Title: Mysteries of Paris — Volume 02

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Release date: October 1, 2004 [EBook #6602]
Most recently updated: December 29, 2020

Language: English

*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK MYSTERIES OF PARIS — VOLUME 02 ***

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[Illustration: THE SAUCEPAN THROWN IN DEFIANCE]

THE MYSTERIES OF PARIS

IN THREE VOLUMES

VOLUME TWO

By EUGENE SUE

[Illustration]

THE MYSTERIES OF PARIS

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

THE EXECUTION.

The surprised lapidary rose and opened the door. Two men entered the garret. One of them was tall and thin, with a face mean and pimpled, surrounded by thick, grayish whiskers; he held in his hand a stout loaded cane, and wore a shapeless hat and a large green greatcoat, covered with mud, and

buttoned close up to the neck; the black velvet collar, much worn, exposed to view his long, bare, red throat, which resembled a vulture's. This man was one Malicorne. The other was short and thick-set, his countenance equally mean, and his hair red. He was dressed with an attempt at finery, quite ridiculous. Bright studs fastened the front of his shirt, whose cleanliness was more than doubtful; a long gold chain, passed across his second-hand plaid stuff waistcoat, was left to view by a velveteen jacket, of a yellowish-gray color. This man's name was Bourdin.

"Oh, what a stink of misery and death is here!" said Malicorne, stopping at the threshold.

"The fact is, it does not smell of musk. What habits!" repeated Bourdin, turning up his nose in disgust and disdain. He then advanced toward the artisan, who looked at him with mingled surprise and indignation.

Through the half-open door was seen Hoppy's evil, watchful, and cunning face, who, having followed the strangers, unknown to them, was narrowly watching and listening attentively.

"What do you want?" challenged the lapidary, roughly, disgusted with the rudeness of the two men.

"Jerome Morel," responded Bourdin.

"I am he."

"Working jeweler?"

"The same."

"Are you quite sure?"

"Once more, I am that person; you annoy me—what do you want? Explain, or leave the room!"

"Oh, you are coming the *bounce*, are you? I say, Malicorne," said this man, turning toward his companion, "there is no catch here; it is not like the haul at Viscount de Saint-Remy's."

"No, but when there is much, the door is shut against you, as we found in the Rue de—-. The bird had watched the net, and would not be taken; while such vermin as these stick to their *cribs* like a snail to his shell."

"It is my opinion that they only require to be jugged to cram themselves."

"Still the costs will be more than ever the creditor *wolf* will get here; however, that's his look-out."

"Hold!" said Morel with indignation; "if you were not drunk, as you surely are, I should be very angry. Instantly leave my room!"

"How very sharp you are this morning, old lopsides!" cried Malicorne, insultingly alluding to the deformity in the lapidary's person.

"Do you hear, Malicorne?—he has the impudence to call this place a *room*—a hole where I would not put my dog."

"For heaven's sake!" cried Madeleine, so alarmed, that till then she had not spoken a word, "call for assistance; perhaps they are thieves. Take care of the diamonds!"

In truth, seeing these two strangers, of doubtful appearance, approach nearer and nearer to the bench on which lay the jewels, Morel, fearing some evil intention, ran forward, and with both hands covered the precious stones.

Hoppy, always on the watch, and listening, hearing Madeleine's words, and seeing the movement of the artisan, said to himself; "They say he is a cutter of false stones; if so, he would not fear their being stolen. Just as well to know that. *I take!* Then again, Mother Mathieu, who comes here so often, is a dealer in *real*; and those she has in her casket are real diamonds. I will put the Owl up to this!" added Red Arm's son.

"If you do not leave this room instantly, I will call the police," said Morel.

The children, frightened at this scene, began to cry, while the old idiot started upright in her bed.

"If any one has a right to call the police, we're the men. Do you hear, Mister Sideways?" said Bourdin.

"You'll see the police lend a hand to take you, if you don't go quietly," added Malicorne; "we have not the magistrate with us, it is true; but if you wish to enjoy his society, you shall have a taste of one, just

out of his bed, quite hot and heavy. Bourdin will go and fetch him."

"To prison! Me?" cried the astounded Morel.

"Yes, to Clichy."

"To Clichy!" repeated the artisan, with a wild look.

"Is he hard of hearing?" asked Malicorne.

"Well, then, to the debtor's prison, if you like that better," explained Bourdin.

"You—you—are—can it be?—the lawyer! Oh, my God!"

The artisan, pale as death, fell back on his stool, unable to utter another word.

"We are the officers who are to take you, if we can; do you understand now, old fellow?"

"Morel, it is for the bill in the hands of Louise's master! We are all lost!" said Madeleine, with a sorrowful voice.

"This is the warrant," said Malicorne, taking from his dirty pocket-book a stamped writ.

After having mumbled over in the usual way a part of this document, in a voice hardly intelligible, he pronounced distinctly the last words, unfortunately too well understood by the artisan.—

"As final judgment, the court condemns Jerome Morel to pay to Pierre Petit-Jean, merchant,[Footnote: The crafty notary incompetent to proceed in his own name, had got from the unfortunate Morel a blank acceptance, and had introduced a third party's name.] by all his goods, and even with his body, the sum of thirteen hundred francs, with lawful interest, dated from the day of the protest; and he is besides condemned to pay all other and extra costs. Given and judged at Paris, the 30th of September," etc., etc.

"And Louise, then? Louise!" cried Morel, almost distracted, without appearing to have heard what had just been read. "Where is she? She must have left the lawyer, since he sends me to prison. Louise! my child! what has become of her?"

"Who is this Louise?" said Bourdin.

"Let him alone," said Malicorne. "Don't you see he's coming the artful?" Then, approaching Morel, he added: "Come, to the right-about-face, march; I want to breathe the air, I am poisoned here!"

"Morel, do not go!" said Madeleine, wildly. "Kill them, the thieves! Oh, you are a coward! You will let them take you, and abandon us to our fate."

"Act as though you were at home, madame," said Bourdin, sarcastically; "but if your husband lifts his hand against me, I will give him something to remember it by," continued he, twisting his loaded stick round and round.

Occupied solely with thoughts of Louise, Morel heard nothing of what was said. Suddenly, an expression of bitter joy lighting up his face, he cried out, "Louise has quitted the lawyer's house. I shall go to prison with a light heart!" But then, glancing round him, he exclaimed, "But my wife, and her mother, and my poor children—who will support them? They will not trust me with stones to cut in prison; for it will be supposed that my own misconduct has sent me there. Does this lawyer desire the death of all of us?"

"Once for all, let us be off!" said Bourdin; "I am sick of all this.
Come, dress yourself and march."

"My good gentleman, forgive what I have just said to you," cried Madeleine, still in bed; "you will not have the cruelty to take away Morel; what do you think will become of me, with my five children, and my idiot mother? There she is, huddled up on her mattress. She is foolish, my good gentlemen; she is quite out of her mind."

"The old woman that is shorn?"

"Sure enough she is shaved," said Malicorne; "I thought she had on a white scull-cap."

"My dear children, throw yourselves at the feet of these two gentlemen," said Madeleine, hoping, by a last effort, to soften the bailiffs, "entreat them not to take away your poor father—our only hope." But in spite of the order of their mother, the children, frightened and crying, dared not leave their beds.

At the unusual noise, and the sight of the two bailiffs, whom she did not know, the idiot began to utter deafening howls, crouching herself against the wall. Morel appeared careless to all that was passing around him; the blow was so frightful, so unexpected, the consequences of this arrest appeared so terrible, that he could scarcely believe in its reality. Already weakened by privations of every description, his strength failed him; he remained pale and haggard, seated on his stool, as though incapable of speech or motion, his head drooping on his breast, and his arms hanging listlessly down.

"Confound it! when will all this end?" cried Malicorne; "think you that we come here for fun? Off with you, or I shall make you!" So saying, the bailiff put his hand on the artisan's shoulder, and shook him roughly. The threat and action alarmed the children; the three little boys left their mattress half naked, and came, in a flood of tears, to throw themselves at the feet of the bailiffs, and, with clasped hands, cried, in tones of touching earnestness, "Pray, pray do not kill father."

At sight of these unhappy children, shivering with cold and fear, Bourdin, in spite of his natural callousness, and the constant sight of scenes like the present, felt something akin to compassion; his companion, unpitying, brutally disengaged his leg from the grasp of the kneeling supplicants.

"Hands off, you young ragamuffins! A pretty business ours would be truly, if we had always to do with such beggars!"

A fearful addition was made to the horrors of this scene. The elder of the little girls, who had remained in the straw with her sick sister, cried out, "Oh, mother, mother! I do not know what is the matter with Adele! She is quite cold, and she stares so at me and she don't breathe!"

The poor consumptive child had just quietly expired, without a murmur, her looks resting on her sister, whom she tenderly loved.

No language can describe the heart-rending cry of anguish uttered by the diamond-cutter's wife at this frightful announcement, for she understood it all. It was one of those stifling, convulsive screams, torn from the depth of a mother's heart.

"My sister seems as though she were dead!" continued the child. "Oh, how she frightens me! She still looks at me, but how cold her face is!" Saying this, the poor child suddenly rose from the side of her dead sister, and, running terrified, threw herself into the arms of her mother; while the distracted parent, forgetful that her paralyzed limbs were incapable of sustaining her, made a violent effort to rise, and ran toward the corpse; but her strength failed her, and she fell on the floor, uttering a last cry of despair. That cry found an echo in Morel's heart, and roused him from his stupor; with one step he reached the bed's side, snatching from it his child, four years old. She was dead! Cold and want had hastened her end, although her complaint, brought on by the want of common necessaries, was beyond cure. Her poor little limbs were already cold and stiff. Morel, his gray hair almost standing on end with despair and fright, remained motionless, holding his dead child in his arms, whom he contemplated with fixed, tearless eyes, bloodshot with agony.

"Morel! Morel! give my Adele to me!" shrieked the unhappy mother, holding out her arms toward her husband; "it is not true that she is dead: you shall see—I will warm her in my arms!"

The idiot's curiosity was excited by the haste with which the two bailiffs approached the lapidary, who would not part with the body of his infant. The old woman ceased to howl, rose from her bed, slowly approached Morel, and passing her hideous and stupid face over his shoulder, gazed vacantly on the corpse of her grandchild. The features of the idiot retained their usual expression of ferocity. After a little time, she uttered a sort of hoarse, hollow groan, like a hungry beast, and returning to her bed, she threw herself upon it, crying out, "I am hungry! I am hungry!"

"You see, gentlemen, this poor little girl, just four years old— Adele; yes, she was named Adele. Only last night, she fondly returned my caresses—and now—look at her! You will, perhaps, say that I have one less to feed, and that I ought not to murmur," said the artisan, with a haggard look.

The poor man's reason began to totter under so many repeated shocks.

"Morel, I want my child; I will have her!" said Madeleine.

"True, true," replied the lapidary, "each in turn, that is but fair!" He went and laid the child in the arms of his wife. Then, hiding his face between his hands, he groaned bitterly. Madeleine, almost as frenzied as her husband, laid the child in the straw of her couch, and watched it with a sort of savage jealousy; while the other children were kneeling round in tears.

The bailiffs, for a moment softened by the death of the child, soon returned to their accustomed brutality of conduct. "Oh, look here, my friend," said Malicorne to the lapidary, "your child is dead; it is

unfortunate, but we are all mortal; we cannot help it, nor can you, so there's an end of it. We have an extra job to do to-day—a *swell* to grab."

Morel did not hear the man. Completely lost in mournful contemplation, the artisan said to himself, in a hollow and broken voice: "It will be necessary to bury my poor little girl—to watch her here till they come to carry her away. But how?—we have nothing! And the coffin!— who will give us credit? Oh, a little coffin for a child of four years old ought not to cost much! And then we shall want no bearers! One can take it under his arm. Ha! ha! ha!" added he, with a frightful burst of laughter, "how lucky I am! She might perhaps have lived to be eighteen, Louise's age, and no one would have given me credit for a large coffin!"

"Egad! this chap seems as though he would lose his senses!" said Bourdin to Malicorne. "Look at him; he quite frightens me! and how the old idiot howls with hunger! What a queer lot!"

"We must, however, make a finish; although the arrest of this beggar is only for seventy-six francs, seventy-five centimes, it is only right that we should swell the costs to two hundred and forty or fifty francs. It is the *wolf* who pays."

"You mean who has to *fork out*—for this poor devil here will have to pay the fiddler, since it is he that must dance."

"By the time he has paid his creditor two thousand five hundred francs, for principal, interest, costs, and all, he will be warm."

"It will not be then as now, for it freezes," said the bailiff, blowing his fingers. "Come, old fellow, pack up and let us be off; you can blubber as you go along. Who the devil can help the youngun's kicking the bucket!"

"Besides, when people are so poor, they have no right to have children."

"A good idea!" said Malicorne. Then slapping Morel on the shoulder, he continued: "Come, come, old boy, we can wait no longer; since you cannot pay, off to prison with you!"

"Prison!" said a pure, youthful voice; "Morel to prison!" A young, bright, rosy brunette suddenly entered the garret.

"Oh, Miss Dimpleton!" said one of the children, crying; "you are so good; save papa! they want to take him to prison, and little sister is dead."

"Adele dead!" exclaimed the girl, whose large, brilliant black eyes were veiled in tears. "Your father to prison? This cannot be." Stupefied by surprise, she looked alternately at the lapidary, his wife, and the bailiffs.

"My pretty girl," said Bourdin approaching Miss Dimpleton, "you're cool, you must try to make this poor man listen to reason; his little girl is dead, but nevertheless he must come with us to Clichy—to the debtors' prison. We are sheriffs' officers."

"It is, then, all true," said the girl.

"Quite true. The mother has the little one in her bed—they cannot take it from her; and while she is hugging it there, the father ought to take the opportunity of slipping out."

"My God! my God! what misery," said Miss Dimpleton. "What is to be done?"

"Pay, or go to prison! there is no other way, unless you have notes for two or three thousand francs to lend them," said Malicorne, in a careless tone; "if you have them, *shell out*, and we will *cut*, devilish glad to get away."

"Oh, this is dreadful!" said Miss Dimpleton, with indignation; "daring to jest with such dreadful misfortunes."

"Well then, joking aside," replied the other bailiff, "if you would do some good, endeavor to prevent the woman from seeing us take away her husband. You will thus save each of them a very disagreeable quarter of an hour."

The advice was good, though coarsely given, and Miss Dimpleton, following it, approached Madeleine, who, distracted with grief, did not appear to notice the young girl, as she knelt down beside the bed with the children.

Meanwhile, Morel had only recovered from his temporary delirium to sink under the most painful

reflections. Having become calm, he could view far too clearly the horror of his situation. The notary must be pitiless, since he had gone to such extremity; the bailiffs did but do their duty. The artisan was therefore resigned.

"Come, come, let's be marching some time to-day," said Bourdin to him.

"I cannot leave these diamonds here, my wife is half mad," said Morel, pointing to the stones scattered upon the bench; "the person for whom I work will come for them this morning, or in the course of the day. Their amount is considerable."

"Good!" said Hoppy, who still remained near the half-open door: "good, good! Screech-Owl shall know that."

"Grant me only till to-morrow," urged Morel, "that I may restore the diamonds."

"Impossible! We must go immediately."

"But I cannot, by leaving the diamonds here, run the risk of their being lost."

"Take them with you, a coach waits at the door, which you will have to pay for, with the other expenses. We can call on the owner of the stones; if he is not at home you can place them in the registry at Clichy; they will be as safe there as in the bank. Come, make haste; we will slip away before your wife or children are aware of it."

"Grant me only till to-morrow, that I may bury my child!" entreated Morel, with a supplicating voice, half stifled with the sobs he endeavored to restrain.

"No! we have already lost more than an hour waiting here."

"This burying still worries you, then?" added Malicorne.

"Oh! yes, it makes me sad," said Morel, with bitterness; "you so much fear to grieve people. Well, then, a last farewell!"

"There, again! confound you, make haste!" said Malicorne, with brutal impatience.

"How long have you had the order to arrest me?"

"The judgment was signed four months since; but it was only yesterday that our officer received instructions from the lawyer to put it in execution."

"Yesterday only. Why was it delayed so long?"

"How can I tell? Come, pack up."

"Yesterday! and Louise not yet here! Where can she be? what has become of her?" said the lapidary, taking from the bench a card-box filled with cotton, in which he arranged the jewels. "But never mind that; in prison I shall have plenty of time for thinking."

"Come, pack up the duds to take with you, and make haste and dress yourself."

"I have no clothes to pack up: I have only these diamonds to take away, and place in the prison registry."

"Well, then, dress yourself."

"I have no other clothes than these."

"Going out in these rags?" said Bourdin.

"You will be ashamed of me, doubtless," said the lapidary, bitterly.

"No, it is of no consequence, since we go in your coach," answered Malicorne.

"Father, father! mother is calling you," said one of the children.

"You hear?" muttered Morel, rapidly, appealing to one of the bailiffs; "do not be inhuman; grant me a last favor. I have not the courage to say farewell to my wife and children; it would break my heart. If they see you take me away they will run after me, and I would avoid that. I therefore beg of you to say

aloud that you will return in three or four days, and pretend to go away; you can wait for me on the landing below; I will come to you in less than five minutes. That will spare me the pain of saying farewell. I will no longer resist, I promise you. I shall go stark mad; I was nearly so just now."

"Not so green!—you want to give us the slip!" said Malicorne, "want to bolt, old son!"

"Oh, God! God!" cried Morel, with mournful indignation.

"I don't think he intends to chouse us," said Bourdin, in a low tone to his companion; "let us do as he wishes, or we'll never get away. I will wait outside the door, there is no other outlet from the garret—he cannot escape us."

"Very well; but he needn't be so particular about leaving the mucky crib!" Then, addressing Morel in a low voice, he said: "Now then, look sharp, and we will wait for you below. Make haste, and offer some pretense for our going."

"I thank you," said Morel.

"Very well, it shall be so," said Bourdin, in a loud voice, and looking significantly at the artisan; "in such case, as you promise to pay in a short time, we will leave you for the present, and call again in four or five days; but then you must be punctual."

"Yes, gentlemen, I trust I shall then be able to pay you."

The bailiffs left the room; while Hoppy, for fear of being seen, had disappeared down the staircase at the same time the bailiffs quitted the garret.

"Madame Morel, do you hear?" said Miss Dimpleton, trying to withdraw the attention of the mother from her melancholy abstraction; "they will not take away your husband—the two men are gone."

"Mother, don't you hear? they will not take father away," said the eldest of the boys.

"Morel, listen to me," murmured Madeleine, in a state of delirium. "Take one of the large diamonds and sell it—no one will know it, and we shall be saved. Our Adele will no longer feel cold; she will not be dead."

Taking advantage of a moment when none belonging to him were observing his actions, the lapidary cautiously left the room. The bailiff was waiting for him upon a sort of little landing, covered also by the roof. Upon this landing, opened the door of a loft, which had formerly been part of the garret occupied by the Morels, and in which Pipelet kept his stock of leather; and the worthy porter called this place his *box at the play*, because, by means of a hole made in the wall between two laths, he was sometimes a witness to the sad scenes that passed in the Morels' room. The bailiff noticed the door of the loft; in a moment he thought that most likely his prisoner had reckoned upon that outlet for escape, or to hide himself.

"Come, march, old fellow!" said he, beginning to descend the stair, and making a sign to the lapidary to follow.

"One minute more, I beseech!" said Morel; and he fell on his knees upon the floor. Through a chink in the door, he threw a last look upon his family, and clasping his hands, he uttered, in a low, heart-rending voice, while tears flowed down his haggard cheeks: "Farewell, my dear children—my poor wife! may heaven preserve you all! Farewell!"

"Make haste and cut that sermon," said Bourdin, brutally, "Malicorne is quite right; you needn't make so much fuss about leaving the stinking kennel. What a hole! what a hole!"

Morel rose to follow the bailiff, when the words "Father! father!" sounded on the staircase.

"Louise!" exclaimed the lapidary, raising his hands toward heaven; "I can then clasp you to my breast before I go!"

"I thank thee, God, I am in time!" said the voice, approaching nearer and nearer, and light steps were heard rapidly ascending the stairs.

"Be calm, my dear," said a third voice, sharp, asthmatic, and out of breath, coming from a lower part of the house;

"I will lay in wait, if I must, in the alley, with my broom and my old darling, and they sha'n't leave here till you have spoken to them, the contemptible beggars!"

The reader has doubtless recognized Mrs. Pipelet, who, less nimble than Louise, followed her slowly. An instant after, the lapidary's daughter was in her father's arms.

"It is indeed you, Louise, my darling Louise!" said Morel, crying; "but how pale you are! For mercy's sake what ails you?"

"Nothing, nothing, father," stammered Louise. "I have run so fast.
Here is the money!"

"How is this?"

"You are free!"

"So you know?"

"Yes, yes! Here, sir, take the money," said the young girl, giving a rouleau of gold to Malicorne.

"But this money, Louise—this money?"

"You shall know all presently; don't be uneasy. Come and comfort dear mother."

"No, not now!" exclaimed Morel, placing himself before the door, remembering that Louise was still in ignorance of the death of the little girl; "wait, I must speak to you. Now, about this money?"

"Stay!" said Malicorne, as he finished counting the gold, and while putting it in his pocket; "sixty-four, sixty-five—that will just make thirteen hundred francs. Have you no more than that, my little dear?"

"Why, you only owe thirteen hundred francs?" said Louise, addressing her father, with a stupefied air.

"Yes," said the lapidary.

"Stop!" rejoined the catchpole; "the bill is for thirteen hundred francs. Well, the bill is paid; but the expenses? Without the execution, they are already eleven hundred and forty francs." [Footnote: We append some curious facts about imprisonment for debt, taken from "*Le Pauvre Jacques*," a paper published by the Society of Christian Morality Prison Committee:—

"A protest and a warrant is legally set down as at 4 francs 35 centimes for the first, and 4 francs 70 centimes for the other, but is generally increased by the warrant-officers to 10fr. 40c., and 16fr. 40c. respectively. Thus 26fr. 80c. illegally obtained for what should have been but 9fr. 50c. The law sets down bailiff fees thus:—Stamp and registry, 3fr. 50c.; hackney-coach, 5fr.; arresting and imprisonment, 60fr. 25c.; turnkey's fee, 8fr. Total 76fr. 75c. One bill of charges taken as the average of those sent in by sheriffs' officers, swells the above to 240 francs!"

In the same paper is this paragraph:—

"M—-, bailiff, has written to desire correction of the article on the Hanged Woman. He did not kill her, he says. We did not say that he did *kill* that unfortunate woman. We reprint that article:—

"M—-, bailiff, having writ out for a cabinet-maker in the Rue de la Lune, was seen by the latter from the house windows. He called out to his wife.—'I am lost, for there they come to arrest me!' His wife heard this, and fastened the door, while her husband hid him self in the loft. The bailiff called in a locksmith. The wife's room door was forced, and they found the woman had hanged herself! The sight of the corpse did not delay or prevent the officer hunting for the husband. 'I arrest you.' 'I have no money.' 'To prison, then.' 'Very well, let me give my wife good-bye.' 'That be hanged, like she is herself. She's dead.' What can you complain of, M—-? we only print your own words, which minutely and blackly paint this frightful picture."

This same paper quotes three or four hundred facts, of which the following is a fair sample:—

"On collection of a 300 franc debt a warrant-officer charged 964 francs! The debtor, a workman with five children, lay seven months in prison."

For two reasons, the present writer quotes from "*Le Pauvre Jacques*," firstly, to show that the chapter just read falls below reality; and again, to prove that, if merely in a philanthropic point of view, the maintenance of such a state of things (the exorbitance of extras, illegally extorted by public servants,) often paralyzes the most generous intentions. For instance, with 1,000 francs there might be three or four honest though unfortunate workmen restored to their families from a prison whither petty debts of 250 or 500 francs had driven them; but these sums being tripled by a shameful exaggeration of costs, the most charitable persons often recoil from doing a good deed at the thought of two-thirds of their bounty merely going to sheriffs and their officers. And yet, there are few hardships more worthy of

relief than those befalling such unfortunate people as we speak of.]

"Gracious heaven!" cried Louise; "I thought it was only thirteen hundred francs in all! But, sir, we will very soon pay you the remainder; this is a pretty good sum on account—is it not, father?"

"Soon!—very well; bring the money to the office, and we will then let your father go. Come, let's be off."

"You will take him away?"

"At once. This is on account. When the rest is paid, he will be free.
Go on, Bourdin; let us get out of this."

"Mercy! mercy!" shrieked Louise.

"Oh, what a row! here it is—the old game over again: it is enough to make one sweat in the depth of winter—on my honor!" said the bailiff, in a brutal tone. Then advancing toward Morel, he continued: "If you don't come along at once, I will take you by the collar, and bundle you down. This wind-up is beastly!"

"Oh, poor father! when I had hoped to save you!" said Louise, overwhelmed.

"No, no! hope nothing for me! Heaven is not just!" cried the lapidary, in a voice of deep despair, and stamping his feet with rage.

"Peace! heaven is just! There is Providence for honest men!" said a soft, yet manly voice.

The same instant Rudolph appeared at the door of the little recess, from whence he had, unseen, witnessed the greater part of the scenes we have just related. He was very pale, and deeply moved. At this sudden interposition, the bailiffs drew back with surprise; while Morel and his daughter stared at the prince vacantly. Taking from his pocket a small parcel of folded bank notes, Rudolph selected three, and giving them to Malicorne, said to him: "Here are two thousand five hundred francs; give back to this girl the money you have just received from her."

More and more surprised, the bailiff took the notes hesitatingly, examined them very suspiciously, turning them over and over, and finally pocketed them. But as his alarm and surprise began to subside, so did his natural coarseness return, and eying Rudolph from head to foot with an impertinent stare, he exclaimed, "Your notes are good; but how came the likes of you with so large a sum? I hope, at least, it is your own!" added he.

Rudolph was very humbly dressed, and covered with dust—thanks to his stay in Pipelet's loft.

"I have bidden you restore that gold to the young girl," answered
Rudolph, in a sharp, stern voice.

"Bid me! Who gives you the right to order me?" cried the bailiff, advancing toward Rudolph, in a threatening manner.

"The gold! the gold!" said the prince, seizing the fellow's wrist so violently that he winced under the iron hold, and cried out,

"Oh, you hurt me! Hands off!"

"Restore the gold! you are paid. Take yourself off, without further insolence, or I will kick you to the foot of the stairs."

"Very well; here is the gold," said Malicorne, giving it to the girl; "but mind what you are about, young man—don't fancy you are going to do as you like with me, because you happen to be the strongest."

"That's right. Who are you, to give yourself such airs?" said Bourdin, sheltering himself behind his companion. "Who are you?"

"Who is he? He is my tenant, the king of tenants, you foul-mouthed wretches!" cried Mrs. Pipelet, who appeared at last, quite out of breath, still wearing the Brutus wig. In her hand she held an earthen pot filled with boiling soup, which she was kindly taking to the Morels.

"What does this old polecat want?" said Bourdin.

"If you dare to pass any of your blackguard remarks upon me, I'll make you feel my nails—and my

teeth too, if necessary!" screamed Mrs. Pipelet: "and more than that, my lodger, my prince of lodgers, will pitch you from the top to the bottom of the staircase, as he says! And I will sweep you away like a heap of rubbish, as you are!"

"This old woman will rouse all the people in the house against us. We are paid, and our expenses also; let us be off!" said Bourdin to Malicorne.

"Here are your documents," said the last-named individual, throwing a bundle of papers at Morel's feet.

"Pick them up, and deliver them properly! You are paid for being civil," said Rudolph, seizing the bailiff with his vigorous hand, while the other he pointed to the papers.

Convinced by this new and formidable grasp that he could not struggle against so powerful an adversary, the bailiff stooped down grumbling, picked up the bundle of papers, and gave them to Morel, who took them mechanically. The lapidary believed himself under the influence of a dream.

"Mind, young fellow, although you have an arm as strong as a porter's, never come under our lash!" said Malicorne. Shaking his fist at Rudolph, he nimbly jumped down the stairs, followed by his companion, who looked behind him with fear.

Mrs. Pipelet, burning for revenge on the bailiffs, for the insults offered to Rudolph, looked at her saucepan with an air of inspiration, and cried out, heroically: "Morel's debts are paid; they will now have plenty to eat, and no longer stand in need of my soup—heads!" Leaning over the banisters, the old woman emptied the contents of her saucepan on the backs of the bailiffs, who had just arrived at the first-floor landing.

"Oh, you are caught, I see!" added the portress. "They are soaked through like two sops! He! he! this is capital!"

"A thousand million thunders!" cried Malicorne, wet through with Mrs. Pipelet's culinary preparation. "Will you take care what you are about up there, you old baggage!"

"Alfred!" retorted Mrs. Pipelet, bawling in a voice sharp enough to split the tympanum of a deaf man. "Alfred! have at 'em, old darling! They wanted to behave improperly to thy 'Stasie! (Anastasia). Those rascals would take liberties with me! Pitch into them with your broom! call the oyster-woman and the potboy next door to help you. Quick!— quick!—after them! Murder! police! thieves! Hish!—hish!—hish! bravo! Halloo! go it, old darling! Broom!—broom!" By way of a formidable finish to these hootings, which she had accompanied with a violent stamping of her feet, Mrs. Pipelet, carried away by the intoxication of her victory, hurled from the top to the bottom of the staircase her earthenware saucepan, which, breaking with a loud, crashing noise, the very moment the bailiffs, stunned by the frightful cries, were taking the stairs four at a time, added greatly to their fears.

"Ha! ha! I rayther think you have got enough for once!" cried Anastasia laughing loudly, and folding her arms in an attitude of triumph.

While Mrs. Pipelet was thus venting her rage upon the bailiffs, Morel, overcome with gratitude, had thrown himself at Rudolph's feet.

"Ah, sir, you have saved our lives! To whom do we owe this unlooked-for succor?"

"'*To HIM who watches over and protects honest men*,' as our immortal Beranger says."

CHAPTER XXXIX.

MISS DIMPLETON.

Louise, the lapidary's daughter, was possessed of remarkable loveliness; tall and graceful, she resembled the classic Juno for regularity of features, and the huntress Diana for the finish of her tall figure. In spite of her sunburned complexion, her rough and freckled hands, beautifully formed, but hardened by domestic labor; in spite of her humble garments, this girl possessed a nobility of exterior.

We will not attempt to describe the gratitude and surprise of this family, so abruptly snatched from a

fearful fate; in the first burst of happiness, even the death of the little girl was forgotten. Rudolph alone remarked the extreme paleness of Louise, and the utter abstraction with which she seemed oppressed, in spite of her father's deliverance. Wishing to completely satisfy the Morels as to apprehensions about the future, and to explain a liberality which might otherwise betray suspicions as to the character he thought proper to assume, Rudolph said to the lapidary, whom he took to the landing (while Miss Dimpleton broke to Louise the news of her sister's death):

"Yesterday morning a young lady came to see you."

"Yes, sir, and appeared much distressed at the situation in which she found us."

"It is to her you must return thanks, and not to me."

"Is it indeed true, sir? That young lady—"

"Is your benefactress. I have often waited upon her with goods from our warehouse. The day before yesterday, while I was here engaging an apartment on the fourth story, I learned from the portress your cruel position. Knowing this lady's charity, I went to her. She came, so that she might herself judge of the extent of your misfortunes, with which she was painfully moved; but as your situation might be the result of misconduct, she begged of me as soon as possible, to make some inquiries respecting you, as she was desirous of apportioning her benefits according to your deserts."

"Good and excellent lady! I had reason to say—"

"As you observed to Madeleine: 'If the rich knew,' is it not so?"

"How, sir!—you know the name of my wife! Who told you that?"

"Since six o' clock this morning," said Rudolph, interrupting Morel,
"I have been concealed in the little loft which adjoins your garret."

"You, sir!"

"Yes, and I have heard all that passed, my honest man."

"Oh, sir! but why were you there?"

"I could employ no better means of getting at your real character and sentiments. I wished to see and hear all, without your knowledge. The porter had spoken to me of this little nook, and offered it to me that I might keep my wood in it. This morning I requested him to permit me to visit it; I remained there an hour, and I feel convinced that there does not exist a character more worthy, noble, and courageously resigned than yours."

"Nay, sir, indeed I cannot see much merit in my conduct; I was born honest, and cannot act otherwise than I have done."

"I know it; and for that reason I do not praise your conduct but appreciate it. I had quitted the loft to release you from the bailiffs when I heard your daughter's voice. I wished to leave her the pleasure of saving you; unhappily the rapacity of the bailiffs prevented poor Louise from enjoying so sweet a delight. I then made my appearance. Fortunately, I yesterday recovered several sums of money that were due to me, and I was able to give an advance to your benefactress by paying for you this unfortunate debt. But your misfortunes are so great, so unmerited, so nobly sustained, that the interest felt for you and deserved, will not stop here. I can, in the name of your preserving angel, assure you of future repose with happiness to you and yours."

"Is it possible? But at least tell me her name, sir—the name of this preserving angel, as you have called her."

"Yes, she is an angel; and you have still reason to say that the great and the lowly have their troubles."

"Is this lady, then, unhappy?"

"Who is there without their sorrows? But I see no cause to withhold her name. This lady is called—"

Remembering that Mrs. Pipelet knew that Lady d'Harville had come to her house to inquire for the Commander, Rudolph, hearing the indiscreet gossiping of the portress, said after a moment's reflection: "I will tell you the name of this lady on one condition—"

"Oh, pray, speak, sir!"

"It is, that you will repeat it to no one. You understand!—to no one."

"Oh, I will solemnly promise that to you. But cannot I at least offer my thanks to this savior of the unhappy?"

