desired to murder. I saw the light, too, and he fired in the air to give the alarm.”

In answer to the sentinel’s cries, several lights appeared above the walls; numerous precipitate steps, and a great clang of arms were heard in the court At last, Master Laramée, a helmet on his head and his breast armed with a cuirass, appeared at one of the embrasures of the gate.

“In the name of God, what do you want?” cried he. “Is this the time, pray, to come here and trouble good people who are keeping Christmas?”

“We have an order from the king which we come to put into execution,” said the recorder, “and I—”

“I have some wine left yet in my glass, recorder; good evening, I am going to empty it,” said Laramée, “only, remember the bulls, and know that a musket-ball reaches farther than their horns. So, now, good-night, recorder!” “Think well on what you are going to do, insolent scoundrel,” said Captain Georges; “you are not dealing this time with a wet hen of a recorder, but with a fight-ing-cock, who has a hard beak and sharp spurs, I warn you.”

“The fact is, Master Isnard,” said the clerk, humbly, to the recorder, “we are to this soldier what a pumpkin is to an artillery ball.”

The recorder, already very much offended by the captain’s comparison, rudely repulsed the clerk, and, addressing Laramée with great importance, said:

“You have this time, at your door, the right and the power, the hand and the sword of justice. So, majordomo, I order you to open and to lower the bridge.”

A well-known voice interrupted the recorder; it was that of Raimond V., who had been informed of the arrival of the captain. Escorted by Laramée, who carried a torch, the old gentleman appeared erect upon the little platform that formed the entablature of the gate masked by the drawbridge.

The fluctuating light of the torch threw red reflections on the group of soldiers, and shone upon their steel collars and iron head-pieces; half of the scene being in the shade or lighted by the rays of the moon.

Raimond V. wore his holiday attire, richly braided with gold, and his white hair fell over his lace collar. Nothing was more dignified, more imposing or manly than his attitude.

“What do you want?” said he, in a sonorous voice. Master Isnard repeated the formula of his speech, and

concluded by declaring that Raimond V., Baron des Anbiez, was arrested, and would be conducted under a safe escort to the prison of the provost of Marseilles, for the crime of rebellion against the orders of the king.

The baron listened to the recorder in profound silence. When the man of law had finished, cries of indignation, howls, and threats, uttered by the dependents of the baron, resounded through the interior court.

Raimond V. turned around, commanded silence, and replied to the recorder:

“You wished to visit my castle illegally, and to exercise in it an authority contrary to the rights of the Provençal nobility. I drove you away with my whip. I did what I ought to have done. Now, Manjour! I cannot allow myself to be arrested for having done what I ought to have done in chastising a villain of your species. Now, execute the orders with which you are charged,—I will not prevent you, any more than I prevented your visit to my magazine of artillery. I regret the departure of my guests, for they also, in their name, would have protested against the oppression of the tyranny of Marseilles.” This speech from the baron was welcomed with cries of joy by the garrison of Maison-Forte.

Raimond V. was about to descend from his pedestal when Captain Georges, who had the rough language and abrupt manners of an old soldier, advanced on the other side of the moat; he took his hat in his hand, and said to Raimond V., in a respectful tone:

“Monseigneur, I must inform you of one thing, which is, that I have with me fifty determined soldiers, and that I am resolved, though to my regret, to execute my orders.”

“Execute them, my brave friend,” said the baron, smiling, with a jocose manner, “execute them. Your marshal wishes to know if my powder is good; he instructs you to be the gunpowder prover. We will begin the trial whenever you wish.”

“Captain, this is too much parley,” cried the recorder. “I order you this instant to employ force of arms to take possession of this rebel against the commands of the king, our master, and to—”

“Recorder, I have no orders to receive from you; only take care not to put yourself between the lance and the cuirass,—you might come to grief,” said the captain, imperiously, to Master Isnard.

Then, turning to the baron, he said, with as much firmness as deference:

“For the last time, monseigneur, I beseech you to consider well: the blood of your vassals will flow; you are going to kill old soldiers who have no animosity against you or yours, and all that, monseigneur,—permit an old graybeard to speak to you frankly,—all that because you wish to rebel against the orders of the king. May God forgive you, monseigneur, for causing the death of so many brave men, and me, for drawing the sword against one of the most worthy gentlemen of the province; but I am a soldier, and I must obey the orders I have received.”

This simple and noble language made a profound impression on Raimond V. He bowed his head in silence, remained thoughtful for some minutes, then he descended from the platform. Murmurs inside were distinctly heard, dominated by the ringing voice of the baron. At the same instant the bridge was lowered and the gate opened; Raimond V. appeared, and said to the captain, as he offered his hand with a dignified and cordial air:

“Enter, sir, enter; you are a brave and honest soldier. Although my head is white, it is sometimes as foolish as a boy’s. I was wrong. It is true, you must obey the orders which have been given to you. It is not to you, it is to the Marshal of Vitry that I should express my opinion of his conduct toward the Provençal nobility. These brave men ought not to be the victims of my resistance. To-morrow at the break of day, if you will, we will depart for Marseilles.”

“Ah, monseigneur,” said the captain, pressing the hand of Raimond V. with emotion, and bowing with respect, “it is now that I really despair of the mission that I am to fulfil.”

The baron was about to reply to the captain when a distant, but dreadful noise rose on the air, attracting the attention of all those who filled the court of Maison-Forte. It was like the hollow roar of the sea in its fury.

Suddenly a tremendous light illuminated the horizon in the direction of La Ciotat, and the bells of the convent and the church began to sound the alarm.

The first idea that entered the baron’s mind was that the city was on fire.

“Fire!” cried he, “La Ciotat is on fire! Captain, you have my word, I am your prisoner, but let us run to the city. You with your soldiers, I with my people, we can be useful there.”

“I am at your orders, monseigneur.”

At that moment the prolonged, reverberating sound of artillery made the shore tremble with its echoes, and shook the windows of Maison-Forte.

“Cannon! Those are the pirates! The watchman to the devil for allowing us to be surprised! The pirates! To arms, captain! to arms! These demons are attacking the city. Laramée, my sword! Captain, to horse! to horse! You can take me prisoner to-morrow, but to-night let us run to defend this unfortunate city.”

“But, monseigneur, your house—”

“The devil take them if they venture here! Laramée and twenty men could defend it against an entire army. But this unfortunate city is surprised. Quick! to horse! to horse!”

The roar of the artillery became more and more frequent. All the bells were ringing,—a deep rumbling sound reached as far as Maison-Forte,—and the flames increased in number and intensity.

Laramée, in all haste, brought the baron’s helmet and cuirass. Raimond V. took the helmet, but would not hear of the cuirass.

“Manjour! what time have I to fasten that paraphernalia? Quick, bring Mistraon to me,” cried he, running to the stable.

He found Mistraon bridled, but, seeing that it required some time to saddle him, he mounted the horse barebacked, told Laramée to keep twenty men for the defence of Maison-Forte, commended his daughter to his care, and took, in hot haste, the road to La Ciotat.

CHAPTER XXXI. THE DESCENT

As the baron and the captain approached the city, they saw the whirlwind of flames more distinctly.

The bells continued to ring at random; a thousand cries, more or less distinct, mingled with the bursts of musketry and the roar of artillery from the galleys.

When they arrived behind the walls of the Ursuline convent, situated at the extreme end of the city, Raimond V. said: “Captain, let us halt here a moment to collect our people and agree upon operations. Manjour! I feel young again; the blood thickens in my veins. I have not felt that since the wars of Piedmont; it is because a pirate is worse than a foreigner, and in the civil wars, a man’s heart is oppressed in spite of himself. Silence!” said the baron to his troops as he turned around. “Let us hear where the firing comes from.”

After listening closely for some minutes, he said to the captain: “Will you listen to my counsel?”

“I will follow your orders, monseigneur, for I am not well acquainted with La Ciotat.”

Then, addressing one of his men, Raimond V. said: “Do you conduct the captain and his soldiers to the port, going around the city so as not to be seen. When you are there, captain, if there are any more demons to land, you will drive them back to their galleys; if they have all disembarked, do you wait until they return, so as to cut off their retreat; during that time, I will try to beat them up for you like a herd of wild boars.”

“In what part of the city do you think they are, monseigneur?”

“As far as I can judge by the noise of the musketry, they are in the town-hall square, occupied in plundering the houses of the richest citizens. They will not dare venture farther in, as no doubt they are in communication with the port by a little street which goes from that place to the wharf. So, then, captain, to the port,—to the port! let us rather throw these villains back into the sea, than into their vessels. If God gives me life I will expect you at Maison-Forte after the affair, for I do not forget that I am your prisoner. To the port, captain! to the port!”

“Count on me, monseigneur,” said the captain, hastening his march in the direction indicated.

“Now, my children,” said the baron, “keep silence, and let us hurry to the town hall, and put all these brigands to the sword. Our Lady! and forward!” Raimond V. then descended from his horse, and entered the streets of La Ciotat at the head of a determined body of men, full of confidence in their leader.

As Raimond V. approached the centre of action, he recognised, here and there, women who uttered heartrending cries, as they ran in the direction of the mountain, followed by their weeping children, and carrying on their heads their most precious possessions.

In other places, priests and distracted monks, seized with the panic of terror, had left their houses, where they were peaceably keeping Christmas, and were running to throw themselves at the foot of the church altar.

In many deserted streets, armed men stood at their windows, resolved to defend their houses and their families to the utmost, and were thoroughly prepared to give the pirates a vigorous reception.

Clouds of sparks and cinders were encountered by the resolute troops as they steadily marched, and the whirling flames made the streets they crossed as bright as broad day.

At last they reached the square, and, as the baron had foreseen, the principal action was on that side of the town.

The pirates rarely ventured into the streets remote from the coast, for fear of being cut off from their vessels.

It is impossible to paint the spectacle which struck Raimond V. with horror. By the light of the dazzling flames, he saw a part of the pirates engaged in a bloody combat with a number of fishermen and citizens entrenched in the upper story of the town hall.

Other corsairs, thinking only of plunder,—these belonged to the galley of Trimalcyon,—ran like so many demons across the conflagration they had kindled, some laden with costly articles, and others bearing in their robust arms women and young girls, who uttered shrieks of agony and terror.

The ground was already strewn with bodies riddled with wounds, unfortunate victims who at least bore testimony to a desperate resistance on the part of the inhabitants.

Near the middle of the square, and not far from the little street which conducted to the port, could be seen a confused mass of all sorts of objects guarded by two Moors.

The pirates increased this pile of plunder every moment, by coming there and throwing down additional booty, then returning to pillage and murder with renewed ardour.

The number of brave sailors and citizens, who were defending themselves in the town hall, began to diminish sensibly under the blows of the spahis of Pog, who thirsted far more for blood than for pillage.

Armed with a hatchet, Pog attacked the door with fury, voluntarily exposing his life. He wore neither helmet nor cuirass, and was only clothed in his yellek of black velvet.

At the height of this attack Raimond V. arrived on the square.

His troops announced their presence by a general discharge of musketry on the assailants of the town hall.

The pirates, attacked unawares, turned and threw themselves in a rage against the soldiers of the baron. Each side then abandoned firearms. A hand to hand struggle ensued; the conflict became bloody, terrible beyond words to describe. The band of Trimalcyon, seeing this unexpected reinforcement, left their pillage and rallied around Fog’s pirates, surrounding the little company of Raimond V., who was performing prodigies of valour.

The old gentleman seemed to recover the strength of the years of his youth. Armed with a heavy boar-spear, which was provided with a sharp and well-tempered bayonet, he employed this murderous weapon, both lance and club, with tremendous power, and although his helmet was broken in several places and his sword-belt covered with blood, Raimond V., in his enthusiasm as a warrior, did not feel his wounds.

Carried along on the wave of battle, Pog suddenly found himself face to face with the baron. His pale, haughty face, his long red beard, were too conspicuous not to have made a lively impression on Raimond V.

He recognised in this pirate one of the two strangers who accompanied Erebus, at the time of the meeting in the gorges of Ollioules.

“It is the Muscovite who accompanied the brave young man to whom I owe my life,” cried Raimond V.; then he added, as he lifted his spear: “Ah! wild bear, you come from the ice of the north to ravage our provinces!”

And with these words Raimond V. aimed a terrible blow full in the breast. Pog avoided the blow by a quick movement in retreat, but his arm was run through.

“I am a Frenchman, like you,” cried the renegade, with a brutal sneer, “and it is French blood for which I thirst! That your death may be more bitter, know that your daughter is in my power!”

At these terrible words, the baron stood for a moment, bewildered.

Pog profited by his inaction to strike him a terrible blow on the head with his battle-axe. The baron’s helmet had already been broken; he staggered a moment like a drunken man, then fell unconscious.

“Another one of these Provençal bulls killed!” cried Pog, brandishing his battle-axe.

“Let us avenge our lord!” cried the people of Raimond V., hurling themselves at the pirates with such fury that they drove them back into the little street which led to the port.

Soon, reinforced by the sailors who had been besieged in the town hall, and whom the attack of Raimond V. had just delivered, they had such a decided advantage over the pirates, that the trumpets of the latter sounded a retreat.

At this signal, a part of the brigands formed in good order in the middle of the square, under the command of Pog. Then they made a vigorous resistance so as to give the other pirates time to transport their booty on board the galleys, and to drag to these vessels the men and women they had captured.

Remaining master of the position that he had defended, Pog covered the entrance of the little street leading to the port, and thus assured the retreat of the band of Trimalcyon, occupied in dragging the captives on board the galleys.

Pog, yielding the ground to his enemies, foot by foot, fell back into the little street, sure that his communication with the port and the galleys could not be intercepted, and that he could effect his reëmbarkation without danger. The street was so narrow that twenty determined men could defend it against ten times the number.

The rumour of the pirates’ retreat was spread through the city, and all the inhabitants who, entrenched in their houses, either from fear or a desire to watch over their dearest interests, had not dared to venture out, now rushed into the streets and joined the combatants, whose number increased in proportion as that of the pirates diminished.

Pog, although wounded in the head and arm, continued his retreat with rare intrepidity.

He was only a few steps from what he believed to be a place of safety. It proved to be otherwise.

The freebooters, who had directed their steps toward the port, in order to regain their galleys, fell into the ambuscade of Captain Georges.

Vigorously attacked by these fresh troops, the pirates fell into disorder in the little street, at the very moment when Pog entered it at the opposite end. Thus, caught in this narrow way, the two outlets of which were obstructed by assailants, the pirates found themselves between two fires.

From the side of the square they were attacked by the baron’s troops; from the side of the port, by the carabineers of Captain Georges.

Trimalcyon remained on board his galley, having that of Pog temporarily under his orders. At some distance from the quay, he awaited the return of the long-boats, which were to bring on board the booty and the pirates.

One of their number, throwing himself in the water, went to inform him of the danger which threatened his companions. Then Trimalcyon resorted to extreme measures. He had the irons removed from a part of the crew, armed them, and approached his galleys so near the quay that their beak-heads served as a landing-place, and at the head of this reinforcement, he, uttering a wild cry, threw himself upon the soldiers of Captain Georges, who in his turn found himself between two fires. Fog’s company, which had kept the street, sure of being supported, made a last effort against the carabineers, already attacked behind by Trimalcyon, cut their way through, operating in union with Trimalcyon’s men, and after a great loss, succeeded in gaining their vessels, carrying with them several prisoners, among whom were Master Isnard and his clerk.

The boldest of the sailors and citizens, and almost all of the carabineers of Captain Georges, jumped into their boats to pursue the pirates.

Unfortunately the advantage was on the side of the galleys.

Their ten pieces of artillery struck the boats which tried to approach them. Then the galley, by vigorous use of oars, rapidly gained the outlet of the port, and prepared to double the point of Verte Island.

Pog was standing in the stem of the Red Galleon; he was pale, his hair and his clothes were full of blood; he threw a look of sullen triumph on the flames which continued to rise in the centre of the city.

Suddenly a cannon-shot resounded; a ball whistled above his head, and carried off a part of his galley’s stem. He turned around quickly. A second ball killed four of the galley-slaves and tore away the first seat of the rowers.

By a little cloud of whitish smoke which crowned the embattled terrace of Maison-Forte, that could be seen in the distance by moonlight, the pirate recognised the spot whence these projectiles were sent.

From his acquaintance with the habits of war, he perceived, from the great distance at which these missiles were fired, that they must have been shot by a culverin of large calibre, and consequently he could not return the fire, as the artillery of the *Red Galleon* was unable to carry to such a distance.

These first shots were followed by several others, not less happy, which caused considerable damage either on board the *Red Galleon* or the *Sybarite*.

“Hell and damnation!” cried Pog. “So long as we do not double the point of the bay, we will be under the fire of that hovel! Ply your oars faster, dogs,” cried he, addressing the crew. “Ply your oars faster, I tell you, or when I reach Tripoli, I will have your arms cut off to the shoulder!”

The crew had no need of that encouragement to redouble their efforts; the dead bodies of slaves killed by the cannon-balls, and still chained to the benches where their companions were rowing, proved to them the danger of remaining under the fire of that murderous culverin.

That piece, however, continued to aim with such marvellous accuracy, that it sent several balls on board the two galleys.

“Death and fury!” cried Pog, “once out of this channel I will go and anchor at the foot of the rocks within half-range of the musket, and there shall not remain one stone on another of the house where that culverin is in battery.”

“Impossible, Captain Pog,” said a Frenchman, a renegade Provençal, who served as pilot. “The Black Rocks extend between wind and water more than half a league from the coast, and you would be sure to lose your galley, if you tried to come nearer to Maison-Forte.”

The pirate made a gesture of rage, and promenaded the deck in great agitation.

Finally the two galleys got out of the dangerous pass where they had been caught.

The artillery of Maison-Forte had disabled many men, and had damaged them to such a degree that they would be compelled to anchor promptly in some harbour on the coast, before they would be able to set sail for Tripoli.

The *Sybarite* had received several shots below her water-line, and the *Red Galleon* had her tree cut in two.

When they had doubled the promontory of Cape l’Aigle, the master carpenter of the galley, a renegade Calabrian, a good sailor and a man of great courage, came forward with a solemn air to Pog-Reis, and said: “Captain, I have daubed as much as I possibly can the damages in the peel, but they are too large, and a thorough refitting is absolutely necessary, for if we have stormy weather, we will not stand the sea two hours with such injuries.”

Pog made no reply, but continued walking the deck with agitation; then he called the pilot and said to him: “Can we not anchor a day or two in the islands of Ste. Marguerite or St Honorât? They say these islands are not armed. You left the coast a year ago; is it true?”

“It is true,” answered the pilot “There ought to be good anchorage in the isles of Pieres and St. Feriol, on the windward of St. Honorât?” asked Pog, who was acquainted with these islands.

“Yes, captain, the coast is so high, and the harbour so protected by the rocks which form these islands, that the galleys will be hidden better there than at Port-Cros.”

“There are not, I believe, fifty inhabitants on the island?” asked Pog.

“Not more, captain, and twenty men at the outside; there is besides a very convenient shore for careening the ship.”

“Then steer for those islands; we ought to be about twenty-five leagues distant.”

“Thirty leagues, captain.”

“That is a great deal for the damage we have sustained, but it is, however, our surest place to put in. We will be there in a day if the wind is favourable.”

The galley of Trimalcyon, as well as the chebec, followed the manoeuvres of the *Red Galleon*, and the three vessels crowded sail toward the island of St Honorât, situated on the coast of Provence, a short distance from Cannes.

These orders given, Pog estimated the losses sustained by his crew; they were quite numerous. Sixteen soldiers had been killed in La Ciotat, and there were a great many wounded men on board.

Besides, the culverin of Maison-Forte had, as we have seen, killed four of the galley-slaves.

They unchained the bodies and threw them into the sea, and replaced them with five soldiers.

The wounded were more or less cared for by a Moor, who performed the functions of surgeon.

Pog had two wounds; one in the head, the other in the arm.

The baron’s spear had given this last wound, which was very deep, but the one in his head was comparatively insignificant.

The Moor who discharged the duties of surgeon had just completed the first dressing of these wounds, when the chebec of Erebus, under full sail, approached the galley of Pog, and ranged herself within reach of his voice.

CHAPTER XXXII. THE CHEBEC

We will now retrace our steps in order to inform the reader what were the manoeuvres of this chebec, during the attack on La Ciotat, in which it took no part. We will also tell how Reine des Anbiez fell into the power of Erebus.

The Bohemian, after having put the watchman to sleep by means of a narcotic, descended to the shore, and reached the point of land behind which the galleys and the chebec of the pirates awaited his arrival, conformable to the instructions he had sent to Pog-Reis by a second pigeon.

Hadji, in spite of the cold, bravely plunged into the water and soon reached the *Red Galleon*, which was resting on her oars a little distance from the coast.

After a long conversation with Pog-Reis, to whom he gave the necessary information to assure the success of his descent upon La Ciotat, the Bohemian, following the orders of Pog, returned on board the chebec commanded by Erebus.

This vessel was to take no part in the action, but was to approach Maison-Forte in order to assist in the abduction of Reine des Anbiez.

As soon as the young girl was in the power of Erebus, the chebec had the order, to give the signal, upon which the galleys of the pirates would begin their attack upon the city.

During the combat the chebec was to serve as light-ship and cruiser at large, so as to give the alarm to the pirates if by chance the royal galleys of the Duke de Brézé appeared in the west.

These plans agreed upon, the chebec, separating herself from the galleys, and doubling the promontory, under the guidance of the Bohemian, who was well acquainted with the localities, advanced toward the belt of rocks which extended at the foot of Maison-Forte.

As a consequence of his conversation with Pog the day before, Erebus had taken a fit of the most profound sadness.

In one of those frequent and bitter moments of introspection, he had seen his conduct in its true light; he was moved to pity as he thought of the misfortunes soon to befall this defenceless city, and when the posts of action were being distributed, he had formally declared to Pog that he would take no part in this new deed of robbery.

Pog, who always urged him to evil, did not oppose this resolution, but even encouraged it, and advised Erebus to take advantage of this opportunity to abduct Mile, des Anbiez.

As a necessary sequence he left him all liberty of manoeuvre to execute this project.

Erebus accepted; he had his designs.

Since his first singular meeting with Reine, since, especially, the report of Hadji had made him believe that he was loved, his passion for the young girl had increased with each day of his life.

The Bohemian, in praising to him the sweetness, the charms, the mind, and the loftiness of character possessed by Mlle, des Anbiez, had aroused in his soul the noblest although the most undefined hopes.

His last conversation with Pog decided him to risk everything to realise those hopes.

He had often heard Pog give vent to his cruel misanthropy, but never had the wickedness of the man, the baseness of the motives which instigated and controlled his actions, been so revealed, and finding he was not bound to him by any tie which demanded his respect, he resolved to avail himself of the first opportunity which offered to escape his influence.

He affected, then, some hours before the enterprise which was designed to lay La Ciotat in ruins, a brutal and licentious gaiety.

Pog was, or appeared to be, the dupe of these demonstrations. As we have said, he gave Erebus entire liberty to conduct the abduction of Reine, and Erebus, eager to profit from this permission, confided his plans to Hadji, from whom he received valuable suggestions.

Doubtless his action was criminal, but the unhappy young man, reared, as we may say, outside the pale of society, knowing only the intensity of his own desires, loving passionately and believing himself not less passionately loved, could not hesitate a moment before this determination.

As soon as they came in sight of Maison-Forte, the chebec lay to, and Erebus descended into a small boat with Hadji and four capable rowers.

The Bohemian had profited from his sojourn on the coast, and thus directed the little craft across the reefs and quicksands until it was moored under the shelter of a rock.

At this moment the guests of Raimond V. had just left him, the Christmas feast being ended, and the recorder Isnard, assisted by Captain Georges, had not arrived to arrest the old gentleman.

Erebus, Hadji, and the four rowers landed and cautiously advanced to the foot of the embattled walls of Maison-Forte.

It will be remembered that the Bohemian had often scaled these walls in order to exhibit his agility before the eyes of Stephanette and Reine.

The moon was shining, but the shadow projected by the massive buildings of Maison-Forte had covered the descent and march of the six pirates.

A sentinel who promenaded the terrace perceived nothing.

The windows in the gallery of the castle flamed with light, but those belonging to Reine’s oratory were dark.

Hadji thought very naturally that Mlle, des Anbiez had not yet retired to her apartments.

He proposed to Erebus to wait until Reine should return to her oratory, then scale the wall, stab the sentinel, and, once masters of the terrace, climb up to the balcony as he had often done during his stay at Maison-Forte.

The window could be broken open, and the cries of Mlle, des Anbiez could be stifled by gagging her. The descent from the window to the terrace was comparatively easy, and from the terrace to the rocks. The girl could be carried down by mean of a sort of girdle, contrived for the landing or embarking of recalcitrant slaves, with which the Bohemian was provisionally furnished.

In case of alarm, the pirates relied upon their address and intrepidity to make good their escape to the boat

before the inmates of Maison-Forte could reach them.

The plan was accepted by Erebus, who only opposed the murder of the sentinel. To that he would not give his consent.

The four pirates then prepared to scale the walls, leaving two rowers in the boat. The sentinel was walking on the side opposite to that on which they intended to climb to the terrace.

Hadji, followed by one of his companions, climbed the wall with the aid of holes which time had worn, and the long branches of ivy which had taken root in the hollows of the stones.

Having reached the summit of the wall, the pirates perceived, to their great joy, that the sentry-box stood between them and the sentinel, and thus hid them from his view.

The moment was critical. They leaped upon the platform of the fortification. At the instant in which the soldier in his regular march returned to the sentry-box, Hadji and his companion threw themselves on him with the rapidity of lightning.

Hadji placed his two hands over the sentinel’s mouth, while his companion seized his musket; then, by the aid of a gag, called by the pirates a tap, with which the Bohemian was provided, they soon stopped his cries, and fastened his limbs firmly with a long cotton cloth, which they wound around him.

Then Hadji threw a rope ladder to Erebus, who in a moment mounted to the terrace. It was then about one o’clock in the morning.

Hadji knew that the post would not be relieved until two o’clock.

Suddenly a light shone from the windows of Reine’s oratory.

Hidden in the shadow of the sentry-box, Hadji and Erebus deliberated a moment upon what they must do, to accomplish their purpose.

The Bohemian proposed to scale the balcony alone, as its length exceeded by far the breadth of the window-casement, and there to hide and spy through the glass panes, in order to learn the most propitious moment for acting, which he would signify to Erebus by a sign.

The latter adopted the plan, but insisted upon taking part in it.

Hadji climbed up the first, threw the rope ladder to Erebus, and both lay in ambuscade on each side of the casement.

Erebus was just about to look through the panes, when the window-blinds, which were on the outside, opened softly, and Reine walked out on the balcony.

Thus Erebus and Hadji found themselves concealed from sight.

The young girl, sad and anxious, wished to enjoy for awhile the beauty of the night.

Time was precious, and the opportunity favourable, and the same idea entered the minds of the Bohemian and Erebus.

Quickly closing the window-blinds behind Reine, they seized her before she was able to utter a cry.

Imagine her fright, her anguish, when she recognised in her ravisher the stranger of the rocks of Ollioules!

Erebus, in the feeble struggle which occurred between him and the unhappy girl, employed every possible means to prevent violence or injury to the one he loved.

In less time than it requires to write it, Mlle, des Anbiez was surrounded with the girdle, which rendered her incapable of movement.

Erebus, not able to use his hands in descending the rope ladder, since he carried Reine in his arms, made Hadji fasten a rope around his body; as he descended each step of the ladder, the Bohemian let the rope slip softly so as to sustain the ravisher; finally, with Reine in his arms, Erebus reached the foot of the wall.

Hadji, in his turn, was just about to leave the balcony, when Stephanette entered the chamber, crying: “Mademoiselle! mademoiselle! the recorder and his soldiers have come to arrest monseigneur!” For at that moment Master Isnard and Captain Georges had arrived at the castle.

Not finding her mistress in her chamber, and seeing the window open, Stephanette ran thither.

The Bohemian, seeing the danger to which he was exposed by the presence of Stephanette, hid himself again.

The girl, astonished not to find her mistress, went out on the balcony. The Bohemian softly shut the window behind her, and put his hand over her mouth.

Although surprised and frightened, Stephanette made bold efforts to deliver herself from the pirate, who, scarcely able to hold her, cried in a low voice to Erebus:

“Help! help! This she devil is as strong as a little demon; she bites like a wildcat If she cries, all is lost!”

Erebus, not willing to leave Reine, ordered the other pirate to go to the help of Hadji.

In fact, Stephanette, much more robust than her mistress, and having habits calculated to develop her strength, made a heroic and vigorous resistance; she even succeeded in making use of her pretty teeth, to make Hadji relinquish his prize, and in uttering a few cries.

Unfortunately, the window was closed and her calls for help were not heard.

The second pirate came to the aid of the Bohemian, and, in spite of her efforts, the betrothed of the worthy Captain Trinquetaille shared the fate of her mistress, and was lowered down to the terrace with much less ceremony.

Having gained the platform of the rampart, the enterprise met with no other serious difficulty, and the two young girls were carried down the length of the wall with the same means and precautions which accomplished their descent from the balcony.

Erebus and Hadji gained the long-boat which awaited them, and the two captives were on board the chebec without a suspicion having entered the thought of a single inmate of Maison-Forte.

All, up to that time, had transpired according to the will of Erebus.

Reine and Stephanette, released from their bonds, were respectfully deposited in the cabin of the chebec, which Erebus had arranged with the most scrupulous care.

The first feeling of alarm and amazement past, Reine recovered her wonted firmness and dignity of character.

Stephanette, on the contrary, after having valiantly resisted, yielded to a grief which was nothing less than desperate.

When Erebus presented himself, she threw herself on her knees before him, weeping in anguish.

Reine preserved a gloomy silence, and did not deign even to look at her captor.

Erebus then began to be frightened at the success of his venture. He was still under the influence of good and bad instincts which struggled within him for mastery. He was not an audacious ravisher; he was a timid child.

The sullen silence, the dignified and grieved manner of Reine, impressed him and pained him at the same time.

Hadji, during the whole time of their fatal expedition, had constantly repeated to Erebus that Reine loved him passionately, and that the first moment of shame and anger past, he would find the young girl full of tenderness and even gratitude. Making one courageous effort, he approached Reine with an insolent ease of manner and said to her:

“After the storm, the sunshine. To-morrow you will think only of the song of the emir, and my love will dry your tears.”

As he said these words, he tried to take one of Reine’s hands, which she kept over her face.

“Wretch! do not come near me!” cried she, repulsing him with horror, and looking at him so disdainfully that Erebus did not dare take another step.

A veil fell from his eyes. The accent, the emotion, the indignation of Reine were so sincere that, in an instant, he lost all hope. He saw, or rather believed, that he had been grossly deceived, that the young girl had no affection for him.

In his painful surprise, he fell on his knees before Reine and, with clasped hands, cried, in a pathetic voice:

“You do not love me then?”

“You—you—-”

“Oh, forgive me, forgive me, mademoiselle,” continued Erebus, on his knees, with his hands clasped, and he added with charming ingenuousness: “My God! forgive me, I thought you loved me. Ah, well! no, no, do not be angry! I believed it,—the Bohemian told me so; if he had not, I should never have done what I have done.”

But for the gravity of the occasion, one would have laughed to see this young pirate, lately so bold, so resolute, trembling and lowering his eyes before the angry glance of Reine.

Stephanette, struck with this contrast, in spite of her grief, could not help saying:

“Why, to hear him, one would think it was the waggish trick of a page, about some stolen ribbon or bouquet! Fie, fie, sir, you are a pagan, a monster!”

“Ah, how dreadful—how dreadful! And my father, my poor father!” cried Reine, bursting into tears.

This sincere sorrow tore the heart of Erebus; he felt the whole extent of his crime.

“Oh! for pity—for pity’s sake, do not weep so!” cried he, his own eyes full of tears. “I see my wrongs now. Tell me, what do you wish me to do to expiate them? I will do it,—command me,’—my life is yours.” “Then send me back to my father, this very instant. My father, my father! if he knows of this capture, what a terrible blow for him! It is a crime for which you will always have to reproach yourself.”

“Spurn me,—I deserve it,—but at least do not forget that I saved the life of your father.”

“And what matters that, since you have saved it only to make him so wretched now? I shall think of you henceforth, not to bless you, but to curse you—”

“No, no!” cried Erebus, rising to his feet. “No, you will not curse me! You will say, yes, you will soon say that your words have snatched an unhappy soul from the abyss which was about to engulf it for ever. Listen to me. This city is now happy and peaceful. The pirates are near: let the signal be given from this chebec,—death, pillage, and flames will desolate this coast—”

“My God! my God! oh, my father!” cried Reine.

“Take courage, that signal shall not be given. I will save this city. You are in my power, and this very hour, I will have you carried back to land. Ah, well, then say—oh, say, if I do that,” implored Erebus, with profound sadness, “will you think of me sometimes without anger and without contempt?”

“I will never thank God, for having restored me to my father, without thinking with gratitude of the saviour of the Baron des Anbiez,” said Reine, with dignity.

“And Erebus shall be worthy of your remembrance!” cried the young pirate. “I am going now to prepare for your departure, and I shall return for you.”

He went up on deck in haste. The chebec was lying to. The two galleys could be seen in the distance. Although the chebec belonged to Pog-Reis, Erebus had commanded the vessel for three years. He believed that he had won the affection of the whole crew. When he reached the deck, he saw Hadji in the act of lighting a fuse, the signal agreed upon between Pog and Erebus, to announce that Mlle, des Anbiez was on board the chebec, and therefore the attack on La Ciotat could begin.

“Stop,” said Erebus to Hadji, “do not give the signal yet. For a long time you have been devoted to me; today, especially, you have served me faithfully. Listen to me now.”

“Speak quickly, Lord Erebus, for Pog-Reis is waiting for the signal, and if I delay to give it, he will make me ride the chase-gun on his galley, with a ball on each foot to hold me in position.”

“If you obey me, you will have nothing to fear. This life of murder and robbery is hateful to me; the men that I command are less brutal than their companions; they love me; they have confidence in me; I can

propose to them to abandon the galleys. The chebec is superior to the galleys in speed. After the expedition of which I will tell you presently, we will set sail for the East,—the Grecian Archipelago; when we arrive at Smyrna, we will put ourselves in the pay of the bey, and instead of being pirates, we will become soldiers; instead of cutting the throats of merchants on the deck of their vessels, we will fight men. Will you second me?" Hadji had kept the lighted match in his hand; holding it to his mouth, he brightened the flame with imperturbable coolness, and said to Erebus:

"Are those all the plans you have, Lord Erebus?"

"No, they are not all. To prevent the new crimes contemplated by Pog-Reis, we are going to approach the galleys under full sail, and cry with fright that we have just seen, on the horizon, the fires of the king's galleys. They know that the galleys of the King of France are at Marseilles, and dread their coming, and so will easily believe us. Pog-Reis will take flight before these superior forces, and this unfortunate city will escape, at least for this time, the horrible fate which threatens it. Ah, well, what do you say to my plan? You have influence over the crew, second me."

Hadji blew his match again, looked at Erebus steadily, and for reply, before the latter could prevent it, set fire to the fuse which was to serve as a signal for the attack of the pirates.

The fatal light darted into space like a meteor.

"Wretch!" cried Erebus, throwing himself on Hadji with rage.

Hadji, with strength superior to that of the young man, wrested himself from his hands, and said to him, with mingled irony, respect, and affection:

"Listen, Lord Erebus; neither I nor these brave men have any desire to exchange our liberty for the discipline of the bey's soldiers. The sea in all its immensity is ours; we would be the proud courser that has the limitless desert for his career, rather than the blindfolded horse that turns the machinery to draw water from a well. Now the service of beyliks, compared to our adventurous life, is nothing more. In a word, we are devils, and we are not old enough yet to become hermits, as the Christians say. Our trade pleases us. We will not give up liberty for a prison."

"So be it; you are a hardened villain, I believed you had nobler sentiments. But so much the worse for you; the crew is attached to me, they will listen to me and will give me a strong hand to get rid of you, if you dare oppose my plans."

"By Eblis! what are you saying, Lord Erebus?" cried the Bohemian, with an ironical air. "You treat me so, I, who, to serve you, sang to your lady-love the song of the emir! I, who demeaned myself to the low trade of a tinker! I, who defiled myself by helping Dame Dulceline raise a sort of altar to the God of the Christians! I, who, to serve you, set the foot of the greyhound belonging to Raimond V. and even consented to shoe the old sot's horse!"

"Be silent, you scoundrel! not a word more of that unhappy father to whom I have given such a cruel blow! Reflect well, I am going to speak to the crew, whatever it may cost me; there is still time for you to rally to my aid and become an honest man."

"Listen, my Lord Erebus; you propose to me to become an honest man. I shall reply to you as a poet and a tinker. When for years a thick and corrosive rust has accumulated on a copper vase, and this rust has been bronzed by fire, you may rub a thousand years and more without giving back to this vase its original purity and brilliancy, and at last succeed in making it a little less black only than the wings of Eblis! Ah, well! such as we, I and my companions, we are bronzed by evil. Do not try to entice us to good. You will be neither understood nor obeyed."

"I shall not be understood, perhaps, but I shall be obeyed."

"You will not be obeyed if your orders are contrary to certain instructions given by Pog-Reis to the crew before departing from Port-Cros."

"Instructions? You lie like a dog!"

"Listen, my Lord Erebus," said Hadji, with unalterable coolness; "although I do not wish to enter into the good road, I love you in my fashion, and I would wish to prevent your taking a false step. Pog-Reis, after a certain conversation with you, which he told me, distrusts you. A little while ago, when on the height of Cape l'Aigle, where I put the old watchman to sleep, I saw our galleys coming, I descended to the shore and went on board the *Red Galleon*, and there I had a secret conversation about you with Pog-Reis." "Traitor! why have you concealed that from me?" "The wise man hides three things for every two he tells. Pog-Reis told me he had informed the crew, and he did inform me that the orders which he had given you were these: carry off the young girl, give a signal that the abduction has been successful, then cruise around La Ciotat while the galleys are attacking that swarm of fat citizens; lastly, watch that our men are not surprised by the galleys of the King of France, coming from the west,—is that true?"

"That is true."

"Ah, well, then, Lord Erebus, I tell you that if the orders you are going to give are contrary to those, they will not listen to you."

"That is a lie!"

"Try it."

"This very instant," said Erebus, and turning to the steersman and sailors who awaited his orders, he commanded them to make a manoeuvre which would bring the chebec nearer to Maison-Forte.

What was his astonishment when, instead of executing his orders, he saw the steersman and sailors, at a sign from Hadji, make a contrary manoeuvre, which brought the chebec nearer the place of action.

"You refuse to obey me!" cried Erebus.

"Ah, well! Lord Erebus, what did I tell you?"

"Not a word from you, scoundrel!"

Erebus tried in vain to shake the fidelity of the sailors; whether from terror, or the habit of passive

obedience, or from the love of their gross and licentious life, they remained faithful to the orders they had received.

Erebus bowed his head in despair.

“Since you are the commander of this chebec,” said he to Hadji, with a bitter smile, “then I address you to have the sails put back, and have the long-boat which is in tow brought to the side of the vessel.”

“You are the captain here, Lord Erebus; order, without going contrary to the commands of Pog-Reis,—and I will be the first to haul the rigging or turn the helm.”

“A truce to words; then have the long-boat manned with four men.”

“Bring the chebec’s sails back? Nothing prevents that,” said Hadji. “Watch is kept as well standing still as moving about, and from time to time the sentinel stops. As to manning the long-boat, that will be done when I know your intention.”

Erebus stamped his foot impatiently.