"I will ask Lady d'Harville, and I doubt not she will give her consent."

"Then this lady is—"

"The Marchioness d'Harville."

"Oh, I shall never forget that name! It shall be my saint, my adoration! To think that, thanks to her, my wife and children are saved! saved!—no, not all, not all, my poor little Adele, we shall never see her again. Alas! but it is necessary to remember that any day we might have lost her, for she was doomed." Here the poor lapidary brushed the tears from his eyes.

"As regards the last sad duties to be performed for this little one," said Rudolph, "trust to my advice; this is what must be done: I do not yet occupy my room, which is large, wholesome, and well aired. There is already a bed in it; we will convey thither all that is necessary for yourself and family to be established there till Lady d'Harville has arranged where to lodge you suitably. Your child's body will remain in the garret, where it shall to-night, as is customary, be attended and watched by a priest. I will go and request M. Pipelet to undertake the management of these sad duties."

"But, sir, it is not necessary to deprive you of your room. Now that we are in peace, and I no longer fear being taken to prison, our humble apartment appears to me a palace, particularly if my dear Louise remains with us, to attend to the family as formerly."

"Your Louise will not again leave you. You said not long ago it would be a luxury to have her always with you; as some recompense for your past sufferings, she shall never leave you again."

"Oh, sir, can it be possible? It surely cannot be a reality! My senses seem lulled in a sweet dream. I have never thought much of religion, but this sudden change from so much misery to so much happiness shows the hand of an overruling Providence."

"And if a father's grief could be assuaged by promises of reward or recompense," said Rudolph, "I should remind you, that although the Almighty hand has removed one of your daughters from you, He has mercifully restored another."

"True, true, sir. Henceforth we shall have our dear Louise to content us for the loss of poor little Adele."

"You will accept my chamber, will you not? If you refuse, how can you manage the mournful duties toward the poor child that is gone? Think also of your wife, whose mind is already so distracted—to leave her for four-and-twenty hours with such an afflicting spectacle before her eyes!"

"You think of everything—of all! How kind you are, sir!"

"It is your benefactress you must thank, for her goodness inspires me. I say to you as she would say, and I am sure she would approve of all; so it is agreed that you will accept the offer of my room. Now tell me, this Jacques Ferrand—"

A dark frown passed across Morel's face.

"This Jacques Ferrand," continued Rudolph, "is the same lawyer who resides in the Rue du Sentier?"

"Yes, sir; do you know him?" Then, his fears newly awakened on the subject of Louise, Morel exclaimed: "Since you have heard all that passed, sir, say, say—have I not a right to hate this man? And who knows, if my child, my Louise—"

He could not proceed; he hid his face with his hands. Rudolph understood his fears.

"The lawyer's proceedings," said he to him, "ought to reassure you, as he doubtless ordered your arrest to be revenged for the scorn of your daughter; I have good reason, too, to believe that he is a dishonest man. If he is so," resumed Rudolph, after a moment's silence, "let us believe that Providence will punish him. If the justice of Heaven often appears to slumber it awakens some time or other."

"He is very rich, and very hypocritical, sir."

"In your deepest despair, a guardian angel came to your assistance, and plucked you from inevitable ruin; so, at a moment when least expected, the Almighty Avenger may call upon the lawyer to atone for

his past crimes if he be guilty."

At this moment Miss Dimpleton came from the garret, wiping her eyes. Rudolph said to the young girl, "Will it not, my good neighbor, be better that M. Morel should occupy my room, with his family, until his benefactress, whose agent I am, shall have provided a suitable lodging?"

Miss Dimpleton regarded Rudolph with a look of unfeigned surprise. "Oh, sir! are you really in earnest when you make so generous an offer?"

"Yes, but on one condition, which will depend on yourself."

"Oh, depend upon all that is in my power!"

"I had some accounts required in haste, to arrange for my employers; they will come for them soon. Now, if you will be so neighborly as to permit me to work in your room, on a corner of your table, I should not disturb your work in the least, and the Morel family can, with the assistance of M. and Mrs. Pipelet, immediately be settled in my room."

"Oh, if it be only that, sir, most willingly; neighbors ought to assist each other. You have set so good an example by what you have done for that poor Morel, that I am at your service, sir."

"No, no, call me neighbor. If you use any ceremony toward me, I shall not have courage to intrude on you," said Rudolph.

"Well, then, it shall be so, I will call you 'neighbor,' because you really are so."

"Father, father!" cried one of Morel's little boys, coming out of the garret, "mother is calling you; come directly, pray do." The lapidary hastily entered the room.

"Now, neighbor," said Rudolph to Miss Dimpleton, "you must render me a still further service."

"With all my heart, if it be in my power."

"You are, I am sure, an excellent little housewife. It is necessary to purchase immediately all that is wanted for Morel's family to be properly clothed, bedded, and settled in my room, for there is only sufficient for myself as a bachelor, that was brought yesterday. How can we manage to procure instantly all I wish for the Morels?"

Miss Dimpleton thought for a moment, and answered: "In a couple of hours you can have all your want; good clothes ready-made, warm and neat, with good clean linen for all the family: two little beds for the children, and one for the grandmother—in short, all that is necessary; but it will cost a great deal of money."

"You don't say so! How much?"

"Oh, at least—at the very least—five or six hundred francs."

"For everything?"

"Yes, it is a great sum of money, you see," said Miss Dimpleton opening her large eyes, and shaking her bead.

"And we can procure all these things—"

"In two hours."

"You must be a fairy, neighbor."

"Oh, no, it is quite easy. The Temple is only two steps from here, where you will find all of which you are in want." "The Temple?"

"Yes, the Temple."

"What place is that?"

"Don't know the Temple, neighbor?"

"No."

"It is, nevertheless, here where people like you and I furnish our rooms, and clothe ourselves, when we would be economical. Things are cheaper there than elsewhere, and quite as good."

"Really?"

"I assure you. Come, now, I suppose—But what did you pay for this great-coat?"

"I do not know exactly."

"What, neighbor, can't tell how much your great-coat cost you?"

"I acknowledge to you in confidence," said Rudolph, smiling, "that I owe for it; now do you understand that I cannot know?"

"Oh, neighbor, neighbor, I fear you are a spendthrift!"

"Alas! neighbor!"

"You must alter in that respect, if you wish us to be good friends; and I already see that we shall be such, you appear so kind! You shall see that you will be glad to have me for a neighbor; for on that account we can assist each other. I will take care of your linen, and you will help me clean my room. I rise very early, and will call you, so that you may not be late at your shop. I'll knock at the wall until you say to me: 'Good-morning, neighbor.'"

"It is agreed; you shall wake me, take care of my linen, and I will clean your room."

"And you will be very neat?"

"Certainly."

"And when you wish to make any purchase, you will go to the Temple, because here is an example; your greatcoat cost, I suppose, eighty francs; very well, you could have had it at the Temple for thirty."

"Why, that is marvelous! Then you think that with five or six hundred francs, these poor Morels—"

"Will be stocked with everything, first-class, for a long time to come."

"Neighbor, an idea has just struck me."

"Well, what is it about?"

"Do you understand household affairs—are you clever at making purchases?"

"Yes—rather so," said Miss Dimpleton, with a look of simplicity.

"Take my arm, and let us go to the Temple and buy wherewith to clothe the Morels; will that suit you?"

"Oh, what happiness! Poor creatures!—but where's the money?"

"I have sufficient."

"Five hundred francs?"

"The benefactress of the Morels has given me *carte blanche;* nothing is to be spared that these poor people require. Is there even a place where better things are to be had than at the Temple?"

"You will find nowhere better; then there is everything, and all ready-made—little frocks for the children, and dresses for their mother."

"Then let us go at once to the Temple, neighbor."

"Oh! but—"

"What's wrong?"

"Nothing; but you see, my time is everything to me; and I am already a little behindhand, in occasionally nursing the poor woman Morel; and you may imagine that an hour in one way and an hour in another makes in time a day; a day brings thirty sous, and if we earn nothing one must still live all the same. But, pshaw! never mind; I must spare from my nights; and then, again, parties of pleasure are rare, and I will make this a joyful day; it will seem to me that I am rich, and that it is with my own money I am buying such good things for these poor Morels. Very well, as soon as I have put on my shawl and cap, I shall be at your service, neighbor."

"Suppose, during the time, I bring my papers to your room?"

"Willingly, and then you will see my apartment," said Miss Dimpleton, with pride; "for it is already put in order, and that will prove to you that I am an early riser, and that if you are sleepy and idle so much the worse for you, for I shall be a troublesome neighbor."

So saying, light as a bird, she flew down the stairs, followed by Rudolph, who went to his room to brush off the dust he had carried away from Pipelet's loft. We will hereafter disclose to the reader how Rudolph was not yet informed of the abduction of Fleur-de-Marie from Bouqueval farm, and why he had not visited the Morels the day after the conversation with Lady d'Harville.

Rudolph, for the sake of appearances, furnished himself with a large roll of papers, which he carried into Miss Dimpleton's room.

Miss Dimpleton was nearly of the same age as Goualeuse, her former prison-friend. There was between these girls the same difference that exists between laughter and tears; between joyful carelessness and melancholy reverie; between daring improvidence and serious, incessant anticipation of the future: between a nature exquisitely delicate, elevated, poetic, morbidly sensitive, incurably wounded by remorse, and a disposition gay, lively, happy, unreflective, although good and compassionate; for, far from being selfish, Miss Dimpleton only cared for the griefs of others; with them she sympathized entirely, devoting herself, soul and body, to those who suffered; but, to use a common expression, her *back turned* on them, she thought no more about them. Often she interrupted a lively laugh to weep passionately, and checked her tears to laugh again. A real child of Paris, Miss Dimpleton preferred tumult to quiet, bustle to repose, the sharp, ringing harmony of the orchestra at the balls of the *Chartreuse* and the *Colysee*, to the soft murmur of wind, water, and trees; the deafening tumult of the streets of Paris, to the silence of the country; the dazzling of the fireworks, the glittering of the flowers, the crash of the rockets, to the serenity of a lovely night—starlit, clear, and still. Alas! yes, this good girl preferred the black mud of the streets of the capital to the verdure of its flowery meadows; its pavements miry or tortuous, to the fresh and velvet moss of the paths in the woods, perfumed by violets; the suffocating dust at the City gates, or the Boulevards, to the waving of the golden ears of corn, enameled by the scarlet of the wild poppy and the azure of the bluebell.

Miss Dimpleton never left home but on Sundays, and every morning laid in her provisions of chick-weed, bread, hempseed, and milk for her birds and herself, as Mrs. Pipelet observed. But she lived in Paris for the sake of Paris; she would have been miserable elsewhere than in the capital.

After a few words upon the personal appearance of the grisette, we will introduce Rudolph into his neighbor's apartment.

Miss Dimpleton had scarcely attained her eighteenth year; rather below the middle size, her figure was so gracefully formed and voluptuously rounded, harmonizing so well with a sprightly and elastic step, that an inch more in height would have spoiled the graceful symmetry that distinguished her. The movement of her pretty little feet, incased in faultless boots of black cloth, with a rather stout sole, reminded you of the quick, pretty, and cautious tread of the quail or wagtail. She did not seem to walk, but to pass over the pavement as if she were gliding over its surface. This step, so peculiar to *grisettes*, at once nimble, attractive, and as if somewhat alarmed, may be attributed to three causes; their desire to be thought pretty, their fear of a too-plainly expressed admiration, and the desire they always have not to lose a minute in their peregrinations.

Rudolph had never seen Miss Dimpleton but by the somber light in Morel's garret, or on the landing, equally obscure; he was therefore dazzled by the brilliant freshness of the girl, when he entered silently her room, lit by two large windows. He remained for an instant motionless, struck by the charming picture before him. Standing before a glass, placed over the chimney-piece, Miss Dimpleton had just finished tying under her chin the strings of a small cap of bordered tulle, trimmed with cherry-colored ribbons. The cap, which fitted tightly, was placed far back on her head, and thus revealed two large thick braids of glossy hair, shining like jet, and falling very low in front. Her eyebrows, well-defined, seemed as if traced in ink, and were arched above large black eyes, full of vivacity and expression; her firm and downy cheeks were tinted with a lovely bloom, like a ripe peach sprinkled with the dew of morning. Her small, upturned, and saucy nose would have made the fortune of a Lisette or Marton; her mouth, rather large, with rosy lips and small white teeth, was full of laughter and sport; her cheeks were dimpled and also her chin, not far from which was a little speck of beauty, a dark mole, *killingly* placed at the corner of her mouth. Between a very low worked collar and the border of the little cap, gathered in by a cherry-colored ribbon, was seen beautiful hair, so carefully twisted and turned up, that its roots were as clear and as black as if they had been painted on the ivory of that tempting neck. A plum-colored merino dress, with a plain back and tight sleeves, skillfully made by herself, covered a bust so dainty and supple, that the young girl never wore a corset—for economy's sake. An ease and unusual freedom in the smallest action of the shoulders and body, resembling the facile, undulating motions of a cat, evinced this peculiarity. Imagine a gown fitting tightly to a form rounded and polished

as marble, and we must agree that Miss Dimpleton could easily dispense with the accessory to the dress of which we have spoken. The band of a small apron of dark green levantine formed a girdle round a waist which might have been spanned with your two hands.

[Illustration: THE ROTUNDA]

Supposing herself to be quite alone (for Rudolph still remained at the door motionless and unperceived), Miss Dimpleton, after having smoothed the bands of her hair with her small white hand, placed her little foot upon a chair, and stooped down to tighten her boot-lace. This attitude disclosed to Rudolph a snow-white cotton stocking, and half of a beautifully formed leg.

After this detailed account we may conclude that Miss Dimpleton had put on her prettiest cap and apron, to do honor to her neighbor on their visit to the Temple. The person of the pretended merchant's clerk was quite to her taste: his face, benevolent, proud, and noble, pleased her greatly: and then he had shown so much compassion toward the poor Morels, in giving up his room to them, that, thanks to his kindness of heart, and perhaps also to his good looks, Rudolph had made great steps in the confidence of the grisette, who, according to her ideas of the necessity of reciprocal obligations imposed on neighbors, esteemed herself fortunate that Rudolph had succeeded the commission-traveler, Cabrion, and Francois Germain; for she had begun to feel that the next room had been too long empty, and she feared, above all, that it would not be *agreeably* occupied.

Rudolph took advantage of his being unperceived, to throw a curious look around this room, which he found deserved more praise than Mrs. Pipelet had given to the extreme neatness of Miss Dimpleton's humble home. Nothing could be gayer or better arranged than this little room. A gray paper, with green flowers, covered the walls; the red-waxed floor shone like a mirror; a saucepan of white earthenware was on the hob, where was also arranged a small quantity of wood, cut so fine and small that you could well compare each piece to a large match. Upon the stone mantelpiece, representing gray marble, were placed for ornament two common flower-pots, painted an emerald green; a little wooden stand held a silver watch, which served in lieu of a clock. On one side shone a brass candle-stick, bright as gold, ornamented with an end of wax candle; on the other side, was one of those lamps formed of a cylinder, with a tin reflector, mounted upon a steel stem, with a leaden stand. A tolerably large glass, in a frame of black wood, surmounted the mantel.

Curtains of green and gray chintz, bordered with worsted galloon, cut out and arranged by Miss Dimpleton, and placed on slight rods of black iron, draperied the windows; and the bed was covered with a quilt of the same make and material. Two glass-fronted cupboards, painted white and varnished, were placed each side of the recess; no doubt containing the household utensils—the portable stove, the broom, etc., etc.; for none of these necessaries destroyed the harmonious arrangement of the room.

A walnut chest of drawers, beautifully grained and well polished, four chairs of the same wood, a large table with one of those green cloth covers sometimes seen in country cottages, a straw-bottom armchair, with a footstool—such was the unpretending furniture. There was, too, in the recess in one of the windows, the cage of the two canaries, faithful companions of Miss Dimpleton. By one of those notable inventions which arise only in the minds of poor people, the cage was set in the middle of a large chest, a foot in depth, upon the table: this chest, which Miss Dimpleton called the garden of her birds, was filled with earth, covered with moss during the winter, and in the spring with turf and flowers. Rudolph gazed into this apartment with interest and curiosity; he perfectly comprehended the joyous humor of this young girl; he pictured the silence disturbed by the warbling birds, and the singing of Miss Dimpleton. In the summer, doubtless, she worked near the open window, half hidden by a verdant curtain of sweet pea, nasturtium, and blue and white morning-glories; in the winter, she sat by the side of the stove, enlivened by the soft light of her lamp.

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Rudolph was thus far in these reflections, when, looking mechanically at the door, he noticed a strong bolt—a bolt that would not have been out of place on the door of a prison. This bolt caused him to reflect. It had two meanings, two distinct uses: to shut the door *upon* lovers within—to shut the door *against* lovers without. One of these uses would utterly contradict the assertions of Mrs. Pipelet— the other would confirm them. Rudolph had just arrived at these conclusions, when Miss Dimpleton, turning her head, perceived him, and, without changing her position, said: "What, neighbor! there you are then!" Instantly the pretty leg disappeared under the ample skirt of the currant-colored gown, and Miss Dimpleton added: "Caught you, Cunning!"

"I am here, admiring in silence."

"And what do you admire, neighbor?"

"This pretty little room, for you are lodged like a queen."

"Nay, you see, this is my enjoyment. I seldom go out; so at least I may please myself at home."

"But I do not find fault. What tasteful curtains! and the drawers—as good as mahogany. You must have spent heaps of money here."

"Oh, pray don't remind me of it! I had four hundred and twenty-six francs when I left prison, and almost all is gone."

"When you left prison?"

"Yes; it is quite a story. But you do not, I hope, think I was in prison for any crime?"

"Certainly not; but how was it?"

"After the cholera, I found myself alone in the world; I was then, I believe, about ten years of age."

"Until that time, who had taken care of you?"

"Oh, very good people; but they died of the cholera (here the large black eyes became tearful); the little they left was sold to discharge two or three small debts, and I found that no one would shelter me. Not knowing what to do I went to the guard-house, opposite where I had resided, and said to the sentinel: 'Soldier, my parents are dead, and I do not know where to go. What must I do?' The sub-officer came and took me to the magistrate, who sent me to prison as a vagabond, which I was allowed to quit at sixteen years of age."

"But your parents?"

"I do not know who was my father; I was six years old when I lost my mother, who had taken me from the Foundling Hospital, where she had been compelled at first to place me. The kind people of whom I have spoken lived in our house; they had no children, and seeing me an orphan, took care of me."

"And how did they live? What was their condition in life?"

"Papa Cretu, so I always called him, was a house-painter, and the female who lived with him worked at her needle."

"Then they were tolerably well off?"

"Oh, as well off as most people in their station. Though not married, they called each other husband and wife. They had their ups and downs; to-day in abundance, if there was plenty of work; to-morrow straitened, if there was not any; but that did not prevent them from being contented and gay (at this remembrance Miss Dimpleton's face brightened). There was nowhere near a house like it—always cheerful, always singing; and with all that, good and kind beyond belief! What was theirs, was for others also. Mamma Cretu was a plump body of thirty, clean as a new penny, lively as an eel, merry as a finch. Her husband was a regular jolly old King Cole; he had a large nose, a large mouth, always a paper cap on his head, and a face so droll—oh, so droll, that you could not look at him without laughing! When he returned home after work he did nothing but sing, make faces, and gambol like a child. He made me dance, and jump upon his knees; he played with me as if he were my own age, and his wife entirely spoilt me. Both required of me but one thing—to be good-humored; and in that, thank God! I never disappointed them; so they baptized me, Dimpleton (not Simpleton, neighbor!) and the cap fitted. As to gayety, they set me the example: never did I see them sad. If they uttered reproaches at all, it was the wife said to her husband: 'Stop, Cretu, you make me laugh too much!' or he said to her 'Hold your tongue, Ramonette (I do not know why he called her Ramonette), you will make me ill, you are so funny!' And as for me, I laughed to see them laugh. That's how I was brought up, and how my character was formed; I trust I have profited by it!"

"To perfection, neighbor! Then they never quarreled?"

"Never; oh, the biggest kind of never! Sunday, Monday, sometimes Tuesday, they had, as they called it, an outing, and took me always with them. Papa Cretu was a very good workman; when employed, he could earn what he pleased, and so could his wife too. As soon as they had sufficient for the Sunday and Monday, and could live till then, well or ill, they were satisfied. After that if they were on short allowance, they were still contented. I remember that when we had only bread and water, Papa Cretu used to take out of his library—"

"He had a library?"

"So he called a little chest, where he put his collections of new songs: for he bought all the new

songs, and knew them all. When there was nothing in the house but bread, he would take from his library an old cookery-book, and say to us: 'Let us see what we will have to eat today—this or that?' and he would read to us a list of many good things. Each chose their dish. Papa Cretu would then take an empty stewpan, and with the drollest manner, and the funniest jests in the world, pretend to put in all the ingredients necessary to make a good stew, and seemed to pour it into a plate, also empty, which he would place on the table, always with grimaces that made us hold our sides, then taking his book again, he would read, for example, the receipt for a good fricassee of chicken that we had chosen, and that made our mouths water; we then eat our bread (while he read) laughing like so many mad things."

"And were they in debt?"

"Not at all! As long as they had money they feasted: when they had none they dined on *water-color* as Papa Cretu called it."

"And did they not think of the future?"

"Oh, yes, they thought of it; but then our present and future were like Sunday and Monday—summer we spent gayly and happily outside the City, the winter we got over at home."

"Since these poor people agreed so well together, why did they not marry?"

"One of their friends once asked the same question, before me."

"Well?"

"They answered: 'If we should ever have children, we will marry; but we are very well as we are. What is the good of compelling us to do that which we now do willingly? Besides, it is expensive, and we have no money to spare.' But see how I am gossiping! as I always do on the subject of those good people, who were so kind to me, for I never tire of speaking of them. Here, neighbor, be civil enough to take my shawl, which is on the bed, and fasten it under the collar of my dress with this large pin, and we will then go, for we shall be some time selecting all you wish to purchase for the Morels."

Rudolph hastened to obey the instructions; he took from the bed a large plaid shawl, and carefully arranged it on his neighbor's lovely shoulders.

"Now then, lift up the collar a little, press the dress and shawl close together and stick in the pin. Above all, take care not to prick me."

The prince executed the given instructions with zealous nicety; then he observed, smilingly, to the grisette, "Oh, Miss Dimpleton, I must not be your *femme de chambre*—there is danger in it!"

"Yes, yes," answer Miss Dimpleton, gayly, "there is great danger of my having a pin run into me! But now," added she, after they had left the room and locked the door after them; "here, neighbor, take the key; it is so very heavy, that I always fear it will tear my pocket. It is quite a pistol for size!" And then she laughed merrily.

Rudolph accordingly took possession of an enormous key—such a one as is sometimes seen in those allegorical representations where the vanquished offer the keys of their cities to the conquerors. Although Rudolph believed himself sufficiently changed by years not to be recognized by Polidori, he yet pulled up the collar of his coat before passing the door of the quack Bradamanti.

"Neighbor, don't forget to tell M. Pipelet that some goods will be brought here, which must be taken to your room," said Miss Dimpleton.

"You are right, neighbor; we will step into the lodge as we pass by."

Pipelet, his everlasting immense hat, as usual, on his head, dressed in his green coat, was sitting gravely before a table, on which were spread pieces of leather and fragments of old shoes; he was occupied in putting a new sole to a boot, which he did with that serious and meditative air which characterized all his doings. Anastasia was absent from the lodge.

"Well, M. Pipelet," said Miss Dimpleton, "I trust things will be better now! Thanks to my neighbor, the poor Morels were rescued from trouble just as those heartless bailiffs were about to drag the unhappy man to prison."

"Oh! these bailiffs are really without hearts, or manners either, mademoiselle," added Pipelet, in an angry voice, flourishing the boot he was repairing, in which he had thrust his left hand and arm.

"No! I do not fear to repeat, in the face of heaven and man, that they are without manners; they took advantage of the darkness of the staircase to make rude remarks on my wife's very person. On hearing

the cries of her offended modesty, in spite of myself, I yielded to the impulse of my temper. I do not disguise it, my first movement was to remain perfectly motionless."

"But afterward you followed them, I hope, M. Pipelet?" said Miss Dimpleton, who had some trouble to preserve a serious air.

"I thought of it," answered Pipelet, with a deep sigh; "but when those shameless ruffians passed before my door, my blood rose, and I could not hinder myself from putting my hand before my eyes, to hide the monsters from my sight! But that does not surprise me; I knew something unfortunate would happen to me to-day, for I dreamed—last night—of Monster Cabrion!"

Miss Dimpleton smiled, as Pipelet's painful sighs were mingled with the taps of the hammer, which he vigorously applied to the sole of the old boot.

"You truly acted the part of a wise man, my dear M. Pipelet, that of despising offenses, and holding it beneath you to revenge them. But let us forget these miserable bailiffs. Will you be kind enough to do me a favor?" asked Rudolph.

"Man is born to assist his fellow-man," replied Pipelet, in a sententious and melancholy tone: "and more particularly so when his fellow-man is so good a lodger as yourself."

"It will be necessary to take up to my room different things which will be brought here presently for the Morels."

"Be assured I will take charge of them," replied Pipelet, "and faithfully carry out your wishes."

"And afterward," said Rudolph, sadly, "you must obtain a priest to watch by the little girl the Morels have lost in the night. Go and register her death, and order a decent funeral. Here is money; spare not, for Morel's benefactress, whose mere agent I am, wishes all to go well."

"Make your mind quite easy, sir," replied Pipelet; "directly my wife comes back, I will go to the mayor, the church, and the ham-and-beef shop—to the church for the soul of the dead, to the cook-shop for the body of the living," added Pipelet, philosophically and poetically. "You may consider it done—already done, in both cases, my good sir."

At the entrance, Rudolph and Miss Dimpleton found themselves face to face with Anastasia, who had returned from market, bearing a heavy basket of provisions.

"Well done!" exclaimed the portress, looking at them both with a knowing and significant air; "already arm-in-arm! That's your sort! Young people will be young people—and where's the harm? To a pretty lass, a handsome lad! If you don't enjoy yourselves while young, you will find it difficult to do so when you get old! My poor dear Alfred and I, for instance, when we were young, didn't we go the pace—But now, oh, dear! oh, dear!—Well, never mind; go along, my dears, and make yourselves happy while you can. Love forever!" The old woman disappeared in the darkness of the alley, calling out, "Alfred, do not grumble, old darling. Here is 'Stasie who brings you good things—rare dainties!"

The young couple had left the house.

* * * * * * *

To the mind of Rudolph, for Miss Dimpleton was too little prone to mournful impressions to long reflect on the matter, the troubles of the Morels had ceased; but in the grim reality, a calamity, ten fold severer than their direst poverty, was gathering and forming nearer them, ready to burst upon their heads almost before the gay young couple would return from their stroll. What this great evil was, and what fate befalls other characters yet to be introduced, will presently be revealed, in shadow and by sunshine.

The Slasher, the Schoolmaster, the Screech-Owl, Hoppy, and the other wretches whose misdeeds blacken these pages, form the foil; while Fleur-de-Marie, Clemence d'Harville, Miss Dimpleton, and Mrs. George are the gems which will be seen to shed their luster and charm over the no less interesting pages of the Second Division of this work, entitled, "*Part Second:* NOON."

PART II.

NOON.

CHAPTER I.

THE ARREST.

To the snow of the past night had succeeded a very sharp wind; so that the pavement of the streets, usually muddy, was almost dry, as Rudolph and Miss Dimpleton directed their steps toward the extensive and singular bazaar called the Temple. The girl leaned without ceremony upon the arm of her cavalier, with as little restraint as though they had been intimate for a long time.

"Isn't Mrs. Pipelet funny," said the grisette to Rudolph, "with the odd remarks she makes?"

"Indeed, neighbor, I think she is quite right."

"In what?"

"Why when she said: 'Young people will be young people—and where's the harm?—Love forever!'"

"Well?"

"Well! I mean to say that I perfectly agree with her."

"Agree with her!"

"Yes, I should like nothing better than to pass my youth with you, taking '*Love forever*!' for my motto."

"I believe it: you are not difficult to please."

"Where is the harm? We are neighbors."

"If we were not neighbors, I should not walk out with you in this way."

"Then allow me to hope—"

"Hope what?" "That you will learn to love me."

"I love you already."

"Really?"

"To be sure I do and for a very simple reason. You are good and lively; although poor yourself, you do all you can for those unfortunate Morels, in interesting rich people in their behalf; you have a face that pleases me much, and a well-turned figure, which is agreeable and flattering to me, as I shall frequently accept your arm. Here are, I think, many reasons that I should love you."

Then interrupting herself to enjoy a hearty laugh, Miss Dimpleton cried: "Look! look at that fat woman, with her old furrowed shoes; one could imagine her drawn along by two cats without tails!" And again she laughed merrily.

"I prefer looking at you, neighbor; I am so happy in thinking you already love me."

"I tell you so, because it is so; if you did not please me, I should say so all the same. I cannot reproach myself with having ever deceived or flattered any one; when people please me, I tell them so at once."

Then, interrupting herself again, to stop before a shop-window, the grisette exclaimed:

"Oh, look at that beautiful clock, and those two pretty vases! I have already saved up three francs and a half toward buying some like them. In five or six years I may be able to manage it."

"Saved up, neighbor? Then you earn—"

"At least thirty sous a day—sometimes forty, but I only reckon upon thirty; it is more prudent, and I regulate my expenses accordingly," said Miss Dimpleton, with an air as important as though it related to the transactions of a financier.

"But with thirty sous a day, how can you manage to live?"

"The reckoning is not difficult; shall I explain it to you, neighbor?
You appear rather extravagant, so it may serve you as an example."

"Let's hear it."

"Thirty sous a day will make forty-five francs a month, will it not?"

"Yes."

"Well, then, by that account I have twelve francs for lodging, and twenty-three francs for living."

"Twenty-three francs for a month's living!"

"Yes, quite as much. I acknowledge that, for a person like myself, it is enormous; but then, you see, I refuse myself nothing."

"Oh, you little glutton!"

"Ah, but I also include food for my birds."

"Certainly, if you reckon for three, it is less extravagant. But let me hear the detail of your every-day management, that I may benefit by the instruction."

"Listen then. A pound of bread, that is four sous; milk, two sous— that makes six; four sous for vegetables in winter, or fruit and salad in summer (I dote on salad and vegetables, because they do not soil the hands)—there is already ten sous; three sous for butter or oil and vinegar, as seasoning—thirteen sous; two pailfuls of water (oh, that is my luxury!) that will make fifteen sous; add to that two sous for chickweed and hempseed for my two birds, which usually share with me my bread and milk—that is twenty-two or twenty-three francs a month, neither more nor less."

"And do you never eat meat?"

"Oh, Lord! Meat indeed! that costs ten to twelve sous a pound; how can I think of that? Besides, it smells of the kitchen, of the stewpan; instead of which, milk, fruit, and vegetables require no cooking. I will tell you a dish I am very fond of, not troublesome, and which I make to perfection."

"Hold up the dish!"

"I put fine potatoes in the oven of my stove; when they are done, I mash them with a little butter and milk, and a pinch of salt. It is a meal for the gods! If you are well behaved I will let you taste them some day."

"Prepared by your pretty hands, it cannot fail to be excellent. But let us see neighbor; we have already reckoned twenty-three francs for living, and twelve francs for lodging—that makes thirty-five francs a month."

"Well, then, out of the forty-five or fifty francs I earn, there remain to me ten or fifteen francs for wood and oil during winter, as well as for my dress and washing—that is to say for soap—as, excepting my sheets, I wash for myself: that is another luxury—a laundress would pretty well ruin me; and as I also iron very well, I thereby save my money. During the five winter months I burn a load and a half of wood, and four or five sous-worth of oil in the day for my lamp; that makes nearly eighteen francs a year for my light and fire."

"So that there remain to you more than a hundred francs for your clothing?"

"Yes; and it is from that I have saved the three francs and a half."

"But your dresses—your shoes and stockings—this pretty cap?"

"My caps I only wear when I go out, and that does not ruin me, for I make them myself; at home I am satisfied with my hair. As to my dresses and boots—is there not the Temple?"—"Oh, yes, that contentment, excellent Temple! Well, you buy there—"

"Very good and pretty dresses. You must know that rich ladies are accustomed to give their old dresses to their waiting maids—when I say old, I mean that maybe they have worn them in their carriages a month or two—and their servants go and sell them to people who keep shops at the Temple for almost nothing. Thus, you see, I have a nice merino dress that I bought for fifteen francs, which perhaps cost sixty; it has hardly been put on and is beautifully fine. I altered it to fit me, and I flatter myself it does me credit."

"Indeed you do it much credit! Thanks to the resources of the Temple, I begin to think you can manage to dress respectably with a hundred francs a year."

"To be sure I can. Why, I can buy charming dresses for five or six francs; and boots, the same that I have on now, and almost new, for two or three francs. Look! would not any one say that they were made for me?" said Miss Dimpleton, stooping and showing the tip of her pretty little foot, very nicely set off by the well-made and well-fitting boot.

"The foot is charming, truly; but you must find a difficulty in fitting it. After that you will doubtless tell me that they sell children's shoes at the Temple."

"You are a sad flatterer, neighbor; however, after what I have told you, you will acknowledge that a girl, quite alone and well, can live respectably on thirty sous a day? I must tell you, by-the-by, the four hundred and fifty francs which I brought from prison assisted materially in establishing me. When once known that I possessed furniture, it inspired confidence and I had work intrusted to me to take home; but it was necessary to wait a long time before I could meet with employment. Fortunately I kept sufficient money to live upon for three months, without earning anything."