“My intention is to conduct these two young girls back to land.”

“Throw back the pearl of the gulf on a savage coast!” cried the Bohemian, “when she is in your power, when you are loved, when—”

“Be silent and obey! That, I think, is my personal affair, and Pog-Reis shall not force me to abduct a woman, if I do not wish to do it.”

“That abduction is a personal affair to Pog-Reis also, Lord Erebus. I cannot order the long-boat to be manned.”

“What do you mean?” cried the young man, almost in fright.

“Pog-Reis is an old stager, Lord Erebus. He knows that, in spite of his strength and courage, the tiger can fall, as well as the stupid buffalo, in the snare that the artful trapper has set for his steps. Eblis has shaken his wings over La Ciotat; the flames crackle, the cannon thunder, the musketry flashes; our people are glutting themselves with pillage and putting the Christians in chains,—that is well. But suppose Pog-Reis, suppose Trimalcyon-Reis should be surprised and taken prisoners by these dogs of Christians! Suppose our people should be obliged to fly back to their galleys and abandon the prisoners, Pog and Trimalcyon, to be quartered and burned as renegades—”

“Will you finish, say, will you finish?”

“By keeping the pearl of La Ciotat, Reine des Anbiez, as hostage, until the end of the enterprise, she can be of great help to us, and be worth to us, by her exchange, the liberty of Pog-Reis, or of Trimalcyon-Reis. So, then, this young girl and her companion must remain here until Pog-Reis has decided their fate.”

Erebus was overwhelmed.

Neither threats nor entreaties could shake the determination of Hadji, or of the crew.

For a moment, in his despair, he was on the point of throwing himself into the sea and swimming to the coast, that he might be killed by the pirates; then he remembered that such a course would leave Reine without a defender. He descended to the cabin in the gloom of despair.

“There is our generous saviour,” cried Reine, rising and walking up to him. Erebus shook his head sadly, and said:

“I am now a prisoner like you.”

And he related to the two young girls what had just transpired on the bridge. One moment calmed by a deceitful assurance, the distress of Reine now burst forth with renewed violence, and notwithstanding the repentance of Erebus, she accused him, with reason, of being the author of the misery which oppressed her.

Such was the state of affairs on board the chebec, when, now commanded by Hadji, since Erebus had joined Reine and Stephanette, it approached the galleys of Pog and Trimalcyon, which, by dint of oars, were leaving La Ciotat after their fatal expedition.

The Bohemian stood at the stem of the chebec, when Pog-Reis, hailing it from his galley, said to him:

“Ah, well! is that girl on board?”

“Yes, Captain Pog, and more, there is a linnet with the dove.”

“And Erebus?”

“Captain Erebus wanted to do what Captain Pog foresaw,” said the Bohemian, making an intelligent sign.

“I expected it Watch him. Keep the command of the chebec, sail in my waters, and follow my manoeuvres.”

“You will be obeyed, Captain Pog. But before parting from you, let me make you a present There are the papers and playthings of love belonging to a chevalier of Malta. It is, I believe, a story worthy of Ben-Absull. I got this treasure-trove from the cabin of the watchman. I thought I had found a diamond, and found only a grain of corn. But it may interest you, Captain Pog. There is a Maltese cross on the casket; everything which bears that hated sign returns to you by right.”

As he said these words, Hadji threw at the feet of Pog-Reis the carved silver casket that he had stolen from the ebony case belonging to Peyrou. This casket was wrapped in a scarf, designed to protect the broken cover.

Pog-Reis, little appreciative of the Bohemian’s attention, made a sign to him to continue his route.

The chebec took her place of headway behind the galley of Pog, and the three vessels soon disappeared in the east, directing their course with all possible speed toward the isles of St Honorât, where they intended to lie in for repairs.

CHAPTER XXXIII. DISCOVERY

Pog was too closely occupied with the disabled condition in which he found his galleys, to lend attention to the last words of Hadji. One of the spahis picked up the casket, and placed it in Pog's chamber, to which the latter had descended, after leaving the galley in the command of the pilot.

This chamber was entirely covered with a coarse red woollen material. On this tapestry could be seen, here and there, a great number of black crosses traced by the hand with charcoal. Among them a small number of white crosses appeared, drawn with chalk.

A copper lamp threw a wan and sepulchral light in this room.

The only furniture of the room consisted in a bed, covered with a tiger-skin, two chairs, and an oak table, hardly square.

When the Moor had dressed the wounds of the captain, he retired.

Pog, left alone, remained seated, resting his head on his hand, and reflecting upon the events of the night His vengeance was only half satisfied.

His precipitate retreat humiliated his self-love, and aroused new resentments in his heart.

Nevertheless, he smiled as he thought of the evil he had wrought, and rose from his seat, saying:

"It is always so! My night will not have been lost, if—"

Then he took a piece of charcoal, and made several black crosses on the tapestry. From time to time he paused, as if to collect his thoughts. He had just traced a black cross when he said to himself:

"That Baron des Anbiez was killed! I think so, and I hope so. From the hollow vibration of the handle of the battle-axe in my hand, I thought I felt his skull broken. But the baron wore a helmet, his death is not certain. We will not make a false estimate of victims." After this lugubrious pleasantry, he erased the cross, and began to count the white crosses.

"Eleven," said he, "eleven chevaliers of Malta, slain by my hand. Oh! they are surely dead, for I would have killed myself a thousand times on their bodies, rather than have left in them one breath of life."

He then sank into a gloomy silence. Suddenly, standing up, his arms crossed on his breast, his head bowed, he said, with a deep sigh:

"For more than twenty years I have pursued my vengeance,—my work of destruction. For twenty years has my sorrow diminished? Are my regrets less desperate? I do not know. Without doubt I feel a horrible joy in saying to man: 'Suffer—die.' But after—after! Always regret—always! And yet I have no remorse, no! It seems to me that I am the blind instrument of an all-powerful will. Yes, that must be. It is not the love of gain which guides me. It is an imperious necessity, an insatiable need of vengeance. Where am I going? What will be the awakening from this bloody life which sometimes seems to me a horrible dream? When I think upon what was formerly my life, on what I was myself, it is something to drive me mad,—as I am. Yes, I must be mad, for sometimes there are moments when I ask myself: 'Why so many cruel deeds?' To-night, for instance, how much blood—how much blood! That old man! Those women! Oh, I am mad, furiously mad! Oh, it is terrible! What had they done to me?"

He hid his face in his hands. After a few moments of sullen reflection, he cried, in an agonising voice:

"Oh, what had I done to him,—to the one who hurled me from heaven to hell? I never did him a wrong! What had I done to her,—to his accomplice? I surrounded her with all the adoration, all the idolatry that man could feel here below for a creature. And, yet! Oh!—this sorrow,—will it always be bleeding? Will this memory always be so dreadful,—always burning like a hot iron? Oh, rage! Oh, misery! Oh, to forget! to forget! I only ask to forget!"

As he uttered these words, Pog fell with his face on the bed, tore the tiger-skin in his convulsed hands, and groaned with a sort of hollow, stifled roar.

The paroxysm lasted some time, and was succeeded by a heavy stupor.

Suddenly he straightened himself up, his complexion paler than usual, his eyes brilliant, and his lips contracted.

He passed his hand over his forehead to fasten the bandage around his wound, which had become disarranged. As he let his arm fall from weakness, he felt near the partition an object which he had not remarked. It was the casket which Hadji had thrown on board the *Red Galleon*, and that one of the men had left in the captain's chamber.

Pog mechanically took up the casket and placed it on his knees. The Maltese cross embossed on the lid met his sight, and made him start.

He threw it abruptly away from him; the scarf became untied, and fell open.

Quite a large number of letters rolled on the floor, with two medallions, and a long tress of blond hair.

Pog was seated on his bed; the medallions had fallen a considerable distance from him.

The light in his chamber was pale and fluctuating.

By what miracle of love, of hatred, or of vengeance, did he recognise instantly the features that he had never forgotten?

The event was so startling, so dreadful, that at first he believed himself to be the sport of a dream.

He did not dare move. His body leaning forward, his eyes fixed on the medallion, he feared every moment to see what he took for a vision of his excited imagination vanish from his sight.

Finally, falling on his knees, he threw himself upon the medallions, as if he feared they might escape his grasp.

He seized the portraits. One of them represented a woman of resplendent beauty. He was not mistaken; he had recognised it.

The other was the face of a child.

The pirate let the medallion fall on the floor; he was petrified with amazement. He had just recognised Erebus! Erebus, at least, as he was fifteen years before, when he had carried him away from the coasts of Languedoc!

Still doubting what he saw with his own eyes, he rallied from this passing weakness, picked up the medallion, recalled his memories with exactness, to provide against every error, and again examined the portrait with a consuming anxiety. It was Erebus, indeed,—Erebus at the age of five years.

Then Pog threw himself on the floor with the letters, and read them on his knees without a thought of rising. The scene was something terrible,—ghastly.

This man, pale, stained with blood, kneeling in the middle of that lugubrious chamber, read with eagerness the pages which revealed to him, at last, the dark mystery which he had sought for so many years.

CHAPTER XXXIV. THE LETTERS

We will now put before the eyes of the reader the letters that Pog was reading with such painful attention.

The first had been written by himself, about twenty years before the period of which we now speak. So striking was the contrast between his life then,—a life calm, happy, and smiling,—and the life of a pirate and murderer, that one might be moved to pity the unhappy man, if only by comparing him as he was, to what he had been in the past.

The height from which he had fallen, the depth of infamy to which he had descended, must have moved the most obdurate heart to pity!

These letters will unveil also what mysterious tie united the Commander des Anbiez, Erebus, and Pog, to whom we restore his real name, that of Count Jacques de Montreuil, former lieutenant of the king’s galleys.

M. de Montreuil—Pog—had written the following letter to his wife on his return from a campaign of eight or nine months in the Mediterranean.

This letter was dated from the lazaretto, or pest-house, in Marseilles.

The galley of Count de Montreuil, having touched at Tripoli, of Syria, where the plague had been declared, was compelled according to custom to submit to a long quarantine.

Madame Emilie de Montreuil lived in a country house situated on the borders of the Rhone, near Lyons.

First Letter.

“*Lazaretto de Marseilles*, December 10,1612.

“On board the *Capitaine*.

“Can it be true, Emilie,—can it be true? My heart overflows with joy.

“I do not know how to express my surprise to you. It is an intoxication of happiness, it is a flowering of the soul,—a foolish exaltation which borders on delirium, if each moment a holy, grateful thought did not lead me to God, the almighty author of our felicities!

“Oh, if you only knew, Emilie, how I have prayed to him, as I have blessed him! with what profound fervour I have lifted to him my transported soul! Thanks to thee, my God, who hast heard our prayers. Thanks to thee, my God, who dost crown the sacred love which unites us by giving us a child.

“Emilie—Emilie, I am crazy with joy.

“As I write this word,—a child,—my hand trembles, my heart leaps.

“Wait, for I am weeping.

“Oh, I have wept with delight!

“What sweet tears! How good it is to weep!

“Emilie, my wife, soul of my soul, life of my life, pure treasure of the purest virtues!

“It seems to me now that your beautiful brow must radiate majesty. I prostrate myself before you, there is something so divine in maternity.

“Emilie, you know it, since the three years of our union, our love, never has a cloud troubled it. Each day has added a day to this life of delight.

“Yet, in spite of myself, doubtless, I have caused you, perhaps, not some pain, not some displeasure, but some little contrariety, and you always so sweet, so good, you have no doubt hidden it from me. Ah, well! in this solemn day I come to you on both knees, to ask your forgiveness as I would ask forgiveness of God for having offended him.

“You know, Emilie, that dear as you are to me, our ever reviving tenderness would change our solitude to paradise. Ah, well! this happiness of the past, which seemed then to go beyond all possible limits, is yet to be doubled.

“Do you not find, Emilie, that in the happiness of two there is a sort of egotism, a sort of isolation, which disappears when a cherished child comes to double our pleasures by adding to them the most tender, most touching, most adorable duties?

“Oh, these duties, how well you will understand them!

“Have you not been a model of daughters? What sublime devotion to your father! What abnegation! What care!

“Oh, yes! the best, the most adorable of daughters will be the best, the most adorable of mothers!

“My God! how we love each other, Emilie! And as we love each other, how we shall love it, this poor little being! My God! how we shall love it!

“My wife, my beloved angel, I weep again.

“My reason is lost. Oh, forgive me, but I have had no news from you in so long a time, and then the first letter that you write me, after so many months of absence, comes to inform me of this. My God! how can I resist weeping?

“I do not know how to tell you of my dreams, my plans, the visions that I caress.

“If it is a daughter, she must be named Emilie, like you. I wish it. I ask it of you. There can be nothing more charming than these happy repetitions of names.

“Do you see how I will gain by it? When I call an Emilie tenderly, two will come to me. That sweet name, the only name which now exists for me, will reach in two hearts at once.

“If it is a boy, would you wish to call it for me?

“And now, Emilie, we must not forget to put a little fence around the lake and on the border of the river. Great God! if our child should—

“You see, Emilie, as I know your heart, this fear will not appear exaggerated to you. It will not make you smile. No, no, but tears will fill your eyes. Oh, is not that true? is it not? I know you so well!

“Is there an emotion of your heart to which I am a stranger? But tell me, how have I deserved so much love? What have I done so good, so great, that Heaven should recompense me thus?

“You know that I have always had religious sentiments.

“You know that you have often said that, if I did not know exactly the feasts of the Church, I knew perfectly well the number of poor in the neighbourhood. Now, I feel the need, not of a more ardent faith, for I believe. Oh, I have so many reasons to believe,—to believe with fervour. But I feel the need of a life more soberly religious,—more serious.

“I owe all to God; paternity is such an imposing priesthood. Now no action of our lives can be indifferent. Nothing belongs to us any longer. We must not only look forward to our own future, but to that of our child.

“You think, Emilie, that what you desire so much, that what you dared not ask me, out of respect for the will of my father; you think that my dismissal from the service is not a question.

“There is not now an hour, a minute of my life, which does not belong to our child. If I have yielded to your entreaties with so much regret, poor wife, because I desired to follow the last request of my father faithfully, now it need be so no longer. Although our wealth is considerable, we must neglect nothing now which can increase it.

“Heretofore we have trusted to agents the management of our affairs; now I shall undertake them myself.

“That will be so much gained for our child. When the lease of our farms near Lyons has expired, we ourselves will put our lands in good condition.

“You know, my love, the dream of my life has been to lead the life of a country gentleman in the midst of sweet and sacred family joys. Your tastes, your character, your angelic virtues, fit you also for the enjoyment of such peaceful pleasures and associations. What more can I say, my Emilie, my blessed angel of God?

“I have just been interrupted. The lazaretto boat is leaving this moment.

“I am in despair when I think of the long mortal month which still separates me from the spot where I shall fall on my knees, and we shall join our hands in thanking God for his gift.”

This artless letter, puerile perhaps in its detail, but which pictured a happiness so profound, which spoke of hopes so radiant, was enclosed in another letter, bearing this address, “To the Commander Pierre des Anbiez,” and containing the following words, written in haste, and with a weak and trembling hand:

Second Letter.

“December 13th, midnight.

“He believes me—read—read. I feel that I am about to die—read, that his letter may be our torment here below, while we wait for that which God reserves for us.

“Now, I am ashamed of you—of myself; we have been base—base like the traitors we are.

“This infamous lie—never will I dare assert it before him—never will I allow him to believe that this child—Ah, I am in an abyss of despair!

“Be accursed! Depart, depart!

“Never has my sin appeared more terrible to me than since this execrable lie was made to impose upon his noble confidence in order to shield ourselves.

“May Heaven protect this unfortunate child.

“Under what horrible auspices will it be born, if it is born, for I feel now it must die before seeing the light—I can never survive the agony I suffer. Yet my husband is coming,—never will I lie to him. What shall I do?

“No, do not depart—my poor head wanders—at least—surely—you will not abandon me—no, no, do not depart—come—come—

“Emilie.”

Pog, the Count de Montreuil, as the sequel will show, had never been able, in discovering his wife’s guilt, to learn the name of the unhappy woman’s seducer. Nor did he know that Erebus was the child of this adulterous connection.

For a moment he was overwhelmed with conflicting emotions. Although such a bitterness of resentment might seem puerile, after the lapse of so many years, his rage reached its height when he saw this letter, written by himself in the very intoxication of happiness, and full of those confidences of the soul which a man dares pour out only in the heart of a beloved wife, enclosed in one addressed to her seducer, when he realised that it had been read, perhaps laughed at, by his enemy, the Commander des Anbiez.

In his fury he could only think of the painful ridiculousness of his attitude in the eyes of that man, as he spoke with so much freedom, so much love, and so much idolatry, of a child which was not his, and of this wife who had so basely deceived him.

The deepest, the most agonising, the most incurable wounds are those which pain our heart and our self-love at the same time.

The very excess of his wrath, his burning thirst for vengeance, brought Pog back, so to speak, to his religious sentiment. He saw the hand of God in the strange chance which had thrown Erebus, the fruit of this criminal love, in his pathway.

He thrilled with a cruel joy at the thought that this unfortunate child, whose soul he had perverted, whom he had led in a way so fatal to all purity and happiness, would, perhaps, carry desolation and death into the Des Anbiez family.

He saw in this startling coincidence a terrible providential retribution.

His first thought was to go at once and assassinate Erebus, but, urged by a consuming curiosity, he desired to discover all the secrets of this guilty connection.

So he continued to read the letters contained in the casket. The next letter, written by Madame de Montreuil, was also addressed to the Commander des Anbiez.

Third Letter,

“December 14th, one o’clock in the morning.

“God has had pity on me.

“The unfortunate child lives; if he continues to live, he will live only for you,—only for me.

“My women are safe; this house is isolated, far from all help. To-morrow I shall send to the village for the venerable Abbé de Saint-Maurice,—another lie,—a sacrilegious lie!

“I will tell him that this unfortunate child died in birth. Justine has already engaged a nurse; this nurse is waiting in the house occupied by the guard of the crossroads. This evening she will take the poor little being with her. This evening she will depart for Languedoc, as we have agreed upon.

“Oh, to be separated from my child, who has cost me so many tears, so much sorrow, and such despair! To be separated from it for ever! Ah, I dare not, I cannot complain! It is the least expiation of my crime.

“Poor little creature, I have covered it with my tears, with my kisses; it is innocent of all this sin. Ah, dreadful, how dreadful it is! I shall not survive these heartrending emotions. That is all my hope. God will take me from this earth,—yes,—but to damn me in eternity!

“Ah, I do not wish to die; no, I do not wish to die! Oh, pity, pity, mercy!

“I have just recovered from a long fainting-fit Peyrou will carry this letter to you; send him back without delay.”

The next letter announced to the commander that the sacrifice had been completed.

Fourth Letter.

“December 15th, ten o’clock in the morning.

“All is over. This morning the Abbé de Saint-Maurice came.

“My women told him that the child was dead, and that I, in my despair, had wished, in pious resignation, to shroud it myself in its coffin.

“You know that this poor priest is very old; and, besides, he has known me from my birth, and has a blind confidence in me, and not for a moment did he suspect this impious lie.

“He prayed over an empty coffin!

“Sacrilege, sacrilege!

“Oh, God will be without pity! At last the coffin was carried and buried in our family chapel.

“Yesterday, in the night, for the last time I embraced this unfortunate child, now abandoned, now without a name. Now the shame and remorse of those who have given it birth will ever—

“I could not give him up—I could not. Alas! it was always a kiss,—just a last kiss. When Justine snatched it from my arms it uttered a pitiful cry.

“Oh, that feeble wail of sorrow reëchoes in the depths of my soul; what a fatal omen!

“Again I ask, what will become of it? Oh, what will become of it? That woman—that nurse, who is she? What interest will she take in this unfortunate orphan? She will be indifferent to its tears, to its sorrows; miserable woman, its poor weeping will never move her as I have been stirred by its one feeble wail!