"Spite of your gay, heedless manner, allow me to say that you possess a great deal of good sense, neighbor."

"Nay, when one is alone in the world, and would not be under obligation to any one, you must exercise some management to build your nest well, and take care of it when it is built, as the saying is."

"And your nest is delightful!"

"Is it not? for, as I have said, I refuse myself nothing; I consider I have a lodging above my station. Then, again, I have birds; in summer always at least two pots of flowers on the mantelpiece, besides the boxes in the windows; and then, as I told you, I had three francs or more in my money-box, toward ornaments I hoped one day to be able to purchase for the chimney-piece."

"And what became of these savings?"

"Why, latterly I have seen those poor Morels so unhappy, so very unhappy, that I said to myself: 'There is no sense in having these ugly pieces of money idling in a box, whilst poor people are perishing of hunger beside you,' so I lent them to Morel. When I say lent, I mean I told him I only lent them, in order to spare his feelings, for I assure you I gave them freely."

"Yes, neighbor, but as they are no longer in want, you surely will not refuse to allow them to repay you?"

"True, I shall not refuse it; it will be something toward the purchase of chimney-ornaments—my dream."

"And then, again, you ought to think a little of the future."

"The future?"

"Should you fall ill, for instance."

And, at the bare idea, Miss Dimpleton burst into an immoderate fit of laughter, so loud, that a fat man, who was walking before her, carrying a dog under his arm, turned round quite angrily, believing himself to be the butt. Miss Dimpleton, resuming her composure, made a half-courtesy to the stout person, and pointing to the animal under his arm, said: "Is your dog so very tired, sir?"

The fat man grumbled something, and continued to walk.

"Come, come, neighbor," said Rudolph; "are you losing your senses?"

"It is your fault if I am."

"My fault?"

"Yes; because you say such silly things to me."

"What, because I tell you that you may fall ill?"

"I ill?"

"Why not?"

"Am I a likely-looking person to be sick then?"

"Never have I beheld a face more rosy and fresh!"

"Very well then, why do you think I shall be ill?"

"Nay, but—"

"At eighteen years of age, leading the life I do, how can that be possible? I rise at five o'clock, winter and summer; I go to bed at ten or eleven; I eat to satisfy my hunger, which is not very great, it is true; I sing like a lark all day, and at night I sleep like a dormouse: I have a mind free, joyful, and contented, with the certainty of plenty of work, because my employers are pleased with what I have done. Why should I be sick! What an idea! Well, I never!"

And Miss Dimpleton again relapsed into long and hearty laughter. Rudolph, struck with this blind, yet happy confidence in the future, reproached himself with having attempted to shake it. He thought, with horror, that an illness of a month could ruin this merry, peaceful mode of existence. Miss Dimpleton's deep faith in her health and her eighteen years, her only treasures, appeared to Rudolph something akin to holiness; for, on the young girl's part, it was neither carelessness nor improvidence, but an instinctive reliance on the commiseration of Divine justice, which could not abandon an industrious and virtuous creature, whose only error was a too confident dependence on the youth and health she enjoyed. The birds, as they cleave with gay and agile wings the azure skies in spring, or skim lightly over the blooming fields, do they think of the cheerless winter?

"Then," said Rudolph to the grisette, "you are not ambitious to possess more than you have?"

"Nothing."

"Absolutely nothing?"

"No—that is to say, I should like to have my chimney-ornaments, and I shall have them, though I do not know when; but I have it in my head to possess them, and I will, if I should have to sit up to work all night to do it."

"And besides these ornaments—"

"I want for nothing; I cannot recollect a single thing more that I care about possessing now."

"How now?"

"Because, if you had asked me the same question yesterday, I should have told you I was longing for a suitable neighbor; so that I could arrange with him comfortably, as I have always done, to perform little services for him, that he might return nice little attentions to me."

"Well, it is already agreed, my pretty neighbor, that you shall take charge of my linen, and that I shall clean your room—without naming your waking me early in the morning, by tapping at the wall."

"And do you think that will be all?'

"What else is there?"

"Oh, bless your heart, you have not arrived at the end of what I expect of you. Is it not necessary that on Sundays you take me for a walk on the Boulevards?—you know that is the only day I have for recreation."

"To be sure. In summer we will go into the country."

"No, I detest the country. I like no place so well as Paris. Nevertheless, I went, once upon a time, out of good nature, with a young friend of mine, who was my companion in prison, to visit Meudon and Saint-Germain. My friend was a very pleasant, good girl, whom they called Sweet-throat, because she was always singing."

"And what has become of her?"

"I do not know. She spent all the money she brought from prison, without appearing to be much amused; she was always sad, but sympathizing and charitable. When we used to go out together, I had not then any work; but when I succeeded in obtaining some, I did not stir from home. I gave her my address, but as she has not been to see me, doubtless she has also some occupation, and, like me, is too busy to get out. I only mention this to let you know, neighbor, that I love Paris above every other place. So whenever you can, on Sunday, you may take me to dine at the ordinary, sometimes to the play; or, if you have not any money, you can take me to see the fashionable shops, which will amuse me almost as much. Rest satisfied, that in our little excursions I shall not disgrace you. You will see how smart I shall look in my pretty dress of blue levantine, that I only wear on Sundays: it suits me to perfection. With that I wear a pretty little cap, trimmed with lace and orange-colored ribbon, which does not contrast

badly with my black hair; satin boots, that I have made for me; an elegant shawl of silk imitation Cashmere! Indeed, I expect, neighbor, people will turn round to look after us as we pass along. Men will say: 'Really, that is a pretty little girl, upon my word!' And the women, on their part, will exclaim: 'Look at that tall young man! what an elegant shape! He has an air that is truly fashionable! and his little brown mustache becomes him exceedingly!' And I shall be of their opinion, for I adore mustaches. Unfortunately, M. Germain did not wear one, because of the situation he held. M. Cabrion did, but then it was red, like his long beard, and I do not like those great beards; besides, he made himself so ridiculously conspicuous in the streets, and teased poor M. Pipelet so much. Now, M. Giraudeau, who was my neighbor before M. Cabrion, dressed well, and altogether had a very good appearance, but he squinted. At first it annoyed me very much, because he always appeared to be looking at some one at the side of me, and without thinking, I often turned round to see who—" And again Miss Dimpleton laughed.

Rudolph, as he listened to this prattle, asked himself, for the third or fourth time, what he ought to think of the *virtue* of Miss Dimpleton. Sometimes the frankness of the grisette, and the remembrance of the large bolt, made him almost believe that she loved her neighbors merely as *brothers* or *companions*, and that Mrs. Pipelet had caluminated her; then again he smiled at his credulity, in thinking it probable that a girl so young, so pretty, so solitary, should have escaped the seductions of Giraudeau, Cabrion, and Germain. Still, for all that, Miss Dimpleton's frankness and originality disposed him to think favorably of her.

"You delight me, neighbor, by your manner of disposing of my Sundays," said Rudolph, gayly; "we will have some famous treats."

"Stop a moment, Mr. Spendthrift. I warn you that I shall keep house. In summer, we can dine very well—yes, very well—for three francs, at the Chartreuse or at the Montmartre Hermitage, half a dozen country dances, or valses included, with a ride upon the wooden horses:—oh, I do so love riding on horseback! That will makeup your five francs—not a farthing more, I assure you. Do you valse?"

"Very well."

"Oh, this pleases me! M. Cabrion always trod on my feet, and then for fun he would throw fulminating balls on the ground, which was the reason they would not let him go any more to the Chartreuse."

"Be assured, I will answer for my discretion wherever we go together; and as to the fulminating balls, I will have nothing to do with them. But in winter, what shall we do?" "In winter, we are less hungry, and can dine luxuriously for forty sous; then we shall have three francs left for the play, for I would not have you exceed a hundred sous— that is indeed too much to spend in pleasure; but if alone, you would spend much more at the wine-shop or the billiard-rooms, with low fellows, who smell horribly of tobacco. Is it not better to pass the day pleasantly with a young friend, very laughter-loving and discreet, who will save you some expense, by hemming your cravats, and taking care of your other little domestic affairs?"

"It is clearly a gaining for me, neighbor; only if my friends should meet me with my pretty little friend on my arm, what then?"

"Well, they will look at us and say: 'He is not at all unlucky, that rogue Rudolph!'"

"You know my name?"

"Why, to be sure I do. When I learned that the next room was let, I asked to whom!"

"Yes, when people meet us together, no doubt, as you say, they will remark: 'What a lucky fellow that Rudolph is!' and will envy me."

"So much the better."

"They will think me perfectly happy."

"Of course they will; and so much the better!"

"And if I should not be so happy as I seem?"

"What does that matter, provided they believe it; men require nothing further than mere outward show."

"But your reputation?"

Miss Dimpleton burst into an immoderate fit of laughter.

"The reputation of a grisette! Would any one believe in such a phenomenon?" answered she. "If I had father or mother, brother or sister, for them I should be careful of what people would say: but I am alone in the world, and it's my own look out. As long as I am satisfied with myself, I don't care a snap for others!"

"But still I should be very uncomfortable."

"What for?"

"In being thought happy in having you for a companion, while, on the contrary, I love you. It would be something like taking dinner with Papa Cretu—eating dry bread, whilst a cookery book was being read to me."

"Nonsense, nonsense! You will be very happy to live after my fashion. I shall prove so mild, grateful, and unwearying, that you will say: 'After all, it is as well to pass my Sunday, with her as with any one else.' If you should be disengaged in the evenings, during the week, and it would not annoy you, you might pass them in my room, and have the advantage of my fire and lamp, you could hire romances, and read them aloud to me. Better than go and lose your money at billiards. Otherwise, if you were kept late at your business, or you liked better to go to the *cafe*, you could wish me good-night on your return, if I were still up. But should I be in bed, at an early hour next day I would say good-morning, by tapping at the wall to waken you. M. Germain, my last neighbor, spent all his evenings in that manner with me, and did not complain; he read all Walter Scott's works to me, which were very interesting. Sometimes on Sunday, when the weather was bad, instead of leaving home, he bought something nice, and we made a downright banquet in my room; after which we amused ourselves with reading, and I was almost as much pleased as if I had been at the theater. This is to show you that it would not be difficult to live with me, and that I will do what I can to make things pleasant and agreeable. And then, you, who talk of illness, if ever you should be laid up, I'll be a real Sister of Charity; only ask the Morels what sort of a nurse I am! So, you see, you are not aware of all your happiness; it is as good as a lucky hit in the lottery to have me for a neighbor."

"That is true, I have always been lucky; but, speaking of M. Germain, where is he now?"

"In Paris, I believe."

"Then you never see him now?"

"Since he left this house, he has not been to see me."

"But where does he live, and what is he doing?"

"Why do you ask those questions, neighbor?"

"Because I feel jealous of him," said Rudolph, smiling, "and I would—"

"Jealous!" exclaimed Miss Dimpleton, laughing. "There is no reason for that, poor fellow!"

"Seriously, then, I have the greatest interest in knowing the address of M. Germain; you know where he lives, and I may, without boasting, add, that I am incapable of abusing the secret I ask of you; it will be for his interest also." "Seriously, neighbor, I believe you wish every good to M. Germain, but he made me promise not to give his address to any one; therefore, be assured, that as I do not give it to you, it is because I cannot. You ought not to be angry with me; if you had intrusted a secret to me, you would be pleased to find I acted as I am now doing."

"But—"

"Stop, neighbor! Once for all, do not speak to me any more on that subject; I have made a promise, I intend to keep it, and, whatever you may say to me, I shall still answer you in the same way."

In spite of her giddiness and frivolity, the girl pronounced these last words so decisively, that Rudolph felt, to his great regret, that he would never obtain from her the desired information about Germain; and he felt a repugnance to employ artifice in surprising her confidence. He paused a moment, and then resumed: "Do not let us speak of it again, neighbor. Upon my soul, you keep so well the secrets of others, that I am no longer surprised at your keeping your own."

"Secrets! I have secrets! I wish I had some; it must be so very amusing."

"Do you mean to say that you have not a little secret of the heart?"

"A secret of the heart!"

"In a word, have you never loved?" said Rudolph, looking steadfastly at Miss Dimpleton, to read the truth in her tell-tale face.

"Loved!—have I not loved M. Giraudeau, M. Cabrion, M. Germain, and you?"

"And did you love them the same as you love me—neither more nor less?"

"Oh, I cannot tell you that, exactly—less, perhaps; for I had to habituate myself to the squint of M. Giraudeau, to the red beard and disagreeable jests of M. Cabrion, and the melancholy of M. Germain, for he was so very sad, poor young man: while you, on the contrary, pleased me instantly."

"You will not feel angry, neighbor, if I speak to you as a friend?"

"Oh, no, don't be afraid—I am very good-natured; and then you are so kind, that I am sure you have not the heart to say anything that would cause me pain."

"Certainly not; but now, frankly, have you never had—a lover?"

"Lovers! Now, is that very likely? Have I time for that?"

"But what has time to do with it?"

"Everything. First of all, I should be as jealous as a tiger, and I should be constantly worrying myself with one idea or the other. Then, again, do I earn money enough to enable me to lose two or three hours a day in grief and tears?—and if he deceived me, what weeping, what sorrow! All that would throw me pretty well behindhand, you may guess."

"But all lovers are not unfaithful, and do not cause their mistresses to weep."

"That would be still worse. If he were very good and loving, could I live a moment away from him? And then, as most likely he would be obliged to stay all day, either at the desk, manufactory, or shop, I should be like a poor restless spirit during his absence. I should invent a thousand chimeras; imagine that others loved him, and that he was with them. Heaven only knows what I might be tempted to do in my despair! Certain it is, that my work would be neglected, and what would become of me then? I can manage, quiet as I am, to live by working twelve or fourteen hours a day; but, were I to lose two or three days in the week by tormenting myself, how could I make up the lost time? Impossible! I must then take a situation. Oh, no, I love my liberty too well."

"Your liberty?"

"Yes; I could enter as forewoman to the person who now employs me; I should receive four hundred francs a year, with board and lodging."

"And you will not accept that?"

"No, indeed. I should be dependent on others; instead of which, however humble my home may be, it is my own. I owe no one anything; I have courage, health and gayety: with an agreeable neighbor like yourself, what do I want more?"

"Then you have never thought of marrying?"

"I marry! I could only expect to meet with a husband as poor as myself; and look at the unhappy Morels—see where it ends! When you have but yourself to look to, you can always manage somehow."

"Then you never build castles in the air—never dream?"

"Yes, I dream of my chimney-ornaments; besides them what can I desire?"

"But suppose, now, some relation, of whom you have never heard, should die and leave you a fortune—say twelve hundred francs a year—to you, who live upon five hundred francs——"

"It might prove a good thing—perhaps an evil."

"An evil?"

"I am very happy as I am; I can enjoy the life I now lead, but I do not know how I should pass my time if I were rich. After a hard day's work, I go to bed, my lamp extinguished, and, by a few light embers that remain in my stove, I see my room neat—curtains, drawers, chairs, birds, watch, and my table spread with goods intrusted to me— and then I say to myself, `All this I owe to myself.' Truly, neighbor, these thoughts cradle me softly, and sometimes I go to sleep with pride, always with content. But here we are at the Temple! You must confess, now, that it is a very superb show!"

Although Rudolph did not participate in the deep veneration expressed by Miss Dimpleton at the sight of the Temple, he was nevertheless struck by the singular appearance of this enormous bazaar, with its numerous divisions and passages. Toward the middle of the Rue du Temple, not far from a fountain which was placed in the angle of a large square, might be seen an immense parallelogram built of timber, surmounted with a slated roof. That building is the Temple. Bounded on the left by the Rue du Petit Thouars, on the right by the Rue Percee, it finished in a vast rotunda, surrounded with a gallery, forming a sort of arcade. A long opening, intersecting this parallelogram in its length, divided it in two equal parts; these were in their turn divided and subdivided by little lateral and transverse courts, sheltered from the rain by the roof of the edifice. In this bazaar new merchandise is generally prohibited; but the smallest rag of any stuff, the smallest piece of iron, brass, or steel, there found its buyer or seller.

There you saw dealers in scraps of cloth of all colors, ages, shades, qualities, and fashion, to assimilate either with worn-out or ill-fitting garments. Some of the shops presented mountains of old shoes, some trodden down at heel, others twisted, torn, split, and in holes, presenting a mass of nameless, formless, colorless objects, among which were grimly visible some species of *fossil* soles, about an inch thick, studded with thick nails, like a prison door, and hard as a horseshoe, the actual skeletons of shoes whose other component parts had long since been devoured by Time. Yet all this moldy, rusty, dried-up accumulation of decaying rubbish found a willing purchaser, an extensive body of *merchants* trading in this particular line.

There existed retailers of trimming, fringes, cords, ravelings of silk, cotton, or thread, during the destruction of curtains, etc., rendered unfit for use. Other industrious persons occupied themselves in the business of women's bonnets; these bonnets never came to their shop but in the bags of the retailer, after the most singular changes, the most extraordinary transformations, the most unheard-of discolorations. To prevent the merchandise taking up too much room in a shop usually of the size of a large box, they folded these bonnets in two, after which they smoothed them and pressed them down excessively tight—saving the salt, it is positively the same process as is used in the preservation of herrings: thus you may imagine how much, thanks to this method of stowage, may be contained in a space of four square feet.

When the purchaser presents himself, they withdraw these bags from the pressure to which they are subject; the merchant, with a careless air, gives a slight push with his fist to the bottom of the crown, to raise it up, smooths the front upon his knee, and presents to your eyes an object at once whimsically fantastical, which recalls confusedly to your memory those fabulous head-dresses favored by box-keepers, aunts of opera dancers, or duennas of provincial theaters. Further on, at the sign of the *Gout du jour*, under the arcades of the Rotunda, elevated at the end of the wide opening which separates the Temple in two parts, were hanging, like *exotics*, numerous clothes, in color, shape, and make still more extravagant than those of the bonnets just described. Here were seen frock-coats, flashily set off by three rows of hussar-jacket buttons, and warmly ornamented with a little fur collar of fox's skin. Great-coats, formerly of bottle-green, rendered by time *invisible*, edged with a black cord, and brightened by a lining of plaid, blue and yellow, which had a most laughable effect. Coats, formerly styled the "swallow-tails," of a reddish-brown, with a handsome collar of plush, ornamented with buttons, once gilt, but now of a copper color. There were also to be seen Polish cloaks, with collars of cat-skin, frogged, and faced with old black cotton-velvet; not far from these were dressing-gowns, cunningly made of watchmen's old great-coats, from which were taken the many capes, and lined with pieces of printed cotton; the better sort were of dead blue and dark green, patched up with sundry pieces of variegated colors, and fastened round the waist with an old woolen bell-rope serving for a girdle, making a finish to these elegant *deshabilles*, so exultingly worn by Robert Macaire.

We shall briefly pass over a variety of "loud" costumes, more or less uncouth, in the midst of which might here and there be seen some authentic relics of royalty or greatness, dragged by the revolution of time from palaces and noble halls, to figure on the dingy shelves of the Rotunda.

These exhibitions of old shoes, old hats, and ridiculous old dresses, were on the grotesque side of the bazaar—the quarter for beggars, ostentatiously decked out and disguised; but it must be allowed, or rather distinctly asserted, that this vast establishment was of immense use to the humble classes, or those of limited means. There they might purchase, at an amazing reduction in price, excellent things, almost new, the actual depreciation in value being almost imaginary. On one side of the Temple, set apart for bedding, there were heaps of coverlets, sheets, mattresses, and pillows. Further on were carpets, curtains, and all sorts of kitchen utensils, besides clothes, shoes, and head-dresses for all classes and ages. These objects, generally of perfect cleanliness, offered nothing repugnant to the sight.

One could scarcely believe, before visiting the bazaar, how little time and money were requisite to fill a cart with all that is necessary to the complete fitting out of two or three families who wanted

everything.

Rudolph was struck by the manner, at once eager, obliging, and merry, with which the various dealers, standing outside their shops, solicited the custom of the passers-by; these manners, stamped with a sort of respectful familiarity, seemed to belong to another age. Scarcely had Miss Dimpleton and her companion appeared in the long passage occupied by those who sold bedding, than they were surrounded by the most seductive offers.

"Sir, come in and see my mattresses; they are better than new! I will unsew a corner, that you may examine the stuffing; you will think it lambs'-wool, it is so white and soft!"

"My pretty little lady, I have sheets of fine holland, finer than at first, for their stiffness has been taken out of them; they are as soft as a glove, strong as steel!"

"Come, my elegant new-married couple, buy of me a counterpane. See how soft, warm, and light they are—you would imagine them of eider-down; nearly new—have not been used twenty times. Look, my little lady; decide for your husband; give me your custom—I will furnish very cheaply for you—you will be satisfied—you will come again to Mother Bouvard. You will find all you want in my shop; yesterday I made beautiful purchases—you shall see them all. Come in, anyhow; it will not cost anything to look."

"By my faith, neighbor," said Rudolph to Miss Dimpleton, "this good fat woman shall have the preference. She takes us for young married people; the supposition flatters me, and I decide for her shop."

"To the good fat woman's, then," answered Miss Dimpleton; "her face pleases me too."

The grisette and her companion then entered Mother Bouvard's shop. By a magnanimity perhaps unexampled anywhere but at the Temple, the rivals of Mother Bouvard did not rebel at the preference accorded her; one of the neighbors, indeed, had the generosity to say, "So long as it is Mother Bouvard, and no other, who has this customer, it is very well: she has a family, and is the oldest inhabitant of the Temple, and an honor to it." It was, besides, impossible to have a face more prepossessing, open, and joyous than hers.

"Here, my pretty little lady," said she to Miss Dimpleton, who examined everything with the manner of one capable of judging, "this is the purchase of which I spoke; two beds, completely fitted up, and as good as new. If by chance you want a little old secretary, and not dear, there is one," and she pointed to it, "that I had in the same lot. Although I do not generally buy furniture, I could not refuse to take it, as the person of whom I had all this seemed so unhappy. Poor lady! it was the parting with that, above all, that appeared to rend her heart; an old piece of furniture very long with the family."

At these words, while the shopkeeper and Miss Dimpleton were debating the prices of different articles, Rudolph looked more attentively at the piece of furniture which Mother Bouvard had pointed out. It was one of those old secretaries of rosewood, in shape nearly triangular, shut in by a panel in front, which, thrown back, and supported by two long brass hinges, could be used as a writing-desk. In the middle of the panel, inlaid with different-colored wood, Rudolph noticed a cipher in ebony, an M. and R. interlaced, and surmounted by the coronet of a count. He imagined its last possessor to belong to an elevated class of society. His curiosity increased; he examined the secretary with renewed attention; he opened mechanically the drawers, one after the other, when, finding some difficulty in opening the last, and seeking the cause, he discovered and drew out carefully a sheet of paper, partly entangled between the drawer and the bottom of the secretary. While Miss Dimpleton was finishing her purchases with Mother Bouvard, Rudolph narrowly scrutinized the paper; from the many erasures it was easily to be seen that it was an unfinished draught of a letter. Rudolph, with difficulty, read as follows:

"Sir,—Be assured that misfortunes the most frightful could alone compel me to address you. It is not from ill-placed pride I feel these scruples, but the absolute want of any claim to the service I venture to ask of you. The sight of my daughter, reduced, like myself, to the most painful privation, urges me to the task. A few words will explain the cause of the misfortunes which overwhelm me. After the death of my husband, there remained to me a fortune of three hundred thousand francs, placed by my brother with M. Jacques Ferrand, notary. I received at Angers, where I had retired with my daughter, the interest of this sum in remittances from my brother. You remember, sir, the frightful event that put an end to his existence: ruined, as it appeared, by secret and unfortunate speculations, he destroyed himself eight months since. Before this melancholy event, I received from him a few lines, written in despair, in which he said, when I read them he should have ceased to exist; he finished by informing me that he possessed no document relative to the sum placed in my name with M. Jacques Ferrand, as that individual never gave a receipt, but was honor and goodness itself, and it would only be necessary for me to call on him for the affairs to be satisfactorily arranged. As soon as I could possibly turn my

attention to anything but the fearful death of my brother, I came to Paris, where I knew no one but yourself, sir, and that indirectly, by business you had had with my husband. I told you that the sum placed with M. Jacques Ferrand comprised the whole of my fortune, and that my brother sent me, every six months, the interest derived from that sum. More than a year having passed since the last payment, I consequently called on the notary, to demand that of which I stood greatly in want. Scarcely had I made myself known, than, without respecting my grief, he accused my brother of having borrowed from him two thousand francs, which he had entirely lost by his death; adding, that not only was his suicide a crime toward God and man, but that it was still further an act of dishonesty, of which he was the victim. This odious speech made me indignant. The upright conduct of my brother was well known; he had, it is true, without the knowledge of myself or his friends, lost his fortune in hazardous speculations, but he died with his reputation unsullied, regretted by every one, and leaving no debts, save that to his notary. I replied to M. Ferrand that I authorized him to take instantly, from the sum he had in his charge of mine, the two thousand francs my brother was indebted to him. At these words he looked at me in stupefied manner, and asked me of what money I spoke. 'The three hundred thousand francs that my brother placed in your hands eighteen months since, sir; the interest of which you have remitted, through him,' said I not comprehending his question. The notary shrugged his shoulders, smiled in pity, as though my assertion was not true, and answered me that, so far from having placed money with him, he had borrowed two thousand francs.

"It is impossible to explain to you my terror at this answer. 'But what, then, has become of this sum?' asked I. 'My daughter and myself have no other resource; if it be taken from us, there remains but the greatest misery. What will become of us?' 'I know nothing about it,' said the notary coolly: 'it is most likely that your brother, instead of placing this sum with me, as he told you, made use of it in those unfortunate speculations to which he gave himself up, without the knowledge of any one.' 'It is false, sir!' I exclaimed; 'my brother was honor's self. Far from despoiling myself and child, he sacrificed himself to us. He would never marry, that he might leave all he possessed to my child.' 'Dare you assume, then, madame, that I am capable of denying a trust reposed in me?' asked the notary, with an indignation so apparently honorable and sincere, that I replied, 'No, sir; without doubt your reputation for probity is well known; but, notwithstanding, I cannot accuse my brother of so cruel an abuse of confidence.' 'Upon what deeds do you found this demand on me?' asked M. Ferrand. 'None, sir; eighteen months since, my brother, who took upon himself the management of my affairs, wrote to me, saying, 'I have an excellent opportunity of realizing six per cent.; send me your warrant of attorney; I will deposit three hundred thousand francs, which I have concluded about, with M. Ferrand, the notary.' I sent the power of attorney; and, a few days after, he informed me that he had effected the deposit with you, and at the end of six months he sent me the interest of that sum. 'At least you have some letters from him on the subject, madame?' 'No, sir; as they related only to business, I did not preserve them.' 'I, unhappily, madame, know nothing of all this,' replied the notary; 'if my character was not above all suspicion, all attack, I should say to you, 'The law is open to you— proceed against me; the judges will have to choose between an honorable man, who for thirty years has enjoyed the esteem of persons of consideration, and the posthumous declaration of a man who, after ruining himself in the most hazardous speculations, found refuge only in suicide.' In short, I say to you now, attack me, madame, if you dare, and the memory of your brother will be dishonored! But I should think that you will nave the good sense to be resigned to a misfortune, doubtless very great, but to which I am a stranger.' 'But, sir, I am a mother; if my fortune is lost to me, my daughter and myself have only the resource of some little furniture; that sold, there remains but misery, sir, appalling misery!' 'You have, unfortunately, been cheated; I can do nothing,' replied the notary. 'Again I tell you, madame, your brother deceived you. If you hesitate between my word and his, proceed against me; the law is open to you—I abide by its decision.' I left the office of the notary in the deepest despair. What remained for me to do in this extremity. Without any document to prove the validity of my claim, convinced of the strict honesty of my brother, confounded by the assurance of M. Ferrand, having no one from whom I could ask advice (you were then traveling), knowing that money was necessary to have the opinion of counsel, and wishing carefully to preserve the little which was left to me, I dared not undertake the commencement of a lawsuit. It was then—"

This copy of a letter ended here, for strokes not decipherable, covered some lines which followed: at last, at the bottom, in a corner of the page, Rudolph read the following memorandum: "*Write to the Duchess de Lucenay, for M. de Saint-Remy*."

Rudolph remained thoughtful after the perusal of this fragment of a letter, in which he had found two names whose connection struck him. Although the additional infamy with which M. Ferrand appeared to be accused was not proved, this man had shown himself so pitiless towards the unfortunate Morel, so infamous to Louise, his daughter, that a denial of the deposit, protected as he was from certain discovery, did not appear strange, coming from such a wretch. This mother, who claimed a fortune which had so strangely disappeared, no doubt accustomed to the comforts of life, was ruined by a blow so sudden: knowing no one at Paris, as the letter said, what could now be the existence of these two

females, deprived of everything, alone in the heart of this immense city?

The prince had, as we know, promised to Lady d'Harville *some intrigues*, which he hazarded for the purpose of occupying her mind, and a part to perform in some future work of charity, feeling certain of finding, before his again meeting the lady, some grief to assuage: he trusted that perhaps chance might throw in his path some worthy, unfortunate person, who could, agreeably to his project, interest the heart and imagination of Lady d'Harville. The wording of the letter that he held in his hands, a copy of which, without doubt, had never been sent to the person from whom assistance was implored, showed a character proud and resigned, to whom the offer of charity would be no doubt repugnant. In that case, what precautions and delicate deceptions would be necessary to hide the source of a generous succor, or to make it acceptable! And then, what address to gain introduction to this lady, so that you might judge if she really merited the interest it seemed she ought to inspire! Rudolph foresaw a crowd of emotions, new, curious, and touching, which ought singularly to amuse Lady d'Harville, as he had promised her.

"Well, *husband*," said Miss Dimpleton, gayly, "what is that scrap of paper you are reading?"

"My little *wife*," answered Rudolph, "you are very curious. I will tell you presently. Have you concluded your purchases?"

"Certainly, and your poor friends will be established like kings. There remains only to pay. Mother Bouvard is very accommodating, it must be allowed."

"My little *wife*, an idea has just struck me; while I am paying, will you go and choose clothing for Mrs. Morel and her children; I confess my ignorance on the subject of such purchases. You can tell them to bring the things here, as there need be but one journey, and the poor people will have all at the same time."

"You are always right, *husband*. Wait for me, I shall not be long; I know two shopkeepers with whom I always deal, and I shall find there all that I want." Miss Dimpleton went out, saying, "Mother Bouvard, I trust my *husband* to you; do not make love to him." And, laughing, she hastily disappeared.

"Indeed, sir," said Mother Bouvard to Rudolph, after the departure of Miss Dimpleton, "you must allow that you possess a famous little manager. She understands well how to buy. So pretty! Red and white, with beautiful large black eyes, and hair to match!"

"Is she not charming? Am I not a happy husband, Mother Bouvard?"

"As happy a husband as she is a wife, I am quite sure."

"You are not mistaken there; but tell me, how much do I owe you?"

"Your little lady would not go beyond three hundred and thirty francs for all. As there is a heaven above, I only clear fifteen francs, for I did not buy them so cheaply as I might; I had not the heart to beat them down, the people who sold them appeared so very unhappy!"

"Indeed! were they not the same persons of whom you bought the little secretary?"

"Yes, sir; and its break my heart only to think of it. There came here the day before yesterday, a lady, still young and beautiful, but so pale and thin, that it gave you pain to see her. Although she was neat and clean, her old threadbare, black worsted shawl, her black stuff gown, also much worn and frayed, her straw bonnet in the month of January, for she was in mourning, proclaimed what is termed a *shabby genteel* appearance, but I am sure she was of real quality. At length she inquired, with a blush, if I would purchase two beds complete, and an old secretary. I replied, that as I sold I must buy, and that, if they suited me, I would have them. She then begged me to go with her, not far from here, on the other side of the street, to a house on the quay of the Canal Saint Martin. I left my shop in charge of my niece, and followed the lady. We came to a shabby-looking house, quite at the bottom of a court; we went up to the fourth story, the lady knocked, and a young girl of fourteen opened the door; she was also in mourning, and equally pale and thin, but in spite of this, beautiful as the day—so beautiful, that I was enraptured!"

"Well, and this young girl?"

"Was the daughter of the lady in mourning. Although so cold she had on nothing more than a black cotton dress with white spots, and a little black shawl quite worn out."

"And their lodging was wretched?"

"Imagine, sir, two little rooms, very clean, but almost empty, and so cold that I was nearly frozen; a

fireplace where you could not perceive the least appearance of ashes; there had not been a fire for a long time. The whole of the furniture consisted of two beds, two chairs, a chest of drawers, an old trunk, and the little secretary. Upon the trunk was a bundle in a handkerchief. This bundle was all that remained to the mother and daughter, when once their furniture was sold. The landlord selected the two bedsteads, the chairs, trunk, and table, for what they were indebted to him, as the porter said who came up with us. When the lady begged me to put a fair value on the mattress, sheets, curtains, and blankets, on the faith of an honest woman, sir, although I live by buying cheap and selling dear, when I saw the poor young lady, her eyes filled with tears, and her mother, in spite of her calmness, appearing to weep inwardly, I estimated them within fifteen francs of their value to sell again, I assure you; I even consented, to oblige them, to take the little secretary, although it is not in my line of business."

"I will buy it of you, Mother Bouvard."

"Will you though? So much the better, sir; it would have remained on my hands a long time, and I only took it to serve the lady. I then told her what I would give for the things, and I expected she would ask me more than I had offered; but no, she said not a word about it. This still more satisfied me that she was no common person; *genteel poverty*, sir, be assured. I said, 'So much,' she answered, 'Thank you! now let us return to your shop, and you can then pay me, as I shall not come back again to this house.' Then, speaking to her daughter, who was sitting on the trunk, crying, she said, 'Claire, take the bundle.' I remember the name well. The young lady rose up, but in passing by the side of the little secretary, she threw herself on her knees before it, and began to sob. 'Courage, my child, they are looking at us,' said her mother, in a low tone, but yet I heard her. You can understand, sir, they are poor but proud people. When the lady gave me the key of the little secretary, I noticed a tear in her eyes, her heart seemed breaking at parting with the old piece of furniture; but she still tried to preserve her calmness and dignity before strangers. She then gave the porter to understand that I was to take away all the landlord did not keep, and afterward we returned here. The young lady gave her arm to her mother, and carried in her hand the little bundle which contained their all. I paid them three hundred and fifteen francs, and have not since seen them."

"But their name?"

"I do not know: the lady sold me the things in the presence of the porter; I had not the necessity to ask her name, as what she sold belonged to herself."

"But their new abode?"

"That, also, I do not know."

"Perhaps they can inform me at their old lodging?"

"No, sir; for when I returned to fetch away the things, the porter said, speaking of the mother and daughter; 'They are very quiet people, but very unhappy; some misfortunes have happened to them. They always appeared calm; but I am sure they were in a state of despair.' 'And where are they going to lodge at this late hour?' I asked him. 'In truth, I know nothing,' answered he; 'it is, however, quite certain they will not return here.'"

The hopes that Rudolph had entertained for a moment vanished. How could he discover these two unhappy females, having only as a clew the name of the young girl, Claire, and the fragment of a letter, of which we have spoken, at the bottom of which were the words: "*Write to Madame de Lucenay, for M. de Saint-Remy*."

The only chance, and that was a very faint one, of tracing these unfortunates, rested in Madame de Lucenay, who, fortunately, was on intimate terms with Lady d'Harville.

"Here, madame, pay yourself," said Rudolph to the shopkeeper, giving her a note for five hundred francs.

"I will give you the difference, sir."

"Where can I engage a cart to carry the things?"

"If it be not very far, a large truck will be sufficient; Father Jerome has one, quite close by; I always employ him. What is your address?"

"No. 17, Rue du Temple."

"Rue du Temple, No. 17. Yes, yes, I know the house."

"You have been there?"

"Many times. First, I bought some clothes of a pawnbroker who lived there. It is true, she did not carry on a large business, but that was no affair of mine: she sold, I bought, and we were quits. Another time, not six months ago, I went again for the furniture of a young man who lived on the fourth story, and who was going to remove."

"M. Francois Germain, perhaps," said Rudolph.

"The same. Do you know him?"

"Very well. Unhappily, he has not left in the Rue du Temple his present address, and I do not know where to find him."

"If that be all, I can remove the difficulty."

"You know where he lives?"

"Not exactly; but I know where you will be sure to meet with him."

"Where is that?"—

"At a notary's, where he is employed."

"At a notary's?"

"Yes; who lives in the Rue du Sentier."

"M. Jacques Ferrand!" exclaimed Rudolph.

"The same; a worthy man; he has a crucifix and a bit of the true cross in his office, which reminds one of a sacristy."

"But how do you know that M. Germain is with the notary?"

"Why, in this way. The young man came to me, and proposed that I should buy all his furniture; although not in my way of business, I agreed, and afterward retailed them here; for, as it suited the young man, I did not like to refuse. Well, then, I bought him clean out, and gave him a good price; he was, doubtless, satisfied with me, for at the end of a fortnight he came to buy a bedstead and bedding. He brought with him a truck and a porter; they packed up all; but just as he was about to pay he found he had forgotten his purse. He appeared such an honest young man, that I said to him: 'Take the things with you, all the same; I will call for the money.''Very well,' he said; 'but I am seldom at home; call, therefore, tomorrow, in the Rue du Sentier, at M. Jacques Ferrand's the notary, where I am employed, and I will then pay you.' I went the next day, and he paid me. Only, what I thought so odd, was, his selling me all his goods, and buying others in a fortnight after."

Rudolph thought he could account for the cause of this singularity. Germain, wishing that the wretches who pursued him should lose all traces, of him, had sold his goods, thinking that if he removed them it might give a clew to his new abode, and had preferred, to avoid this evil, purchasing others, and taking them himself to his lodgings. Rudolph started with joy when he thought of the happiness for Mrs. George, who was at last about to see this son, so long and vainly sought.

Miss Dimpleton now returned with joyful eyes and smiling lips.

"Well, did I not tell you?" she exclaimed. "I was not wrong: we have spent, in all, six hundred and forty francs, and the Morels will be housed like princes. See! the shopkeepers are coming: are they not loaded? Nothing is wanted for the use of the family—even to a gridiron, two beautiful saucepans newly tinned, and a coffee-pot. I said to myself, since everything is to be had, it shall be so; and, besides all that, I have spent three hours. But make haste and pay, neighbor, and let us go. It is almost noon, and my needle must go at a pretty rate to overtake this morning!"

Rudolph paid, and left the Temple with Miss Dimpleton. As the grisette and her companion entered the passage of the house, they were almost thrown down by Mrs. Pipelet, who was running out, troubled, frightened, aghast.

"Gracious heaven!" said Miss Dimpleton, "what is the matter with you,
Mrs. Pipelet? Where are you running to in that manner?"

"Is that you, Miss Dimpleton?" exclaimed Anastasia.

"Providence has sent you. Help me! save the life of Alfred!"

"What do you say?"

"That poor old darling has fainted! Have pity upon us! run and fetch two sous worth of absinthe—very strong; that is the remedy when he is indisposed in the pylorus. Be kind; do not refuse me, and I can return to Alfred. I am quite confused!"

Miss Dimpleton left Rudolph's arm, and ran off to the dram-shop.

"But what has happened, Mrs. Pipelet?" asked Rudolph, following the portress, who returned to the lodge.

"How should I know, my worthy sir? I left home to go to the mayor's, the church, and the cook-shop, to prevent Alfred from tiring himself. I returned; what did I see? the dear old man with his legs and arms all in the air! Look, M. Rudolph!" said Anastasia, opening the door of the room, "is not that a sight to break one's heart?"

Lamentable spectacle! With his enormous hat still on his head, even further on than usual, for the questionable *castor,* pushed down, no doubt, by violence, if we may judge by a transverse gap, covered Pipelet's eyes, who was on his back on the floor, at the foot of his bed.

The fainting was over, and Alfred was beginning to make some slight movements with his hands, as though he wished to repulse some one or some thing; and then he tried to remove his troublesome visor.

"He kicks! that is a good sign; he recovers!" cried the portress—and stooping down, she bawled in his ears: "What is the matter with my Alfred? It is his 'Stasie who is here. How are you now? They are coming to bring you some absinthe; that will put you to rights." Then, assuming a caressing tone of voice, she added: "Have they abused you, killed you, my dear old darling—eh?"

Alfred sighed deeply, and with a groan uttered a fatal word: "*Cabrion!*" His trembling hands seemed as though desirous of repulsing a frightful vision.

"Cabrion! that devil of a painter again!" exclaimed Mrs. Pipelet. "Alfred all night dreamed so much about him, that he kicked me dreadfully. That monster is his nightmare! Not only has he poisoned his days, but his nights also; he persecutes him even in his sleep— yes, sir, as though Alfred was a malefactor, and this Cabrion, whom may the devil confound! is his remorseless enemy."

Rudolph smiled, as he foresaw some new trick on the part of Miss
Dimpleton's former neighbor.

"Alfred, answer me; do not remain dumb—you alarm me," said Mrs. Pipelet; "let us get you up. Why will you think on that beggarly fellow? You know that, when you think of him, it has the same effect on you as when you eat cabbage—it fills up your gizzard, and stifles you!"

"Cabrion!" repeated Pipelet, lifting with difficulty his hat from his eyes, which he rolled about with a frightened air.

Miss Dimpleton entered, carrying a small bottle of absinthe.

"Thank you, mademoiselle; you are very kind," said the old woman. Then she added: "Here, darling, pop it down; it will bring you to yourself."

And Anastasia, presenting the vial quickly to Pipelet's lips, insisted on his swallowing the contents. Alfred in vain struggled courageously: his wife, profiting by the weakness of her victim, held his head with a firm grasp in one hand, and with the other introduced the neck of the vial between his teeth, and forced him to drink the absinthe; after which she cried triumphantly: "Well done! you are again on your pins, my cherished one!"

Alfred, having wiped his mouth with the back of his hand, opened his eyes, stood up, and asked in a trembling voice: "Have you seen him?"

"Who?"

"Is he gone?"

"Alfred, whom do you mean?"

"Cabrion!"

"Has he dared—" cried the portress.

Pipelet, as dumb as the statue of the Commander in *Don Giovanni,* bowed his head twice in the affirmative.

"M. Cabrion, has he been here?" asked Miss Dimpleton, restraining with difficulty an inclination to laugh.

"That monster! has he been let loose upon Alfred?" cried Mrs. Pipelet. "Oh, if I had been here with my broom, he should have eaten it up, to the very handle! But speak, Alfred; relate to us this horrible affair."

Pipelet made a sign with his hand that he was about to speak, and they listened to the man of the immense hat in religious silence. Pie expressed himself in these terms, with a voice deeply agitated: "My wife had just left me to complete the orders given by you, sir (bowing to Rudolph), to call at the mayor's and the cook-shop."

"The dear old man had the nightmare all night, and I wished him to rest," said Anastasia.

"This nightmare was sent me as a warning from above," said the porter, solemnly. "I had dreamed of Cabrion—I was to suffer by Cabrion. Here was I sitting quietly before the table, thinking of an alteration that I wished to make in this boot confided to me, when I heard a noise, a rustling at the window of my lodge—was it a presentiment—a warning from above? My heart beat; I raised my head, and through the window I saw—saw—"

"Cabrion!" cried Anastasia, clasping her hands.

"Cabrion!" replied Pipelet, in a hollow tone. "His hideous face was there, close to the window, looking at me with his cat's eyes—what do I say? tiger's eyes! just as in my dream. I tried to speak, but my tongue stuck to the roof of my mouth: I would have risen—I was glued to my seat; the boot fell from my hands, and, as in every critical and important event of my life, I remained completely motionless. Then the key turned in the lock; the door opened, and Cabrion entered!"

"He entered? what effrontery!" said Mrs. Pipelet, as much astonished as her husband at such audacity.

"Cabrion advanced slowly, his looks fixed on me, as a serpent glares on the bird, like a phantom—on, on, chilling, lowering!"

"I'm goose-flesh all over!" groaned Anastasia.

"He came quite close to me; I could no longer endure his revolting aspect; it was too much, I could hold out no longer. I shut my eyes, and I then felt that he dared to put his hands on my hat, took it slowly off my head, and left it naked! I was seized with giddiness—my breathing was suspended—a ringing came in my ears—I was more than ever glued to my seat—I shut my eyes more firmly. Then Cabrion stooped, took my bald head between his hands, cold as death, and upon my forehead, bathed in sweat, imprinted a lascivious kiss!"

Anastasia lifted her arms toward heaven.

"My most inveterate enemy kissed my forehead! A monstrosity so unparalleled overcame and paralyzed me. Cabrion profited by my stupor to replace my hat on my head: then, with a blow on the crown, bonneted me as you saw. The last outrage quite overpowered me—the measure was full; everything about me turned round, and I fainted at the moment when I saw him, from under the rim of my hat, leave the room as quietly and slowly as he had entered."

Then, as though this recital had exhausted his strength, Pipelet fell back on his chair, raising his hands to heaven in the attitude of mute imprecation. Miss Dimpleton left the room suddenly; her desire to laugh almost stifled her, and she could no longer restrain herself. Rudolph himself had with difficulty preserved his gravity.

Suddenly a confused murmur, such as announces the assembling of a multitude, was heard in the street; a tumult arose at the end of the passage, and then musket-butts sounded on the door-step.

"Good heaven, M. Rudolph!" cried Miss Dimpleton, running back, pale and trembling; "here are a commissary of police and the guard!"

"Divine justice watches over me!" said Pipelet, in a burst of religious gratitude; "they come to arrest Cabrion! Unhappily, it is too late!"

A commissary of police, known by a scarf worn under his black coat, entered the lodge. His

countenance was grave, dignified, and severe.

"M. le Commissaire, you are too late; the malefactor has fled!" said Pipelet, sadly; "but I can give you his description. Villainous smile, impudent manners—"

"Of whom do you speak?" asked the officer.

"Of Cabrion, M. le Commissaire, and if you make all haste, there may be yet time to get hold of him," answered Pipelet.

"I do not know who this Cabrion is," said the officer, impatiently.
"Does Jerome Morel, working lapidary, live in this house?"

"Yes, sir," said Mrs. Pipelet, standing at the salute.

"Conduct me to his apartment."'

"Morel, the lapidary!" resumed the portress, quite surprised; "he is as gentle as a lamb, and incapable of—"

"Does Jerome Morel live here or not?"

"He does live here, sir, with his family, in the attic."

"Show me, then, to this garret."

Then, addressing a man who accompanied him, the magistrate said: "Let the two municipal guards wait below, and not leave the alley. Send Justin for a coach." The man left to execute these orders.

"Now," said the magistrate, addressing Pipelet, "conduct me to Morel."

"If it be all the same to you, sir, I will go instead of Alfred, who is indisposed from the persecution of Cabrion; who, just as cabbage does, troubles his gizzard."

"You, or your husband, it matters little which—go on." Preceded by Mrs. Pipelet, he began to ascend the stairs; but he soon stopped, perceiving that he was followed by Rudolph and Miss Dimpleton.

"Who are you, and what do you want?" demanded he.

"They are the two fourth-floors," said Mrs. Pipelet.

"Pardon me, sir, I did not know that you belonged to the house," said he, to Rudolph; who, auguring well from the politeness of the magistrate, said, "You will find a family in great distress, sir. I do not know what new misfortune menaces the unhappy artisan, but he has been cruelly tried last night; one of his children, worn out by illness, is dead beneath his eyes—dead from cold and misery."

"Is it possible?"

"It is the truth," said Mrs. Pipelet. "If it had not been for the gentleman who now speaks to you, and who is a king of lodgers, for he has saved, by his goodness, poor Morel from prison, the whole family of the lapidary must have died from hunger."

The commissary looked at Rudolph with as much interest as surprise.

"Nothing is more simple, sir," said the latter. "A person who is very charitable, knowing that Morel, to whose worth I pledge my honor, was in a position as deplorable as it was unmerited, instructed me to pay a bill of exchange, for which the bailiffs were about to drag to prison this poor man, the sole support of a large family."

Struck in his turn by the noble appearance of Rudolph, and the dignity of his manner, the magistrate replied, "I do not doubt the probity of Morel; I only regret being compelled to fulfill a painful duty before you, sir, who have shown so lively an interest in this family."

"What can you mean, sir?"

"After the services you have rendered the Morels, and from your language, I know that you are a worthy man. Having, besides, no reason to conceal the object of the mandate I am about to execute, I will acknowledge that I am about to arrest Louise Morel, the lapidary's daughter."

The rouleau of gold that she had offered to the bailiffs came to the mind of Rudolph.

"Of what is she accused?"

"She is accused of infanticide."

"She, she! Oh, her poor father!"

"From what you have told me, sir, I conceive that, under the circumstances in which the artisan is placed, this new blow will be terrible for him. Unfortunately I must obey my orders."

"But it is only a simple accusation!" cried Rudolph. "The proofs are wanting, without doubt?"

"I cannot explain myself further on this subject. The authorities have been informed of this crime, or rather, the presumption, by the declarations of a man in every way respectable—the master of Louise Morel."

"Jacques Ferrand, the notary," said Rudolph indignantly.

"Yes, sir. But why this vivacity?"

"M. Jacques Ferrand, the notary, is a scoundrel, sir!"

"I see with pain that you do not know of whom you speak. M. Jacques Ferrand is the most honorable man in the world; of most exemplary piety, and known probity."

"I repeat to you, sir, that the notary is a scoundrel. He wished to imprison Morel, because his daughter repulsed his infamous propositions. If Louise is only accused on the testimony of such a man —acknowledge, sir, that it merits but little belief."

"It does not belong to me, sir, and it does not become me, to discuss the value of the testimony of M. Ferrand," said the officer coldly. "Justice has taken cognizance of the affair; the tribunals will decide. As to me, I have orders to arrest Louise Morel, and I shall do it."

"You are right, sir. I regret that a movement of indignation, perhaps legitimate, has made me forget that this is neither the time nor place for such a discussion. One word alone: the body of the child he has lost is in the garret. I have offered my room to this family, to spare them the sad sight of the corpse; hence it is, probably, in my chamber you will find the artisan and his daughter. I conjure you, sir, in the name of humanity, do not arrest Louise suddenly in the midst of these misfortunes. Morel has gone through so many shocks this night, that his reason will give way: his wife is also dangerously sick —such a blow will kill her. If you will permit me, I'll ask you a favor. This is what I propose. The young girl who follows us with the door-keeper occupies a room adjoining mine; I do not doubt but that she will place it at your disposal. You can at first send for Louise; then, if it must be, for Morel, that his daughter may bid him farewell. You will at least spare a poor, sick, and infirm mother a heart-rending scene.

"If this can be arranged so, sir, willingly."

The conversation had taken place in an undertone, while Rigolette and
Mrs. Pipelet held themselves discreetly at some distance off.

Rudolph descended, and said to the former: "My poor neighbor, I must ask another favor; you must let me have your room at my disposal for an hour."

"As long as you please, M. Rudolph. You have my key. But, what is the matter?"

"I will tell you directly. This is not all: you must be kind enough to return to the Temple to tell them to delay sending home our purchases for an hour." "Willingly, M. Rudolph; but is there a new misfortune happened to the Morels?"

"Alas! yes; you will know it only too soon."

"Come, neighbor, I fly to the Temple. I, thanks to you, thought them out of trouble," said the grisette, descending rapidly the stairs.

Rudolph wished to spare Rigolette the sad spectacle of the arrest of Louise. "Officer," said Mrs. Pipelet, "since my prince of lodgers accompanies you, I can go and find Alfred. He alarms me: he has hardly recovered from his attack of—Cabrion."

"Go—go!" said the magistrate; who remained alone with Rudolph. Both arrived on the landing place of the fourth, opposite the door of the room where the artisan and his family were temporarily placed.

Suddenly this door was opened. Louise, pale and weeping, came out quickly. "Adieu, adieu! father," cried she; "I will return—I must go now."

"Louise, my child, listen to me, then," answered Morel, following his daughter, and trying to detain her.

At the sight of Rudolph and the magistrate they remained immovable.

"Ah, sir! you, our savior," said the artisan, recognizing Rudolph; "aid me to prevent Louise from going. I do not know what is the matter with her, she makes me afraid; she wishes to go away. Is it not so, sir, that she must not return any more to her master? Did you not say, 'Louise shall quit you no more—this shall be your recompense'? Oh! at this delightful promise, I avow it, for a moment I have forgotten the death of my poor little Adele; but to be separated from you, Louise, never, never!"

Rudolph felt himself overcome; be had not strength to utter a word.

The officer said severely to Louise, "Are you Louise Morel?"

"Yes, sir!" answered the young girl, amazed. Rudolph had opened the chamber of Rigolette.

"You are Jerome Morel, her father?" added the magistrate addressing the artisan.

"Yes, sir! but—"

"Enter there with your daughter." And the magistrate pointed to the chamber of Rigolette, where Rudolph already was. Reassured by his presence, the artisan and Louise, astonished and troubled, obeyed; the officer shut the door, and said to Morel, with emotion, "I know your honesty and misfortunes; it is, then, with regret I inform you that, in the name of the law, I come to arrest your daughter."

"All is discovered—I am lost!" cried Louise, throwing herself in the arms of her father.

"What do you say? what do you say?" said Morel, stupefied. "Are you mad? why lost? arrest you! why arrest you? who will arrest you?"

"I—in the name of the law!" and the officer showed his scarf.

"Oh, unfortunate! unfortunate that I am!" cried Louise, falling on her knees.

"How, in the name of the law?" said the artisan, whose mind began to wander; "why arrest my daughter in the name of the law? I answer for Louise, I—she is my daughter, my worthy daughter—is it not true, Louise? How arrest you, when our guardian angel restores you to us, to console us for the death of my little Adele? Come now! it cannot be! And besides, sir, speaking with respect, only criminals are arrested, do you understand—and Louise, my daughter, is not a criminal. Very sure, do you see, my child, this gentleman is mistaken. My name is Morel; there are more Morels than me. You are Louise—but there are more of the same name. That's it, you see, sir; there is a mistake!"

"Unfortunately, there is no mistake! Louise Morel, say farewell to your father."

"You carry away my daughter, will you?" cried the workman, furious from grief, and advancing toward the magistrate with a threatening air.

Rudolph seized him by the arm, and said, "Calm yourself, and hope; your daughter shall be returned to you—her innocence shall be proved; she is doubtless not culpable."

"Of what? she can be culpable of nothing. I would place my hand in the fire that"—then recollecting the gold that Louise had brought to pay the note, Morel cried, "But that money, that money, Louise?" and he cast on his daughter a terrible look.

Louise understood it. "I steal!" cried she, and the cheeks colored with generous indignation. Her tone of voice, her gesture, satisfied her father.

"I knew it!" he cried. "Do you see, sir—she denies it—and never in her life has she lied, I swear to you. Ask every one who knows her, and they will say the same. She lie? she is too proud for that. Besides, the bill was paid by our benefactor. She don't want gold; she was going to return it to the person who lent it, wasn't you, Louise?"

"Your daughter is not accused of theft," said the magistrate.

"But of what is she accused, then? I, her father, swear that, whatever she is accused of, she is

innocent; and all my life I have never lied."

"What good will it do to know what she is accused of?" said Rudolph to him; "her innocence shall be proven—the person who interests herself so much in you will protect your daughter. Come, come. This time, again, Providence will not fail you. Embrace your daughter—you will soon see her again."

"M. le Commissaire," cried Morel, without listening to Rudolph, "a daughter is not taken away from a father without at least telling him of what she is accused! I wish to know all! Louise, will you speak?"

"Your daughter is accused—of infanticide," said the magistrate.

"I—I—do not comprehend—I—you—"

"Your daughter is accused of having killed her child," said the officer, much overcome at this scene.

"But it is not yet proved that she has committed this crime."

"Oh, no, it is not so, sir, it is not so," cried Louise, with force, and raising herself up: "I swear to you it was dead. It breathed no more; it was frozen; I lost all consciousness; that is my crime. But kill my child, oh, never!"

"Your child, wretch!" cried Morel, raising his hands to Louise, as if he wished to annihilate her with this gesture and terrible imprecation.

"Pardon, father, pardon!" cried she.

After a moment of frightful silence, Morel went on with a calmness still more frightful.

"Sir, take away this creature; she is not my child."

He wished to go out; Louise threw herself at his knees, which she embraced with both arms, and, with face upward, frantic and supplicating, she cried, "Father, listen to me, only listen to me."

"Officer, take her away, I abandon her to you," said the artisan, making every effort to disengage himself from the embraces of Louise.

"Listen to her," said Rudolph, stopping him; "do not be now without pity."

"She, she!" repeated Morel, burying his face in his hands, "she dishonored! oh! infamous, infamous!"

"Is she dishonored to save you?" whispered Rudolph.

These words made a startling impression on Morel; he looked at his weeping child, still kneeling at his feet, then, interrogating her with a look impossible to describe, he cried in a hollow voice, his teeth grinding with rage, "The notary!"

An answer came to the lips of Louise. She was about to speak, but, on reflection, she stopped, bent her head, and remained silent.

"But no—he wished to imprison me this morning," continued Morel; "it is not he? oh, so much the better! so much the better. She has no excuse for her fault; I can curse her without remorse."

"No, no! do not curse me, my father; to you I will tell all; to you alone; and you will see—you will see if I do not deserve your pardon."

"Listen to her for the sake of pity," said Rudolph.

"What can she tell me? her infamy? it will soon be public; I will wait."

"Sir!" cried Louise to the magistrate, "in mercy let me say a few words to my father before leaving him, perhaps forever. And before you also, our savior, I will speak, but only before you and my father."

"I consent," said the magistrate.

"Will you, then, be insensible? will you refuse this last consolation to your child?" asked Rudolph. "If you think you owe me some return for the favors I have directed toward you, grant the prayer of your daughter."

After a moment of mournful silence, Morel answered, "Let us go."

"But where shall we go?" asked Rudolph; "your family is in the next room."

"Where shall we go?" cried the artisan, with bitter irony, "where shall we go? up there—up there, in the garret, alongside of the body of my child. The place is well chosen for this confession—is it not? Come—we will see if Louise will dare to lie in the sight of her sister. Come!" Morel went out precipitately, with a wild stare, without looking at Louise."

"Sir," whispered the officer to Rudolph, "do not prolong this interview. You said truly, his reason will not sustain it; just now his look was that of a madman."

"Alas! sir, I fear, like you, a terrible and new misfortune: I will shorten as much as possible the touching adieus." And Rudolph rejoined the artisan and his daughter.

CHAPTER II.

CONFESSION.

Dark and gloomy spectacle.

In the garret reposed, on the couch of the idiot, the corpse of the little child. An old piece of sheet covered it. Rudolph standing with his back to the wall, was painfully affected. Morel, seated on his work-bench, his head down, hands hanging; his looks, fixed, wild, were constantly bent on the bed where reposed the remains of the little Adele.

At this sight, the anger, the indignation of the artisan became weaker, and changed into a sadness of inexpressible bitterness; his energy abandoned him—he sunk under this new blow. Louise, of a mortal paleness, felt her strength fail her. The revelation that she was about to make frightened her. Yet she took tremblingly the hand of her father—that poor, thin hand, deformed by excess of labor.

He did not withdraw it. Then his daughter, bursting into tears, covered it with kisses, and soon felt it press lightly against her lips.

The anger of Morel had ceased; his tears, for a long time retained, flowed at last. "My father, if you knew—if you knew how much I am to be pitied."

"Oh! stop; you see, this will be the grief of all my life, Louise—of all my life," answered the artisan, weeping. "You in prison—in the dock—you, so proud-when you had the right to be so. No," continued he, in a new access of desperate grief, "no, I should prefer to seeing you under the winding-sheet, alongside your poor little sister."

"And I, also, wish it were so," answered Louise.

"Hush, unfortunate child, you give me pain. I was wrong to say that; I went too far. Come, speak, but tell the truth. However frightful it may be, tell me all. If I hear it from you, it will appear less cruel to me. Speak; alas! our moments are counted; you are waited for. Oh! the sad, sad parting."

"My father, I will tell you all," said Louise, resolutely; "but promise me, and you, our benefactor, promise also, not to repeat this to any one. If he knew that I had spoken, do you see—oh! you would be lost—lost like me; for you do not know the power and ferocity of this man."

"Of what man?"

"My master."

"The notary?"

"Yes," said Louise, in a low tone, and looking around her, as if she were afraid of being overheard.

"Compose yourself," answered Rudolph. "This man is cruel and powerful, but no matter; we will face him. Besides, if I reveal what you are about to tell us, it will be only in your interest or in that of your father."

"And, Louise, if I speak, it will be to try to save you. But what has this wicked man done?"

"This is not all," said Louise, after a moment's reflection; "this sad tale concerns some one who has rendered me a great service—who has been for my father and family full of kindness—this person was

employed at M. Ferrand's when I went; I have sworn not to mention the name."

"If you mean Francois Germain, be easy; his secret will be kept by your father and myself," said Rudolph.

Louise looked at Rudolph with surprise.

"You know him?" said she.

"The good and excellent young man who lived here for three months, and was employed at the notary's when you went there?" said Morel. "The first time you saw him here you appeared not to know him."

"That was agreed upon between us. He had grave reasons to conceal that he worked for M. Ferrand. It was I who told him of the chamber on the fourth story, knowing he would be a good neighbor for you."

"But," said Rudolph, "who placed your daughter with the notary?"

"When my wife was taken sick, I had said to Madame Burette, the pawnbroker, who lives in this house, that Louise wished to go to service to aid us. Madame Burette knew the housekeeper of the notary; she gave me a letter to her, in which she strongly recommended Louise. Cursed—cursed be that letter; it has caused all our misfortunes. So, sir, this is the way my daughter went there."

"Although I am informed of some of the facts which have caused the hatred of M. Ferrand toward your father," said Rudolph to Louise, "I beg you will relate to me in a few words what passed between you and the notary since you entered his service. This may serve to defend you."

"During the first months of my stay at M. Ferrand's I had no reason to complain of him. I had much work to do; the housekeeper was often very rough toward me; the house was gloomy; but I endured all with patience; servitude is servitude, otherwise I should have had other disagreements. M. Ferrand had a stern look. He went to mass; he often received priests. I did not mistrust him. At first he hardly looked at me. He spoke very cross to me; above all, in the presence of strangers.

"Except the porter who lodged on the street, in the building where the office is, I was the only domestic with Mrs. Seraphin, the housekeeper. The building we occupied was an old isolated ruin, between the court and garden. My chamber was quite up to the top. Very often I was afraid to remain alone all the evening, either in the kitchen, which was underground, or in my chamber. In the night, I sometimes thought I heard extraordinary noises in the room under mine, which no one occupied, and where M. Germain alone often came to work during the day. Two of the windows of this story were walled up, and one of the doors, very thick, was strengthened with bars of iron. The housekeeper told me afterward that M. Ferrand kept his strong box there.

"One night I had sat up very late to finish some mending, which was very urgent; I was about to go to bed, when I heard some one walking very softly in the corridor at the end of which was my chamber: they stopped at my door; at first I thought it was the housekeeper, but as she did not come in, it made me afraid; I dared not stir; I listened, no one stirred; I was, however, sure there was some one behind the door; I asked twice who was there—no one answered. More and more alarmed, I pushed my chest of drawers against the door, which had neither lock nor bolt. I still listened—nothing stirred; at the end of half-an-hour, which appeared very long, I threw myself on my bed; the night passed tranquilly. The next morning I asked the housekeeper for permission to put a bolt on my door, as there was no lock, relating to her my fears of the last night; she answered that I had dreamed, that I must speak to M. Ferrand about it; at my demand he shrugged his shoulders, and told me I was a fool. I did not dare to say anything more.

"Some time after this happened the affair of the diamond. My father, almost desperate, knew not what to do. I related his trouble to Mrs. Seraphin; she answered, 'M. Ferrand is so charitable that perhaps he will do something for your father.' The same evening I waited on table; M. Ferrand said to me, bluntly, 'Your father has need of thirteen hundred francs; go this night and tell him to come to my office to-morrow; he shall have the money. He is an honest man, and deserves that one should interest himself for him.' At this act of kindness I burst into tears; I did not know how to thank my master. He said to me, in his ordinary rough manner, 'It is well, it is well; what I have done is very simple." In the evening I came to tell the good news to my father, and the next day——"

"I had the money, against a bill at three months' date, accepted in blank by me," said Morel. "I did like Louise; I wept with gratitude: I called him my benefactor. Oh! he must needs have been wicked indeed to destroy the gratitude and veneration I vowed to him."

"This precaution to make you sign a bill in blank, at such a date that you could not pay it, did not awaken your suspicions?" asked Rudolph.

[Illustration: THE ARRIVAL OF THE SOLDIERS]

"No, sir, I thought that the notary only took it for security; besides, he told me I need not think of paying it under two years; every three months it should be renewed for the sake of being regular; yet, at the end of the first term, it was presented, and not being paid, he obtained a judgment against me under another name; but he told me not to be troubled, that it was an error of his clerk."

"He wished thus to have you in his power," said Rudolph.

"Alas! yes, sir; for it was from the date of his judgment he began to—but continue, Louise, continue: I do not know where I am. My head turns. I shall become mad; it is too much—too much!"

Rudolph soothed him, and Louise continued: "I redoubled my zeal to show my gratitude. The housekeeper then held me in great aversion; she often placed me in the wrong by not repeating the orders that M. Ferrand gave her for me; I suffered from this, and would have preferred another place, but the obligation of my father to my master prevented my leaving. It was now three months since he had lent the money; he continued to scold me before Mrs. Seraphin, yet he looked at me sometimes behind her back in such a manner as to embarrass me, and he smiled in seeing me blush."

"You comprehend, sir, he was then about to obtain a judgment against me."

"One day," continued Louise, "the housekeeper went out after dinner, as was her custom; the clerks had left the office; they lodged elsewhere. M. Ferrand sent the porter on an errand; I remained in the house alone with my master; I was working in the ante-chamber; he rang for me. I entered his room; he was standing before the fireplace; I drew near; he turned quickly, and took me by the arm. I was alarmed. I ran into the ante-chamber, and shut the door, holding it with all my strength; the key was on his side."

"You understand, sir. You hear," said Morel to Rudolph, "the conduct of this worthy benefactor."

"At the end of a few moments the door yielded to his efforts," continued Louise. "I blew out the light—he called me. I made no answer. He then said, in a voice trembling with rage, 'If you resist, I will send your father to prison for the money he owes and cannot pay.' I begged him to have pity on me; promised to do everything I could to serve him, and show my gratitude, but I declared nothing could induce me to degrade myself."

"Yes; this is the language of Louise," said Morel, "of my Louise, when she had the right to be proud. But now? Continue—continue."

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"The next morning after this scene, in spite of the threats of my master, I came here and told my father all. He wished to make me leave the house at once—but there was the prison. The little that I earned was indispensable to the family, since the illness of my mother; and the bad character which M. Ferrand threatened to give me would prevent my seeking or obtaining another place for a long time, perhaps."

"Yes," said Morel, with great bitterness, "we had the cowardice, the selfishness, to let our child return there. Oh! poverty, poverty! how many crimes it causes to be committed!"