“Who is this woman? Who is this woman, I ask. Justine says she will answer for her, but has Justine the heart of a mother, which could answer for her, could judge her? I, yes, I would have known so quickly if she was worthy of confidence. Why did I not think of that? Why did I not see her myself? Ah, God is just! the guilty wife could be nothing but a bad mother!

“Poor little one! He is going to suffer. Who will protect him? Who will defend him? If this woman is unfaithful,—if she is avaricious, she is going to let him want for everything,—he is going to be cold,—he is going to be hungry,—perhaps she will beat him! Oh, my child, my child!

“Oh! I am an unnatural mother,—I am base,—I am infamous,—I am afraid,—I have not the courage of my crime. No, no, I will not! I will not! I will brave all, the return of my husband, the shame, ay, death itself, but I will not be separated for ever from my child; nothing but death shall separate us,—there is time enough yet Justine is coming. I am going to tell her to go for the nurse and instruct her to remain here.

“Nothing, nothing!—oh, my God! to be at the mercy of these people like that! Justine refuses to tell me the route this woman has taken,—she has dared to speak to me of my duties, of what I owe to my husband. Oh, shame, shame! once I was so proud, to be reduced to this! Yet she weeps while she denies me; poor woman, she thinks I am insane.

“What is so awful is, that I dare not invoke Heaven’s blessing on this unfortunate child, abandoned at its birth; it is devoted to grief. What will become of it?

“Ah! you at least will not abandon it, but in his infancy, at that age when he will have so much need of care

and tenderness, what can you do for him? Nothing, oh, my God, nothing! And besides, may you not die in battle? Oh, how dreadful would that be—fortunately I am so weak, that I shall not survive this agony, or rather I shall die under the first look of him whom I have so terribly offended.

"Each one of his letters, so faithful, so noble, so tender, strikes me a mortal blow. Yesterday I announced to him the fatal news, another lie. How he will suffer! Already he loved the child so much!

"Ah, how dreadful, how dreadful! but this struggle will soon end, yes, I feel it, the end is very near.

"Pierre, I wish nevertheless to see you before I die. It is more than a presentiment—it is a certainty. I tell you that never shall I see him again.

"I am sure of it, if I see him again, I feel it, his presence will kill me.

"To-morrow you must leave France.

"When this poor child is confided to you, if he survives his sad infancy, Pierre, love him, oh, love him! He will never have had a mother's love. I wish, if he is worthy of the sacred vocation, and if it suits his mind and his character, I wish him to be a priest. Some day you will tell him the terrible secret of his birth.

"He will pray for you and for me, and perhaps Heaven will hear his prayers. I feel very feeble, very feeble. Again, Pierre, I must see you. Ah, how cruelly we expiate a few days of madness!

"Once more, that which most pains me is his confidence. Oh, I tell you that the sight of him will kill me. I feel that I must die."

The marks of the tears could still be seen upon this letter written with a feeble, fainting hand.

Pog, after having read the pages which portrayed so faithfully the agony of Emilie's soul, gazed thoughtfully upon the lines.

He bowed his head on his breast. That man so cruelly outraged, that man hardened by hatred, could not refuse a feeling of pity for this unhappy woman.

A tear, a burning tear, the only one he had shed in years, coursed his weather-beaten cheek.

Then his resentment against the author of all these woes rose again in fury. He thanked Heaven for having at last made known to him the seducer of Emilie, but he did not now wish to concentrate his thought on the terrible vengeance that he meditated.

He continued to read.

The next letter was in the handwriting of Emilie. She informed the commander of the consequence of the last venture.

Fifth Letter.

"December 16th, nine o'clock in the morning.

"My husband knows the supposed death of the child; his despair borders on madness. His letter terrifies me with its wild and passionate grief. The quarantine ends in fifteen days. I shall not live until that time; my crime will be buried with me, and he will regret me, and he will weep my memory, perhaps. Oh, to deceive, to deceive, to deceive even to the coffin and the grave! God! will he ever forgive me? It is an abyss of terror into which I dare not cast my eyes. This evening, at eleven o'clock, Justine will open the little gate at the park. Pierre, these are solemn farewells, funereal, perhaps. To-morrow, then, to-morrow."

CHAPTER XXXV. THE MURDERER

A paper, part of which was torn, contained this written confession, in the handwriting of the commander, a few days after the bloody tragedy which he relates. The person to whom it was addressed is unknown. Some passages, tom intentionally, perhaps, seem to refer to a journey, made by the commander in Languedoc at the same period, for the purpose, no doubt, of learning the fate of his unfortunate child.

"And my hands are stained with blood. I have just committed a murder.

"I have assassinated the man against whom I have committed a deadly wrong.

"At eleven o'clock I presented myself at the little gate of the park. I was conducted into the chamber of Emilie.

"She was in bed, pale, almost dying.

"She, formerly so beautiful, seemed the ghost of herself. The hand of God had already touched her.

"I seated myself at her bedside. She extended to me her trembling, icy hand.

"I pressed it to my lips, my cold lips.

"We gave a last painful look at the past I accused myself of having destroyed her.

"We spoke of our unfortunate child. We wept, oh, how bitterly! when suddenly—

"Ah! I feel still the cold sweat deluge my brow. My hair stands on end, and a terrible voice cries to me, 'Murderer! Murderer!'

"Oh, I will not seek to fly from remorse; till my last day I shall keep before me the image of my victim.

"By the judgment of God, which has already condemned me, I take oath to do it.

"Let me recall the scene.

"It was a terrible moment.

"The chamber of Emilie was dimly lighted by a night-lamp placed near the door.

"My back was toward this door. I was seated by her bed. She could not retain her sobs. My forehead was resting on my hand.

“The most profound silence reigned around us.

“I had just spoken to her of our child. I had just promised to fulfil her will in reference to him.

“I had tried to console her, to induce her to hope for better days, to reanimate her courage, to give her strength to conceal all from her husband; to prove to her that, for his own peace and happiness, it was better to let him remain in confident security.

“Suddenly the door behind me opened with violence.

“Emilie cried in terror: ‘My husband! I am dead!’

“Before I could turn around, an involuntary movement of her husband extinguished the lamp.

“We were all three in the dark.

“‘Do not kill me before forgiving me!’ cried Emilie.

“‘Oh—you first—him afterwards,’ said Count de Montreuil, in a hollow voice.

“The moment was horrible.

“He advanced irresolutely. I advanced also.

“I wished to meet him and hold him back.

“We said nothing. The silence was profound.

“Nothing was heard but the sound of our oppressed breathing, and the low, spasmodic voice of Emilie, who murmured: ‘Lord have pity on me! Lord have pity on me!’

“Suddenly I felt a hand as cold as marble on my forehead.

“It was the hand of her husband. In seeking her, he had touched me.

“He started, and said, without concerning himself further about me: ‘Her bed ought to be on the left!’

“His calmness terrified me. I threw myself on him.

“At that moment, Emilie, whom he had doubtless already seized, cried, ‘Mercy! Mercy!’

“I tried to take him by the middle of his body. I felt the point of a dagger graze my hand.

“Emilie uttered a long sigh. She was killed or wounded, her blood spouted up on my forehead.

“Then my brain became wild; I felt myself endowed with a supernatural strength. With my left hand I seized the right arm of the murderer; with my right hand I snatched his dagger from him, and plunged it twice in his breast.

“I heard him fall without uttering a cry. From that moment I remember nothing.

“I found myself at the rising of the sun lying by the side of a hedge. I was covered with blood.

“For some moments I could remember nothing, then all returned to my memory. I returned home, avoiding the sight of every one.

“I discovered, as I entered, that my Maltese cross was lost. Perhaps it had been taken away from me in the struggle.

“I found Peyrou, who was waiting for me with my horses. I arrived here.”

[Some pages are wanting in this place.]

“... and she is no more.

“He lies by her side in the same tomb. The idea of murder pursues me. I am doubly criminal.

“My entire life will not suffice to expiate this murder, and...”

The rest of this page was wanting.

The last letter which the casket contained was a letter addressed to Peyrou by a bargemaster in the neighbourhood of Aiguemortes five years after the events which we have just recorded, and the same year, no doubt, of the abduction of Erebus by the pirates on the coast of Languedoc.

Peyrou, who was then serving on board the galleys of religion with the commander, was in the secret of this strange and bloody tragedy.

The following letter was addressed to Malta, to which place he had followed the commander, who, five years after these fatal events had transpired, was still unwilling to enter France.

To M. Bernard Peyrou, Overseer-Patron of Our Lady of Seven Sorrows.

“My dear Peyrou:—Three days ago a great calamity occurred. A pirate galley made a descent on the unguarded coast.

“The pirates put all to fire and sword, and carried off into slavery all the inhabitants upon whom they could fasten their chains. I hardly know how to tell you the rest of this misfortune. The woman Agniel and the child that you confided to her care have disappeared, no doubt massacred, or carried away captives by these pirates. I went into her house, and everything there showed marks of violence. Alas! I must tell you, there remained no doubt that the woman and child had shared the fate of the other inhabitants of this unfortunate village. We can hardly hope that the child was able to endure the fatigues and hardships of the voyage. I send you the only thing that could be found in the house, the picture of the child, which, in obedience to your order, the woman Agniel had taken to Montpellier, where the portrait had been executed about a month before. I saw the child quite recently, and I can assure you that it is an excellent likeness. Alas! it is, perhaps, all that remains of him now. I send this letter directly to Malta by the tartan *St. Cecile*, so that it may reach you safely.

“P. S. In case the child is recovered, I inform you that there is a Maltese cross tattooed on his arm.”

To complete the explanation of the tragedy, it remains to be said that, although Pog—the Count de Montreuil—was dangerously wounded, he retained sufficient strength and presence of mind to keep the events of that fatal night a profound secret.

After the death of Emilie, he commanded Justine, under the direst threats, to say that her mistress, overwhelmed with grief at the death of her child, had finally succumbed to the desperate illness which

ensued.

Nothing seemed more plausible than this account, hence it was generally accepted.

The Count de Montreuil remained concealed in his house until his wound was thoroughly healed. With every conceivable threat and promise, he tried to induce Justine to reveal the secret of the child's hiding-place, but all his efforts were unavailing.

It now becomes necessary to explain how the count surprised the interview between Emilie and the commander.

Learning the supposed death of his child, while in the lazaretto or pest-house near Marseilles, he was plunged in desperate grief. He believed that his wife was no less inconsolable, and, notwithstanding the penalty of death incurred by deserters from the lazaretto, before the expiration of the established quarantine, he swam that night even from the island Ratonneau, where the sanitary buildings were situated.

Reaching the coast, where a trusty servant awaited him with clothing, he assumed another name, and galloped in hot haste on the road to Lyons. Leaving his horses about two leagues from his house, he accomplished the rest of the journey on foot. Passing through the little gate which the commander had left open, he entered the park.

Several days before, by way of precaution, Emilie had dismissed most of her servants, under various pretexts, retaining two women only of whom she felt sure. Her husband, finding the house almost deserted, entered unperceived, and stood at the door of Emilie's chamber, while she believed that he would remain ten days longer in the lazaretto.

Hearing the conversation which took place between his wife and Pierre des Anbiez, the Count de Montreuil could have no further doubt of her infidelity.

When he had entirely recovered from his wounds, he abandoned his house, situated in the country near Lyons, for ever; and feeling sure of Justine's silence, as the woman had no interest in betraying his secret, he left France, taking with him a considerable sum in gold.

When his disappearance from the lazaretto was discovered, it was believed and currently reported that the Count de Montreuil, frenzied by grief over the loss of his child, had thrown himself into the sea. While this rumour was accepted in France, the commander believed that his victim had died from his wounds.

Thus it was that the Count de Montreuil was ignorant of the name of Emilie's seducer, and the only clew he had was the commander's Maltese cross, which had fallen on the floor of the chamber.

This cross bore the initials L. P. on its ring, which letters proved that its owner belonged to the Provençal nation. This explains the intense hatred which Pog cherished against the chevaliers of Malta.

His thirst for vengeance was so blind, that, by preference, he directed his attacks against Languedoc and Provence, because Emilie's seducer must have been a chevalier of Malta, born in that province.

It is needless to say, if the love Pog felt for Emilie before her betrayal was strong and passionate, the rage, or rather the monomania, which seized his mind after he learned of the deception practised upon him, was in itself a terrible proof of his love and desperate grief.

The portrait which hung above the coffin which served as a bed for the Commander des Anbiez, as a part of the expiation of his crime, was the portrait of the Count de Montreuil, or Pog,—obtained by Peyrou at the sale of the house near Lyons.

Let us now return to Pog, in his chamber on the *Red Galleon*.

After having read the letters which unveiled so many mysteries, he remained for a time in a sort of dazed state of mind. He closed his eyes. A thousand conflicting thoughts and ideas reached his brain. He feared he was losing his mind.

By degrees he recovered his self-possession, and contemplated the new opportunities which this discovery offered his hatred with a calmness which was more dreadful than anger.

CHAPTER XXXVI. PLANS

Once enlightened on the subject of the birth of Erebus, Pog, in his diabolical joy, thanked the devil for having delivered the child into his hands.

All the feelings of aversion which Erebus had inspired in him were now explained; all his impulses of tenderness for the unfortunate youth could now be easily understood.

Erebus was the son of his mortal enemy; but he was also the son of the woman whom he had adored.

Without the secret instinct of hatred and of vengeance which dominated his being unconsciously, he could never have taken such pleasure in corrupting and perverting a young and innocent soul.

The most hardened hearts find a solace in the thought that their crimes are justifiable.

From this moment, Pog saw into his hatred clearly, if it may be said; his only indecision now was how to satiate his revenge.

He saw the necessity for prudence, that his vengeance might be sure and complete.

The death of Erebus could not satisfy him; that death, however slow, however cruel it might be, would be only one day of torment,—that no longer sufficed him.

The violence of his rage could not dissociate the innocent result of the crime from the crime itself, or from those who committed it, but Pog had long ceased to think or act with regard to justice.

In his opinion, Erebus was justly devoted to his wrath. He felt, too, a sinister joy in learning that Pierre des Anbiez was the seducer of his wife. Now he knew where to direct his blows.

Everything seemed to favour his plans. He believed he had killed Raimond V., Baron des Anbiez, in the attack on La Ciotat. Reine, abducted by Erebus, was the niece of the commander. Thus destiny assisted him in his hatred and pursuit of this family. Such were the bitter and triumphant feelings which filled his heart when the two galleys and the chebec reached their place of anchorage off the isles of Ste. Marguerite.

They had scarcely anchored when Hadji came on board the *Red Galleon*, and found Pog absorbed in his reflections.

In a few words he informed him of the designs of Erebus, and of his vain attempts to seduce the crew of the chebec and fly to the Orient.

Pog turned pale with fright. Erebus might have escaped him but for the fidelity of Hadji and his sailors! His vengeance baffled!

He manifested toward the Bohemian such overwhelming gratitude for his behaviour under the circumstances, that the latter stood gazing at him in bewilderment, so strangely did these grateful expressions contrast with the usual habit and bearing of Pog.

“Reassure yourself, Captain Pog,” said Hadji, “you need not carry on your conscience such a weight of gratitude; the sailors and I remained faithful to you because our interest demands it That obligation is superior to all others; but if you will believe me, Captain Pog, you will seize the first opportunity to put that young man ashore. He is getting spoiled,—he is getting weak; a little while ago he was weeping at the feet of those two women. So I advise you to abandon him at the first opportunity. He can only be in our way now.”

“Abandon Erebus!” cried Pog, with such passionate energy that Hadji looked at him in amazement “Abandon Erebus! but you do not know—what am I saying,—how can you know? This instant,—this instant bring the boy to me. You answer to me for him with your life—with your life, do you understand? Or indeed—but no—I will go myself on board his chebec; that will be more sure.”

At the same moment the pilot of the Red Galleon entered with an excited air. “Captain,” said he, to Pog, “in examining the horizon with my telescope, I have just discovered a galley and a polacre. These two vessels may pass without discovering us. Eblis grant it, for the black galley is fatal to those she attacks.”

“The black galley?” asked Pog.

“Who does not know the black galley of the Commander des Anbiez?” said the pilot.

“Eh, no doubt!” cried the Bohemian. “They expected the commander every day at Maison-Forte, the castle of Raimond V. Pierre des Anbiez must have arrived after us, he must have seen the citizens’ houses in flames, and known that his niece was carried off and his brother killed, and he is seeking us to avenge them.”

“That galley is the galley of the commander Pierre des Anbiez?” said Pog, stuttering, so profound was his astonishment “Pierre des Anbiez—the commander—here—he!”

It is impossible to picture the burst of savage joy with which Pog uttered these words.

After a short silence, during which he passed his hand over his brow, as if to assure himself that what happened around him was real, he suddenly fell on his knees, clasped his hands, and said, with an air of the deepest piety:

“My God, my God! Forgive me. Long have I doubted thy justice; to-day it reveals itself to me in all its glorious majesty! Lord—Lord—forgive me. Grief has distracted me; now thine almighty power is manifest in my sight. The same day thou dost place father and son at the mercy of my vengeance, after twenty years of torture. My God! after twenty years. Lord—Lord, upon my knees I thank thee; my entire life will not suffice to pray to thee, and to bless thee! The father and son in my power! My God, thou art sovereignly great! Thou art sovereignly just!”

The violent transports of fury to which Pog was subject had never terrified Hadji, but this prayer, delivered in a low, trembling, solemn voice, filled him with a vague disquietude.

This miserable creature, who hesitated before no evil, now trembled with fright.

In fact, something formidable was required thus to bow Pog in the dust, and wrest from him this cry of gratitude and submission.

After having uttered this prayer, Pog rose and walked a long time in great agitation without saying a word. He forgot the presence of Hadji and the pilot A half-hour passed thus, the Bohemian staring at Pog all the while with an eager, sinister curiosity.

He was waiting to see what strange and fatal result would follow this chaos of ideas.

Pog, as was ordinarily the case when he yielded to such violence of emotion, felt quite weak; he became as pale as a ghost, he sank down, and, but for the timely aid of Hadji and the pilot, would have fallen backwards.

The Bohemian bore him to his bed, drew a smelling-bottle from his girdle, held it to his nostrils, and soon Pog-Reis recovered from his swoon.

“I remember all now,” said he, looking around him anxiously. “I remember all. You see I am weak,—but, Hadji, what do you wish? the time of miracles has returned. Oh, this mark of the almighty power of the Most High imposes obligations on me; now I am strong; now I will not compromise the ends of Heaven’s justice by anticipating it No, no, I await its voice. It shall be obeyed, and a terrible example shall be given to the world. You must send Erebus to me, Hadji.”

These words, and the calmness of Pog’s countenance and accent, were additional cause for the astonishment of Hadji.

“It shall be done as you wish, captain. I am going to send the young man to you, or, for greater surety, conduct him to you myself.”

“That is not all, Hadji. You love pillage as much as Trimalcyon-Reis, but you also love combat for the sake of combat, and danger for danger’s sake.”

“And I did not have my part either in the pillage or the danger last night, captain! I held the hook, but the fish was not for me.”

“Listen, Hadji, you can have presently your part in a brilliant combat, or remain spectator. You must go out

with the chebec to join the black galley of the Commander des Anbiez. The speed of your vessel is superior to that of all the galleys. You will hoist the black flag and allure the commander into this road."

"I understand, captain."

"You understand me, Hadji! The culverin of Mai-son-Forte has done such damage to our water-line and other parts of the ship that it will be several days before she is repaired sufficiently to put to sea, but we could in a few hours put her in a state to sustain a battle at anchor, and few such battles have been as you will see, Hadji, if you lead the black galley into this bay! If you wish to preserve the chebec which belongs to me, do not enter the bay, Hadji, for as soon as the black galley once sees the *Red Galleon*, she will hardly think of pursuing you. Then you can set sail to the south. I give you the chebec and slaves, Hadji."