"Alas! father! did you not try all means to obtain the money? That being impossible, we had to submit."

"Go on, go on, continue. Your parents have been your executioners; we are guiltier than you are," said the artisan, concealing his face in his hands.

"When I saw my master again," said Louise, "he acted toward me as usual, cross and harshly; he said not a word of the past; the housekeeper continued to torment me; she hardly gave me enough to eat, locked up the bread; sometimes, out of wickedness, she would defile the remains of the dinner before my eyes, for she always ate with Ferrand. At night I hardly slept. I feared at each moment to see the notary enter my room! He had taken away the drawers with which I had barricaded my door; there only remained a chair, a little table, and my trunk; I always retired to bed dressed. For some time he left me tranquil; he did not even look at me. I began to be at ease, thinking that he thought no more of me. One Sunday he allowed me to go out; I came to announce this good news to my parents. We were all very happy! It is up to this moment you have known all. What remains to tell," and the voice of Louise trembled, "is frightful! I have always concealed it from you."

"Oh, I was very sure of it—very sure that you concealed a secret from me," cried Morel, with a kind of wandering, and a singular volubility of expression which astonished Rudolph. "Your pallor and expression should have enlightened me. A hundred times I have spoken to your mother; but she always repelled me. Look at us well! look at us! To escape a prison, we leave our daughter at this monster's. And where does our child go to? To the dock! Because one is poor—yes—but the others—the others." Then, stopping as if to collect his thoughts, Morel struck himself on the forehead, and cried, "Stop, I do not know what I say. My head pains dreadfully. It seems to me I am drunk." And he concealed his face in his hands.

Rudolph, not wishing to let Louise see how much he was alarmed at the incoherent language of her father, said, gravely, "You are not just, Morel; it was not for herself alone, but for her mother, for her children, for yourself, that your poor wife feared the consequences of Louise leaving the notary. Accuse no one. Let all the maledictions, all your hatred, fall on one man—this monster of hypocrisy, who placed a girl between dishonor and ruin; the death, perhaps, of her father and his family; on this master, who abused in an infamous manner his power as a master. But, patience; I have told you Providence often reserves for great crimes a surprising and frightful vengeance."

The words of Rudolph were stamped with such force and conviction, in speaking of this providential vengeance, that Louise looked at him with surprise, almost with fear.

"Continue, my child," said he: "conceal nothing; this is more important than you think."

"I began, then, to feel some security," said Louise, "when one night Ferrand and his housekeeper both went out, each their own way. They did not dine at home; I remained alone. As usual, they left me some bread and water, and wine. My work finished, I dined; and then, fearing to remain alone in the apartments, I went up to my own room, after having lighted M. Ferrand's lamp. When he went out at night no one waited for him. I began to sew, and, what was very unusual, by degrees, sleep overpowered me. Oh, father," cried Louise, "you will not believe me—you will accuse me of falsehood; and yet, on the corpse of my little sister, I swear I tell you the truth."

"Explain yourself," said Rudolph.

"Alas! sir, for seven months I sought in vain to explain to myself this frightful night. I have almost lost my reason in trying to explore this mystery."

"Oh!" cried the artisan, "what is she going to say?"

"Contrary to my custom, I fell asleep on my chair," continued Louise. "That is the last thing I recollect. Before—before—oh, father, pardon! I swear to you I am not culpable."

"I believe you, I believe you; but speak!"

"I do not know how long I slept; when I awoke I was still in my chamber, but—"

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"Oh! the wretch, the wretch," cried Rudolph. "Do you know, Morel, what he gave her to drink?" The artisan looked at Rudolph, but made no reply. "The housekeeper, his accomplice, had put in the drink of Louise a soporific—opium, without doubt; the strength, the senses of your child have been paralyzed for some hours; when she awoke from this lethargic sleep, the crime was committed."

"Ah! now," cried Louise, "my misfortune is explained; you see, father,
I am less guilty than I appear. Father, father! answer me!"

The look of the artisan was of a frightful vagueness.

Such horrible perversity could not be understood by so honest and simple-hearted a man. He could hardly comprehend the dreadful revelation. And, besides, it must be said, that for some moments his reason had deserted him; at each moment his ideas became more obscure; then he fell into that vacuity of thought which is to the mind what night is to the sight: formidable symptoms of mental alienation. Yet Morel answered, in a quick, dull, and a mournful tone, "Oh! yes, it is very wicked, very wicked, wicked."

And he fell back into his apathy. Rudolph looked at him with anxiety: he thought that the intensity of indignation began to be exhausted with him; the same as after violent griefs tears are often wanting. Wishing to terminate as soon as possible this sad conversation, Rudolph said to Louise:

"Courage, my child; finish unveiling this tissue of horrors."

"Alas! sir, what you have heard is nothing as yet."

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"Ah! all precautions were taken to conceal his enormity!" said Rudolph.

"Yes, sir, and I was ruined. To all that he said to me I could find no answer. Ignorant what drink I had taken, I could not explain my long sleep. Appearances were against me. If I complained, every one would condemn me; it must be so, for to me all was an impenetrable mystery."

CHAPTER III

THE CRIME

Rudolph remained confounded at the detestable villainy of Ferrand. "Then," said he to Louise, "you did not dare to complain to your father of the odious conduct of the notary?"

"No, sir; I feared he would have thought me the accomplice instead of the victim; and besides, I feared that, in his anger, my father would forget that his liberty, the existence of his family, depended entirely upon my master."

"And was his conduct less brutal toward you afterward?"

"No, sir. To drive away suspicion, when by chance he had the Cure of Bonne Nouvelle and his vicar to dinner, my master addressed me before them with severe reproaches; he prayed the Cure to admonish me; he said that sooner or later I should be lost; that my manners were too free with his clerks; that I was idle; that he kept me out of charity for my father, an honest man with a family, whom he had served. All this was false. I never saw the clerks; they were in a separate building from us."

"And when you found yourself alone with M. Ferrand, how did he explain his conduct toward you before the Cure?

"He assured me that he joked. But the Cure took these accusations for serious; he told me severely that one must be doubly vicious to act thus in a holy house, where I had religious examples continually under my eyes. To that I did not know what to answer; I held down my head, blushing. My silence, my confusion, turned still more against me; my life was such a burden that several times I was on the point of destroying myself; but I thought of my father, my mother, my brothers and sisters, whom I helped to support. I resigned myself; in the midst of my degradation I found a consolation—at least my father was saved from prison. A new misfortune overwhelmed me—I was *enceinte;* I saw myself altogether lost. I do not know why, I had a presentiment that M. Ferrand, in learning an event which should have rendered him less cruel toward me, would increase his bad treatment; I was, however, far from supposing what would happen."

Morel recovered from his momentary aberration, looked around him with astonishment, passed his hand over his face, collected his thoughts, and said to his daughter, "It seems to me I have forgotten myself for a moment—fatigue—sorrow. What did you say?"

"When M. Ferrand was informed of my situation—"

The artisan made a movement of despair. Rudolph calmed him with a look.

"Go on; I will listen to the end," said Morel. "Go on, go on."

Louise resumed:—"I asked M. Ferrand by what means I could conceal my shame. Interrupting me with indignation, and a feigned surprise, he pretended not to understand me; he asked me if I were mad; frightened, I cried, 'But, my God, what do you wish to become of me now? If you have no pity on me, have at least some pity on your child!' 'What a horror!' cried he, raising his hands toward heaven. 'How, wretch! You have the audacity to accuse me of being corrupt enough to descend to a girl of your class! you have effrontery enough to accuse me!—I, who have a hundred times repeated before the most respectable witnesses that you would be ruined, vile wanton. Leave my house this moment—I thrust you from my door.'"

Rudolph and Morel remained horror-struck; such atrocity overpowered them.

"Oh! I confess," said Rudolph, "this passes all conception."

Morel said nothing; his eyes became enlarged in a fearful manner: a convulsive spasm contracted his features; he descended from the bench where he was seated, opened quickly a drawer, and took out a strong, very sharp, file, with a wooden handle, and rushed toward the door.

Rudolph, divining his thoughts, seized him by the arm and stopped him.

"Morel, where are you going? You will ruin yourself, unfortunate man."

"Take care!" cried the artisan, furiously struggling; "I shall commit two crimes instead of one!" and the madman threatened Rudolph.

"Father, it is our savior!" cried Louise.

"He is mocking us! bah, bah! he wishes to save the notary!" answered Morel, completely wild, and contending with Rudolph. At the end of a second, he succeeded in disarming him, opened the door, and threw the instrument on the staircase.

Louise ran to the artisan, held him in her arms, and said, "Father, he is our benefactor; you have raised your hand on him; come to yourself."

These words recalled Morel to himself; he covered his face with his hands, and, without saying a word, he fell at Rudolph's feet.

"Rise, unfortunate father!" said Rudolph kindly. "Patience, patience; I understand your fury, I partake of your hatred; but, in the name even of your vengeance, do not compromise it."

"Good heavens!" cried the artisan, raising himself up. "What can justice—law—do in such a case? Poor as we are, when we go and accuse the powerful, rich, and respected man, they will laugh in our face— ah, ah, ah!" and he laughed convulsively. "And they will be right. Where are our proofs—yes, our proofs? They will not believe us. Therefore, I tell you," cried he, in another storm of madness, "I tell you I have no confidence but in the impartiality of the knife!"

"Silence, Morel; grief makes you wander," said Rudolph suddenly. "Let your daughter speak; moments are precious—the magistrate waits; I must know all—I tell you, all. Continue, my child."

"It is useless, sir," said Louise, "to speak to you of my tears, my prayers. I was disregarded. This took place at ten o'clock in the morning, in the cabinet of M. Ferrand. The priest was to breakfast with him that morning; he entered at the moment my master was loading me with reproaches and outrages. He appeared much vexed at the sight of the priest."

"And what did he say then?"

"He soon made up his mind what course to pursue; he cried, pointing to me, 'Well, reverend sir, I said truly that this creature would be ruined. She is lost—lost forever; she has just acknowledged to me her fault and her shame, begging me to save her. And to think that I, through pity, have received such a wretch into my house.' 'How,' said the priest to me, with indignation, 'in spite of the salutary counsels which your master has given you so often before me, you have thus degraded yourself? Oh, this is unpardonable. My friend, after the kindness you have shown her and her family, pity would be a weakness. Be inexorable,' said the priest, a dupe, like everybody else, of the hypocrisy of M. Ferrand."

"And you did not at once unmask the scoundrel?" said Rudolph.

"I was terrified, my head turned; I dared not, I could not pronounce a word, yet I wished to speak, to defend myself. 'But, sir'—I cried. 'Not a word more, unworthy creature!' said M. Ferrand, interrupting me. 'You have heard the worthy priest: pity would be weakness. In an hour, you leave my house!' Then, without giving me time to answer, he led the priest into another room.

"After the departure of M. Ferrand," continued Louise, "I was for a moment, as it were, delirious. I saw myself driven from his house, not able to get another place, on account of my situation and the bad character my master would give me. I did not doubt but that in his anger he would imprison my father; I did not know what would become of me. I went for refuge and to weep, to my chamber. At the end of two hours M. Ferrand appeared. 'Is your trunk ready?' said he. 'Have mercy!' I cried, falling at his feet 'Do not send me away in the state in which I am; what will become of me? I can find no other place.' 'So much the better; God will thus punish your conduct and your lies.' 'You dare to say that I lie!' cried I indignantly; 'you dare to say you are not the cause of my ruin?' 'Leave my house at once, you infamous

creature, since you persist in your calumnies!' cried he, in a terrible voice. 'And to punish you, to-morrow I will imprison your father.' 'Well—no, no!' said I, aghast; 'I will accuse you no longer, sir—I promise it; but do not drive me away—have pity on my father; the little that I earn here supports my family. Keep me here—I will say nothing—I will conceal everything as long as I can, and then—you can send me away.'

"After renewed supplications, M. Ferrand consented to my prayers: I regarded it as a great favor, so frightful was my condition. Yet, for the five months which followed this cruel scene, I was very unhappy, very cruelly treated. Sometimes only M. Germain, whom I saw but seldom, interrogated me with kindness on the subject of my sorrows; but shame forbade my confession."

"Is it not about this time that he came to live here?"

"Yes, sir. He wished for a room near the Temple or the Arsenal; there was one to be let here, it suited him."

"And you never thought of confiding your sorrows to M. Germain?" asked Rudolph.

"No, sir; he was also a dupe of M. Ferrand's; he said he was hard and exacting, but he thought him the most honest man in the world. I passed these five months in tears, in continual agony. With care, I had concealed my situation from all eyes, but I could hope to do so no longer. The future was for me most dreadful; M. Ferrand had declared he would not keep me any longer with him. I was thus about to be deprived of the small resource that aided our family to live. Cursed, driven away by my father—for, after the falsehoods that I had told him to dissipate his suspicions, he would not believe me to be the victim of M. Ferrand—what was to become of me? where was I to fly? where to find a refuge? I had then a very wicked idea. I confess this, sir, because I wish to conceal nothing, even that which may cast suspicion on me, and also to show you to what an extremity I was reduced by the cruelty of M. Ferrand. If I had yielded to a fatal thought, would he not have been an accomplice of my crime?"

After a moment's silence, Louise resumed, with an effort, and in a trembling voice, "I had heard from the portress that a quack lived in the house—and—" She could not finish.

Rudolph remembered that at his first call on Mrs. Pipelet he had received from the postman, in her absence, a letter written on coarse paper, in a disguised hand, and on which he had remarked the traces of tears. "And you did write him, unhappy child, three days since? On this letter you have wept; your writing was disguised."

Louise looked at Rudolph with affright. "How do you know, sir?"

"Calm yourself. I was alone in the lodge of Mrs. Pipelet when this letter was handed in, and it was my chance to receive it."

"Yes, sir; in this letter, without signature, I wrote to M. Bradamanti, that, not daring to come to him, I begged he would meet me that evening near the Château dead. I was half crazy. I wished to ask his fearful advice. I left my master's house to meet him; but my reason returned. I regained the house; I did not see him. Thus the scene took place, from the consequences of which I am now suffering— M. Ferrand believing me gone out for two hours, while after a very short time I returned."

"In pacing before the little door of the garden, to my great astonishment I saw it open. I entered that way, and I carried the key to the cabinet of M. Ferrand, where it was ordinarily kept. This was, next to his bed-chamber, the most retired place in the house: it was there he gave his secret audiences. You will see, sir, why I give you these details. Knowing all the ways of the house very well, after having crossed the dining-room, which was lighted, I entered into the saloon in the dark, then to the cabinet, as I said before. The door of his chamber opened at the moment I placed the key on the table. Hardly had my master perceived me by the light which was burning in his chamber, than he closed the door quickly on a person whom I could not see. Then he threw himself on me, seized me by the throat as if he wished to strangle me, and said to me in a low tone, at once furious and alarmed, 'You were spying; you listened at the door; what did you hear? Answer, answer! or I'll strangle you.' But changing his mind, without giving me time to say a word, he pushed me backward into the dining-room. The office was open; he threw me into it brutally, and locked the door."

"And you heard nothing of his conversation?"

"Nothing, sir: if I had known he had anybody in the room, I should have taken care not to have entered the cabinet; he forbade even Mrs. Seraphin to do so."

"And when you came out of the office, what did he say to you?"

"It was the housekeeper who came to conduct me, and I did not see him again that night. The alarm I had experienced had made me very ill. The next morning, as I came downstairs, I met M. Ferrand. I shuddered in thinking of his threats of the evening previous; what was my surprise when he said to me, almost calmly, 'You know I forbid any one to come into my cabinet when I have some one in my chamber; but for the short time that you have to remain here, it is useless to scold any more,' and he passed into his office. This moderation surprised me, after the violence of the previous evening. I went on with my usual duties; I went to put in order his sleeping apartment. In arranging some clothes in a dark closet near the alcove, I was suddenly taken very ill; I felt that I was about to faint. In falling, I grasped at a cloak which was hanging against the wall. I dragged it along with me; it covered me completely as I lay upon the floor. When I came to myself, the glass door of this closet was shut. I heard the voice of M. Ferrand. He spoke very loud. Recollecting the scene of the previous evening, I thought myself killed if I stirred. I supposed that, concealed under the mantle which had fallen on me, my master, in shutting the door, had not perceived me. If he discovered me, how could I make him believe that my presence was accidental? I held my breath, and, in spite of myself, I heard the end of this conversation, which doubtless had been commenced for some time."

"Who was the person who was talking with him?" asked Rudolph.

"I am ignorant, sir; I did not know the voice."

"And what did they say?"

"The conversation had lasted for some time, doubtless, for this is all I heard. 'Nothing can be plainer,' said this unknown voice. 'A queer fish, called Bras-Rouge (Red-Arm), a determined smuggler, has brought me, for the affair I have just spoken about, in connection with a family of fresh-water pirates, who are established at the point of a little island near Aspires. They are the greatest bandits in the land; the father and grandfather have both been guillotined, two of the sons are to the galleys for life; but the mother, three sons, and two daughters are left, all as great villains one as the other. It is said that at night, to rob on both sides of the Seine, they come down in their boats sometimes as far as Barky. They are folks who will kill the first comer for a crown; but we have no need of them; it suffices if they will give hospitality to your country lady. The Martial (the name of my pirates) will pass in her eyes for an honest family of fishermen. I will go on your account, and make two or three visits to your young lady; I will order her certain potions, and at the end of eight days she will make acquaintance with Aspires Cemetery. In the villages, a death passes like a letter through the post-office, while at Paris they scrutinize too closely. But when will you send your country girl to the island, so that I can advise the Martial what part they have to play?' 'She will arrive to-morrow, and the day after she will be there,' answered Ferrand; 'and I will inform her that the Doctor Vincent will take care of her on my account.' 'Agreed for the name of Vincent,' said the voice; 'I like that as well as any other.'"

"What is this new mystery of crime and infamy?" said Rudolph, more and more surprised.

"New? no, sir; you will see that it has reference to a crime that you do know," answered Louise; and she continued, "I heard the movement of chairs; the conversation was at an end. 'I do not ask you to be secret,' said M. Ferrand; 'you hold me as I hold you.' 'That proves that we can serve, but never injure one another,' answered the voice; 'see my zeal. I received your letter last night at ten o'clock; this morning I am here. Farewell, accomplice; do not forget the Island of Asnieres, the fisher Martial, and Dr. Vincent. Thanks to these three magical words, your country girl has only eight days left.' 'Stop,' said M. Ferrand, 'while I go and unbolt the door of my cabinet, and see if there is any one in the ante-chamber, that you may go out by the garden, as you came in.' M. Ferrand went out a moment, and then returned, and finally I heard him go off with the unknown person. You may imagine my alarm, sir, during this conversation, and my horror at knowing such a secret. Two hours after this conversation, Mrs. Seraphin came to seek me in my chamber, where I had gone more trembling and sick than I had yet been. 'M. Ferrand wants you,' said she; 'you have more good luck than you deserve; come, descend. You are very pale; what you are going to learn will give you more color.'

"I followed Mrs. Seraphin; M. Ferrand was in his cabinet. At seeing him, I shuddered in spite of myself; yet he had a less wicked look than usual; he looked at me fixedly for a long time, as if he wished to read my thoughts. I cast down my eyes. 'You appear very ill,' said he. 'Yes, sir,' I answered, astonished that he did not address me familiarly as usual. 'It is very plain,' added he, 'it is in consequence of your situation; but notwithstanding your lies, your bad conduct, and your indiscretion of yesterday,' added he, in a softened tone, 'I have pity on you. Although I have treated you as you deserved before the cure of the parish, such an affair as this will be a scandal to my house; and, moreover, your family will be in despair. I consent, under these circumstances to come to your assistance.' 'Ah, sir,' I cried, 'these words of kindness on your part make me forget all.' 'Forget what?' asked he sharply. 'Nothing, nothing; pardon me, sir,' answered I, fearing to irritate him, and believing in his professions of pity. 'Listen to me,' said he; 'you will go to see your father to-day; you will

announce to him that I am going to send you for two or three months in the country to take charge of a house I have just bought; during your absence I will send him your wages. To-morrow you will leave Paris; I will give you a letter of recommendation for Mrs. Martial, the mother of a family of honest fishermen who live near Asnieres. You will require to say you came from the country, nothing more. Later you will know the object of this letter, all for your interest. Mrs. Martial will treat you as her child; a physician, a friend of mine, Dr. Vincent, will take you under his charge. You see how good I am for you!'"

"What a horrible plot!" cried Rudolph. "Now I comprehend all. Believing that the evening previous you had become possessed of a secret of great importance to him, he wished to get rid of you. He had probably some interest in deceiving his accomplice, in representing you as a girl from the country. What must have been your affright at this proposition!"

"It was a great blow. I was completely bewildered; I knew not what to answer; I looked at M. Ferrand with affright; my mind wandered. I was about, perhaps, to risk my life in telling him that I had overheard his projects in the morning, when, happily, I recollected the new dangers to which this would expose me. 'You do not comprehend me, then?' asked he, with impatience. 'Yes, sir, but,' said I, trembling, 'I prefer not to go to the country.' 'Why not? You will be perfectly well taken care of where I shall send you. 'No, no, I will not go; I prefer to remain in Paris, near my family; I had rather confess all, die with shame, if it is necessary.' 'You refuse me!' said M. Ferrand, restraining his anger, and looking at me with attention. 'Why have you changed your mind so quickly? Just now you accepted.' I saw that if he suspected me I was lost; I answered that I did not think that he meant me to leave Paris and my family. 'But you will dishonor your family, wretch,' cried he; and not being able any longer to contain himself, he seized me by the arm, and pushed me so violently that I fell. 'I give you until after to-morrow,' cried he; 'to-morrow you shall leave this to go to the Martials, or to tell your father I have sent you away, and that he goes the same day to prison.' I remained alone, stretched on the earth; I had not the strength to get up. Mrs. Seraphin came, and with her assistance I regained my chamber. I threw myself on my bed; I remained there until night."

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"Amid the horrors of this frightful, solitary night, I had a moment of bitter joy: it was when I pressed my child in my arms." And the voice of Louise was suffocated with her tears.

Morel had listened to the story of his daughter with an apathy and indifference which alarmed Rudolph. Yet, seeing her in tears, he looked fixedly at her and said: "She weeps—she weeps; why, then, does she weep? Oh, yes; I know, I know—the notary. Continue, my poor Louise; you are my child. I love you still—just now I did not know you; my tears obscured my sight. Oh, my head—my head—it gives me great pain."

"You see I am not culpable; is it not so, father?"

"Yes, yes."

"It is a great sorrow—but I feared the notary so much!"

"The notary? Oh! I believe you—he is so bad—so wicked!"

"You pardon me now?"

"Yes."

"Truly?"

"Yes, truly. Oh, I love you still—go—although—I cannot—say—do you see—because—oh! my head! my bead!"

Louise looked at Rudolph with alarm.

"He suffers; let him compose himself. Continue."

"I pressed my child to my heart. I was astonished not to hear it breathe, but I said to myself, the respiration of so young a child can hardly be heard; and yet it seemed to me that it was very cold. I had no light. I waited until dawn, trying to warm it as well as I could, At daylight I found it was stiff—icy. I placed my hand on its heart; it did not beat—it was dead."

And Louise burst into bitter sobs.

"Oh! at this moment," continued she, "thoughts passed impossible to describe, I remember it

confusedly as a dream; it was at once despair, terror, anger, and, above all, I was seized with another alarm; I no longer dreaded that Ferrand would strangle me, but I feared that if my child was found dead at my side I should be accused of having killed it. Then I had but one thought, that of concealing it from all eyes; in that way my dishonor would not be known; I would no longer have to dread the anger of my father; I should escape the vengeance of Ferrand; then I could leave his house, procure another place, and continue to earn something toward the support of my family. Alas! sir, such are the reasons which induced me to acknowledge nothing, to conceal the body of my child from all eyes. It was wrong, certainly; but the position I was in, overwhelmed on all sides, crushed by long sufferings, almost delirious, I did not reflect to what I exposed myself if I was discovered."

"What tortures! what tortures!" said Rudolph, overcome.

"Daylight increased," continued Louise, "in a short time every one would be awake in the house. I hesitated no longer. I wrapped up my child as well as I could; I descended very softly; I went to the end of the garden to make a hole in the ground to bury it, but it had frozen all night—the earth was too hard. Then I hid the body at the bottom of a kind of cellar where no one entered in winter. I covered it with an empty flower-box, and I returned to my room without seeing any one. Of all I tell you, sir, I have but a confused idea. Feeble as I was, I can as yet hardly comprehend how I had the nerve to do all this. At nine o'clock, Mrs. Seraphin came to know why I was not yet up. I said that I was so ill, that I begged her to let me remain in bed all day; the next day I would quit the house, since M. Ferrand sent me away. At the end of one hour he came himself. 'You are worse; this is the consequence of your self-will,' said he. 'If you had profited by my offers, to-day you would have been established with kind people, who would have taken every care of you; however, I will not be so inhuman as to let you suffer; to-night Dr. Vincent will come to see you.' At this threat I shuddered with fear. I answered that I was wrong the night before to refuse his offers; that I accepted them; but that, as yet being too ill to leave, I would go the next day but one to the Martials; and that it was useless to send for Dr. Vincent. I only wished to gain time; I was decided to leave the house, and to go to my father. I hoped in this manner he would be ignorant of all. But, deceived by my promise, M. Ferrand was almost affectionate toward me, and recommended me, for the first time in his life, to the care of Mrs. Seraphin.

"I passed the day in mental agony, trembling at each moment that chance would cause a discovery of the body of my child. I only desired one thing—that the cold might cease, so that I might be able to dig a grave. It snowed—that gave me hopes. I remained all day in bed. The night being come, I waited until every one was asleep. I had strength to get up to go to the wood pile to look for a hatchet to cut some wood to make a hole in the frozen ground. After infinite trouble I at last succeeded; then I took the body, I wept over it again, and I buried it as I could in the little flower-box. I did not know the prayer for the dead; I said a pater and an ave, praying God to receive it. I thought my courage would have failed me when I covered it with the earth. A mother interring her child! At length I succeeded. Oh! what it cost me! I placed the snow over the grave, so that nothing should be seen. The moon gave me light. When all was finished, I could not make up my mind to come away. Poor little thing! in the frozen ground—under the snow. Although it was dead, it seemed to me that it must feel the cold. At length I returned to my chamber. I went to my bed with a violent fever. In the morning M. Ferrand sent to know how I was. I answered that I felt rather better, and that I should certainly be ready to leave for the country the next day. I remained all this day still in bed, in order to gain strength. In the evening I arose. I went to the kitchen to warm myself. I remained late, all alone. I went to the garden to say a last prayer. At the moment I ascended toward my chamber, I met M. Germain on the landing-place of the cabinet, where he sometimes worked; he was very pale. He said to me, quickly, placing a rouleau in my hand, 'Your father will be arrested early to-morrow morning; here is the money; as soon as it is day run to his house. It is only to-day I have found out Ferrand; he is a bad man; I will unmask him. Do not, above all, say that you have this money from me.' And M. Germain, not giving me time to thank him, descended the stairs quickly."

CHAPTER IV.

MADNESS.

Louise continued: "This morning, before any one was up, I came here with the money, but it was not sufficient; and, without your generosity, he would not have escaped the bailiffs. Probably, after my departure, some one had gone to my room and discovered some traces which had led to this discovery. A last service I ask of you, sir," said Louise, drawing out the rouleau of gold from her pocket; "will you

hand this money to M. Germain? I promised him not to tell any one that he was employed at Ferrand's; but since you know it, I have not been indiscreet. Now, sir, I repeat, before God, who hears me, and before you, I have not said a word that is not true. I have not sought to "—but, interrupting herself suddenly, Louise, much alarmed, cried, "Oh, sir! look at my father! look at him! What is the matter with him?"

Morel had listened to the last part of this narrative with somber indifference, which Rudolph had explained to himself by attributing it to the overwhelming grief of this unhappy man. After so many violent shocks, so oft repeated, his tears were dried up, his sensibility blunted—he has not even strength enough left to vent his indignation, thought Rudolph.

He was mistaken. Like the flickering light of a lamp about to expire, the reason of Morel, already strongly shaken, vacillated for some time, showed forth now and then some last rays of intelligence, and then suddenly became obscured.

Absolutely a stranger to what was said, to what passed around him, for some moments the artisan had become mad!

Although his wheel was placed the other side of his work-table, and he had in his hands neither diamonds nor tools, the artisan, attentively occupied, imitated his ordinary occupations. He accompanied this pantomime with a clacking noise with his tongue, like the wheel when in operation.

"Oh, sir!" said Louise, with increased alarm; "look at my father!"
Then, approaching him, she said, "Father! father!"

Morel looked at his daughter with that vacant stare peculiar to lunatics. Without ceasing for a moment his imaginary occupation, he answered, in a soft and mournful voice, "I owe thirteen hundred francs to the notary, the price of Louise's blood. I must work, work, work! Oh! I will pay, pay, pay!"

"This is not possible! This cannot last! He is not altogether mad is he?" cried Louise, in a heart-rending tone, "He will come to himself— it is only momentary——"

"Morel, my friend," said Rudolph, "we are here. Your daughter is alongside of you; she is innocent."

"Thirteen hundred francs," said the artisan, without looking at
Rudolph, and continuing his imaginary occupation.

"Father," cried Louise, throwing herself at his feet, and taking hold of his hands, "it is I, Louise!"

"Thirteen hundred francs," repeated he, endeavoring to disengage himself from Louise; "thirteen hundred francs, or else," added he, in a low and confidential tone, "or else Louise is guillotined," and he began to turn his wheel.

Louise uttered a piercing cry. "He is mad," cried she, "he is mad! and it is I—I—who am the cause. Oh, yet it Is not my fault; I did not wish to do wrong; it is this monster!"

"Come, poor child, courage!" said Rudolph, "let us hope. This madness will be but momentary. Your father has suffered too much, his reason has become weakened, he will get better."

"But my mother—my grandmother—my brothers and sister! what will become of them?" cried Louise. "See, they are deprived of both my father and myself. They will die with hunger, with poverty, and despair!"

"Am I not here? Be calm, they shall want for nothing. Courage, I pray you: your revelation will cause the punishment of a great criminal. You have convinced me of your innocence; it shall certainly be known and acknowledged."

"Oh, sir, you see dishonor—madness—death; these are the evils he has caused—this man; nothing can be done to him—nothing. Ah, this thought completes all my troubles!"

"Far from that; let a contrary thought aid you in supporting them."

"What do you say, sir?"

"Carry with you the certainty that you shall be avenged."

"Avenged!"

"Yes, I swear to you," answered Rudolph, with solemnity, that, his crimes proved, this man shall severely expiate the dishonor, madness, and death he has caused. If the laws are powerless, if his

cunning and address equal his misdeeds, to his cunning shall be opposed cunning— to his misdeeds, misdeeds—but which shall be to them what the just and avenging punishment, inflicted on the culpable by an inexorable hand, is to the cowardly and concealed murder."

"Ah, sir, may God hear you! It is not myself I wish to revenge, it is my crazy father; it is"—then, turning to her father, she cried, "Father, farewell. They take me to prison—I shall never see you more; it is your Louise who bids you farewell—father, father, father!"

At this touching appeal nothing responded; nothing responded in this poor annihilated mind—nothing. The paternal cords, always the last broken, vibrated no more.

The garret door opened, and the officer entered.

"My time is up, sir," said he to Rudolph. "I declare to you, with regret, that it is impossible for me to wait any longer."

"The conversation is terminated, sir," answered Rudolph bitterly, pointing to the artisan. "Louise has nothing more to say to her father; he has nothing more to hear from his daughter—he is mad."

"Good God! just what I feared. Ah, it is frightful," cried the magistrate; and approaching quickly to the artisan, after a moment's examination he was convinced of the sad reality. "Ah, sir," said he, sadly, to Rudolph, "I have already made sincere wishes that the innocence of this young girl may be proved; but now I will not confine myself to wishes—no, no, I will tell of this last dreadful blow; and, do not doubt it, the judges will have a motive the more to find her innocent."

"Well, well, sir," said Rudolph, "in acting thus, it is not only your duty you fulfill, but you are performing a worthy part."

"Believe me, sir, some of our missions are so painful, that it is with happiness, with gratitude, that we interest ourselves in what is good and virtuous."

"One word more, sir. The revelations of Louise Morel have evidently proved to me her innocence. Can you inform me how her pretended crime has been discovered, or rather denounced?"

"This morning," said the magistrate, "a woman in the employ of M. Ferrand, notary, came and declared to me that, after the precipitate flight of Louise Morel, who she knew was *enceinte*, she had gone up into the chamber of this young girl, and that she had there found traces of a clandestine accouchement; after some investigations, some footsteps in the snow had led to the discovery of a newborn child interred in the garden. On the relation of this woman, I went to the Rue du Sentier. I found M. Jacques Ferrand very indignant that such a thing should have occurred in his house. The priest of Bonne Nouvelle Church, whom he had sent for, also declared to me that the girl Morel had acknowledged her fault before him one day; that she had implored the pity and indulgence of her master, and that, still more, he had often heard M. Ferrand give Louise Morel the most severe reprimands, predicting that, sooner or later, she would be ruined. 'A prediction which had just been realized so unfortunately,' added the priest. The indignation of M. Ferrand," continued the magistrate, "appeared to me so real, that I partook of it. He told me that, without doubt, Louise Morel had taken refuge at her father's. I came here at once; the crime being flagrant, I had the right to proceed to an immediate arrest."

Rudolph restrained himself in hearing the indignation of M. Ferrand spoken of. He said to the magistrate, "I thank you a thousand times, sir, for your kindness and for the assistance you tender Louise. I shall conduct this unfortunate man to a lunatic hospital, as well as the mother of his wife." Then, addressing Louise, who yet kneeled before her father, trying in vain to restore him to reason, "Be resigned, my child, to go without embracing your mother; spare her this touching farewell. Be assured as to her welfare—nothing shall henceforth be wanting. I will find a woman who will take care of your mother, and your brothers and sisters, under the superintendence of your good neighbor, Miss Dimpleton. As to your father, nothing shall be spared, that his cure shall be rapid and complete. Courage, then; believe me, virtuous people are often harshly tried by misfortunes, but they always come out of these struggles purer, stronger, and more respected."

* * * * * * *

Two hours after the arrest of Louise, the artisan and the old idiot were, by the orders of Rudolph, conducted to Charenton; they were to have chamber treatment, and receive particular care and attention. Morel left the house without assistance; indifferent, he went where they took him; his madness was inoffensive and sad. The grand mother had hunger; they showed her food; she followed this food.

The diamonds and rubies confided to the wife of the artisan were the same day given to Mrs. Mathieu, the broker, who came to get them. Unfortunately, this woman was watched and followed by Tortillard, who knew the value of the pretended false jewels, from a conversation he had overheard when Morel was arrested by the bailiffs. The son of Bras-Rouge (Red Arm) ascertained that she lived at No. 11 Boulevard Saint Denis.

Miss Dimpleton informed Mrs. Morel, with much tact, of the lunacy of her husband and the imprisonment of Louise. At first she wept much, uttering sorrowful cries. Then, the first spasms of grief over, the poor creature, weak and unsettled, consoled herself by degrees in seeing herself and children surrounded by comforts which they owed to the generosity of their benefactor.

Rudolph's thoughts were bitter in thinking of the revelations of Louise.

CHAPTER V.

JACQUES FERRAND.

At the time when the events passed which we relate, at one of the extremities of the Rue du Sentier could have been seen a long wall, much cracked, and covered with a coating of plaster, the top protected with pieces of broken glass. This wall, forming the boundary on this side of the garden of Jacques Ferrand, the notary, extended to a building situated on the street, of only one story and a garret. Two large brass plates, the sign of the notary's office, flanked the worm-eaten gate, the primitive appearance of which was no longer to be distinguished under the mud which covered it. This door led to a covered passage; on the right was the lodge of an old porter, half deaf, who was to the fraternity of tailors what Pipelet was to the boot-maker; on the left a stable, which served the purposes of a cellar, wash-house, wood-house, and of a growing colony of rabbits, lodged in a manger by the porter, who consoled himself from the pangs of a recent bereavement, in the death of his wife, by raising these domestic animals.

Alongside the lodge was the crooked, narrow, and obscure staircase, leading to the office, as the clients were informed by a hand painted black, the forefinger pointing to these words on the wall "Office— Second Floor." On one side of a large paved court, overgrown with grass, were to be seen the unoccupied carriage-houses, on the other, a rusty iron railing, which inclosed the garden; at the end the pavillion, where the notary alone dwelt.

A flight of eight or ten steps of tottering, disjointed stones, covered with moss and worn by time, led to this house, composed of a kitchen, and other offices under ground, two floors and an attic, where Louise had slept.

This pavilion appeared also in a great state of decay; immense cracks were to be seen in the walls; the windows and blinds, once painted gray, had become with age almost black; the six windows of the first story, looking upon the court, had no curtains; the glasses were almost incrusted with dirt; on the ground floor they were rather cleaner, and were hung with faded yellow curtains, red-flowered. On the side toward the garden the pavilion had but four windows; two were walled up.

This garden, overgrown with wild briers, seemed abandoned; not a single border, not a bed; a cluster of elms, five or six large trees, some acacias and alders, a yellow grass-plot, walks encumbered with brambles, and bounded by a high wall. Such was the sad aspect of the garden and habitation.

To this appearance, or rather to this reality, Ferrand attached great importance. To vulgar eyes, a carelessness of comfort and prosperity passes almost always for disinterestedness; uncleanliness for austerity.

Comparing the grand financial luxury of some notaries, or the reported toilets of their wives, to the gloomy mansion of M. Ferrand, so contemptuous of elegance and splendor, the clients felt a kind of respect, or, rather, of blind confidence for this man, who, from the number of his employers and the fortune he was supposed to possess, could have said, like many of his brethren, "My equipage, my country-house, my opera-box," etc., and who, far from that, lived with great economy; thus deposits, legacies on trust, investments, all those affairs in fine which depend upon the most tried integrity, or the most perfect good faith, flowed into the hands of Ferrand. In living as he did, the notary consulted

his taste. He detested society, pomp, pleasures dearly bought; had it been otherwise, he would have, without hesitation, sacrificed his most lively wishes to the appearances which it was important to give himself. Some words on the character of this man. He was a son of the grand family of misers. Avarice is, above all, a negative, passive passion. Yet Jacques Ferrand risked, and risked much.

He counted on his cunning—it was extreme; on his hypocrisy—it was profound; on his understanding—it was fertile and pliable; on his audacity—it was infernal—to assure impunity to his crimes, and they were already numerous.

One single passion, or rather appetite, but most disgraceful, ignoble, shameful, but almost ferocious, raised him often to frenzy—lust.

Save this weakness, Jacques Ferrand loved but gold He loved gold for the sake of gold.

Not for the enjoyments it procured; he was stoical.

Notwithstanding his great cunning, this man had committed two or three errors which the most crafty criminals hardly ever escape from.

Forced by circumstances, it is true, he had two accomplices: this great fault, as he said himself, had been repaired in part; neither of his accomplices could betray him without betraying themselves; nor could any advantage be derived from their denouncing the notary and themselves to public vindictiveness. He was therefore on this head quite at rest.

Some words now on the personal appearance of Ferrand, and we will introduce the reader into the notary's study, where he will find out the principal personages. Ferrand had passed his fiftieth year. He did not appear more than forty; he was of medium size, round-shouldered, square-built, strong, thick-set, red-haired, shaggy as a bear. His hair lay smooth on his temples, the top of his head was bald, his eyebrows hardly to be perceived; his bilious-looking skin was covered with large freckles; but when any lively emotion agitated it, this yellow, clayey visage filled with blood, and became a livid red.

His face was as flat as a death's-head, his nose crushed down, his lips so thin, so imperceptible, that his mouth seemed cut in his face; when he smiled in a wicked and sinister manner, the ends of his teeth could be seen, black and decayed. Closely shaved to his temples, this man's countenance had an expression austere, sanctified, impassible, rigid, cold and reflecting; his little black eyes—quick, piercing, restless,—were hidden by large green spectacles.

Jacques Ferrand had excellent sight, but under the shelter of his spectacles he had great advantages, observing without being observed; he knew how much a glance of the eye is often and involuntarily significant. In spite of his imperturbable audacity, he had encountered, two or three times in his life, certain powerful looks, before which he had been forced to quail. Now, in some circumstances, it is fatal to cast down your eye before the man who interrogates, accuses, or judges you. The large spectacles of Ferrand were therefore a kind of covered breastwork, from whence he could attentively examine the maneuvers of the enemy; for many such he had to encounter, because many found themselves more or less his dupes.

He affected in his dress a negligence which reached to uncleanliness, or, rather, it was naturally rusty and mean. His face, shaved but once in two or three days, his dirty bald head, his black nails, old snuff-colored-coats, greasy hats, threadbare cravats, black woolen hose, and coarse shoes, recommended him singularly to his clients, by giving him an air of detachment from the world, and a perfume of practical philosophy, which charmed them. "To what pleasures—what passions— could the notary," said they, "sacrifice the confidence which was shown him? He gained, perhaps, sixty thousand francs a year, and his household was composed of a servant and an old housekeeper; his sole pleasure was to go every Sunday to mass and vespers; he knew no opera comparable to the solemn sounds of the organ, no company which could equal an evening passed at his fireside with the parish priest, after a frugal dinner. Finally, he placed his delight in his probity, his pride in his honor, his happiness in his religion."

Such was the opinion of many concerning Jacques Ferrand, this good and excellent man.

CHAPTER VI.

THE OFFICE.

His office resembled all offices, his clerks all other clerks. It was reached by an ante-chamber, furnished with four old chairs. In the office, properly so called, surrounded by shelves furnished with paper boxes, containing documents belonging to the clients of the notary, five young men, bending over desks of black wood, laughed, talked, or scribbled incessantly. An adjoining room, in which usually remained the head clerk, then an empty room, which, for the sake of secrecy, separated the notary's sanctum from the other offices, such was this laboratory of all kinds and sorts. Two o'clock had just struck by an old cuckoo clock, placed between the two windows of the office; agitation seemed to reign among the clerks, which some fragments of their conversation will explain.

"Certainly, if any one had told me that Francois Germain was a thief," said one of the young men, "I should have answered, `You are a liar!'"

"And I!"

"And I also!"

"I! It produced such an effect on me to see him arrested and taken away by the guard that I could not eat my breakfast. I was recompensed, however, for it spared me from eating the daily mess of Mother Seraphin."

"Seventeen thousand francs—it is a sum!"

"A famous sum!"

"And to think that for seventeen months, since he has been cashier, he never has been wanting a centime in his cash account!"

"As for me, I think master was wrong to arrest Germain, since the poor fellow swore that he had only taken thirteen hundred francs in gold."

"Yes. And so much the more, that he brought back the amount this morning at the moment the master had sent for the guard!"

"That is the consequence of being of such a rigid probity as master.
Such people are always without pity."

"Never mind; one ought always to think twice before ruining a poor young man who always conducted himself well until now."

"M. Ferrand would reply to that, 'It was for the sake of example.'"

"Example of what? It is of no use to those who are honest; and those who are not, know well enough that they are likely to be discovered if they steal."

"This house is, however, a good customer for the officer."

"How?"

"Why, this morning poor Louise; just now Germain."

"As for me, the affair of Germain don't appear too clear."

"But he has acknowledged it!"

"He confessed that he had taken thirteen hundred francs—yes; but he maintained that he had not taken the remaining fifteen thousand francs in bank bills, and the remaining seven hundred francs that were missing."

"Exactly; since he acknowledged one thing, why not the other?"

"It is true, one is as much punished for five hundred as for fifteen thousand francs.".

"Yes; but one keeps the fifteen thousand francs, and on coming out of prison, that makes a nice little establishment, a rogue would say."

"Not so bad."

"One may well say there is something in that."

"And Germain, who always defended master when we called him a Jesuit!"

"It is nevertheless true. 'Why hasn't master a right to go to mass?' he would say: 'you have the right to stay away.'"

"Stop, here is Chalomel; now he will be astonished!"

"About what! what! My good fellow, is there anything new concerning poor Louise?"

"You would have known, lazybones, if you hadn't been absent so long."

"Hold; you think it is only a hop, skip, and a jump from here to the Rue de Chaillot."

"Well; this famous Viscount de Saint Remy?"

"Has he not come yet?"

"No."

"His carriage was all ready, and his valet told me that he would come at once; but he did not appear pleased, the domestic said. Oh! that is a fine hotel; one might say it had belonged to the lords of the olden time, as are spoken of in Faublas. Oh! Faublas! he is my hero, my model!" said Chalomel, putting away his umbrella and taking off his overshoes.

"I believe that this viscount is in debt, and there are writs out against him."

"A writ for thirty-four thousand francs, which has been sent here, since it is here he must come to pay it; the creditor prefers it, why, I know not."

"He must be able to pay it now, because he returned last night from the country, where he has been concealed for three days to escape the bailiffs."

"But why did they not levy on his furniture?"

"He is not such an ass! The house is not his; the furniture is in the name of his valet, who is looked upon as hiring him furnished lodgings, in the same way that his horses and carriages are in the name of his coachman, who says he lets them out to the viscount at so much per month. Oh! he is cunning, this Viscount de Saint Remy. But what is that you were talking about? Has anything new happened here?"

"Just imagine—about two hours since, master came in here like a madman: 'Germain is not here?' cried he. 'No, sir.' 'Well! the scoundrel has robbed me, last night, of seventeen thousand francs!' continued the governor."

"Germain steal! Come, come, draw it mild."

"You shall see. 'How sir! are you sure? It is not possible!' we all cried.

"'I tell you, gentlemen, that I put yesterday in the desk where he works fifteen notes of a thousand francs, besides two thousand francs in gold in a small box; all has disappeared.' At this moment Marriton, the porter, came in and said, 'The guard is coming.'"

"And Germain?"

"Stop a moment. The governor said to the porter. 'As soon as Germain comes, send him here, without telling him anything. I wish to confound him before you, gentlemen,' continued the governor. At the end of fifteen minutes poor Germain arrived, as if nothing was the matter. Mother Seraphin came to bring us our breakfast; she saluted the governor, and said good-day to us very tranquilly. 'Germain, do you not breakfast?' said M. Ferrand. 'No, sir, I am not hungry, I thank you.' 'You come very late!' 'Yes, sir, I have been to Belleville this morning.' 'To conceal, doubtless the money you have stolen from me,' cried M. Ferrand with a terrible voice."

"And Germain?"

"Oh! the poor boy became as pale as death, stammering, 'Sir, I beg you, do not ruin me."

"He had stolen?"

"Now, do wait, Chalomel. 'Do not ruin me,' said he to the governor. 'You acknowledge then, wretch?' 'Yes, sir; but here is the money that is wanting. I thought I should be able to return it this morning before you were up; unfortunately, a friend, who had a small sum of mine, and whom I thought to find at home last night, had been at Belleville for two days. I was obliged to go there this morning, which has caused my delay. Pardon me, sir, do not ruin me! In taking this money, I knew I could return it this

morning. Here are the thirteen hundred francs in gold.' 'You have robbed me of fifteen notes of one thousand francs each, that were in a green book, and two thousand francs in gold!' 'I! never!' cried poor Germain. 'I took the thirteen hundred francs, but not one penny more. I have seen no pocket-book in the drawer; there was only two thousand francs in gold in a box.' 'Oh! the infamous liar!' cried the master. 'You have stolen thirteen hundred francs, you could well steal more; justice will decide. Oh! I shall be without pity for such a frightful breach of confidence. It will be an example.' Finally, the guard arrived with an officer to make out a commitment; they carried him off, and that's all!"

"Can it be possible? Germain, the cream of honest people!"

"It has appeared to us quite as singular."

"After all, it must be confessed, Germain was reserved; he never would tell where he lived."

"That is true."

"He always had a mysterious air"

"That's no reason why he should steal the money."

"Doubtless. It is a remark I make."

"Ah! well, this is news! It is as if some one had given me a stunner on the head—Germain—who looked so honest; who would have died without confession!"

"One would have said that he had a presentiment of his misfortune."

"Why?"

"For some time past he looked as if something troubled him."

"It was, perhaps, concerning Louise."

"Louise?"

"Oh! I only repeat what Mother Seraphin said this morning,"

"What?"

"That he was the lover of Louise, and the—"

"Oh! the cunning fellow."

"Stop, stop, stop!"

"Bah!"

"It is not true!"

"How do you know that, Chalomel?"

"It is not two weeks since, that Germain told me, in confidence, that he was dead in love with a little sewing girl, whom he had known in the house where he lived; he had tears in his eyes when he spoke to me about her."

"Oh!"

"He says that Faublas is his hero, and yet he is simple enough, stupid enough, not to comprehend that one can be in love with one and the love of another."

"I tell you that Germain spoke seriously."

At this moment the chief clerk entered the office.

"Well," said he. "Chalomel, have you finished all your errands?"

"Yes, M. Dubois, I have been to M. de Saint Remy: he will be here shortly to pay."

"And to Countess M'Gregor?"

"Likewise; here is the answer."

"And to Countess d'Orbigny?"

"She is much obliged; she arrived yesterday from Normandy, she did not expect an answer so soon; here is her letter. I have also been to the Marquis d'Harville's steward, as he required, for the charges of the contract I signed the other day at the hotel."

"You told him that it was not pressing?"

"Yes, but he would pay it. There is the money. Ah! I forgot that this card was here, below, at the porter's; the words in pencil written underneath by the porter; this gentleman asked for M. Ferrand; he left this."

"'WALTER MURPHY,'" read the chief clerk; and then in pencil, "'*Will return at three o'clock on important business*.' I do not know this name."

"Oh! I forgot," continued Chalomel; "M. Badinot said it was all right, that M. Ferrand should do as he pleased; that would be always right."

"He did not give a written answer?"

"No, sir, he said he hadn't time."

"Very well."

"M. Charles Robert will also come in the course of the day to speak to the governor; it appears he fought a duel yesterday with the Duke of Lucenay."

"Is he wounded?"

"I believe not, or they would have told me of it at his house."

"Look! here is a carriage stopping."

"Oh! the fine horses, are they not mettlesome."

"And the fat English coachman, with his white wig and brown livery, with silver lace and epaulets like a colonel!"

"An embassador, surely."

"And the chasseur, has not he enough silver lace?"

"And grand mustachios."

"Hold!" said Chalomel, "it is the carriage of the Viscount de Saint Remy."

"Ain't it stylish? Whew!"

Soon afterward Saint Remy entered the office. We have described the charming face, the exquisite elegance, the ravishing bearing of Saint Remy, arrived the previous evening from Arnouville Farm, belonging to the Duchess Lucenay, where he had found a refuge from the bailiffs.

Saint Remy entered the office hastily, his hat on, his manner haughty and proud, his eyes half closed, asking, in a very impertinent way, without looking at any one, "The notary? where is he?"

"M. Ferrand is busy in his private office," answered the head clerk; "if you will wait a moment, sir, he will receive you."

"I wait?"

"But, sir——"

"There are no 'but, sirs'; go and tell him that M. de Saint Remy is here. I find it very singular that this notary makes me wait in his antechamber; it smells of the stove."

"Please to pass into the next room, sir," said the clerk; "I will go at once and inform M. Ferrand."

Saint Remy shrugged his shoulders, and followed the head clerk. At the end of a quarter of an hour, which seemed to him very long, and changed his contempt into rage, Saint Remy was introduced into the cabinet of the notary. Nothing could be more curious than the contrast of these two men, both profound physiognomists, and generally accustomed to judge at a first glance with whom they had to deal.

Saint Remy saw Jacques Ferrand for the first time. He was struck with the characteristics of this wan, rigid, impassible face; the expression concealed by the large green spectacles, the head half-hidden in an old black silk cap.

The notary was seated before his desk in a leathern arm-chair, beside a broken-down fireplace, filled with ashes, in which were smoking two black stumps. Curtains of green muslin, almost in tatters, suspended from iron rods, concealed the lower part of the windows, and cast into this cabinet, already dark enough, a dull and disagreeable light. Shelves of black wood, filled with labeled boxes; some chairs of cherry wood, covered with yellow Utrecht velvet; a mahogany clock; a yellow, moist, and slippery floor; a ceiling filled with cracks, and, ornamented with garlands of spider-webs; such was the sanctum sanctorum of Jacques Ferrand.

The viscount had not advanced two steps, had not said a single word, before the notary who knew him by reputation, hated him already. In the first place, he saw in him, so to speak, a rival in knavery; and, although Ferrand was of a mean and ignoble appearance himself, he did not the less detest in others elegance, grace, and youth; above all when an air deeply insolent accompanied these advantages.

The notary ordinarily affected a sort of rudeness, almost gross, toward his clients, who only felt more esteem for him for these boorish manners. He promised himself to redouble this brutality toward the viscount.

He, knowing M. Ferrand only by reputation, expected to find in him a kind of scrivener, good-natured or ridiculous, the viscount figuring to himself always that men of proverbial probity must be simpletons. Far from this, the other's looks imposed on the viscount an undefinable feeling, half fear, half hatred, although he had no serious reason to fear or hate him. Thus, in consequence of his resolute character, Saint Remy increased his insolence and habitual foppery of manner. The notary kept his cap upon his head; the viscount retained his hat, and cried from the door in a loud, sharp voice:

"It is, by Jove! very strange, that you give me the trouble to come here, instead of sending to me for the money for the bills I have indorsed for this Badinot, for which the fellow has sued me. You should not expose me to wait a quarter of an hour in your antechamber; that is not so polite as it might be."

Ferrand, without paying the least attention, finished a calculation he was making, wiped his pen methodically on the sponge which lay near his ink-stand, and raised toward the viscount his cold, unearthly, flattened face, encumbered with the green spectacles.

It looked like a death's head, whose eyes had been replaced by great, fixed, glassy sockets. After having looked at him for a moment in silence, he said to the viscount, in a rough, short tone, "Where is the money?"

Such coolness exasperated Saint Remy.

He-he! the idol of the women, the envy of men, the paragon of the best company in Paris, the renowned duelist, not to produce more effect on a miserable notary! It was odious; although he was *tete-a-tete* with Jacques Ferrand, his self-pride revolted.

"Where are the bills?"

With the ends of his fingers, hard as iron, and covered with red hair, the notary, without answering, struck on a large portfolio of leather placed near him.

Decided to be equally laconic, although bursting with rage, the viscount took from the pocket of his coat a small book of Russian leather, clasped with golden hasps, drew out forty-one thousand franc notes and showed them to the notary.

"How much?" asked he.

"Forty thousand francs."

"Give them to me."

"Here, and let us finish quickly, sir; do your business, pay yourself, hand me back the papers," said the viscount, throwing the packet impatiently on the table.

The notary took them, arose and examined them near the window, turning them over one by one with an attention so scrupulous and so insulting to Saint Remy, that he grew pale with rage.

The notary, as if he had suspected the thoughts which agitated the viscount, shook his head, half

turned toward him, and said, in an undefinable tone, "There are such things as—"

For a moment astonished, Saint Remy replied, dryly, "What?"

"Counterfeits," answered the notary, continuing to examine those he held closely.

"For what purpose do you make this remark to me, Sir?"

Jacques Ferrand stopped a moment, looked steadily at the viscount through his glasses; then, shrugging his shoulders, he turned again to counting and examining the bills.

"By George, Master Notary, you must know, when I ask a question, I am always answered!" cried Saint Remy, irritated beyond measure at the calmness of Jacques Ferrand.

"*These* are good," said the notary, turning toward his bureau, whence he took a bundle of stamped papers, to which were annexed two bills of exchange; he afterward placed one of the notes for a thousand francs and three rouleaux of one hundred francs on the back of the papers; then he said to Saint Remy, pointing his finger to the money and bills, "There is what is to come to you from the forty thousand francs; my client has ordered me to collect the bill of costs."

The viscount had with great difficulty contained himself while Jacques Ferrand arranged his accounts. Instead of answering him and taking the money, he cried, in a voice trembling with anger, "I ask you, sir, why you said to me, respecting the bank bills that I have just given you, *that there were such things as forged notes?*"

"Why?"

"Yes."

"Because I have sent for you here concerning a forgery." The notary turned his green glasses full on the viscount.

"How does this forgery affect me?"

After a moment's pause Ferrand said, with a severe tone, "Are you acquainted, sir, with the duties of a notary?"

"The duties are perfectly clear to me, sir. I had just now forty thousand francs; I have now remaining but thirteen hundred."

"You are very jocose, sir. I will tell you, that a notary is to temporal affairs what a confessor is to spiritual ones; from his profession he often knows ignoble secrets."

"What next, sir?"

"He is often obliged to be in relations with rogues."

"What after this, sir?"

"He ought, as much as in his power, to prevent an honorable name from being dragged in the mire."

"What have I in common with all this?"

"Your father has left you a respected name, which you dishoner, sir!"

"What do you dare to say?"

"But for the interest that this name inspires to all honest people, instead of being cited here before me, you would have been at this moment before the police."

"I do not comprehend you."

"About two months since, you discounted, through the agency of a broker, a bill for fifty-eight thousand francs, drawn by the house of Meulaert and Co., of Hamburgh, in favor of one William Smith, and payable in three months, at Grimaldi's, banker, in Paris."

"Well!"

"That bill is a forgery."

"That is not true."

"This bill is a forgery! the house of Meulaert has never contracted any engagement with William Smith; they do not know him."

"Can it be true!" cried Saint Remy, with as much surprise as indignation, "but then I have been horribly deceived, sir, for I received this bill as ready money."

"From whom?"

"From William Smith himself; the house of Meulaert is so well known, I knew so well myself the probity of Smith, that I accepted this bill in payment of a debt he owed me."

"William Smith has never existed; it is an imaginary person."

"Sir, you insult me!"

"His signature is as false as the others."

"I tell you, sir, that William Smith does exist; but I have, without doubt, been the dupe of a horrible breach of confidence."

"Poor young man!"

"Explain yourself!" cried Saint Remy, whose anxiety and humiliation were increased by this ironical pity.

"In a word, the actual holder of the bill is convinced that you have committed the forgery."

"Sir!"

"He pretends to have the proof; two days ago he came to me to beg me to send for you here, and to propose to return you this forged note, under an arrangement. So far, all was right; this is not; and I only tell you for information. He asks one hundred thousand francs. Today even, or to-morrow at noon, the forgery will be made known to the public prosecutor."

"This is indignity!"

"And what is more, absurdity. You are ruined. You were prosecuted for a sum that you have just paid me, from some resource I do not know of: this is what I told to this third party. He answered, 'That a certain great lady, who is very rich, would not leave you in this embarrassment.'"

"Enough, sir, enough!"

"Another indignity! another absurdity! we agree."

"In short, sir, what do they want?"

"Unworthily to take advantage of an unworthy action. I have consented to make this proposition known to you, in branding it as an honest man ought to brand it. Now it is your affair. If you are guilty, choose between the court of assize or the terms proposed. My part is altogether professional. I will have nothing more to do with so dirty a business. The third party's name is M. Petit Jean, oil merchant; he lives on the banks of the Seine, No. 10, Quai de Billy. Settle with him. You are worthy of each other, if you are a forger, as he affirms."

Saint Remy had entered the notary's with an insolent voice and lofty head. Although he had committed in his life some disgraceful actions, there remained in him still a certain pride of lineage—a natural courage which had never failed him. At the commencement of this conversation, regarding the notary as an adversary quite unworthy of him, he treated him with contempt.

When Jacques Ferrand spoke of forgery, the viscount felt himself crushed. He found the notary had the advantage in his turn. Except for his great self-command, he could not have concealed the great impression made upon him by this unexpected accusation, for the consequences might be most fatal to him, of which even the notary had no idea.

After a moment's reflection and silence, he determined—though so proud, so irritable, so vain of his bravery—to throw himself on the mercy of this vulgar man, who had so roughly spoken the austere language of probity. "Sir, you give me a proof of interest for which I thank you; I regret the harshness of my opening words," said Saint Remy, in a cordial manner.

"I do not interest myself in you at all," answered the notary, brutally. "Your father was honor itself; I did not wish to see his name in the court of assizes, that's all."

"I repeat to yon, sir, that I am incapable of the infamy of which I am accused."

"You can tell that to M. Petit Jean."

"But I avow that the absence of Mr. Smith, who has so unworthily taken advantage of my good faith —"

"Infamous Smith!"

"The absence of Mr. Smith places me in a cruel position; I am innocent; let them accuse me, I will prove it, but such an accusation always injures a gallant man."

"What next?"

"Be generous enough to use the sum I have just paid you to quiet, in part, this third person."

"This money belongs to my client—it is sacred."

"But in two or three days I will repay you."

"You cannot do it."

"I have resources."

"None available, at least. Your furniture, your horses, no longer belong to you, as you may say; which to me has the appearance of fraud."

"You are very hard, sir. But admitting this, will I not turn everything into money, in a situation so desperate? Only as it is impossible for me to procure between this and to-morrow one hundred thousand francs, I conjure you, employ this money to withdraw this unhappy draught. Or you, who are so rich, make me an advance; do not leave me in such a position."

"I make myself responsible for a hundred thousand francs for you!
Really, are you a fool?"

"Sir, I supplicate you, in the name of my father, of whom you have spoken, be so kind as to—"

"I am kind for those who deserve it," said the notary, rudely; "an honest man; I hate sharpers; and I should not be sorry to see one of you fine gentlemen, who are without law or gospel, impious and debauched, some fine day, standing in the pillory as an example for others. But, I hear, your horses are very restless, sir viscount," said the notary, smiling, and showing his black teeth.

At this moment some one knocked at the door. "Who is it?" asked
Jacques Ferrand.

"Her ladyship the Countess d'Orbigny," said the clerk.

"Beg her to wait a moment."

"It is the step-mother of the Marquise d'Harville," cried Saint Remy.

"Yes, sir. She has an appointment with me; so, good-morning."

"Not a word of this, sir," said Saint Remy, in a threatening tone.

"I have told you, sir, that a notary was as discreet as a confessor."

Jacques Ferrand rang the bell, and the clerk appeared.

"Show in her ladyship." Then, addressing the viscount, he added, "Take these thirteen hundred francs, sir; it will be so much on account with M. Petit Jean."

Lady d'Orbigny (formerly Madame Roland) entered as the viscount went out, his features contracted with rage for having uselessly humiliated himself before the notary.

"Oh, good-morning, Saint Remy!" said the countess; "it is a long time since I have seen you."

"Yes, madame; since the marriage of D'Harville, of which I was a witness, I have not had the honor to meet you," said Saint Remy, bowing, and suddenly assuming a most smiling and affable expression. "Since then, you have always remained in Normandy?"

"Dear me! yes. M. d'Orbigny cannot live now but in the country; and where he lives, I live. Thus you

see in me a true 'county lady.' I have not been to Paris since the marriage of my dear step-daughter with excellent D'Harville. Do you see him often?"

"D'Harville has become very savage and very morose. I meet him very seldom in society," said Saint Remy, with a shade of impatience; for this conversation was insupportable, both from its inopportuneness, and because the notary seemed to be much amused. But the stepmother of Madame d'Harville, enchanted at this meeting with a beau of society, was not the woman to let her prey escape so easily.

"And my dear step-daughter," continued she, "is not, I hope, as savage as her husband?"

"Madame d'Harville is very fashionable, and always much sought after, as a pretty woman should be; but I fear, madame, I trespass on your time, and—"

"Not at all, I assure you. I am quite fortunate to meet the 'mold of form, the glass of fashion;' in ten minutes I shall know all about Paris, as if I had never left it. And your dear friend, De Lucenay, who was with you a witness of D'Harville's marriage?"

"More of an original than ever; he set out for the East, and he returned just in time to receive yesterday morning a thrust from a sword; of no great harm, however."

"The poor duke! and his wife, still beautiful and ravishing?"

"You know, madame, that I have the honor to be one of her best friends; my testimony on this subject would be suspected. Will you, madame, on your return to Aubiers, do me the honor to remember me to M. d'Orbigny?"

"He will be very sensible of your kind recollections, I assure you, for he often asks after you and your success. He says you remind him of the Duke de Lauzun."

"This comparison alone is quite an eulogium; but, unfortunately for me, it is much more kind than true. Adieu, madame; for I dare not hope that you will do me the honor to receive me before your departure."

"I should be distressed if you should take the trouble to call upon me. I am for a few days at furnished lodgings; but if, this summer or fall, you pass our way to some of the fashionable country-seats, grant us a few days only by way of contrast, and to rest yourself with some poor country-folks from the giddy round of the chateau life, so elegant and so extravagant; for it is always holidays where you go."

"Madame——"

"I need not tell you how happy D'Orbigny and myself would be to receive you; but adieu, sir: I fear that the benevolent humorist," pointing to the notary, "will become tired of our talk."

"Just the contrary, madame, just the contrary," said Ferrand, in an accent which redoubled the restrained rage of the viscount.

"Acknowledge that M. Ferrand is a terrible man," continued Madame d'Orbigny; "but take care, since he is, fortunately for you, charged with your affairs, he will scold you furiously; he is without pity. But what do I say? A man like you to have M. Ferrand for notary—it is a sign of amendment: for every one knows he never lets his clients commit any follies without informing them of it. Oh! he does not wish to be the notary of every one." Then, addressing Jacques Ferrand, she said, "Do you know, Mr. Puritan, that this is a superb conversion you have made here—to render wise and prudent the king of fashion!"

"It is exactly a conversion, madame; M. le Vicomte leaves ray cabinet altogether different from what he entered it."

"When I say you perform miracles, it is not astonishing: you are a saint."

"Oh, madame, you flatter me," said Jacques Ferrand.

Saint Remy profoundly saluted Madame d'Orbigny; and at the moment of leaving the notary, wishing to try a last effort to soften him, he said, in a careless manner, which nevertheless disclosed profound anxiety:

"Decidedly, my dear M. Ferrand, you will not grant me what I ask?"

"Some folly, without doubt! Be inexorable, my dear Puritan," cried Madame d'Orbigny, laughing. "You hear, sir; I cannot act contrary to the advice of so handsome a lady."

"My dear M. Ferrand, let us speak seriously of serious things, and you know that this is so. You refuse decidedly?" asked the viscount, with anguish he could not conceal.

The notary was cruel enough to appear to hesitate; Saint Remy had a moment of hope.

"How, man of iron, you relent?" said the step-mother of Madame d'Harville, laughing; "you submit also to the charms of the irresistible?"

"Faith, madame, I was on the point of yielding, as you say, but you make me blush for my weakness," said Ferrand; then turning to the viscount, with an expression of which he comprehended all the signification, he continued, "There, seriously, it is impossible; I will not suffer that, through caprice, you should commit such an absurdity. M. le Vicomte, I regard myself as the mentor of my clients; I have no other family, and I should regard myself as an accomplice of any errors I should allow them to commit."

"Oh! the Puritan, the Puritan!" cried Madame d'Orbigny.

"Yet, see M. Petit Jean; he will think, I am sure, as I do; and, like me, he will refuse."