"It is not for the sake of possessing the chebec that I will do as you wish me to do," replied Hadji, with sullen pride. "Who could have prevented my profiting from the offers of Erebus? Who now could prevent my saying I consent to what you wish, and then setting sail to the south, instead of going out to sea after the black galley? I will lead the commander's ship here to you, and I will take part in the battle, because it pleases me, because, notwithstanding your calm appearance, a terrible tempest has gathered in your soul, which I wish to see burst forth. I am of an inquisitive turn of mind, captain."

"Ah, by the wrath of Heaven, whose instrument I am, you will see a beautiful storm let loose, if you return!"

"And I shall return, captain."

"Above all, say nothing to Trimalcyon of my plan; that fat brute, once under fire, will do his duty in spite of himself."

"Make yourself easy, captain, before an hour the black galley will be in pursuit of me around this point."

"And then—and then," said Pog, talking to himself with a solemn, inspired air,—"then this bay, now so peaceful, will behold one of the greatest tragedies,—a tragedy whose very memory will terrify humanity for generations."

"I am going, and I shall return with Erebus, captain," said Hadji.

He disappeared.

Pog knelt down and prayed.

CHAPTER XXXVII. THE INTERVIEW

While the Bohemian was on board the Red Galleon Erebus, now virtually considered a prisoner, shared the cabin of the chebec with Reine and Stephanette.

Notwithstanding her anger, notwithstanding her fright, notwithstanding her keen anxiety concerning the fate of her father, Mlle. des Anbiez could not remain insensible to the despair of Erebus.

He reproached himself so bitterly for her abduction, and had done so much to obtain from the Bohemian both her liberty and that of Stephanette, that she could not stifle every emotion of pity that rose in her heart.

Besides, in the frightful position in which she was placed, she felt that in him, at least, she had a defender.

A feeble ray of the sun lighted the little apartment where these three persons were associated.

Stephanette, exhausted by fatigue, was sleeping, half-recumbent on a mat.

Reine, seated, hid her face in her two hands.

Erebus stood with his arms crossed and head bowed, while great tears rolled down his pale cheeks.

"Nothing—nothing, I see no help," said he, in a low voice; then, lifting a supplicating glance to Reine, he said: "What can be done, my God, to snatch you from the hands of these wretches?"

"My father, my father!" said Reine, in a hollow voice. Then turning to Erebus, she exclaimed: "Ah, be accursed, you have caused all my sorrows! But for you I should be with my father. Perhaps he is suffering—perhaps he is wounded! And then at least he would have my care. Ah, be accursed!"

"Yes, always accursed!" repeated Erebus, with bitterness. "My mother doubtless cursed me at my birth! Cursed by the man who reared me! Cursed by you!" added he, in a heartrending voice.

"Have you not taken a daughter from her father? Have you not often been the accomplice of the brigands who ravaged that unfortunate city!" cried Reine, with indignation.

"Oh, for pity's sake do not crush me! Yes, I have been their accomplice. But, my God! have compassion on me. I was brought up to evil, as you have been brought up to good. You had a mother. You have a father. You have had always before your eyes noble examples to imitate. I,—thrown by chance among these wretches at the age of four or five years, I believe, without parents, without relations, a victim of Pog-Reis, who for his pastime—he told me yesterday—trained me to evil as one would train a young wolf to slaughter, accustomed to hear nothing but the language of bad passions, to know no restraint,—yet, at least, I repent of the evils I have caused. I weep—I weep with despair, because I cannot save you. These tears, which the most cruel suffering would not have wrung from me,—these tears are the expression of the remorse I feel for having wronged you. This wrong I have tried to repair by wishing to conduct you back to your father. Unfortunately, I could not succeed. Ah, if I only had not met you that day in the rocks of Provence, if only I had not seen your beauty—"

"Not a word more," said Reine, with dignity. "It was that day my sorrows began. Oh, it was indeed a fatal day!"

"Yes, fatal, for if I had not seen you I should never have felt an aspiration toward good. My life would always have been a life of crime. I should never have been tormented by the remorse which now consumes me," said Erebus, with a gloomy air.

“Unhappy man!” cried Reine, carried away in spite of herself by her secret preference. “Do not speak thus. Notwithstanding all the evil you have done me and mine, I shall despise our fatal meeting less, if you owe to it the only feelings which some day may result in the saving of your soul.”

Reine des Anbiez uttered these words with such earnestness, and with such an accent of interest, that Erebus clasped his hands, looking at her with gratitude and astonishment.

“Save my soul! I do not understand your words. Pog-Reis has always taught me there was no soul, but at last I see that you have a little pity for me. Those are the only kind words I have ever heard during my existence. Severity and cruelty repel me. Goodness would surely conquer me, would render me better, but, alas! who cares whether I am better or not? No one! I see only hatred, contempt, or indifference around me.”

He put his hand over his eyes, and remained silent.

Reine could not repress an emotion of pity for the unfortunate youth, nor a feeling of horror at the thought of his cruel education.

Moved with compassion, she could but hope that his natural instincts toward good had prevented his utter corruption. Since she had been in the power of the pirates, the conduct of Erebus had never transgressed the limits of the most profound respect. If he had abducted her from her father’s castle, with a most criminal audacity, he had, at least, shown in his bearing toward her a delicacy and forbearance which seemed almost like timidity.

This decided contrast proved to her the struggle of a noble, generous nature against a perverse education, and her imagination fondly pictured what he might have been, but for the cruel fate which imposed such a life upon him.

But these sentiments soon gave way to the anxious fears which agitated her mind concerning her father, and she cried with tears, “Oh, my father, my father! when shall I see him again? Oh, how dreadful!” Erebus, thinking that she addressed him, replied, sadly, “Do you think I would not attempt everything in the world to take you from this vessel? But what can be done? Ah, without you, without the vague hope that I have been useful to you—” Erebus could not finish, but his countenance was so sad that Reine, frightened, cried, “What do you mean?”

“I mean that when one cannot endure life the best thing is to get rid of it; when you are rescued and in safety, Erebus will give a last thought to you, and then kill himself.”

“Another crime! he will end a life already so guilty by another misdeed!” cried Reine. “But you do not know that your life belongs to God only!”

Erebus smiled bitterly, and replied: “My life belongs to me, since I can free myself from it when it becomes a burden. When I shall have left you, I can live no longer. I do not kill myself at your feet, because I still hope to be useful to you. What good is my life henceforth? You have made me understand how criminal has been the life I have been leading. But the future! The future for me is you, and I am unworthy of you, and you do not love me—and you will never love me. Ah, cursed be the Bohemian who has deceived me, who told me that you had not forgotten him who saved your father’s life!”

“I have never forgotten that you were my father’s saviour,” said Reine, with dignity, “nor can I forget the outrage practised upon me, yet I ought to take kindly what you have done to repair that wrong. Repentance for the greatest crimes finds pardon before the Lord! If I am permitted to see my father and my home again, I will forgive you. But before I leave, I will say to you: ‘Never despair of the infinite goodness of God! Instead of yielding to an insane despair, abandon for ever those who made you their accomplice, seek instruction in our holy religion, learn to know and love and bless the Lord, become a good man; prove by an exemplary life that you have forsaken the criminal career which wicked men forced upon you; then can we pity your past misfortunes, then we can forget your outrages, then we can believe, indeed, that you wish to expiate the guilty actions of the past, by good.’”

“And if I follow your counsel,” cried Erebus, transported by the pious and lofty language of Reine, “if I become a good man, may I some day present myself at Maison-Forte?”

Reine looked downwards.

The door of the cabin suddenly opened, and the Bohemian entered, and perhaps saved the young girl from an embarrassing reply.

Stephanette started out of sleep, and said, artlessly:

“Ah, my God, mademoiselle, I dreamed that I was married to my poor Luquin, who had rescued us, and that he was having that wicked vagabond hanged.”

“All I wish, my pretty girl,” said the Bohemian, with an insolent smile, “is that the very opposite of your dream may happen, which is usually the case. You can believe that such are my intentions concerning Captain Luquin.”

“What do you want?” asked Erebus, impatiently, interrupting Hadji.

“I have come for you. Pog-Reis wants you. He is waiting for you on board the *Red Galleon*.”

“Tell Pog-Reis that I will not leave this chebec except to conduct Mlle, des Anbiez ashore. She has no other protector, and I will not abandon her.”

The Bohemian, knowing the determined spirit of Erebus, preferred to have recourse to a lie to employing force to take him away from the young girls, and said to him:

“Pog-Reis asks for you because he wishes to get rid of you. He knows that you tried to make his crew act contrary to his orders. As to these two women, he prefers a ransom. You are to go and demand this ransom from Raimond V. As soon as the money is here, you can conduct the two doves to Maison-Forte.”

“That is a decoy to separate me from them,” cried Erebus. “You are lying.”

“And if I only wished to take you away, my young captain, what would hinder my calling our men to my aid, and making them carry you off?”

“I have a kangiar in my belt,” said Erebus.

“And when you have stabbed one, or two, or three of these honest pirates, will you not be obliged to yield to numbers sooner or later? So believe me; go on board the *Red Galleon*. Pog-Reis will give you his orders and a little boat. You will go to Raimond V., and to-morrow you can be here with a large sum of gold that the old baron will be only too glad to give for his daughter. To-morrow, I tell you, you can take away these two girls.”

“My God, what is to be done?” cried Reine. “That man perhaps is speaking the truth. And my father would not hesitate to give any sum, whatever it might be. Yet, if the man is lying, we will only lose our only protector,” added she, turning to Erebus.

Erebus was equally perplexed. He realised that he must succumb to numbers at last, and that, in refusing Pog-Reis, he would only aggravate the situation of Mlle, des Anbiez.

After some moments of reflection Reine said to Erebus, in a voice full of courage:

“Go to my father, and give me that weapon,” and she pointed to the dagger which Erebus wore at his side.

“I am left without a defender, but at least death will be able to save from dishonour.”

Impressed with these simple and dignified words, Erebus knelt respectfully before Reine, and gave her his kangiar without uttering a word, as if he feared to profane the solemnity of the scene.

He left the cabin, followed by the Bohemian, embarked in a small boat, and presented himself to Pog, on board the *Red Galleon*.

Hadji left Erebus on board this vessel, and returned to the chebec to carry out the orders of Pog.

The Bohemian set sail and was out of the bay before Reine and Stephanette knew that he had returned.

After a few tacks, he distinguished perfectly the commander’s black galley and Captain Trinquetaille’s polacre to his windward. The two vessels were coming from La Ciotat. A few words will explain their presence in sight of the bay, and how they had been able to follow the track of the pirates.

CHAPTER XXXVIII. THE THREE BROTHERS

Pierre des Anbiez arrived at Cape l’Aigle at the break of day. Scarcely had the black galley anchored in the port of La Ciotat, when the commander and his brother descended to the shore.

Everywhere they saw marks of the pirate’s barbarity.

The weeping inhabitants then knew all the extent of their losses. Each family had learned which one of its members had perished or had been taken captive.

During the battle, they thought only of defending themselves and repulsing the enemy; then, too, night had veiled the disasters which day revealed in all their horror. On one side, walls blackened by the conflagration barely supported the tottering carpentry.

Farther on was the town hall, of which only the walls remained. Its windows were broken, its balcony demolished, its doors burned to ashes, its foundations charred, and showers of balls everywhere proved that the citizens had defended themselves with vigorous earnestness.

The large square of La Ciotat, the theatre of the most murderous conflict of that fatal night, was covered with dead bodies.

Nothing could be more heartrending than to see the afflicted inhabitants seeking a father, a brother, a son, or a friend among these dead.

When they recognised one whom they sought, the others, petrified with grief, would look on in silence; again, some would utter impotent cries for vengeance; and some in their wild lamentation would rush to the port, as if they would there find the galleys of the lawless brigands.

The commander and Father Elzear walked through this scene of desolation, speaking words of consolation to the unfortunate sufferers, and asking information of Raimond V.

They learned that he had made a most valuable and courageous defence, by attacking the pirates at the head of the company from Maison-Forte, but no one could tell them if the baron was wounded or not.

The two brothers, in their anxiety, hastened to Maison-Forte, followed by a few subordinate officers of the galley, and by Luquin Trinquetaille, who had also anchored his polacre in the port.

They arrived at the Castle des Anbiez. The bridge was lowered, and the great court deserted, although it was the hour for work.

They mounted the stairs in haste, and reached the immense hall in which the pious Christmas ceremonies had taken place the evening before.

All the inmates of Maison-Forte, men, women, old people, and children, were kneeling in this vast hall, where reigned the most profound silence.

So absorbed was this crowd in its devotions, and so anxiously did they watch the half-open door of the baron’s chamber, that not one perceived the entrance of the commander and Father Elzear.

At the bottom of the hall, under the dais, was the cradle, the masterpiece of Dame Dulceline and the good chaplain. A few candles still burned in the copper chandeliers. The colossal Christmas log was smoking in the depth of the vast chimney, still ornamented with green branches and fruits and flowers and ribbons.

Nothing seemed more startling than this scene lighted by the first pale rays of a winter day; nothing more painful than the contrast between the feast of the night and the sorrow of the morning.

After having contemplated this quiet and imposing scene, the commander gently called aside some of the baron’s vassals to open a way to the door of the baron’s chamber.

“Monseigneur, the commander, and good Father Elzear!” were the words which circulated among the

anxious crowd, as they waited for news of the baron's condition, whether or not his wounds permitted them to indulge a hope for his recovery.

Pierre des Anbiez and his brother, with a soft and cautious tread, entered the chamber of Raimond V.

The old gentleman, still dressed in his holiday attire, even to his long boots, was lying on his bed. His venerable face was livid, and his flowing white locks were stained with blood.

Abbé Mascarolus was dressing the wounds in his head, assisted in this pious duty by Honorât de Berrol. Dame Dulceline, whose tears never ceased to flow, was cutting cloth bands, while the majordomo Laramée, standing at the foot of the bed, apparently unconscious of all around him, was sobbing aloud.

So absorbed were the actors in this sad scene, that Father Elzear and Pierre des Anbiez entered unperceived.

"My brother!" cried the commander and the priest at the same time, falling on their knees at the bedside of the baron, and kissing his cold hands affectionately.

"Are the wounds serious, abbé?" said the commander, while Father Elzear remained on his knees.

"Alas! is it you, M. Commander?" said the chaplain, clasping his hands in surprise; "if only you had arrived yesterday all these misfortunes would not have happened, and monseigneur would not be in danger of death."

"Great God!" cried Pierre des Anbiez, "we must send at once for Brother Anselm, the surgeon on board my galley. He will assist you; he understands wounds made by weapons of war."

Seeing Luquin Trinquetaille at the door, the commander said to him: "Go immediately for Brother Anselm, and bring him here."

Luquin disappeared to execute the commander's orders. The abbé was anxiously listening to the laboured breathing of the baron. Finally, the wounded man made a light movement, turned his head from the chaplain without opening his eyes, and uttered a long sigh. The commander and the priest gazed inquiringly into the chaplain's face, who made a sign of approval, and took advantage of the baron's position to dress another part of the wounds.

Father Elzear, disappointed at not seeing Reine at her father's bedside at such a time, said, in a low voice to Honorât: "And where is Reine? The poor child no doubt cannot endure this painful sight!"

"Great God!" cried Honorât, in astonishment, "and do you not know, Father Elzear, all the misfortunes which have befallen this house? Reine has been carried off by the pirates!"

Father Elzear and the commander looked at each other, bewildered.

"My God! my God! spare his old age this last blow!" said the priest, clasping his hands in supplication, and looking up to heaven. "Grant us the power to take this unfortunate child from their hands!"

"And does no one know to what point these pirates have fled?" said the commander, his wrath beyond all bounds. "Inquire of the boats that arrive; the night was clear, and they must be able to give us some information." "Alas!" said Honorât, "I have just arrived at Maison-Forte, which I and the baron's guests left that night in peace. I was ignorant of all these disasters. When the baron was brought home unconscious, the good abbé sent for me in haste, and I came, finding him in this desperate state, and his vassals informed me of the abduction of Mlle, des Anbiez."

Raimond V. still lay unconscious. From time to time he uttered a feeble sigh, and then relapsed into a lethargic torpor.

The commander anxiously awaited the coming of the surgeon from his galley, as he thought his medical attainments superior to those of the chaplain.

Finally he arrived, followed by Luquin Trinquetaille, who, notwithstanding the profound silence guarded by the watchers around the wounded man, cried out to the commander, as he entered the door: "Monseigneur, the pirates must be anchored on the coast, twenty-five or thirty leagues from here at the most."

Pierre des Anbiez, making a sign to the worthy captain to be silent, walked up to him rapidly, and conducted him into the gallery, which the vassals had just left at the chaplain's request.

"What do you say?" said he to Trinquetaille. "Who told you that?"

"Monseigneur, the coxswain Nicard told me. That night he passed very near to two galleys and a chebec, which hugged the shore, and he easily recognised the *Red Galleon*. These vessels were moving very, very slowly, as if they had been so badly damaged as to be compelled to halt every few minutes in some deserted harbour on the coast."

"That must be so," said the commander, thoughtfully, "they must have been seriously crippled to stay near the shore, instead of flying south with their captives and their booty."

"There is no doubt, monseigneur, that the culverin of Maison-Forte did them great damage, for Pierron, the fisherman, told me that he saw them fire that artillery the whole time the galleys of those demons were doubling the point of the island Verte, and that pass is a fine aim for the culverin; Master Laramée has told me so a thousand times."

"The vengeance of the Lord will overtake these robbers, glutted with blood and pillage," said the commander, in a hollow voice. "Perhaps I shall be able to snatch my brother's unfortunate daughter from their hands."

"And also her attendant, Stephanette, if you please, monseigneur," said Luquin. "These brigands, no doubt, have carried her off with the aid of a cursed Bohemian, that the good God will send some day, perhaps, within reach of my arm."

"There is not a moment to lose," said the commander, after a few moments' reflection. Then addressing Luquin, he said: "Run to the port, and issue my order to the king of the chevaliers to prepare my galley for immediate departure. Do you follow with your polacre. Where did the coxswain Nicard meet the *Red Galleon?*"

"Near the island of St. Fereol, monseigneur."

"Then we only need to watch the coast this side of the island of St. Fereol As soon as you put to sea, set all

your sails so as to examine every point on the coast which may serve as a retreat for the pirates. If you see anything suspicious, give me warning. I will keep in sight of your vessel."

"May Heaven bless your undertaking, monseigneur, and grant that I may be able to aid you."

Luquin Trinquetaille, inspired by the hope of recovering Stephanette, and eager to wreak his vengeance upon the Bohemian, ran to the port in all possible haste.

Pierre des Anbiez returned to the baron's chamber. The surgeon from the galley already saw signs of hope in the improved respiration and more quiet sleep of the wounded man. The commander gazed sadly and thoughtfully at his brother. Presentiments he could not conquer told him that this day would prove a fatal one to him. It grieved him much to leave the baron without being recognised by him, but time pressed, and he approached the bed, leaned over the patient, and, kissing his cold cheeks, said, in a low and broken voice: "Farewell, my poor brother, farewell."

When he rose, his hard and austere countenance betrayed his emotion, and a tear flowed down his cheek.

"Embrace me, my brother," said he to Elzear, "I am going into battle, and into a bloody battle, for the *Red Galleon* is intrepid. I hope to meet these pirates in some harbour on the coast."

"M. Commander, I shall follow you," cried Honorât de Berrol, "although it pains me to leave Raimond V. at such a time. I ask you to accept me as a volunteer."

Pierre des Anbiez seemed agitated by an inward struggle. He recognised the courage of Honorât, but he also realised the danger of the enterprise he was about to undertake, and foresaw that it would result in one of the most desperate encounters in which they had ever taken part.

"I understand your interest," said he to Honorât. "We will meet the pirates, and succeed, perhaps, in rescuing Reine des Anbiez, but if I do not return, and if his daughter should not return, who will console him?" and he pointed to the baron. "Does he not love you as a second son?"