Saint Remy left in a state of desperation. After a moment's thought, he said, "It must be!" Then, addressing his footman, who held open the door of the carriage, "To Lucenay House." While Saint Remy is on his way to the duchess, we will be present with the reader at the interview between Ferrand and the stepmother of Madame d'Harville.

CHAPTER VII.

THE WILL.

Madame D'Orbigny was a slender blonde, with eyebrows nearly white, and pale blue eyes, almost round; her speech honeyed, her look hypocritical, her manners insinuating and insidious.

"What a charming young man is the Viscount de Saint Remy!" said she to Jacques Ferrand, when the viscount had gone.

"Charming; but, madame, let us talk of business. You wrote me from Normandy that you wished to consult me on some grave affairs."

"Have you not always been my adviser since good Dr. Polidori referred me to you? Apropos, have you heard from him?" asked Madame d'Orbigny, in a careless manner.

"Since his departure from Paris he has not written me once," answered the notary, no less indifferently. We must inform the reader that these two personages lied most boldly to each other. The notary had seen Polidori recently (one of his two accomplices), and had proposed to him to go to Asnieres, to the Martials, the freshwater pirates (of whom we shall speak presently), under the name of Dr. Vincent, to poison Louise Morel. The stepmother of Madame d'Harville came to Paris expressly to have a conference with this scoundrel, who now went by the name of Caesar Bradamanti.

"But it is not concerning the good doctor," said Madame d'Orbigny, "you see me much troubled; my husband is sick—he grows worse daily. Without causing me serious fears, his condition troubles me, or, rather, troubles him," continued she, wiping her tearless eyes.

"What is the matter?"

"He continually speaks of his final arrangements—of his will." Here Madame d'Orbigny hid her face in her handkerchief for some moments.

"That is sad, doubtless," said the notary; "but this precaution is not alarming. What are his intentions, madame?"

"How can I tell? You know well, when he touches on this subject I change it."

"But has he said nothing positive?"

"I believe," said Madaine d'Orbigny, in a most disinterested manner, "I believe he wishes not only to give me all the law allows—but—oh! hold, I beg you, let us not speak of this!"

"What shall we speak of?"

"Alas! you are right, relentless man; we must return to the sad subject which brought me here. Well, D'Orbigny carries his kindness so far as to wish to convert a part of his fortune, and give me a considerable sum."

"But his daughter—his daughter?" cried Ferrand, with severity. "I ought to tell you that, for a year past, M. d'Harville has given me charge of his affairs. I have lately bought for him a magnificent property. You know my roughness in business. It imports little to me that M. d'Harville is my client; that which I plead is the cause of justice. If your husband takes toward his daughter, Madame d'Harville, a determination which seems to me not proper, I tell you plainly he must not count on me. Straightforward! such has always been my line of conduct."

"And mine also. Thus I repeat to my husband always just as you have said: 'Your daughter has treated you badly; so be it; but that is no reason to disinherit her.'"

"Very well—all right; and what did he answer?"

"He answered, 'I will leave my daughter twenty-five thousand francs a year. She had more than a million from her mother; her husband has an enormous income. Can I not leave the rest to you, my tender friend, the sole support, the sole consolation of my old age, my guardian angel?' I repeat these too flattering words," said Madame d'Orbigny, with a modest sigh, "to show you his goodness toward me; yet I have always refused his offers; seeing which, he decided to beg me to come and find you."

"But I do not know M. d'Orbigny."

"But he, like every one else, knows your probity."

"But how did he address you to me?"

"To silence my scruples. He said, 'I do not ask you to consult my notary, you will think him too much under my orders; but I will leave it to the decision of a man whose honesty is proverbial, M. Ferrand. If he finds your delicacy compromised by your acceptance of my offer, we will talk no more about it; if not, you acquiesce.' 'I consent,' said I, and in this way you have become our arbitrator. 'If he approves,' added my husband, 'I will send him a power of attorney to realize, in my name, my real estate and bank stock; he will keep this sum on deposit, and, after my death, you will at least have an income worthy of you."

Never, perhaps, had Ferrand felt more the value of his spectacles than at this moment. Without them, Madame d'Orbigny would have seen how his eyes sparkled at the word "deposit."

He answered, however, in a morose tone, "This is troublesome; this is for the tenth or twelfth time that I have been chosen an arbiter, always under pretext of my probity; that is the only word in their mouths—my probity! my probity! Great advantage; it only gives me trouble and—"

"My good M. Ferrand, come, don't scold; you will write to M. d'Orbigny; he awaits your letter, to send you his full power to realize the sum."

"How much is it?"

"He said, I believe, that it was about four or five hundred thousand francs."

"The amount is not so large as I thought. After all, you have devoted yourself to M. d'Orbigny. His daughter is very rich—you have nothing; I can approve of this. It appears to me you might accept."

"Really, you think so?" said Madame d'Orbigny, dupe, like every one else, of the proverbial honesty of the notary, and not undeceived in this respect by Polidori.

"You may accept," said he.

"I shall accept then," said Madame d'Orbigny, with a sigh.

The clerk knocked at the door. "Who is it?" demanded Ferrand.

"Her ladyship, the Countess M'Gregor."

"Let her wait a moment."

"I leave you, then, my dear M. Ferrand," said Madame d'Orbigny; "you will write to my husband, since he desires it, and he will send you full powers tomorrow."

"I will write."

"Adieu, my worthy and good counselor."

"Ah! you people of the world do not know how disagreeable it is to take charge of such deposits—the responsibility which bears on us. I tell you there is nothing more detestable than this fine reputation for probity which brings one nothing but drudgery."

"And the admiration of good people."

"Praise the Lord! I place otherwise than here below the recompense I seek for," said Ferrand, in a sanctified tone.

To Madame d'Orbigny succeeded Countess Sarah M'Gregor.

Sarah entered the cabinet of the notary with her habitual coolness and assurance. Jacques Ferrand did not know her; he was ignorant of the object of her visit. He observed her very closely, in the hope to make a new dupe; and, notwithstanding the impassibility of the marble face, he remarked a slight tremor, which appeared to him to betray concealed embarrassment.

The notary arose from his chair, and handed a seat to the countess, saying, "You asked for a meeting, madame, yesterday. I was so much occupied that I could not send you an answer until this morning; I make you a thousand excuses."

"I desired to see you, sir, on business of the greatest importance. Your reputation has made me hope my business with you will be successful."

The notary bowed in his chair. "I know, sir, that your discretion is well tried."

"It is my duty, madame."

"You are, sir, a rigid and incorruptible man."

"Granted, madame."

"Yet, if one should say to you, sir, it depends on you to restore life—more than life—reason to an unhappy mother, would you have the courage to refuse?"

"State facts, madame, I will answer."

"About fourteen years since, in December, 1824, a young man, dressed in mourning, came to propose to you to take, for an annuity, the sum of one hundred and fifty thousand francs, for a child of three years, whose parents desired to remain unknown."

"Continue, madame," said the notary, avoiding a direct answer.

"You consented to receive this amount, and to assure the child an income of eight thousand francs. The one-half of this amount was to be added to the capital until its majority; the other half was to be paid by you to the person who should take charge of this little girl."

"Continue, madame."

"At the end of two years," said Sarah, without being able to conquer a slight emotion, "the 28th November, 1827, this child died."

"Before continuing this conversation, madame, I shall ask you what interest you have in this affair?"

"The mother of this little girl is my *sister*, sir; I have here, for proof of what I advance, the publication of the death of this poor little thing, the letters from the person who had care of her, the receipt of one of your clients, with whom you placed the fifty thousand crowns."

"Let me see these papers, madame."

Quite astonished not to be believed at her word, Sarah drew from a portfolio several papers, which the notary closely examined.

"Ah, well, madame, what do you want? The notice of the death is quite correct; the fifty thousand crowns became the property of M. Petit Jean, my client, by the death of the child; as to the interests, they were always punctually paid by me until its decease."

"Nothing can be more correct than your conduct in this affair; sir, I am pleased to acknowledge it.

The woman to whom the child was confided has also a right to our gratitude; she has taken the greatest care of my poor little niece."

"That is true, madame; I was so much pleased with her conduct, that, after the death of the child, I took her in my service; she is still there."

"Mrs. Seraphin is in your service, sir?"

"For fourteen years, as housekeeper."

"Since it is thus, sir, she can be of great assistance, if you will grant a demand which will appear strange, perhaps, even culpable at first; but, when you shall know with what intention—"

"A culpable demand, madame; I do not think you are any more capable of making than I am of hearing it."

"I know, sir, that you are the last person to whom one should address such a request; but I place all my hopes—my sole hope—in your pity. In every case I rely on your discretion."

"Yes, madame."

"I continue, then. The death of this poor little girl has cast her mother into such a state, her grief is as poignant at the present day as it was fourteen years since; and, after having feared for her life, to-day we fear for her reason."

"Poor mother!" said Ferrand, with a sigh.

"Oh! yes, very unfortunate mother, sir; for she could only blush at the birth of her daughter, at the time she lost her; while now circumstances are such, that my sister, if her child still lived, could own her, be proud of her, never leave her. Thus, this incessant regret, joined to other griefs, makes us fear for her reason."

"Unfortunately, nothing can be done for her."

"Oh, yes."

"How, madame?"

"Suppose some one should come and say to the poor mother. 'Your child was supposed to be dead; she is not; the woman who had care of her infancy can affirm it.'"

"Such a falsehood would be cruel, madame. Why cause vain hopes to this poor mother?"

"But if this was not a falsehood, sir; or, rather, if this supposition could be realized?"

"By a miracle! If it only needed, to obtain it, my prayers joined to yours, I would pray from the bottom of my heart. Alas! there can be no doubt of her death."

"I know it, alas! sir, the child is dead: and yet, if you wish it, the evil is not irreparable."

"It is an enigma, madame."

"I will speak, then, more plainly. If my sister finds to-morrow her child, not only will she be restored to health, but, what is more, she is sure to marry the father of this child, now as free as she is. My niece died at six years. Separated from her parents at this tender age, they have no recollection of her. Suppose that a young girl of seventeen could be found; that my sister should be told, 'Here is your child; you have been deceived; certain interests required that she should be thought dead. The woman who had charge of her, a respectable notary will affirm, will prove to you that it is she—'"

Jacques Ferrand, after having allowed the countess to speak without interrupting her, rose suddenly, and cried, in an indigant manner, "Enough, enough, madame. Oh! this is infamous."

"Sir!"

"To dare to propose to me—to me—to palm off a child—a criminal action! It is the first time in my life that I have received such an outrage, and I have not deserved it—heaven knows."

"But, who is wronged by it? My sister and the person she desires to marry are single; both regret bitterly the child they have lost; to deceive them is to restore to them happiness—life; it is to assure some forsaken young girl a most happy lot: thus it is a noble, generous action, and not a crime."

"Truly," cried the notary, with increasing indignation, "I see how the most execrable projects can be colored with—"

"But reflect."

"I repeat to you, madame, that it is infamous. It is a shame to see a woman of your rank contriving such abominations, to which your sister, I hope, is a stranger."

"Sir!"

"Enough, madame, enough! I am not a gallant, not I. I tell you the naked truth."

Sarah cast on the notary one of her dark looks, and said coldly, "You refuse?"

"No new insult, madame!"

"Take care!"

"Threats?"

"Threats! and to prove to you that they will not be in vain, learn, in the first place, that I have no sister."

"What, madame?"

"I am the mother of this child."

"You?"

"I invented this fable to interest you. You are without pity: I raise the mask. You want war! well, war be it."

"War! because I refuse to lend myself to a criminal act? what audacity!"

"Listen to me, sir; your reputation as an honest man is great—known far and near."

"Because it is merited. You must have lost your reason before you would have dared to make such a proposition?"

"Better than any one, I know, sir, how much one ought to suspect these reputations of such strict virtue, which often conceal the gallantries of women and the scoundrelism of men."

"You dare to say this, madame?"

"Since the commencement of our conversation, I do not know wherefore, I doubted that you deserve the consideration and esteem which you enjoy."

"Truly, madame, this doubt does honor to your perspicacity."

"Does it not so? for this doubt is founded on nothing—on mere instinct—on inexplicable presentiments; but rarely has this boding deceived me."

"Let us finish this conversation, madame."

"Before we do so, know my determination. I begin by telling you, that I am convinced of the death of my poor child; but, no matter, I will pretend she is not dead; the most unlikely events are often brought about. You are at this moment in such a position that you must have many envious rivals; they will regard it as a piece of good fortune to attack you. I will furnish means to them."

"You!"

"I, in attacking you under an absurd pretext, on an irregularity in the registry of death, let us say—no matter, I will maintain my child is not dead. As I have the greatest interest in having it believed that she still lives, although lost, this process will serve me in giving much notoriety to this affair; a mother who reclaims her child is always interesting; I shall have on my side those who are envious of you, your enemies, and all those who are feeling and romantic."

"This is as foolish as wicked. Why should I? For what interest should
I say your child is dead, if she were not?"

"That is true, the motive is sufficiently embarrassing to find. Happily, lawyers are plenty. But a thought! ah! an excellent one: wishing to divide with your client the sum paid for the annuity, you have

caused the child to be carried off."

The notary, without moving a muscle of his face, shrugged his shoulders. "If I had been criminal enough to do that, instead of sending her off, I would have killed her!"

[Illustration: THE DUEL]

Sarah shuddered with surprise, remained silent for a moment, then resumed with bitterness: "For a holy man, that is a thought of crime profoundly deep! Have I touched to the quick in shooting at random? This sets me thinking. One last word: you see what kind of a woman I am—I crush without pity all who cross my path. Reflect well; to-morrow you must decide! you can do with impunity what you are asked. In his joy, the father of my child would not discuss the probability of such a resurrection, if our falsehoods, which will render him so happy, are adroitly combined. He has, besides, no other proofs of the death of our child, than what I wrote to him fourteen years since; it will be easy for me to persuade him that I deceived him on this subject; for then I had just cause of complaint against him. I will tell him that in my anger I wished to break, in his eyes, the last link which still held us together. You cannot therefore in any way be compromised; affirm only, irreproachable man, affirm that all has been concerted between you and me and Mrs. Seraphin, and you will be believed. As to the money placed with you, that concerns me alone; it shall remain with your client, who must be ignorant of all this; finally, you shall name your own recompense."

Jacques Ferrand preserved all his coolness, notwithstanding his position, so strange and dangerous for him. The countess, believing really in the death of her child, came to ask him to represent as living this child, whom he had himself *passed for dead* fourteen years before. He was too cunning, and knew too well the perils of his situation, not to comprehend the bearing of Sarah's threats. Although admirably constructed, the edifice of the notary's reputation was built on sand. The public as easily detach as they attach themselves, and are pleased with the right to trample under foot those whom they once had exalted to the skies. How foresee the consequences of the first attack on the reputation of Jacques Ferrand? However ridiculous this attack might be, its boldness alone might awaken suspicion.

The pertinacity of Sarah, and her obduracy, alarmed the notary. This mother had not shown for a moment any feeling in speaking of her child; she had only seemed to consider her death as the loss of a means of action. Such dispositions are implacable in their objects, and in their vengeance. Wishing to give himself time to seek some means to avoid the dangerous blow, Ferrand said coldly to Sarah, "You have asked until noon to-morrow. It is I, madame, who give you until the next day to renounce a project, of which you know not the gravity. If, meanwhile, I do not receive a letter from you in which you announce that you have abandoned this foolish and criminal undertaking, you will learn to your cost that justice knows how to protect honest people who refuse to lend themselves to culpable acts."

"That is to say, sir, that you demand one day more to reflect on my proposition? That is a good sign; I grant it to you. The day after to-morrow, at this hour, I will return here, and it shall be between us peace or war; I repeat it to you, a war to the knife, without mercy or pity;" and Sarah disappeared.

"All goes well," said she to herself. "This miserable young girl, for whom Rudolph was so much interested—thanks to old One Eye, who has delivered me from her, is no longer to be feared. The skill of Rudolph has saved Madame d'Harville from the snare I placed for her, but it is impossible she can escape from the new plot I have contrived; she will then be forever lost to him. Then, sad, discouraged, isolated from all ties, will he not be in such a disposition of mind, that he will not desire anything better than to be the dupe of a falsehood, to which, with the aid of the notary, I can give every appearance of truth? And the notary will assist me for I have alarmed him. I can easily find a young orphan girl, interesting and poor who, instructed by me, will fill the part of our child, so bitterly regretted by Rudolph. I know the grandeur and generosity of his heart. Yes, to give a name and rank to her whom he believes to be his daughter, until then unhappy and abandoned, he will renew those ties which I had thought indissoluble. The predictions of my nurse will at length be realized, and I shall have this time surely attained the constant aim of my life—a crown." Hardly had Sarah left the mansion of the notary, than Charles Robert entered it, descending from an elegant cabriolet: he turned toward the private cabinet, as one having free admission.

CHAPTER VIII.

CHARLES ROBERT.

The new-comer entered without any ceremony the notary's office, who was in a very thoughtful and splenetic mood, and who said to him very roughly, "I reserve the afternoon for my clients; when you wish to speak to me, come in the morning."

"My dear scribbler" (this was one of the pleasantries of M. Robert), "it is concerning an important affair, in the first place, and then I wish to assure you myself concerning the fears that you might have."

"What fears?"

"Do you not know?"

"What?"

"My duel with the Duke de Lucenay. Are you ignorant of it?"

"Yes."

"Really?"

"Why this duel?"

"Something very serious, which required blood. Just imagine that, in the face of the whole embassy, M. de Lucenay allowed himself to say to me, to my face, that I had a cough, a complaint that must be very ridiculous."

"You fought for this?"

"And what the devil would you have one to fight for? Do you think that one could, in cold blood, hear one's self accused of having a cough? and before a charming woman, too; what is more, before a little marchioness, who, in brief—it could not be overlooked."

"Certainly."

"We soldiers, you understand, we are always on the look out. My seconds, the day before yesterday, had an interview with those of the duke. I had the question placed very plainly; a duel or a retraction."

"A retraction of what?"

"Of the cough, by Jove, which he allowed himself to attribute to me."
The notary shrugged his shoulders.

"On their side the duke's seconds said, 'We render justice to the honorable character of M. Charles Robert; but his grace of Lucenay cannot, ought not, will not retract.' 'Then, gentlemen,' responded my seconds, 'M. de Lucenay still continues to insist that M. Charles Robert has a cough?' 'Yes, gentlemen; but he does not intend it as an attack upon M. Robert's reputation.' 'Then let him retract.' 'No, gentlemen; M. de Lucenay recognizes M. Robert for a gallant man, but he insists that he has a cough.' You see there was no way of arranging so serious an affair."

"None. You were insulted in that which a man holds to be most respectable."

"So they agreed on the day and hour of meeting, and yesterday morning at Vincennes, all passed in the most honorable manner. I touched the duke slightly in the arm with my sword; the seconds declared my honor satisfied. Then the duke said, in a loud voice, 'I never retract before an affair; afterward, it is different: it is therefore my duty to proclaim that I falsely accused M. Charles Robert of having a cough. Gentlemen, I confess, not only that my loyal adversary has no cough, but I affirm that he is incapable of ever having it.' Then the duke extended his hand to me cordially, saying, 'Are you content? Henceforth we are friends in life until death.' I answered, that I owed him as much. The duke has done everything that was right. He might have said nothing at all, or contented himself with saying that I had not the cough; but to affirm that I never could have one was a very delicate proceeding on his part."

"This is what I call courage well employed. But what do you mean?"

"My dear banker" (another pleasantry of M. Robert), "it concerns something of great importance to me. You know that in our agreement, when I advanced you 350,000 francs, in order that you might finish the purchase of your notariat, it was stipulated that, by giving you three months' notice, I could withdraw from you this amount for which you now pay interest."

"What next?"

"Well!" said M. Robert, with hesitation, "I; no, but—"

"What?"

"You perceive it is pure caprice; an idea to become a landed proprietor, my dear law-writer."

"Explain yourself; you annoy me."

"In a word, I have been offered a territorial acquisition, and, if it is not disagreeable to you I should wish, that is to say, I should desire, to withdraw my funds from you; and I come to give you notice, according to our agreement."

"Humph!"

"It does not make you angry, I hope!"

"Why should it?"

"Because you might think—"

"I may think?"

"That I am the echo of rumors."

"What rumors?"

"No, nothing; absurdities."

"But, tell me then?"

"It is no reason because there *are* reports in circulation about you——"

"About me?"

"There is not a word of truth in it—that you have been doing some bad business; pure scandal, no doubt, like when we speculated on the 'Change together. That report soon fell to the ground; for I wish that you and I might become——"

"Then you think your money is no longer safe with me?"

"Not so; but I prefer to have it in my hands."

"Wait a minute."

Ferrand shut the drawer of his bureau, and rose.

"Where are you going to, my dear banker?"

"To look for something to convince you of the truth of the rumors concerning me," said the notary, ironically. And opening a little private staircase which led to the pavilion, without going through the office, he disappeared.

Hardly had he gone when the clerk knocked at the door. "Come in," said
Charles Robert.

"Is not M. Ferrand here?"

"No, my worthy blue-baggist."

"A veiled lady wishes to speak to master instantly, on very pressing business."

"Worthy fellow, your master will return directly; I will tell him. Is she pretty?"

"One must be a wizard to find this out; she wears a black veil, so thick that her face cannot be seen."

"Good, good! I'll take a look at her when I go out."

The clerk left the room.

"Where the devil is he gone to?" said Charles to himself. "If these reports are absurd, so much the better. Never mind, I prefer to have my money. I will buy the chateau they have spoken to me of, with Gothic towers of the time of Louis XIV.; that will give me a noble appearance. It will not be like my affair with this prude of a Madame d'Harville—fine game! Oh, no; I have not made my expenses, as the

stupid old portress in the Rue du Temple said, with her fantastic periwig. This pleasantry has cost meat least a thousand crowns. It is true, the furniture remains; and I can compromise the marquise. But here is the scrivener."

Ferrand returned, holding in his hand some papers, which he gave to Robert.

"Here," said he to him, "are three hundred and fifty thousand francs in Treasury notes. In a few days we will regulate the interest. Write me a receipt."

"Eh!" cried Charles, stupefied. "Oh! now don't think, at least, that I—"

"I think nothing."

"But—"

"This receipt!"

"Dear sir."

"Write; and tell the people who speak to you of my embarrassments how I answer such suspicions."

"The fact is, as soon as this is known, your credit will only be the more solid. But, really, take the money; I cannot use it now; I said in three months."

"M. Charles Robert, no one shall suspect me twice."

"You are angry?"

"The receipt."

"Oh, obstinacy!" said Charles Robert; then he added, writing the receipt, "There is a lady closely veiled, who wishes to speak to you on some very pressing business. I shall take a good look at her when I pass. Here is your receipt; is it right?"

"Very well; now go away by the little staircase."

"But the lady?"

"It is just to prevent your seeing her."

The notary rang for the clerk, saying to him, "Show the lady in. Adieu, M. Robert."

"Well, I must renounce seeing her. No ill-feeling, eh! scrivener?"

"Believe as much."

"Well, well! adieu."

The notary shut the door on Charles Robert.

After a few moments the clerk introduced the Duchess de Lucenay, very modestly dressed, wrapped in a large shawl, her face completely concealed by a thick veil of black lace, which covered her moire hat of the same color.

CHAPTER IX.

THE DUCHESS DE LUCENAY.

Madame de Lucenay slowly approached the desk, in an agitated manner; he advanced to meet her.

"Who are you, madame, and what do you want with me?" said the notary, roughly, whose temper, already fretted by the threat of Sarah, was exasperated at the suspicions of Robert. Besides, the

duchess was so modestly dressed, that the notary saw no reason why he should be civil to her. As she hesitated to speak, he said, even more harshly, "Will you explain yourself, madame?"

"Sir," said she, in a trembling voice, trying to conceal her face under the folds of her veil, "Sir, can one confide a secret to you of the highest importance?"

"Anything can be confided to me, madame, but I must see and know to whom I speak."

"That, perhaps, is not necessary. I know that you are honor and loyalty itself."

"Just so, madame, just so; there is some one there waiting. Who are you?"

"My name is of no importance, sir. One of my friends—of my relations— has just left you."

"His name?"

"M. Floreston de Saint Remy."

"Ah!" said the notary, casting on the duchess an inquisitive and searching glance; then he resumed: "Well, madame!"

"M. de Saint Remy has told me everything, sir."

"What did he tell you?"

"All!"

"But what did he say?"

"You know well."

"I know many things about M. de Saint Remy."

"Alas! sir, a terrible thing."

"I know a great many terrible things about M. de Saint Remy."

"Ah! sir, he told me truly—you are without pity."

"For cheats and forgers like him, yes, I am without pity. Is Saint Remy your relation? Instead of confessing it, you ought to blush. Do you come here to weep, to soften me? It is useless; without saying that you are performing a wretched part for an honest woman, if you are one."

This brutal insolence was revolting to the pride and patrician blood of the duchess. She drew herself up, threw her veil back, and with a proud look, and a firm, imperious voice, she said, "Sir, I am the Duchess of Lucenay."

This woman assumed so haughty an air, her appearance became so imposing, that the notary, overcome, charmed, fell back astonished; took off, mechanically, his black silk cap, and saluted her profoundly.

Nothing could be, indeed, more graceful and more majestic than the face and bearing of Madame de Lucenay; yet she was then over thirty years of age, with a pale face, appearing slightly fatigued; but she had large sparkling brown eyes, splendid black hair, a fine arched nose, a proud and ruby lip, dazzling complexion, very white teeth, tall and slender figure, a form like a "goddess on the clouds," as the immortal St. Simon says.

She had entered the notary's as a timid woman; all at once she showed herself a grand, proud, and irritated lady. Never had Jacques Ferrand in his life met with a woman of so much insolent beauty, at once so bold and so noble. Although old, ugly, mean, and sordid, Jacques Ferrand was as capable as any one else of appreciating the style of beauty of Madame de Lucenay. His hatred and his rage against Saint Remy augmented with his admiration of the charming duchess. He thought to himself that this gentleman forger, who had almost kneeled before him, inspired such love in this grand lady, that she risked a step which might ruin her. At these thoughts the notary felt his audacity, which for a moment was paralyzed, restored. Hatred, envy, a kind of burning, savage resentment kindled in his looks, on his forehead, and his cheeks—the most shameful and wicked passions. Seeing Madame de Lucenay on the point of commencing a conversation so delicate, he expected on her part some turnings, expedients. What was his surprise! She spoke to him with as much assurance and pride as if it was concerning the most natural thing in the world, and as if before a man of his species, she had no thought of the reserve and fitness which she had certainly shown to her equals. In fact, the gross insolence of the notary, in

wounding her to the quick, had forced Madame de Lucenay, to quit the humble and imploring part that she had at first assumed with much trouble; returned to her own dignity, she believed it to be beneath her to descend to the least concealment with this scribbler of deeds.

"Sir notary," said the duchess, resolutely, to Jacques Ferrand, "M. de Saint Remy is one of my friends; he has confided to me the embarrassing situation in which he finds himself, from the inconvenience of a double piece of villainy of which he is the victim. Everything can be managed with money. How much is necessary to terminate these miserable, shuffling tricks?"

Jacques Ferrand was completely astounded with this cavalier and deliberate manner of opening the business.

"They ask a hundred thousand francs," answered he, as soon as he had recovered from his astonishment.

"You shall have your hundred thousand francs; and you will send at once the bad papers to M. de Saint Remy."

"Where are the hundred thousand francs, your grace?"

"Did I not tell you that you should have them, sir?"

"They must be had to-morrow, before noon, madame; otherwise a complaint of forgery will be made."

"Well, give this amount; I will be accountable for it; as for you I will pay you well."

"But, madame, it is impossible."

"You will not tell me, I hope, that a notary like you cannot procure a hundred thousand francs any day?"

"On what security, madame?"

"What does that mean? Explain yourself."

"Who is to be answerable for this amount?" "I."

"But, madame—"

"Is it necessary for me to tell you that I have property yielding eighty thousand livres rent, at four leagues from Paris? That will suffice, I believe, for that which you call guarantee?"

"Yes, madame, by means of a mortgage."

"What does that mean again? Some formality, doubtless. Make it, sir, make it."

"Such a deed cannot be drawn up under two weeks, and it needs the consent of your husband, madame."

"But this is my property, mine—mine alone," said the duchess, impatiently.

"No matter, madame; you are in the power of your husband, and a deed of mortgage is very long and very minute."

"But once more, sir, you cannot make me believe that it so difficult to procure one hundred thousand francs in two hours."

"Then, madame, apply to your own notary, to your steward; with me, it is impossible."

"I have reasons, sir, to keep this a secret," said Madame de Lucenay, heartily. "You know the rogues who wish to rob M. de Saint Remy; it is on this account I address myself to you."

"Your confidence infinitely honors me, madame; but I cannot do what you ask."

"You have not this amount?"

"I have much more than this sum in bank bills, or in gold—here—here, in my safe."

"Oh, what a waste of words! Is it my signature you wish? I give it you; let us finish."

"In admitting, madame, that you are the Duchess of Lucenay."

"Come in an hour's time to the Hôtel de Lucenay, sir: I will sign at home what is necessary to be signed."

"Will his grace sign also?"

"I do not understand you, sir."

"Your signature alone is of no value to me, madame."

Jacques Ferrand enjoyed with cruel delight the impatience of the duchess, who, under the appearance of *sang froid* and disdain, concealed the most painful anguish. She was for a moment at the end of her resources. The evening previous, her jeweler had advanced her a considerable sum on her diamonds, some of which were confided to Morel, the artisan. This sum had served to pay the bills of Saint Remy, and disarm other creditors; Dubreul, the farmer at Arnouville, was more than a year in advance, and besides, time was wanting; unfortunately for Madame de Lucenay, two of her friends, to whom she could have had recourse in an extreme situation, were then absent from Paris. In her eyes, the viscount was innocent; he had told her, and she believed it, that he was the dupe of two rogues; but her situation was none the less terrible. He accused, he dragged to prison! Then, even if he should take to flight would his name be any less dishonored by such a suspicion?

"Since you possess the sum I ask for, sir, and my guarantee is sufficient, why do you refuse me?"

"Because men have their caprices as well as women, madame."

"But what is this caprice, which makes you act thus against your interest? for, I repeat to you, make your conditions; whatever they may be, I accept them!"

"Your grace will accept all the conditions?" said the notary, with a singular expression.

"All! two, three, four thousand francs—more, if you will; for I tell you," added the duchess, frankly, in a tone almost affectionate, "I have no resource but in you, sir—in you alone. It will be impossible for me to find elsewhere that which I ask you for to-morrow; and it must be—you understand—it must be absolutely. Thus, I repeat to you, whatever condition you impose on me for this service, I accept."

In his blindness, he had interpreted in an unworthy manner the last words of the duchess. It was an idea as stupid as it was infamous; but we have already said that sometimes Jacques Ferrand became a tiger or a wolf; then the beast overpowered the man. He arose quickly and advanced toward the duchess. She, thunder-struck, rose at the same moment and regarded him with astonishment.

"You will not regard the cost?" cried he, in a broken voice, approaching still nearer to the duchess. "Well, this sum I will lend to you on one condition, one single condition—and I swear that——" He could not finish his declaration.

By one of those strange contradictions of human nature at the sight of the hideous face of M. Ferrand, at the mere thought of what his conditions might be, Madame de Lucenay, notwithstanding her inquietudes and troubles, burst out in a laugh so frank, so loud, so mirthful, that the notary recoiled confounded.

Without giving him time to utter a word, the duchess, abandoning herself more and more to her hilarity, pulled down her veil, and between two renewed bursts of laughter, said to the notary, who was almost blind with rage, hatred, and fury, "I prefer, upon the whole, to ask this favor openly of the duke." She then went out, continuing to laugh so loudly that, though the door of the cabinet was closed, the notary could still hear her.

Jacques Ferrand returned to his senses only to curse his imprudence bitterly. Yet, by degrees he reassured himself in thinking that the duchess could not speak of this interview without gravely compromising herself.

Nevertheless, it was a bad day for him. He was buried in the blackest thoughts, when the private door of his cabinet was opened, and Mrs. Seraphin entered wildly.

"Oh, Ferrand!" cried she, clasping her hands, "you were right enough in saying that we should some day regret having spared her life!"

"Whose?"

"That cursed little girl's."

"How?"

"A one-eyed woman, whom I did not know, to whom Tournemine delivered the little girl to rid us of her, fourteen years ago, when we said she was dead. Oh, who would have thought it!"

"Speak!"

"This woman has just been here; she was below just now. She told me she knew it was I who gave up the child."

"Malediction! who could have told her? Tournemine is at the galleys."

"I denied everything, treating her as a liar. But she maintains that she has found this child again, now grown up; that she knows where she is, and that it only depends upon herself to discover everything."

"Is hell unchained against me to-day?" cried the notary, in a fit of rage that rendered him hideous.

"What shall be said to the woman? What must we promise, to keep her silent?"

"Does she look as if she were poor?"

"As I treated her like a beggar, she shook her reticule—there was money in it."

"And she knows where this young girl is now?"

"She declares she knows."

"And she is the daughter of Countess M'Gregor!" said the notary to himself, "who just now offered me so much to say that her child was not dead! And the child lives. I can restore her to her! Yes; but this false certificate of death—if any inquiry is made, I am lost! This crime may put them on the scent of others." After a moment's thought, he said to Madame Seraphin, "This one-eyed woman knows where the girl is?"

"Yes."

"And this woman will return to-morrow?"

"To-morrow."

"Write to Polidori to be here to-night at nine o'clock."

"Do you mean to get rid of the girl and the old woman? It will be too much for one time, Ferrand!"

"I tell you to write to Folidori to be here to-night by nine o'clock."