"And if you do not return, and if his daughter does not return," eried Honorât, "who will console me for not having followed you, and for not having shared your dangers?"

"Come, then," said the commander, "I cannot combat your noble resolution any longer. Let us go. Farewell, again, my brother, pray for us," added the soldier, tenderly embracing his brother Elzear.

"Alas! may the Lord bless your undertaking. God grant you may bring our dear child back to us, and our brother, waking from the painful sleep, may find his daughter kneeling at his bedside!"

"May Heaven hear you, brother!" said the commander. For the last time he pressed the cold hand of Raimond V., and hurried out of the chamber toward the port There he found his galley ready to depart, and set sail at once, followed by the polacre of the brave Trinquetaille.

Thus it was that the black galley found itself in sight of the Bay of Lérins, where the two galleys of the pirates were anchored, when Hadji came out of the road with his chebec to execute the orders of Pog, and lead in pursuit of him the galley of religion.

CHAPTER XXXIX. PREPARATIONS FOR THE COMBAT

The wind was favourable for the black galley and the polacre, and after having passed the island of Lerol the two vessels slackened their speed.

Luquin Trinquetaille touched at the different harbours along the coast, without meeting the pirate ships, which he was to announce to the commander by a shot from his swivel-gun.

Toward evening, just as the sun was sinking below the horizon, the black galley and the polacre arrived in sight of the isles of Ste. Marguerite, at the moment, as we have just said, when the chebec of Hadji issued from the road, in quest of the Christian galleys, in obedience to the commands of Pog.

Captain Trinquetaille signalled the chebec, and set every sail to join it. The Bohemian slackened his speed and waited for him. The betrothed of Stephanette, by the aid of his telescope, recognised Hadji, who was commanding the little craft. The worthy captain of the *Holy Terror to the Moors* boiled with rage at this encounter, and had need of all his self-control not to attack the author of Stephanette's abduction, but, faithful to the orders of the commander, he doubled the point of Lerol, and soon perceived the *Red Galleon* and the galley of Trimalcyon anchored in the bay, very near each other.

Thus having obtained an exact knowledge of the position of the pirates, he stood toward the black galley in order to announce this discovery to Pierre des Anbiez, while the chebec of Hadji was entering the bay under full sail.

When he arrived near the stem of the black galley and gave this information to the pilot, the latter, in obedience to the commander, ordered him to set back the sails of the polacre, and come on board.

Luquin obeyed, but was in despair to see that the chebec of Hadji, whom he was burning to fight, had escaped him.

The chevaliers had assembled on the deck of the galley, and, according to the methods of warfare of that time, had cleared the deck for action.

The rambades, which formed a sort of forecastle at the prow, where the five pieces of artillery belonging to the galley were in battery, were already covered with coarse oakum cloth, several inches in thickness. This heavy covering was designed to deaden the effect of the enemy's projectiles.

In case the galley was boarded by the enemy, an entrenchment called a bastion had been erected, which extended the entire length of the ship's balcony, and reached to the height of the fourth bench of the prow.

This entrenchment was constructed of beams and crosspieces of timber, the spaces between being filled with old cordage and dilapidated sails. This construction, six feet high on the side of the stem, was only five feet high at the prow, toward which it sloped to the level of the rambades, and was designed to prevent the raking fire of the enemy's artillery, sweeping the length of the galley.

The subordinate officers and soldiers were armed with steel helmets, buff-skin, and neck-pieces of iron. Matches ready for lighting lay near the cannon and swivel-guns; the masts had been hauled down and placed in the waist of the vessel, as galleys never fight with sails up, but are sustained by their oars.

The slaves who composed the crew looked on these preparations for battle with mute terror or sullen indifference. These poor creatures, chained to their benches, were accounted only a locomotive power. The discipline of force, to which they had been subjected on board the galley, had, through its severity, given them the calmness necessary for confronting danger.

Their position was one of peculiar trial. The gagged and passive spectators of a desperate battle,—since during a conflict the crews were generally gagged by means of a piece of wood inserted in the mouth,—they were not able to deaden their perception of danger, or satisfy that instinct of ferocity which self-preservation always awakens in men at the sight of carnage, that enthusiasm or courage which demands blow for blow, and kills in order not to be killed.

Nor had these slaves any hope of the ordinary results which follow a victory. If their vessel was the conqueror they continued to row on board of her; if she was conquered, they rowed on board of the conqueror.

Placed during the action between the balls of the enemy and the pistols of their keepers, who killed them on their first refusal to row, the men of the crew only escaped certain death by exposing themselves to a death less certain, inasmuch as there was a possibility of missing the enemy's balls, while the keepers fired their pistols into the breasts of their helpless victims. Under such an alternative the galley-slaves resigned themselves to their fate and continued to row.

In all cases, they were indifferent to victory, and not unfrequently were interested in defeat, since the conquerors, Turks or Arabs, often delivered their own nationality. As to the renegades, all crews were alike to them. Hence, the convict-crew of the black galley knew only that they were about to do battle with the *Red Galleon*, and were utterly indifferent to the result of the engagement.

Preparations for the fight went on in the most profound silence. The calm, austere countenances of the soldiers of the cross showed that they found nothing unusual in these preliminary details. The chevaliers carefully inspected the different services with which they were charged; so seriously was every duty performed, that one might have thought the actors were preparing for some religious rite.

At the stern, the assembled chevaliers made a rigid examination of the position of the two galleys commanded by the pirates.

When Luquin Trinquetaille arrived on deck, the overseer ordered him to attend the commander, who was expected there. Pierre des Anbiez, kneeling in his chamber, was fervently praying. Since his departure from Maison-Forte, the gloomiest presentiments had assailed his mind. In the poignancy of his remorse, he had seen a providential coincidence in his return and the frightful disasters which had just overwhelmed his family. He accused himself of having, by his own crime, called down the vengeance of Heaven upon the house of Anbiez.

His imagination, unnaturally excited by the violent emotions which had shaken his whole being, evoked the strangest phantoms.

As he cast a serious yet fearful glance upon the portrait of Pog,—the Count de Montreuil,—which was hanging in his chamber, it seemed to him that the eyes of this portrait glowed with a supernatural brilliancy.

Twice he approached the frame to assure himself that he was not the sport of an illusion; twice he recoiled terrified, feeling his brow bathed in a cold sweat, and his hair standing up on his head.

Then he was struck with dizziness,—his reason forsook him,—he saw nothing more. Objects unnamable passed before his eyes with frightful rapidity; it seemed to him that he was being transported on the wings of a whirlwind.

By degrees he came to himself,—the aberration was past, and he found himself in his chamber on the galley, face to face with the portrait of Pog.

For the first time in his life he felt a dark and painful presentiment at the thought of going into battle. Instead of burning with that wild enthusiasm which characterised him, instead of thinking with a sort of ferocious joy upon the tumult of the fray, which had so often stifled the remorse which cried aloud in his soul, his thoughts turned involuntarily to death and disaster.

He started, as he asked himself if his soul was ready to appear before the Lord,—if the austerities which he had imposed upon himself for so many years sufficed for the expiation of his crime.

Terrified, he fell upon his knees, and began to pray with fervour, beseeching God to give him the courage and the strength to accomplish his last mission,—once more to uplift the cross triumphantly, and to rescue Reine des Anbiez from the hands of her ravishers.

He had scarcely finished his prayer when some one knocked at his door. He rose to his feet. The artilleryman, Captain Hugues, appeared.

"What do you want?"

"A man in a boat, sent by these miscreants, wishes to make some terms with you. M. Commander, must I welcome him with a shot from my swivel-gun, or send him on deck?"

"Send him on deck."

"Where shall I conduct him?"

"Here."

Pierre des Anbiez thought he understood the nature of the desired interview. The pirates, holding Reine des Anbiez as a hostage, wished, no doubt, to make terms for her ransom.

The artillery officer returned with the Bohemian.

“What do you want?” said the commander to him.

“Order this man to retire, monseigneur; your ears alone should hear what my lips will say.”

“You are very impudent,” replied Pierre de Anbiez, looking at Hadji, sharply.

Then he added, addressing Captain Hugues: “Leave us—go away.”

“Alone with this robber, M. Commander?”

“We are three,” said Pierre des Anbiez, pointing to his arms hanging on the wall.

“Do you take me, then, for an assassin?” said Hadji, with scorn.

The artillery officer shrugged his shoulders, and went out with evident regret, although the tall stature and robust figure of the commander, compared to the slender proportions of the Bohemian, ought to have reassured him.

“Speak, as I do not wish to have you crucified yet at the prow of my galley,” said Pierre des Anbiez to the Bohemian.

The latter, with his accustomed insolence, replied: “When my hour comes it shall find me. Pog-Reis, captain of the *Red Galleon*, sends me to you, monseigneur. It was he who attacked La Ciotat that night; it is he certainly who has Reine des Anbiez in his power.”

“Enough, enough, wretch, do not boast longer of your crimes, or I will have your tongue torn out! What have you come to demand? I am eager to chastise your accomplices and make a terrible example of them. If you come to speak of favour and ransom, hear well what fate awaits you and yours; let them try to defend themselves or not, they shall all be carried in chains to La Ciotat, and burned in the middle of the town hall square. Do you understand clearly?”

“I understand clearly,” said the Bohemian, with imperturbable coolness. “Pog-Reis will not object to your burning his crew.”

“What do you mean? That he will deliver his accomplices to me, if I grant him his life? It is natural that barbarity like his should hide an ignoble cowardice. If that is his opinion, I am of another mind. The two captains of the galleys and you, all three shall be quartered before being burned, even if you deliver to me your accomplices bound hand and foot, to receive the punishment they deserve. So, go at once, and tell that to your confederates. Go! my blood boils when I think of that unfortunate city and my brother! Go! I do not wish to soil my hands with the blood of a bandit, and I wish you to warn your associates of the fate which awaits them!”

“I had nothing to do with the massacre in the city, monseigneur.”

“Will you finish?”

“Ah, well, monseigneur, Pog-Reis and the other captain propose a single combat to you and one of your chevaliers, two against two, with the Spanish sword and dagger. If he is killed, you will attack his galleys afterward, and easily capture them, as there will then be two bodies without a head. If you are killed, your lieutenant will attack the galleys of Pog-Reis. The desire to avenge your death will give new zeal to your soldiers, and no doubt they will offer Pog-Reis and his crew as a holocaust to your ghost. That need not change your plans in the least; only the captain of the *Red Galleon* will find himself face to face with the captain of the black galley. The tiger and the lion can thus defy each other.”

The commander listened to this proposition, as insolent as it was unheard of, in silence and astonishment.

When the Bohemian ceased talking, Pierre des Anbiez, in his wrath, could not resist seizing him by the throat, and crying: “What! you wretch, is that the message with which you are charged? You dare propose to me to cross swords with an assassin like Pog-Reis and one of his brigands! By the holy cross!” added the commander, pushing back the Bohemian so violently that he stumbled to the other end of the chamber, “to punish you for your impudence, I shall have you given twenty lashes on the chase-gun before handing you over to execution.”

The Bohemian darted the glance of a tiger at Pierre des Anbiez and gnashed his teeth together in rage, but seeing that he would be at a disadvantage in a contest, he restrained himself and replied: “Pog-Reis, monseigneur, counted on your refusal at first, and, to decide you, he instructed me to inform you that your brother’s daughter was in his power. If you refuse his proposition, if you attack his galleys at once, Reine des Anbiez and all the captives we have taken shall be instantly put to death.”

“Wretch!”

“If, on the contrary, you accept the combat and send your gauntlet as a pledge, Reine des Anbiez will be brought on board your vessel without ransom, as well as the other prisoners that Pog-Reis has taken at La Ciotat.” “I will never make terms with such murderers. Go!” “Think of it, consider it, monseigneur. Pog-Reis, if you attack him, will defend himself vigorously. If he is defeated, he will blow up his ship. You will have neither him nor Reine des Anbiez nor the other captives, while by accepting this single combat you can return the young girl to her father, and the captives to their city.”

“Be silent!” said the commander, who could not help reflecting that this proposition had its advantage, notwithstanding its audacious insolence.

“Finally,” said Hadji, as if he had guarded this last consideration as the most decisive, “a mysterious spirit wishes the combat that Pog-Reis proposes to you. Yes, this morning, after the attack on La Ciotat, Pog-Reis, exhausted by fatigue, fell asleep and had a dream. A voice said to him that a single combat between him and a soldier of the cross to-day would expiate a great crime.”

These last words of the Bohemian struck the commander, and he started. Already he believed, in the intensity of his remorse, that his crime had brought upon his family the frightful evils which had befallen it. When he heard Hadji speak of the expiation of a great crime, he believed âiat the will of Heaven had been declared in these words, uttered by chance.

“What dream? what dream? speak,” said he to the Bohemian, in a hollow voice, as he was seized by a secret

terror.

“What matters the dream to you, monseigneur?”

“Speak, I tell you, speak!”

“Pog-Reis was transported into the region of visions,” replied Hadji, with an Oriental emphasis. “He heard the voice of the spirit. It said to him, ‘Look!’ and he saw a woman in a coffin, and that woman had been pierced to the heart and her wound was bleeding. And near the dead woman Pog-Reis beheld the vision of a soldier of Christ,—that vision was you!”

“I! I!” cried the commander, petrified with astonishment.

“You!” said Hadji, restraining his joy, for he saw that this story, prepared by Pog-Reis, accomplished the desire of the pirate.

Pog,—the Count de Montreuil,—judging of the religious character of the commander by the letters which the Bohemian had stolen from the watchman’s cabin, did not doubt that Pierre des Anbiez would be impressed by this dream, and thus be induced to decide in favour of the combat. The commander was all the more impressed by this account of the dream, inasmuch as he believed his crime had never been discovered.

“Ah, God wishes it, God wishes it,” murmured he, in a low voice.

The Bohemian continued without appearing to hear him: “The spirit said to Pog, ‘Tomorrow you will fight this soldier of Christ, one to one, and a great crime will be expiated.’ Pog-Reis has committed great crimes, monseigneur, he has never felt remorse, the revelation of the spirit has touched him, and he wishes to obey it. He offers you combat. Take care not to refuse it. Christian, the God of all sends his dreams to all indiscriminately. It is by dreams that he declares his will. Perhaps, he chooses you, holy man, as an instrument of a great vengeance; you ought to obey. Perhaps in asking combat of you, Pog-Reis asks for death at your hands.”

The astonishment, the terror, of the commander can be comprehended. In these words, he saw a divine revelation; he thought he heard the voice of the Lord commanding this expiation, and, contrary to the prediction of the Bohemian, believed that the anger of Heaven had decreed himself to be the victim which should fall under the blows of Pog.

Finally, in accepting the combat, he assured the rescue of Reine des Anbiez; he would return a daughter to her father, and prisoners to their weeping families,—a last proof that divine justice desired to strike him alone, since it offered him the means of repairing the evils his crime had called down upon his own.

When we reflect that the constant remorse of Pierre des Anbiez, while it did not impair his reason, had predisposed him to a sort of religious fatalism by no means orthodox, but calculated to make a deep impression upon his earnest and gloomy nature, we may comprehend the crushing effect produced on him by the language of Hadji.

After a moment’s silence, he said to the Bohemian,

“Go up on deck, I will give you my orders.”

Then he sent for the overseer, and commanded him to conduct Hadji on deck, to watch over him, and to take him under his protection.

CHAPTER XL. THE CHALLENGE

The commander sent for the chaplain of the black galley to descend into his chamber. While Pierre des Anbiez confessed his sins,—with the exception of the murder reserved for the great act of penitence of the order,—and received absolution, the Bohemian went up on deck. The first person whom he met there was the captain of the *Holy Terror to the Moors, by the Grace of God*.

Hadji, affecting an easy and impertinent familiarity, approached Luquin Trinquetaille and said to him: “Who would have believed, my boy, that we would see each other again here, when that pretty girl enraged you so much by giving me flame-coloured ribbons at Maison-Forte?”

This excess of impudence rendered the worthy captain speechless a moment, then, putting his hand on his sword, he was about to attack Hadji, when the overseer reminded him that the Bohemian was under his protection by order of the commander.

“There is another place where we will meet, you villain,” said Luquin, “and that will be under the gallows where you will be hanged; for, zounds! although the office of executioner is repugnant to me, I would sell my polacre even to have the right to put the rope around your neck.”

“Ingrate, you do not think of the grief you would bring upon Stephanette; the poor girl loves me so much that she would die of sorrow to see me hanged, and especially by you.”

“You lie, you lie like a dog. Oh, that I could tear your cursed tongue out by the roots!”

“You would be right, my boy, to tear out my tongue, for it was my honeyed words which opened the way to this pretty girl’s heart A little while ago, on board my chebec where she was with me, she said, as she leaned her head on my shoulder—”

“You lie, you blaspheme!” cried Luquin, in fury.

“She said, as she leaned her head on my shoulder,” continued the Bohemian, with imperturbable coolness, “‘What a difference, my handsome captain, between your gallant and charming language, and the tiresome twittering of that long-legged heron that flutters around me so clumsily.’ That is the way she spoke of you, my poor boy.”

“Here, overseer,” exclaimed Luquin, pale with rage, “permit me to cut this villain’s face with a few blows of my sabre scabbard.”

“If his words wound you, do not listen to them,” answered the overseer. “The commander entrusted this pagan to me, and I cannot permit any one to do him harm.”

Luquin uttered a groan of concentrated wrath.

“After all,” continued the Bohemian, with a disdain-ful self-conceit, “that girl is rather good-looking, but you have made her so silly, my boy, that the conversation I had with her yesterday was enough to take away any desire to continue the interview. You can marry her when you please, my boy, only when you see her look sad, you need only mention my name to make her smile tenderly, since the memory of me will live in her heart eternally. Poor girl, she told me so yesterday as she kissed my hand as if I had been a lord.”

The indignant Luquin could hear no more. Shaking his fists at the Bohemian, he turned away abruptly, followed by the derisive laugh of the vagabond.

As we have said, the sun was just sinking and the sea was calm. In the distance, between two points of the rocks at the depth of the bay, could be seen the *Red Galleon* and the galley of Trimalcyon anchored near each other, while not far from them lay the chebec of Hadji.

The boat which had brought Hadji balanced on the waves, fastened to the stem of the black galley. The sky was clear, with the exception of a belt of reddish gray clouds around the setting sun.

Captain Hugues, the artilleryman, approached the overseer who guarded the Bohemian, and said to him, as he shook his head and pointed to the west:

“Brother, I do not like those clouds which are gathering down there, they are threatening, we are in a dead calm. If the sun, as it sets, scatters these clouds, the night will be beautiful; if, on the contrary, the cloud covers the sun before it sets—”

“I understand you, Brother Hugues, we will have a shift of the wind, a hurricane, and the night will be bad,” replied the overseer. “Fortunately, we have time yet.” And, turning to Hadji, he said, “Little it matters to you or to yours to be hanged in a storm or a calm.”

“I prefer to be hanged in a storm, overseer; the wind rocks you like a cradle, and you fall asleep sooner in eternity,” replied Hadji, with a disdainful indifference.

The commander appeared on deck. The assembled chevaliers separated and respectfully made way for him. Pierre des Anbiez was dressed entirely in black. His face seemed paler and more sad than usual. At his side he wore a heavy iron sword, and a long dagger in its bronze scabbard; on his right hand he wore a glove of black buffalo skin, his left hand was naked. He made a sign to the Bohemian and threw down before him his left gauntlet. Hadji picked it up and was about to speak, when the commander, with an imperious gesture, showed him the boat which had brought him to the galley. Hadji descended and embarked, and was soon on his way to the vessels of the pirates.

Astonished at the commander’s action, the chevaliers and Honorât de Berrol, who was among them, looked at each other in surprise. The commander followed the Bohemian’s departing boat with his eyes, then, turning to the group around him, said, in a loud voice:

“Brothers, in a little while we will attack the galleys of these miscreants; they are anchored near each other. The long-boat will be put to sea, half the soldiers will descend into it, and, while the black galley attacks the *Red Galleon*, the long-boat will attack the other pirate vessel.” Then addressing the king of the chevaliers, he continued: “You will command the black galley, brother, and the Brother de Blinville, the oldest lieutenant of the galley, will command the long-boat. Now, overseer, strokesman, all, ply your oars! the sun is setting and only an hour of daylight is left us to chastise these miscreants.”

Although the chevaliers had not understood why Pierre des Anbiez abandoned the command of the black galley and the long-boat, they hastened to execute his orders.

A part of the crew, well armed, embarked in the longboat of the galley, which was put to sea under the orders of the Chevalier de Blinville, and the two vessels, with full force of oars, directed their course toward the entrance of the bay.

The commander having ordered Captain Trinquetaille to remain on board the galley, the polacre was directed by the second in command, and followed the black galley’s movements.

Honorât approached the commander, and said: “I wish to fight at your side, M. Commander. Reine des Anbiez was my betrothed. Raimond V. has been a second father to me, and my place should be the post of danger.”

Pierre des Anbiez looked steadily at Honorât, and answered: “It is true, chevalier, you have a double vengeance to wreak upon these robbers. To assure the freedom of Reine, I have consented to fight in single combat with one of the pirate captains. I need a second. Will you accept that duty?”

“You, monsieur, you accede to such a proposition!” cried Honorât, “do such honour to these miscreants!”

“Will you or will you not draw the sword and the dagger when I draw them, young man?” rudely interrupted Pierre des Anbiez.

“I can only be proud to do what you do, M. Commander; my sword is at your orders.”

“Go, then, and arm yourself, and hold yourself in readiness to follow me when I descend.”

After a moment’s silence, he added: “You see that long-boat doubling the point; she will bring on board my galley Reine des Anbiez and the captives from La Ciotat.”

“Reine!” cried Honorât.

“There she is,” said the commander.

In fact, the long-boat of Hadji was rapidly approaching; the Chevalier de Berrol soon recognised Reine, Stephanette, and two other young girls, besides twenty inhabitants of La Ciotat, captured when the pirates made their descent upon the city.

The chevaliers were ignorant of the agreement made between the commander and the Bohemian. They could not understand why the pirates returned their prisoners in this manner.

When the long-boat was within range of the voice, the commander ordered the overseer to lift the galley’s

oars and wait for this craft, which soon reached them.

Pierre des Anbiez advanced to the height of the first rower's seat, and there received his niece, who threw herself in his arms with all the effusion oi affectionate gratitude.

"And my father?" cried the young girl.

"Your return will relieve his anxiety, my child," replied the commander, who did not wish to inform Reine of her father's condition.

"Honorât, is it you?" said Reine, extending her hand to the chevalier, whom she did not see at first "Alas! my friend, under what sad circumstances I see you. But who is with my father, pray? Why did you leave him alone?"

"Reine, our aim was to rescue you, and I followed the commander. Father Elzear is at Maison-Forte with Raimond V."

"But now I am free, will you not return with me to my father?"

"Return with you? No, Reine, I must remain with the commander. To-morrow, no doubt, I will see you. I bid you a tender farewell, Reine. Farewell, farewell."

"With what a serious air you bid me farewell, Honorât," cried the young girl, struck with the chevalier's solemn expression. "But there is no danger, they will not attack the pirates; what good can be done by remaining here?"

"No, doubtless they will not fight," said Honorât, with embarrassment "The commander only wishes to assure the departure of these wretches."

Pierre des Anbiez, having given his orders, approached Reine and took her by the hand, as he said: "Come, hasten, my child; embark at once, the sun is sinking. Luquin Trinquetaille will take you on board his polacre, and before to-morrow morning you will be in the arms of your father."

Then addressing the captain of the *Holy Terror to the Moors*, who was darting furious glances at the Bohemian because this vagabond never took his eyes from Stephanette, and affected to speak to her in a low voice, the commander said: "With your life you will answer for Mlle, des Anbiez. Depart this instant. Conduct her to Maison-Forte with the other young girls and her attendant. The men will remain and reinforce the crew of my galley. Come, farewell, Reine, embrace me, my child; say to my brothers that I hope to take them by the hand to-morrow."

"You hope, uncle,—pray, what danger is there?"

"The sun is setting, embark at once," said the commander, without replying to the question of his niece, as he led her to the boat which was to conduct her to the polacre.

While Reine exchanged a last look with Honorât, the Bohemian, still insolent and satirical, approached Luquin, holding Stephanette's hand in spite of her resistance, and said to him: "I give you this pretty girl, my boy; marry her in all confidence. Alas! my poor little thing, I must resign you. I will remember all your tenderness."

"What! my tenderness!" cried Stephanette, indignant.

"It is true we agreed to say nothing about it before this cormorant."

"Luquin, to your boat!" cried the commander, in an imperious voice.

The worthy captain was compelled to swallow this new insult, and to descend in haste to his boat in order to receive there Mlle. des Anbiez.

Five minutes after the polacre, commanded by Luquin, set sail for Maison-Forte, bearing Reine, Stephanette, and two other young girls so miraculously saved from the fate which threatened them.

When the polacre had departed, the Bohemian approached the commander respectfully, and said:

"Pog-Reis has kept his word, monseigneur."

"I will keep mine. Go, wait for me in your longboat."

The Bohemian bowed and left the galley.

Pierre des Anbiez said to the Chevalier de Blinville, who was to command the galley in his absence:

"The hour-glass is full; in a half-hour, if I do not return on board, you are to enter the bay and attack the pirates according to the orders which I have given to you; the black galley will fight the *Red Galleon*, and the boat will fight the other vessel."

"Shall we begin the attack without waiting for you, M. Commander?" repeated the lieutenant, thinking he had not understood the instructions.

"You will begin the attack without waiting for me, if I do not return in a half-hour," replied the commander, in a firm voice. One of his men brought to him his hat and large black mantle, on which was quartered the white cross of his order. He then left the galley, followed by Honorât, to the great astonishment of the chevaliers and the crew.

Hadji stood at the helm of the little boat; four Moorish slaves took the oars, and soon the light craft bounded over the swelling waves in the direction of the western point of the bay.

Pierre des Anbiez, wrapped in his mantle, turned his head and threw a last lingering look upon his galley, as if to assure himself of the reality of the events which were taking place. He felt himself dragged, so to speak, by an irresistible force to which he submitted in blind obedience.

After some moments of silence, he said to Hadji: "Where does that man expect me?"

"On the beach, near the ruins of the Abbey of St. Victor, monseigneur."

"Make your crew row faster, they do not advance," said Pierre des Anbiez, with feverish impatience.

"The waves are high, the cloud is gathering, and the wind is going to blow; the night will be bad," said Hadji, in a low voice.

The commander, absorbed in his own thoughts, did not reply to him. The sun's last rays were soon

obscured by a large belt of black clouds, which, at first heavy and motionless upon the horizon, began to move with frightful rapidity. Deep and distant bursts of thunder, a phenomenon quite common during the winter season of Provence, announced one of those sudden hurricanes so frequent in the Mediterranean.

CHAPTER XLI. THE COMBAT

The clouds piled high in the west, spread rapidly over the sky which had been so serene. The increasing murmur of the waves, the plaintive moan of the wind, which was gradually rising, the distant rolling of the thunder, all announced a terrible storm.

The little boat reached the shore, a lonely beach girded by blocks of reddish granite. The commander and Honorât landed, when Hadji, who had preceded them a few steps, stopped and said to Pierre des Anbiez, “Monseigneur, follow this path hollowed out of the rock, and you will soon arrive at the ruins of the Abbey of St. Victor. Pog-Reis awaits you there.”

Without replying to Hadji, Pierre des Anbiez resolutely entered a sort of crevasse formed by a rent in the rock, and scarcely large enough for a man to pass through.

Honorât, not less courageous, followed him, reflecting at the same time that a traitor, placed on the crest of the two rocks between which they rather glided than walked, could easily crush them by rolling upon them some one of the enormous stones which crowned the escarpment. The tempest was gradually approaching. The loud voices of the wind and the sea, which threatened more and more, at last burst forth into fury, and were answered from the height of the clouds by the thunderbolts. The elements had entered upon a tremendous struggle.

The commander walked with long strides. In the violence of the storm he saw an omen; it seemed to him that the vengeance of Heaven clothed itself in a terrible majesty before striking him.

The more he reflected, the more the strange dream related by the Bohemian appeared to him a manifestation of the divine will.

By one of the ordinary phenomena of thought, Pierre des Anbiez in one second recalled every detail of bloody tragedy which was the consequence of his love for the wife of Count de Montreuil, the birth of his unfortunate child, the death of Emilie, and the murder of her husband. All of these events came back to his mind with awful precision, as if the crime had been committed the day before.

The narrow passage which wound across the rocks enlarged somewhat, and the commander and Honorât issued from this granite wall, and found themselves opposite the ruins of the Abbey of St. Victor. In this spot they beheld no one.

The interior basin of the bay formed a deep cove. At the south it was shut in by the rocks through which they had just passed; at the north and at the west, by the half-destroyed buildings of the abbey; at the east could be seen the road in which the two galleys of the pirates were anchored.

The imposing pile of the abbey ruins, the wreck of vaults and heavy arches, the crumbling towers covered with ivy, outlined their sad, gray forms upon the black clouds which hung lower and lower over the solemn scene.

A wan, bleak day, which was neither light nor darkness, threw a strange and weird radiance over the rocks, the ruins, the beach, and the sea. The waves roared, the wind howled, the thunder rolled, yet no person appeared.

Honorât, in spite of his courage, was struck with the awful and dismal scene which lay around him. The commander, wrapped in his long black mantle, his form erect, his face anxious and gloomy, seemed to evoke evil spirits.

In a deep, sepulchral voice, he called three times: “Pog-Reis! Pog-Reis! Pog-Reis!” No answer was heard.

An enormous owl uttered a doleful cry as it flew slowly and heavily from a vault, as massive as the arch of a bridge, which had once been the entrance to the cloister.

“Nobody comes,” said Honorât. “Do you not fear an ambuscade, M. Commander? Perhaps you have placed too much confidence in the words of these wretches.”

“Divine vengeance assumes all forms,” replied Pierre des Anbiez.

He then relapsed into silence, gazing abstractedly at the heavy arcade, which formerly served as an entrance to the cloister, and whose interior was now enveloped in dense shadow.

Suddenly a pale winter ray threw its wan light over this arch, casting a livid, fantastic illumination over the solemn scene.

A thunderbolt broke and reverberated, and, by a strange coincidence, at the same moment two men issued from the obscurity of the vault, and with slow and deliberate steps advanced toward the commander and Honorât de Berrol.

These men were Pog and Erebus.

Pog held a naked sword in his right hand; his left arm was around the neck of Erebus, and he reclined tenderly upon the young man, as a father would lean upon a son. Erebus also held an unsheathed sword in his hand.

Both continued to approach the commander and Honorât.

Suddenly Pierre des Anbiez stood for a moment petrified, then, without uttering a word, quickly stepped back, seized the arm of the Chevalier de Berrol, and pointed to Pog and Erebus, with a gesture of terror.

Notwithstanding the change produced by years in the countenance of Pog, the commander recognised in him the Count de Montreuil, the husband of Emilie, the man whom he believed he had killed, and whose

portrait he had preserved as an expiation of his crime.

“Have the dead come back from the grave?” said he, in a low voice, recoiling and dragging Honorât with him as Pog advanced.

The Chevalier de Berrol was ignorant of all that pertained to that terrible tragedy, but he felt a secret horror, less at the appearance of the two pirates than at the evident fright of the commander, whose intrepidity was so well known.

Then, as if to render the solemn scene still more awful, the tempest increased in violence, and the thunder grew louder and more frequent.

Pog stopped.

“Do you know me? Do you know me?” said he to the commander.

“If you are not a ghost, I know you,” replied the commander, fixing a look of amazement upon the husband of Emilie.

“Do you remember the unhappy woman whose murderer you were?”

“I remember, I remember, I accuse myself.” And the commander struck his breast in the act of contrition.

At these words, uttered in a low voice by Pierre des Anbiez, Erebus, whose countenance expressed the rage of desperation, raised his sword, and started to throw himself upon the commander.

Pog restrained him with a firm hand, and said to him: “Not yet.”

Erebus rested the point of his sword on the ground, and raised his eyes to heaven.

“You owe me a bloody reparation,” said Pog.

“My life belongs to you. I shall not lift my sword against you,” replied the commander, bowing his head upon his breast.

“You have accepted the combat. I have your word. Here is your adversary,” and he pointed to Erebus. “Here is mine,” and he pointed to Honorât.

“Take up your sword, then,” cried the Chevalier do Berrol, who wished at any cost to put an end to a scene which, in spite of himself, chilled him with horror.

He advanced toward Pog.

“They first, we afterward,” answered Pog.

“This instant, this instant! Take up your sword!” cried Honorât.

Pog, addressing Pierre des Anbiez, said, in an imperious tone: “Order your second to await the result of your fight with the young captain.”

“Chevalier, I pray you to wait,” said the commander, with resignation.

“Defend your life, murderer!” cried Erebus, rushing upon Pierre des Anbiez with uplifted sword.

“But this is a child!” said the commander, looking at his adversary with a sort of contemptuous compassion.

“Your mother! Your mother!” whispered Pog to Erebus.

“Yes, a child, the child of those whom you have murdered,” cried the unfortunate youth, striking the commander in the face with the breadth of his sword.

The livid countenance of the old soldier became purple; transported with anger at this insult, he threw himself upon Erebus, saying, “Lord, thy will be done!”

Then ensued a parricidal struggle.

And the darkness suddenly fell upon the scene, as if nature herself revolted at the sight.

Thunderbolts rent the clouds, the tempest let loose its fury, and the very rocks trembled upon their foundations.

The parricidal combat continued with undiminished rage.

With clasped hands, Pog, with ferocious eagerness, enjoyed the frightful spectacle.

“At last, after twenty years, I taste one moment of true, ineffable happiness. Roll, O thunder! Burst forth, O tempest! All nature takes part in my vengeance!” cried he, in savage joy.

Honorât, unable to account for his own feelings, cried in dismay:

“Enough! enough!” and tried to separate Erebus and Pierre des Anbiez.

Pog, endowed for the moment with superhuman strength, seized Honorât, paralysed his efforts, and said, in a low voice, trembling with rage and excitement, “My vengeance!”

Erebus fell.

“Pierre des Anbiez, you have killed your son! Here are your letters, here are the portraits, you can see them,” cried Pog, in a voice that rose above the storm, and he threw at the feet of the commander the casket which Hadji had stolen from Peyrou.

Suddenly a thunderbolt struck with a noise impossible to describe. The heavens, the bay, the ruins, the rocks, and the sea, appeared to be on fire.

A terrible explosion followed, and the very earth trembled; a part of the ruins of the abbey fell away, while a blast of wind, breaking and driving everything in its path, enveloped the entire bay in its irresistible and tremendous whirlpool.

CHAPTER XLII. CONCLUSION.

Three days after the dreadful combat between Pierre des Anbiez and Erebus, the black galley and the polacre of Luquin were anchored in the port of La Ciotat.

The great clock in the hall of Maison-Forte had just struck nine. Captain Trinquetaille was walking softly on tiptoe through the gallery where the Christmas ceremonies had taken place, directing his steps toward the apartment of Mlle. des Anbiez. He knocked at the little door of the oratory. Stephanette soon came out of the door.

“Ah, well, Luquin,” said the young girl, anxiously,

“how has he passed the night?”

“Badly, Stephanette, very badly; the abbé says there is no hope for him.”

“Poor child!” said the young girl, “and how is M. Commander?”

“Always in the same state, seated at the youth’s bedside like a statue; he never moves or speaks or sees or hears. Father Elzear says if M. Commander could only weep, he might be saved, if not—”

“Well?”

“If not, he fears his head,” and Luquin made a gesture indicating the alarm felt for the commander’s mind.

“Ah, my God, if that misfortune should be added to all the others!”

“And how is Mlle. Reine?” asked Luquin.

“Always suffering. The sad ceremony of the baptism yesterday affected her so deeply! Monseigneur wished her to be with him sponsor to this poor young pagan whom they called Erebus, so that he can die a Christian. My God! at his age never to have been baptised! Fortunately, Father Elzear has given him the sacrament! Ah, poor young man, he will bear the Christian names that monseigneur and mademoiselle have given him only until this evening.”

“And how is monseigneur?” asked Luquin.

“Oh, as to monseigneur, he would be on his feet and with the commander if we would listen to him. Abbé Mascarolus says an ordinary man would have been killed by such a wound, and that monseigneur must have a head as hard as iron to have resisted that heavy club. Thank God, he who gave that blow will not give any more.”

“Speaking of that, Stephanette, you know they have not been able to find the body of Pog-Reis under the ruins of the abbey?”

“He was only an infidel, but, oh, to die without burial!” said Stephanette, with a shudder. “How was he buried under the ruins?”

“This is what M. Honorât told me, and he ought to know. The moment the unfortunate young man fell, wounded by the commander, Pog-Reis, as they called him, seized M. Honorât, so as to prevent his separating the two combatants. Suddenly, as you know, the thunderbolt burst in the middle of the bay It struck the *Red Galleon*; her powder took fire, and she was blown up, and carried with her the other galley, already seriously damaged by the culverin of Master Laramée. Not a pirate escaped. The waves of the bay were so high and so powerful that the best swimmer would have been drowned a thousand times over.”

“But, Pog-Reis?” asked Stephanette.

“The explosion was so tremendous that the earth trembled. M. Honorât told me this: ‘The pirate, startled, then left me. I ran to the commander, who had already been thrown on the body of his son. He was embracing him, as he sobbed. At the time of the explosion Pog-Reis was standing on the ruins. Those old walls, shaken by the commotion and violence of the wind, suddenly fell and crushed him beneath their weight’ This morning, some fishermen coming from the bay said the stones were so enormous that they could not be moved, and so they had given up all hope of finding the body of the brigand.”

“My God! my God! What a disaster, Luquin, and how it proves that Heaven is just See, the two galleys of these brigands were struck and not one escaped! And Pog-Reis crushed under the ruins of the abbey!”

“No doubt, no doubt, Stephanette, Heaven has done much; but it has not done all, there remains yet another account to settle.”

“What do you mean?”

“When we heard this explosion at sea, and when we set sail for Maison-Forte, and a little faster, too, than I wished, for the tempest was driving my polacre over the waves like a feather in the air, you see—”

“That is true, Luquin, we thought we were lost What weather! what waves! we thought we had escaped one danger only to fall into another.”

“Yes, yes. Ah, well, what was it passed within range of my cannon during the hurricane?”

“How do I know? I was too much frightened and too much occupied with my mistress to see what was happening around us.”

“Indeed, Stephanette! Ah, well, it was the chebec of that cursed Bohemian whom hell leaves on this earth I know not why. Yes, it was his chebec that was near us. He had, by chance, anchored his ship so far from the

galleys that he did not feel the explosion. Two hours after, when he had brought M. Commander, M. Honorât, and that poor young man on board the galley, taking advantage of the commander's forgetfulness, who neglected to have him hanged, he had the audacity to set sail again, and it was he we saw pass us, returning, no doubt, to the south, where he will be drowned or burned if the good God wishes to finish the example he has already given us in destroying the two galleys of these infidels. That is what I wish may happen to him."

"Come, come, Luquin, you are so enraged against this wretch; do not think of him any more. Yet it was he who brought on board the black galley Mlle. Reine, me, my companions, the prisoners, the recorder Isnard and his clerk, who were among the captives, and who never ceased to call him our deliverer. So do have a little pity on your neighbour—"

"My neighbour! that miserable vagabond! My neighbour! the neighbour of Satan! That is what he is!"

"Ah, how wicked you are in your hatred!"

"Come, now, that is pretty good!" cried Luquin, in a fury, "that is the way you defend him now! You can do no more than regret him. Besides, he said, really, that you would regret him, and perhaps he was not wrong!" "Indeed, if you begin your jealousy again, you will make me regret him."

"Regret him—him! you dare—"

"Without doubt; for at least, one time in his ship, he left me to weep and grieve in peace, and—"

"But that was not what he said. H'm—h'm—the honeyed words of this insolent prattler were quite capable of making you forget your grief for a time, no doubt."

Stephanette, indignant, was about to reply to her betrothed, when the whistle of Mlle, des Anbiez called her to that lady's apartment.

She entered, after having thrown an angry glance at Luquin.

The captain was in the way of repenting of his suspicions when the majordomo Laramée, coming precipitately out of the chamber of Raimond V., said:

"Here you are, Luquin, come quick and help me to carry monseigneur to the commander. He is too weak to walk; we will carry him in his armchair."

Luquin followed Laramée, and entered the baron's chamber. The old gentleman was still very pale, a wide black bandage wrapped his head, but he had partly recovered his vivacity and his energy. Abbé Mascarolus was with him.

"You say, then, abbé, that this poor young man is about to die, and he wishes to speak to me?"

"Yes, monseigneur."

"And how is my brother Pierre?"

"In the same state, monseigneur."

"Quick, quick, Laramée, throw a mantle over my shoulders, and I will walk on your legs and the legs of this boy, for my own will not support me yet." Luquin took the armchair on one side, and Laramée took the other, and they transported the baron into the large chamber where Erebus was lying. At the door of this chamber they found Peyrou, the watchman, who anxiously awaited news from his old captain.

The face of Erebus already gave signs of approaching death. His features, once so clear, so beautiful, so serene, were painfully contorted. He was pale with the pallor of the dying. His eyes shone with a brilliancy all the more intense because it was so soon to be eclipsed in death. His wound was mortal, and no place was left for hope.

Pierre des Anbiez, wearing the same clothes he wore on the day of the fatal encounter, was seated on the foot of his son's bed, absolutely motionless, his head bowed on his breast, his hands on his knees, his gaze fixed upon the floor; since the day before he had kept this position.

Father Elzear, seated by the pillow of Erebus, leaned over him, lifted the poor young man's heavy head, and pressed it tenderly to his breast.

Raimond V. made his bearers place him near the bed. Luquin and Laramée retired.

"God will forgive me, will he not, good priest?" said Erebus, in a feeble voice, to Father Elzear. "He will have pity on my ignorance, and look only at my zeal. Alas! I have known the true faith but two-days."

"Hope, hope in his infinite compassion, my child, you are a Christian now. Two days of repentance and faith will atone for many sins. It is the fervour and not the length of the repentance which touches the Lord."

"Oh, I would die with one hope more, if my father could forgive me also," said Erebus, bitterly. Then he cried, in a frenzy, "Oh, a curse on Pog-Reis! Oh, why did he make me believe, as he showed me these portraits, that my father had been the murderer of my mother and of my family? Oh, how he excited all my bad passions! Alas! I believed him, because he who had always been so cruel wept, yes, he wept, as he pressed me to his heart and asked my forgiveness for all the evil he had done me. Then, seeing this implacable man weep as he embraced me, I believed him. I hoped the combat would be fatal to me. I knew Reine des Anbiez would be returned in safety to her father, hence I was able to die. And you—you—her father, will you forgive me, too?" added Erebus, addressing Raimond V.

"Poor child, did you not save my life in the rocks of Ollioules? Although my daughter was in your power, did you not respect her and defend her? And are you not the son of my brother, after all? the son of a guilty love, of course, but, Manjour! you are of the family." "Raimond—Raimond!" said Father Elzear to his brother, softly, in a tone of reproach.

"But, my father, my father does not hear me," said Erebus. "I will die without his saying to me, 'My son!'" cried the unhappy youth, in a failing voice, and then with a sadden movement he sat up, threw his arms around the neck of Pierre des Anbiez, and letting his heavy head fall on the paternal bosom, he cried, "My father, my father! Oh, hear me!"

This despairing, expiring cry, in which Erebes seemed to have concentrated all that remained of his strength, at last reached the depth of the heart of Pierre, des Anbiez.

The commander slowly raised his head, looked around him, then fixed his eyes on Erebus, who still hung

around his neck. Then, pressing his son's head in his two hands, he kissed his forehead reverently and tenderly. Placing his son's head softly on the pillow, he said, in a low voice, with a strange smile, and an accent full of kindness: "My child, you have called me, I heard your voice in the midst of darkness. I have come; now I return to it Farewell, sleep—sleep for ever, my child."

And he spread a cloth on the face of Erebus as is done for the dead.

"My brother!" cried Father Elzear, quickly removing the cloth and looking at the commander in astonishment.

The latter did not seem to hear him; he fell back into a sort of lethargy from which he seemed unable to recover.

Erebus grew weaker and weaker, and said to Raimond V.:

"One last favour before I die."

"Speak, speak, my child, I grant it already."

"I would like to see your daughter once more, she who gave me a Christian name. She too, alas! must forgive me."

"Reine, your cousin, your godmother? I consent to it with all my heart Elzear, my brother, will you go and tell her?"

"Your moments are numbered, you must think on God, my son," said Father Elzear to Erebus.

"For pity's sake, let me see her, or I shall die in despair," said Erebus in such a heart-broken voice that Father Elzear went in search of Reine.

Raimond V. took both hands of his nephew in his own. Already they were cold.

"She does not come," said Erebus, "and yet I must—"

His voice grew weaker, he could not continue.

Reine entered, accompanied by Father Elzear.

Erebus raised himself on his elbow; with his right hand he had the strength to break a little chain of gold he wore around his neck. He handed it to Reine, showing her, with a faint smile, the little enamelled dove that he had fastened to it, formerly taken from Reine in the rocks of Ollioules, and said to her:

"I return it to you. Will you forgive me?"

"I will always wear this chain in memory of the day you saved the life of my father," replied Reine, full of emotion.

"You will wear it always?" said Erebus.

"Always!" replied Reine, bursting into tears.

"Ah, now I can die!" said Erebus.

A last ray seemed to illumine his face, as death slowly approached.

"Brother," said Father Elzear, in an austere voice, as he rose, "this child is about to die."

Raimond V. understood that the last moments of Erebus belonged to God. He embraced his nephew, called Luquin and Laramée to cany him, and went out with Reine.

The commander remained silent and motionless, seated on the bed of his dying son.

Raimond V. sent Peyrou to him, hoping the watchman's presence might perhaps recall him to himself.

The watchman, approaching Pierre des Anbiez, said to him, "M. Commander, come."

Whether the voice of Peyrou, which he had not heard for so long a time, impressed him all the more, or whether he obeyed an inexplicable instinct, the commander rose and followed the watchman, alas! without casting a look upon his son.

Father Elzear alone remained with the young man.

A quarter of an hour after, Erebus was no more.

Erebus was buried in the cemetery of La Ciotat. The black and gray monks of La Ciotat followed his funeral procession. When the service was over, they dispersed.

One penitent only remained long at the grave.

It was very strange. He had taken no part in the chants or the ceremonies of the church, he had not sprinkled holy water on the coffin.

This penitent remained until night.

Then with slow steps he travelled to a stream where he found a boat in which he embarked. That false penitent was Hadji. He had left his chebec and had landed, braving every peril in order to come and render homage to the memory of the unfortunate youth, whom he had, nevertheless, done so much to destroy. From that time no more was heard of the Bohemian.

Pierre des Anbiez, until the end of his days, remained in a state which was one neither of reason, nor insanity. He was never heard to utter a word, although he continued to live at Maison-Forte. He never replied to a question, but every morning went to sit by the grave of his son, and there he remained until the evening, absorbed in profound meditation. Peyrou never left him, but the commander never seemed to recognise his presence.

Father Elzear, after some months' sojourn at Maison-Forte, began again his adventurous life as the ransomer of captives, and led that life until old age permitted him to travel no longer.

Reine did not marry Honorât de Berrol. She remained faithful to the sad memory of Erebus. Some years after, the chevalier married, and Reine was the best of friends to him and to his wife.

Raimond V., healed of his wounds, rode Mistraon a long time.

Cardinal Richelieu, informed of the courageous conduct of the baron at the time of the descent of the pirates, shut his eyes to the misdemeanours of the old malcontent in his dealings with the recorder Isnard.

A short time after, the Marshal of Vitry was sent to the Bastille, in consequence of his quarrel with the Archbishop of Bordeaux.

Raimond V. felt that he was avenged, and, as much out of gratitude to the cardinal as for his sense of right, he ever after took a very venial part in rebellions.

The worthy Luquin Trinquetaille married Stephanette, and although he had a blind confidence in his wife, which she deserved in every respect, he always regretted not having been able to drown the Bohemian.

Master Laramée died in the service of the baron.

The venerable Abbé Mascarolus continued to give wonderful recipes to Dame Dulceline, who made many Christmas cradles, which fortunately were not attended by such disastrous happenings as marred the Christmas festivity of 1632.

THE END. THE END.

without charge with others.

1.D. The copyright laws of the place where you are located also govern what you can do with this work. Copyright laws in most countries are in a constant state of change. If you are outside the United States, check the laws of your country in addition to the terms of this agreement before downloading, copying, displaying, performing, distributing or creating derivative works based on this work or any other Project Gutenberg™ work. The Foundation makes no representations concerning the copyright status of any work in any country other than the United States.

1.E. Unless you have removed all references to Project Gutenberg:

1.E.1. The following sentence, with active links to, or other immediate access to, the full Project Gutenberg™ License must appear prominently whenever any copy of a Project Gutenberg™ work (any work on which the phrase “Project Gutenberg” appears, or with which the phrase “Project Gutenberg” is associated) is accessed, displayed, performed, viewed, copied or distributed:

> This eBook is for the use of anyone anywhere in the United States and most other parts of the world at no cost and with almost no restrictions whatsoever. You may copy it, give it away or re-use it under the terms of the Project Gutenberg License included with this eBook or online at www.gutenberg.org. If you are not located in the United States, you will have to check the laws of the country where you are located before using this eBook.

1.E.2. If an individual Project Gutenberg™ electronic work is derived from texts not protected by U.S. copyright law (does not contain a notice indicating that it is posted with permission of the copyright holder), the work can be copied and distributed to anyone in the United States without paying any fees or charges. If you are redistributing or providing access to a work with the phrase “Project Gutenberg” associated with or appearing on the work, you must comply either with the requirements of paragraphs 1.E.1 through 1.E.7 or obtain permission for the use of the work and the Project Gutenberg™ trademark as set forth in paragraphs 1.E.8 or 1.E.9.

1.E.3. If an individual Project Gutenberg™ electronic work is posted with the permission of the copyright holder, your use and distribution must comply with both paragraphs 1.E.1 through 1.E.7 and any additional terms imposed by the copyright holder. Additional terms will be linked to the Project Gutenberg™ License for all works posted with the permission of the copyright holder found at the beginning of this work.

1.E.4. Do not unlink or detach or remove the full Project Gutenberg™ License terms from this work, or any files containing a part of this work or any other work associated with Project Gutenberg™.

1.E.5. Do not copy, display, perform, distribute or redistribute this electronic work, or any part of this electronic work, without prominently displaying the sentence set forth in paragraph 1.E.1 with active links or immediate access to the full terms of the Project Gutenberg™ License.

1.E.6. You may convert to and distribute this work in any binary, compressed, marked up, nonproprietary or proprietary form, including any word processing or hypertext form. However, if you provide access to or distribute copies of a Project Gutenberg™ work in a format other than “Plain Vanilla ASCII” or other format used in the official version posted on the official Project Gutenberg™ website (www.gutenberg.org), you must, at no additional cost, fee or expense to the user, provide a copy, a means of exporting a copy, or a means of obtaining a copy upon request, of the work in its original “Plain Vanilla ASCII” or other form. Any alternate format must include the full Project Gutenberg™ License as specified in paragraph 1.E.1.

1.E.7. Do not charge a fee for access to, viewing, displaying, performing, copying or distributing any Project Gutenberg™ works unless you comply with paragraph 1.E.8 or 1.E.9.

1.E.8. You may charge a reasonable fee for copies of or providing access to or distributing Project Gutenberg™ electronic works provided that:

- You pay a royalty fee of 20% of the gross profits you derive from the use of Project Gutenberg™ works calculated using the method you already use to calculate your applicable taxes. The fee is owed to the owner of the Project Gutenberg™ trademark, but he has agreed to donate royalties under this paragraph to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation. Royalty payments must be paid within 60 days following each date on which you prepare (or are legally required to prepare) your periodic tax returns. Royalty payments should be clearly marked as such and sent to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation at the address specified in Section 4, “Information about donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation.”

- You provide a full refund of any money paid by a user who notifies you in writing (or by e-mail) within 30 days of receipt that s/he does not agree to the terms of the full Project Gutenberg™ License. You must require such a user to return or destroy all copies of the works possessed in a physical medium and discontinue all use of and all access to other copies of Project Gutenberg™ works.

- You provide, in accordance with paragraph 1.F.3, a full refund of any money paid for a work or a replacement copy, if a defect in the electronic work is discovered and reported to you within 90 days of receipt of the work.

• You comply with all other terms of this agreement for free distribution of Project Gutenberg™ works.

1.E.9. If you wish to charge a fee or distribute a Project Gutenberg™ electronic work or group of works on different terms than are set forth in this agreement, you must obtain permission in writing from the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, the manager of the Project Gutenberg™ trademark. Contact the Foundation as set forth in Section 3 below.

1.F.

1.F.1. Project Gutenberg volunteers and employees expend considerable effort to identify, do copyright research on, transcribe and proofread works not protected by U.S. copyright law in creating the Project Gutenberg™ collection. Despite these efforts, Project Gutenberg™ electronic works, and the medium on which they may be stored, may contain “Defects,” such as, but not limited to, incomplete, inaccurate or corrupt data, transcription errors, a copyright or other intellectual property infringement, a defective or damaged disk or other medium, a computer virus, or computer codes that damage or cannot be read by your equipment.

1.F.2. LIMITED WARRANTY, DISCLAIMER OF DAMAGES - Except for the “Right of Replacement or Refund” described in paragraph 1.F.3, the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, the owner of the Project Gutenberg™ trademark, and any other party distributing a Project Gutenberg™ electronic work under this agreement, disclaim all liability to you for damages, costs and expenses, including legal fees. YOU AGREE THAT YOU HAVE NO REMEDIES FOR NEGLIGENCE, STRICT LIABILITY, BREACH OF WARRANTY OR BREACH OF CONTRACT EXCEPT THOSE PROVIDED IN PARAGRAPH 1.F.3. YOU AGREE THAT THE FOUNDATION, THE TRADEMARK OWNER, AND ANY DISTRIBUTOR UNDER THIS AGREEMENT WILL NOT BE LIABLE TO YOU FOR ACTUAL, DIRECT, INDIRECT, CONSEQUENTIAL, PUNITIVE OR INCIDENTAL DAMAGES EVEN IF YOU GIVE NOTICE OF THE POSSIBILITY OF SUCH DAMAGE.

1.F.3. LIMITED RIGHT OF REPLACEMENT OR REFUND - If you discover a defect in this electronic work within 90 days of receiving it, you can receive a refund of the money (if any) you paid for it by sending a written explanation to the person you received the work from. If you received the work on a physical medium, you must return the medium with your written explanation. The person or entity that provided you with the defective work may elect to provide a replacement copy in lieu of a refund. If you received the work electronically, the person or entity providing it to you may choose to give you a second opportunity to receive the work electronically in lieu of a refund. If the second copy is also defective, you may demand a refund in writing without further opportunities to fix the problem.

1.F.4. Except for the limited right of replacement or refund set forth in paragraph 1.F.3, this work is provided to you ‘AS-IS’, WITH NO OTHER WARRANTIES OF ANY KIND, EXPRESS OR IMPLIED, INCLUDING BUT NOT LIMITED TO WARRANTIES OF MERCHANTABILITY OR FITNESS FOR ANY PURPOSE.

1.F.5. Some states do not allow disclaimers of certain implied warranties or the exclusion or limitation of certain types of damages. If any disclaimer or limitation set forth in this agreement violates the law of the state applicable to this agreement, the agreement shall be interpreted to make the maximum disclaimer or limitation permitted by the applicable state law. The invalidity or unenforceability of any provision of this agreement shall not void the remaining provisions.

1.F.6. INDEMNITY - You agree to indemnify and hold the Foundation, the trademark owner, any agent or employee of the Foundation, anyone providing copies of Project Gutenberg™ electronic works in accordance with this agreement, and any volunteers associated with the production, promotion and distribution of Project Gutenberg™ electronic works, harmless from all liability, costs and expenses, including legal fees, that arise directly or indirectly from any of the following which you do or cause to occur: (a) distribution of this or any Project Gutenberg™ work, (b) alteration, modification, or additions or deletions to any Project Gutenberg™ work, and (c) any Defect you cause.

Section 2. Information about the Mission of Project Gutenberg™

Project Gutenberg™ is synonymous with the free distribution of electronic works in formats readable by the widest variety of computers including obsolete, old, middle-aged and new computers. It exists because of the efforts of hundreds of volunteers and donations from people in all walks of life.

Volunteers and financial support to provide volunteers with the assistance they need are critical to reaching Project Gutenberg™’s goals and ensuring that the Project Gutenberg™ collection will remain freely available for generations to come. In 2001, the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation was created to provide a secure and permanent future for Project Gutenberg™ and future generations. To learn more about the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation and how your efforts and donations can help, see Sections 3 and 4 and the Foundation information page at www.gutenberg.org.

Section 3. Information about the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation

The Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation is a non-profit 501(c)(3) educational corporation organized under the laws of the state of Mississippi and granted tax exempt status by the Internal Revenue Service. The Foundation’s EIN or federal tax identification number is 64-6221541. Contributions to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation are tax deductible to the full extent permitted by U.S. federal laws and your state’s laws.

The Foundation's business office is located at 809 North 1500 West, Salt Lake City, UT 84116, (801) 596-1887. Email contact links and up to date contact information can be found at the Foundation's website and official page at www.gutenberg.org/contact

Section 4. Information about Donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation

Project Gutenberg™ depends upon and cannot survive without widespread public support and donations to carry out its mission of increasing the number of public domain and licensed works that can be freely distributed in machine-readable form accessible by the widest array of equipment including outdated equipment. Many small donations ($1 to $5,000) are particularly important to maintaining tax exempt status with the IRS.

The Foundation is committed to complying with the laws regulating charities and charitable donations in all 50 states of the United States. Compliance requirements are not uniform and it takes a considerable effort, much paperwork and many fees to meet and keep up with these requirements. We do not solicit donations in locations where we have not received written confirmation of compliance. To SEND DONATIONS or determine the status of compliance for any particular state visit www.gutenberg.org/donate.

While we cannot and do not solicit contributions from states where we have not met the solicitation requirements, we know of no prohibition against accepting unsolicited donations from donors in such states who approach us with offers to donate.

International donations are gratefully accepted, but we cannot make any statements concerning tax treatment of donations received from outside the United States. U.S. laws alone swamp our small staff.

Please check the Project Gutenberg web pages for current donation methods and addresses. Donations are accepted in a number of other ways including checks, online payments and credit card donations. To donate, please visit: www.gutenberg.org/donate

Section 5. General Information About Project Gutenberg™ electronic works

Professor Michael S. Hart was the originator of the Project Gutenberg™ concept of a library of electronic works that could be freely shared with anyone. For forty years, he produced and distributed Project Gutenberg™ eBooks with only a loose network of volunteer support.

Project Gutenberg™ eBooks are often created from several printed editions, all of which are confirmed as not protected by copyright in the U.S. unless a copyright notice is included. Thus, we do not necessarily keep eBooks in compliance with any particular paper edition.

Most people start at our website which has the main PG search facility: www.gutenberg.org.

This website includes information about Project Gutenberg™, including how to make donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, how to help produce our new eBooks, and how to subscribe to our email newsletter to hear about new eBooks.