At the close of this day, Rudolph said to Murphy, who had not been able to see the notary, "Let M. de Graun send a courtier off at once. Cicily must be in Paris in six days."

"Once more that infernal she-devil! the execrable wife of poor David, as handsome as she is infamous! For what good, your highness?"

"For what good, Sir Walter? In a month's time you may ask this question of the notary, Jacques Ferrand."

CHAPTER X.

DENUNCIATION.

About ten o'clock in the evening of the day on which Fleur-de-Marie had been carried off by Screech-owl and the Schoolmaster, a man on horseback arrived at the farm, coming, as he said, on the part of Rudolph, to reassure Mrs. George as to the disappearance of her young *protegee*, who would return to her in a few days. For several very important reasons, added this man, Rudolph begged Mrs. George, in the event of her having anything to send him, not to write him at Paris, but to hand the letter to the courier, who would take charge of it.

This courier was an emissary of Sarah's. By this she tranquilized Mrs. George, and retarded thus for

some days the moment when Rudolph must hear of the abduction. In this interval, Sarah hoped to force the notary to favor the unworthy scheme of which we have spoken. This was not all. Sarah wished also to get rid of Madame d'Harville, who inspired her with serious fears, and who would have been lost but for Rudolph's rescue.

On the day when the marquis had followed his wife to the house in the Rue du Temple, where she was to meet Charles Robert, but where Rudolph led her to the Morels, and thus changed the assignation into a call in charity, Sarah's brother Tom went there, easily set Mrs. Pipelet jabbering, and learned that a young lady, on the point of being surprised by her husband, had been saved, thanks to a lodger in the house named Rudolph. Informed of this circumstance, Sarah, possessing no material proof of the rendezvous that Lady d'Harville had given to Charles Robert, conceived another odious plan. It was concocted to send an anonymous letter to the marquis, in order to effect a complete rupture between him and Rudolph, or, at least, to make the marquis so suspicious as to forbid any further intercourse between the prince and his wife.

This letter was thus couched:

"You have been deceived most shamefully. The other day, your wife, advised that you were following her, pretended an imaginary visit of charity; she went to meet a very *august personage*, who has hired in the Rue du Temple a room in the fourth story, under the name of Rudolph. If you doubt these facts, strange as they may appear, go to the Rue du Temple, No. 17, and inform yourself; paint to yourself the features of the *august person* spoken of, and you will easily acknowledge that you are the most credulous, good-natured husband who has ever been so *sovereignly* deceived. Do not neglect this advice; otherwise it will be supposed that you, also are too much.

"THE FRIEND OF PRINCES."

This note was put in the post at five o'clock by Sarah, on the day of her interview with the notary. The same evening, Rudolph went to pay a visit to a foreign embassy: after which it was his intention to go to Madame d'Harville's to announce to her that he had found a charitable intrigue worthy of her. We will conduct the reader to Madame d'Harville's. It will be seen, from the following conversation, that this young lady, in showing herself generous and compassionate towards her husband, whom she had until then treated with extreme coldness, followed already the noble counsels of Rudolph.

The marquis and his wife had just left the table; the scene passed in the little saloon of which we have spoken; the expression of Clemence d'Harville was affectionate and kind; D'Harville seemed less sad than usual. He had not yet received the now infamous letter from Sarah.

"What are you going to do to-night?" said he, mechanically, to his wife.

"I shall not go out; pray what are your plans?"

"I do not know," answered he, with a sigh. "Society is insupportable to me. I will pass this evening, like so many other evenings, alone."

"Why alone, since I am not going out?"

M. d'Harville looked at his wife with surprise. "Doubtless, but—"

"Well?"

"I know that you often prefer solitude when you do not go out."

"Yes; but as I am very capricious," said Clemence, smiling, "at present I prefer to partake my solitude with you, if it is agreeable to you."

"Really," cried D'Harville, with emotion, "how kind you are to anticipate what I dared not express."

"Do you know, dear, that your astonishment has almost an air of reproach?"

"A reproach? Oh, no, no! not after my unjust and cruel suspicions the other day. To find you so forgiving, it is, I confess, a surprise for me; but a surprise the most delightful."

"Let us forget the past," said she to her husband, with an angelic smile.

"Clemence, can you forget?" answered he, sadly. "Have I not dared to suspect you? To tell you to what extremity a blind jealousy has impelled me? But what is all this compared to other wrongs, still greater, more irreparable?"

"Let us forget the past, I say," repeated Clemence, restraining her emotion.

"What do I hear? The past also—can you forget it?"

"I hope to do so."

"Can it be true, Clemence, you can be so generous? But no, no, I cannot believe in so much happiness; I had renounced it forever."

"You were wrong, you see."

"What a change! Is it a dream? Oh, tell me I am not mistaken."

"No, no, you are not mistaken."

"And, truly, your look is less cold; your voice almost falters. Oh, say, is it true? Am I not under an illusion?"

"No; for I also have need of pardon."

"You!"

"Have I not been cruel towards you! Ought I not to have thought that you must have needed a rare courage, a virtue more than human, to act differently from what you did? Isolated, unhappy, how resist the desire of seeking some consolation in a marriage which pleased you? Alas! when one suffers, one is so disposed to believe in the generosity of others! Your error has been, until now, to count on mine. Well, henceforth I will try to give you reason."

"Oh, speak, speak once more!" said D'Harville, his hands clasped in a kind of ecstasy.

"Our existence is forever united. I will do all in my power to render your life less bitter."

"Is it you I hear?"

"I beg you do not be so much astonished; it gives me pain; it is a bitter censure on my past conduct. Who else should pity you? Who should lend you a friendly and helping hand, if not I? A happy inspiration I have received. I have reflected, well reflected, on the past, on the future. I have seen my errors, and I have found, I believe, the means to repair them."

"Your errors, poor wife?"

"Yes; I should have, the next day after our marriage, appealed to your honor, and frankly demanded a separation."

"Ah, Clemence, pity, pity!"

"Otherwise, since I accepted my position, I should have augmented it by submission, instead of causing you constant self-reproach by my haughty and taciturn coldness. I should have endeavored to console you for a fearful malady, by only remembering your misfortune. By degrees I should have become attached to my work of commiseration, by reason even of the cares, perhaps the sacrifices, which it would have cost me; your gratitude had rewarded me, and then—but what is the matter? You weep!"

"Yes, I weep—weep with joy. You do not know how many new emotions your words cause me. Oh, Clemence, let me weep!"

"Never more than at this moment have I comprehended how culpable I have been in chaining you to my sad destiny!"

"And never have I felt more decided to forget. These gentle tears that you shed make me acquainted with a happiness of which I was ignorant. Courage, dear, courage; in default of a fortunate and smiling destiny, let us seek our satisfaction in the accomplishment of the serious duties that fate imposes. Let us be indulgent to one another; if we falter, let us regard the cradle of our child, let us concentrate on her all our affections, and we shall yet have some joys, melancholy and holy."

"An angel, she is an angel!" cried D'Harville, joining his hands and looking at his wife with affectionate admiration. "Oh! you do not know the pain and pleasure you cause me, Clemence! you do not know that your harshest words formerly, your most severe reproaches, alas! the most merited, have never so much overwhelmed me as this adorable, generous resignation, and yet, in spite of myself, you make hope spring up again. You do not know the future that I dare imagine."

"And you can have blind and entire faith in what I tell you, Albert. This resolution is taken firmly; it shall never fail, I swear it to you. Before long I may give you new guarantees of my word."

"Guarantees?" cried D'Harville, more and more excited by happiness so unlooked for, "guarantees! have I need of them? Your look, your voice, this beaming expression of goodness which still graces you, the throbbings of my heart, all, all prove to me that what you say is true. But you know, Clemence, man is insatiable in his hopes," added the marquis. "Your noble and touching words give me courage to hope, yes, to hope what yesterday I regarded as an insensate dream."

"Albert, I swear to you I shall always be the most devoted of friends, the most tender of sisters; but nothing more. Pardon, pardon, if unknowingly my words have ever given you hopes which can never be realized."

"Never?" cried D'Harville, fixing on her a desperate and supplicating look.

"Never!" answered Clemence.

This single word, the tone of voice, revealed an irrevocable resolution. Clemence, brought back to noble resolutions by the influence of Rudolph, was firmly resolved to surround her husband with the most touching attentions; but she felt that she was incapable of ever loving him. An impression still stronger than fright, contempt, hatred, separated Clemence from her husband forever. It was a repugnance invincible. After a moment of mournful silence, D'Harville passed his hand over his eyes, and said to his wife, bitterly:

"Pardon me for deceiving myself; pardon me for having abandoned myself to a hope, mad as it was foolish. Oh! I am very unfortunate!"

"My friend," said Clemence to him gently, "I do not wish to reproach you; yet do you reckon as nothing my promise to be for you the most tender of sisters? You will owe to the most devoted friendship attentions that love could not give you. Hope for better days. Until now you have found me almost indifferent to your sorrows; you shall see how I shall compassionate you, and what consolations you will find in my affection."

A servant entered, and said to Clemence, "His Royal Highness the Grand
Duke of Gerolstein asks if your ladyship will receive him?"

Clemence looked at her husband, who, recovering his coolness, said to her, "Of course." The servant retired.

"Pardon me, my friend," said Clemence; "I did not say that I would not receive. Besides, it is a long time since you have seen the prince; he will be happy to find you here. I shall, also, be much pleased to see him; yet I avow, that just now I am so agitated that I should have preferred to receive his visit some other day."

"I can comprehend it; but what could we do? Here he is." At the same moment, Rudolph was announced.

"I am a thousand times happy, madame, to have the honor to meet you," said Rudolph; "and I doubly appreciate my good fortune, since it also procures me the pleasure of seeing you, my dear Albert," added he, turning toward the marquis, whom he cordially shook by the hand.

"It is a long time since I have had the honor to pay your highness my respects."

"And whose fault is it, invisible lord? The last time I came to pay my respects to Madame d'Harville, I asked for you; you were absent. It is now three weeks that you have forgotten me; it is very wrong."

"Be merciless, your highness," said Clemence, smiling: "M. d'Harville is the more guilty, since he has for your highness the most profound respect, and he might make that doubted by his negligence."

"Well! see my vanity, madame; whatever D'Harville might do, it would always be impossible for me to doubt his affection; but I ought not to say this. I am encouraging him in such conduct."

"Believe me, your highness, that some unforeseen circumstances alone have prevented me from profiting oftener by your kindness toward me."

"Between ourselves, my dear Albert, I believe you a little too platonic in friendship; very sure that you are loved, you are not pliant enough to give or receive proofs of attachment."

Through a breach of etiquette, which rather annoyed Madame d'Harville, a servant entered, bringing a letter to the marquis. It was the anonymous denunciation of Sarah, which accused the prince of being

the lover of Madame d'Harville.

The marquis, out of deference to the prince, pushed back with his hand the silver salver which the servant handed him, and said, in an undertone, "Not now, not now."

"My dear Albert," said the prince, in the most affectionate tone, "do you stand on ceremony with me?"

"But, your highness—"

"With the permission of Madame d'Harville, I beg you to read this letter!"

"I assure your highness that there is nothing pressing."

"Once more, Albert, read this letter!"

"But—"

"I entreat you—I wish it."

"Since your royal highness requires it," said the marquis, taking the letter from the salver.

"Certainly. I require you to treat me as a friend."

Then turning toward the marchioness, while M. d'Harville broke the seal of this fatal letter, the contents of which Rudolph could not have imagined, he added, smiling, "What a triumph for you, madame, to cause this will, so stern, always to yield!"

D'Harville drew near one of the candelabra on the chimney-piece, and opened the letter. Rudolph and Clemence conversed together, while D'Harville twice read the letter. His countenance remained composed; a nervous trembling, almost imperceptible, agitated his hands alone; after a moment's hesitation, he put the note into his waistcoat pocket.

"At the risk of passing for a savage," said he to Rudolph, smiling, "I shall ask permission to go and answer this letter—more important than I thought at first."

"Shall I not see you again to-night?"

"I do not think that I can have that honor; I hope your royal highness will excuse me."

"What a man!" said Rudolph gayly. "Will you not try to retain him, madame!"

"I dare not attempt what your highness has attempted in vain."

"Seriously, my dear Albert, try to return to us as soon as your letter is written; if not, promise to grant me an interview some morning. I have a thousand things to say to you."

"Your royal highness overwhelms me," said the marquis, bowing profoundly as he retired.

"Your husband is preoccupied," said Rudolph to the marchioness, "his smile appeared constrained."

"When your royal highness arrived D'Harville was profoundly affected; he had great trouble to conceal it."

"I have arrived, perhaps, at an inopportune moment."

"No, you have even spared me the conclusion of a painful conversation."

"How is that?"

"I have told D'Harville the new line of conduct that I was resolved to follow, promising him support and consolation."

"How happy he should be!"

"At first he was as much so as myself; for his tears and joy produced an emotion to which I had, as yet, been a stranger. Formerly I thought I revenged myself by addressing him a reproach, a sarcasm. Sad revenge! My sorrow afterward has only been more bitter. While just now—what a difference! I asked my husband if he were going out: he answered me sadly, that he should pass the evening alone, as was usually the case. When I offered to remain with him—Oh! if you could have seen his astonishment! how his expression, always sad, became at once radiant. Ah! you were right—nothing is more pleasing than to contrive such surprises of happiness!"

"But how did these proofs of goodness on your part lead to this painful conversation of which you have spoken?"

"Alas!" said Clemence, blushing, "to these hopes succeeded hopes more tender, which I was very guarded not to excite, because it will always be impossible for me to realize them."

"I comprehend; he loves you tenderly."

"As much as I was at first touched with his gratitude, so much was I alarmed at his protestations of love. I could not conceal my alarm. I caused him a sad blow in manifesting thus my invincible repugnance to his love, I regret it. But, at least, D'Harville is now forever convinced that he has only to expect from me the most devoted friendship."

"I pity him, without being able to blame you; there are susceptibilities, thus to speak, which are sacred. Poor Albert, so good, so kind! If you knew how much I have been afflicted, for a long time past, with his sadness and dejection, although ignorant of the cause. Let us leave all to time, to reason. By degrees he will recognize the value of the affection you offer him, and he will be resigned to it, as he was resigned before having the touching consolations which you offer him."

"And which shall never be wanting, I swear to your highness."

"Now let us think of the other unfortunates. I have promised you a good work, having all the charm of a romance in action. I come to fulfill my engagement."

"Already! what happiness!"

"Ah! it was a kind of happy inspiration that induced me to take that poor room in the house of the Rue du Temple, of which I have spoken to you. You cannot imagine all that I find curious and interesting! In the first place, your *proteges* of the garret enjoy the comforts your presence had promised them; they have, however, yet to undergo some sad trials; but I do not wish to make you sad. Some day you shall know how many horrible calamities may overwhelm one single family."

"What must be their gratitude toward you!" "It is your name they bless."

"Your highness has succored them in my name?"

"To render the charity sweeter to them. Besides, I have only realized your promises."

"Oh! I will go and undeceive them: tell them it is to you they owe—"

"Do not do that! you know I have a room in that house: be guarded against any new cowardly acts of your enemies, or of mine; and since the Morels are now out of the reach of want, think of others. Let us think of our intrigue. It concerns a poor mother and her daughter, who, formerly in affluence, are at this time, in consequence of an infamous spoliation, reduced to the most frightful misery."

"Unfortunate women! and where do they live, your highness?"

"I do not know."

"But how did you find out their situation?"

"Yesterday I went to the temple. Your ladyship does not know what the
Temple is?"

"No, my lord."

"It is a bazaar very amusing to see. I went there to make some purchases with my neighbor of the fourth floor."

"Your neighbor?"

"Have I not my room in the Rue du Temple?"

"I forgot."

"This neighbor is a charming little grisette; she calls herself Rigolette; this Miss Dimpleton is always laughing, and never had a lover."

"What virtue for a grisette!"

"It is not exactly from virtue that she is virtuous, but because, she says, she has no time to be in love;

for she must work from twelve to fifteen hours a-day to earn twenty-five sous, on which she lives."

"She can live on so small an amount?"

"Rather; and she has even articles of luxury; two birds who eat more than she does; her little room is as neat as possible, and her dress really quite coquettish."

"Live on twenty-five sous a-day! she is a prodigy."

"A real prodigy of order, labor, economy, and practical philosophy, I assure you; hence, I recommend her to you. She is, she says, a very skillful seamstress. At all events, you would not be ashamed to wear the clothes she may make."

"To-morrow I will send her some work. Poor girl! to live on so small a sum, and, so to speak, be unknown to us, who are rich, whose smallest caprices cost a hundred times that amount."

"I am rejoiced that you have determined to interest yourself in my little *protegee*. I will now explain our new adventure. I had gone to the Temple with Rigolette, to purchase some furniture designed for the poor people in the garret, when, upon accidentally examining an old secretary which was for sale, I found the draft of a letter written by a female to some individual, in which she complained that herself and daughter were reduced to the greatest misery, on account of the dishonesty of a lawyer. The secretary was part of a lot of furniture, which a woman of middle age had been compelled by her penury to sell; and I was told by the dealer that the woman and her daughter seemed to belong to the upper classes of society, and to bear their reverses with great fortitude and pride."

"And you do not know their abode?"

"Unfortunately, no. But I have given orders to M. de Graun to endeavor to discover it, even if he is obliged to apply to the police. It is possible that, stripped of every thing, the mother and daughter have sought refuge in some miserably furnished lodgings. If it should be so, we have some hope, for the landlords report every evening the strangers who arrive in the course of the day."

"What a singular concurrence of circumstances!" said Madame d'Harville, with astonishment.

"This is not all. In a corner of this letter, found in the old secretary were these words, '*Write to Madame de Lucenay*.'"

"What good fortune! perhaps we can find out something from the duchess," cried Madame d'Harville, with vivacity; then she continued, with a sigh, "But I am ignorant of the name of this woman—how designate her to Madame de Lucenay?"

"You must ask if she does not know a widow, still young, of distinguished appearance, whose daughter, aged sixteen or seventeen, is named Claire."

"I remember the name. The name of my own daughter! It seems to me a motive the more to interest me in their misfortunes."

"I forgot to tell you that the brother of this widow committed suicide some months ago."

"If Madame de Lucenay knows this family," said Madame d'Harville, "such information will suffice to bring them to her mind. How desirous I am of going to see her. I will write her a note to-night, so that I shall be sure to find her to-morrow morning. Who can these women be? From what you know of them, they appear to belong to the upper classes of society. And to find themselves reduced to such distress! Ah! for them poverty must be doubly frightful!"

"By the robbery of a notary, a miserable scoundrel, of whom I already know many other misdeeds—Jacques Ferrand."

"My husband's notary!" cried Clemence; "the notary of my step-mother! But you are deceived, my lord; he is looked upon as one of the most honorable men in the world."

"I have proofs to the contrary. But do not, I pray you, say a word on this subject to any one; he is as crafty as he is criminal, and to unmask him, I have need that he shall not suspect, or rather, that he shall go on with impunity a short time longer. Yes; it is he who has despoiled these unfortunates, by denying a deposit which, from all appearances, had been placed in his hands by the brother of this widow."

"And this sum?"

"Was their sole resource! Oh! what a crime—what a crime!" cried Rudolph; "a crime that nothing can

excuse—neither want nor passion. Often does hunger cause robbery, vengeance, murder. But this notary was already rich; and, clothed by society with a character almost holy, which imposes, ay, forces confidence, this man is induced to crime by a cold and implacable cupidity. The assassin only kills you once, and quickly, with his knife; he kills you slowly, by all the horrors of despair and misery into which he plunges you. For a man like this Ferrand, no patrimony of the orphan or savings of the poor are sacred! You confide to him gold; this gold tempts him; he makes you a beggar. By the force of privations and toil, you have assured to yourself bread, and an asylum for your old age; *the will* of this man tears from your old age this bread and shelter. This is not all. See the fearful effects of these infamous spoliations; this widow of whom we speak may die of sorrow and distress; her daughter, young and handsome, without support, without resources, accustomed to a competency, unfit, from her education, to gain a living, soon finds herself between starvation and dishonor! she is lost! By this robbery, Jacques Ferrand is the cause of the death of the mother, the ruin of the child! he has killed the body of one, he has killed the soul of the other; and this, once more I say it, not at once, like other homicides, but with cruelty, and slowly."

[Illustration: BETWEEN DISHONOR AND HUNGER]

Clemence had never heard Rudolph speak with so much bitterness and indignation; she listened in silence, struck by these words of eloquence, doubtless very sad, but which discovered a vigorous hatred of evil.

"Pardon me, madame," said Rudolph, after a moment's pause; "I cannot restrain my indignation in thinking of the cruel fate which your future *protegees* may have realized. Ah! believe me, the consequences of ruin and poverty are very seldom exaggerated."

"Oh! on the contrary, I thank your highness for having, by these terrible words, still more augmented, if that is possible, the sincere commiseration I feel for these unfortunates. Alas! it is above all for her daughter she must suffer! oh! it is frightful. But we will save them—we will assure their future. I am rich, but not as much so as I could wish, now that I see a new use for money; but, if it is necessary, I will speak to D'Harville; I will make him so happy that he cannot refuse any of my new caprices. Our *protegees* are proud, your highness says; I like them better for it: pride in misfortune always proves an elevated mind. I will find the means to save them, without their knowing that they owe the succor they receive to a benefactor. It will be difficult; so much the better! Oh! I have already a project; you shall see, your highness, you shall see that I am not wanting in address and cunning."

"I already foresee the most Machiavelian combinations," said Rudolph, smiling.

"But we must first discover them; how I wish it was to-morrow! On having Madame de Lucenay I will go to their old lodgings, I will question their neighbors; I will see for myself. I will ask information from everybody. I will compromise myself, if it is necessary! I shall be so proud to obtain by myself, and by myself alone, the result I desire: oh! I will succeed; this adventure is so touching. Poor women: it seems to me I feel more interest in them when I think of my child."

Rudolph, touched with this charitable eagerness, smiled sadly on seeing this lady, so handsome, so lovely, trying to forget in noble occupations the domestic troubles which afflicted her; the eyes of Clemence sparkled with vivacity, her cheeks were slightly suffused; the animation of her gesture, of her speech, gave new attraction to her ravishing countenance. She perceived that Rudolph was contemplating her in silence. She blushed, cast down her eyes; then, raising them in charming confusion, she said, "You laugh at my enthusiasm? It is because I am impatient to taste those holy joys which are about to reanimate my existence, until now sad and useless. Such, without doubt, was not the life I dreamed of; there is a sentiment, a happiness, more lively still that I can never know; although still very young, I must renounce it!" added Clemence, suppressing a sigh. "But thanks to you, my deliverer, always thanks to you, I have created for myself other interests; charity shall replace love. I am already indebted to your advice for such touching emotions! Your words, your highness, have so much influence! The more I meditate, the more I reflect on your ideas, the more I find them just, great, and fruitful. Oh! how much goodness your mind discloses! from what source have you, then, drawn these feelings of tender commiseration?"

"I have suffered much, I still suffer! This is the reason I know the cause of many sorrows."

"Your highness unhappy!"

"Yes, for one would say that, to prepare me to solace all kinds of sorrow, fate has willed I should undergo them all. A lover, it has struck me through the first woman that I loved with all the blind confidence of youth; a husband, through my wife; a son, it has struck me through my father; a father, through my child!"

"I thought that the grand duchess did not leave you any child?"

"She did not; but before my marriage with her I had a daughter, who died very young. Well! strange as it may appear to you, the loss of this child, whom I had hardly seen, is the sorrow of my life. The older I become, the more profound my regrets! Each year redoubles the bitterness. It seems to increase as her years would have increased. Now she would have been seventeen!"

"And does her mother still live?" asked Clemence.

"Oh! do not speak of her!" cried Rudolph. "Her mother is an unworthy creature, a being bronzed by egotism and ambition. Sometimes I ask myself if it were not better my child should be dead, than to have remained in the hands of her mother."

Clemence experienced a kind of satisfaction in hearing Rudolph express himself thus. "Oh! I conceive," cried she, "how you doubly regret your daughter!"

"I should have loved her so well! and, besides, it seems to me that among us princes there is always in our love for a son a kind of interest of race and name; but a daughter is loved for herself alone. And when one has seen, alas! humanity under the most sinister aspects, what delight to contemplate a pure and lovely being! to inhale her virgin purity, to watch over her with tender care! A mother the most fond and most proud of her daughter cannot experience this feeling; she is herself too similar to taste these ineffable delights; she will appreciate much more the manly qualities of a bold and noble boy. For, do you not find that that which renders, perhaps, still more touching the love of a mother for her son, a father for his daughter, is, that there is always in these affections a feeble being who has need of protection. The son protects the mother, the father protects the daughter."

"Oh, it is true."

"But, alas! why understand the ineffable joys, when one can never experience them?" said Rudolph, dejectedly. "But pardon me, madame; my regrets and my souvenirs have, in spite of myself, carried me away; you will excuse me?"

"Ah! believe I partake of your sorrows. Have I not the right? Have you not partaken of mine? Unfortunately, the consolations that I can offer you are in vain."

"No, no; the expression of your interest is sweet and salutary to me. It is weakness, but I cannot hear a young girl spoken of without thinking of her whom I have lost."

"These thoughts are so natural! Hold, my lord; since I have seen you, I have accompanied, in visits to the prisons, a lady of my acquaintance, who is a patroness of the work of the young women confined at Saint Lazare; this house contains many culprits. If I were not a mother, I should have judged them, doubtless, with still more severity, while I now feel for them pity; much softened in thinking that, perhaps, they had not been lost, except for the state of poverty and neglect they had been in from their infancy. I do not know why, but after these thoughts it seemed to me I loved my child the more."

"Come, courage," said Rudolph, with a melancholy smile: "this conversation leaves me quite reassured as to you. A salutary path is open to you; in following it, you will pass through, without stumbling, these years of trial, so dangerous for women, above all for a woman gifted as you are; your reward shall be great; you will still have to struggle and suffer-for you are very young—but you will renew your strength in thinking of the good you have done—of that which you still do."

Madame d'Harville burst into tears. "At least," said she, "your assistance, your counsels, will never fail me?" "Far or near, I shall always take the deepest interest in all that concerns you; always, as much as depends upon me, I will contribute to your happiness: to the man's to whom I have vowed the most constant friendship."

"Oh! thank your highness for this promise," said Clemence, drying her tears; "without your generous support, my strength would abandon me; but, believe me, I swear it here, I will constantly accomplish my duty."

On these words, a small door, concealed behind the tapestry, was opened roughly. Clemence uttered a cry. Rudolph shuddered. D'Harville appeared pale and profoundly affected: his eyes were wet with tears. The first astonishment over, the marquis said to Rudolph, giving him Sarah's letter, "Your highness, here is the infamous letter which I received just now before you. I pray you to burn it after you have read it."

Clemence looked at her husband with alarm. "Oh, this is infamous!" cried Rudolph, indignantly. "Yet there is something still more infamous than this anonymous scurrility—it is my own conduct." "What do

you mean to say?" "A little while ago, instead of showing you this letter frankly, boldly, I concealed it from you; I pretended to be calm, while I had jealousy, anger, and despair in my heart; this is not all. Do you know what I did, my lord? I shamefully went and concealed myself behind this door to listen to you—to spy—yes, I have been wretch enough to doubt your honor. Oh! the author of this letter knows to whom he addresses it; he knows how weak my head is. Well, my lord, say, after hearing what I have just heard—for I have not lost a word of your conversation, and know why you go to the Rue du Temple—ought I not, on my knees, ask for pardon and pity? and I do it, my lord. I do it, Clemence; I have no more hope but in your generosity."

"My dear Albert, what have I to pardon?" said Rudolph, extending both hands with the most touching cordiality. "*Now* you know our secrets, I am delighted. I can preach to you at my leisure. I am your confidant by compulsion, and, what is still better, you are the confidant of Madeline d'Harville; that is to say, you now know all you have to expect from that noble heart."

"And, Clemence, will you pardon me also?"

"Yes: on condition that you will assist me in assuring your own happiness," and she extended her hand to her husband, who pressed it with emotion.

"My dear marquis," cried Rudolph, "our enemies are unlucky; thanks to them, we are only the more intimate from the past. You never have more justly appreciated Madame d'Harville: she has never been more devoted to you; acknowledge that we are well avenged of the envious and wicked. That will answer while waiting for something better, for I divine from whence this came, and I am not accustomed to suffer patiently the injuries done to my friends. But this regards me. Adieu, madame; here is our *intrigue* discovered; you will no longer be alone in assisting your *protegees*: be assured we will get up some new mysterious enterprise, which the marquis must be very cunning to discover."

After having accompanied the prince to his carriage, to thank him again, the marquis retired to his own apartments without seeing Clemence again.

CHAPTER XI.

REFLECTIONS.

It would be difficult to describe the tumultuous and contrary sentiments which agitated D'Harville when he found himself alone. He acknowleged with joy the falsity of the accusation against Rudolph and Clemence, but he was also convinced that he must renounce the hope of being loved by her. The more in her conversation with Rudolph Clemence had shown herself courageous and resolute to do good, the more he bitterly reproached himself for having, with guilty egotism, linked this unhappy lady to his fate. Far from being consoled from the conversation he had just heard, he fell into a state of sadness, of inexpressible despondency. There is in a life of opulence without employment this terrible disadvantage: nothing turns its attention, nothing protects the mind from brooding on its sorrows, on itself. Never being compelled to occupy itself with the necessities of the future, or the labors of each day, it remains entirely a prey to great mental afflictions. Being able to possess all that gold can procure, it desires or regrets violently that which gold alone cannot procure.

The grief of D'Harville was desperate; for, after all, he desired nothing but what was just and lawful.

To transports of vain anger succeeded a feeling of gloomy dejection. "Oh!" cried he, at once softened and cast down, "it is my fault, my fault! poor unhappy woman, I have deceived her, unworthily deceived her! She can, she ought to hate me; and yet, just now, again she evinced the most touching interest for me; but, instead of contenting myself with that, my foolish passions have carried me away. I became tender; I have spoken to her of my love, and hardly had my lips touched her hand, than she trembled with affright. If I could still have had any doubt of the invincible repugnance with which I inspire her, what she has just now said to the prince leaves me no illusion. Oh! it is frightful—frightful!

"And by what right did she confide to him this hideous secret? it is an unworthy betrayal of confidence? By what right? Alas! by the same right as prisoners have to complain of their executioner. Poor girl! so young and lovely, all that she could find to say that was cruel against the horrible fate to which I have doomed her, is that such was not the lot she had dreamed of, and that she was very young to renounce love! I know Clemence; the word she has given me, which she has given to the prince, she

will henceforth keep; she will be for me the most affectionate sister. Well! my position is not worthy of envy! to the cold and constrained feeling which existed between us, are going to succeed the most affectionate and the kindest relations, while she might have continued to treat me with a frozen contempt, without my daring to complain. Another torture! How I have suffered, my God! when I thought her guilty!—what terrible agony! But no, this fear is vain; Clemence has sworn not to fail in her duties; she will keep her promises; but at what a price! Just now, when she returned to me with her affectionate words, how her sad, soft, melancholy smile caused me pain! How much this return to her executioner must have cost her! Poor woman, how handsome she looked! For the first time I felt acute remorse, for until then her haughty coldness was her revenge. Oh, unfortunate man, unfortunate man that I am!"

After a long sleepless night of bitter reflections, the agitation of D'Harville ceased as by enchantment.

He awaited the day with impatience. As soon as it was morning, he rang for his valet, old Joseph. On entering the room, the latter heard his master, to his great astonishment, humming a hunting-song, a sign, as rare as it was sure, of D'Harville's good-humor.

"Ah!" said the faithful servant, quite softened, "what a good voice your lordship has! what a shame you do not sing oftener!" "Really, Joseph, have I a good voice?" said D'Harville, laughing.

"My lord might have a voice as hoarse as an owl or a rattle, I should still think he had a good voice."

"Hold your tongue, flatterer!"

"When your lordship sings, it is a sign you are contented; and then your voice appears to me the most charming music in the world."

"In that case, Joseph, learn to open your long ears."

"What do you say?"

"You can enjoy this charming music every day."

"You will be happy every day, my lord?" cried Joseph, clasping his hands with astonished delight.

"Every day, my old Joseph! happy every day. Yes, no more sorrow—no more sadness. I can tell this to you, who are sole and discreet confidant of all my sorrows! I am overjoyed with happiness! My wife is an angel of goodness! she has asked pardon for her past coldness, attributing it to—can you guess?—to jealousy!"

"To jealousy?"

"Yes; absurd suspicions, caused by anonymous letters."

"What indignity!"

"You comprehend? women have so much self-love! It needed nothing more to separate us; but, happily, last night we had an explanation. I undeceived her; to tell you of her joy would be impossible; for she loves me! oh, how she loves me! Thus, this cruel separation has ceased; judge of my joy!"

"Can it be true?" cried Joseph, with tears in his eyes. "Then, my lord, you are forever happy, since the love of her ladyship was alone wanting, as you have told me."

"And to whom should I have told it, my poor old Joseph? Do you not possess a still more sorrowful secret? But let us not talk of sorrow; the day is too happy. You see, perhaps, I have wept! it is thus, you see, happiness overpowers me! I so little expected it! How weak I am!"

"Yes, yes, my lord can well weep for joy, who has wept so much for sorrow. Hold! am I not acting as you are? Brave tears! I would not part with them for ten years of my life. I have only one fear: it is that I shall hardly be able to keep from throwing myself at my lady's feet the first time I see her."

"Old fool! you are as unreasonable as your master. Now I have a fear that this will not last. I am too happy! what is wanting?"

"Nothing, my lord, absolutely nothing."

"It is on this account I am mistrustful of happiness so perfect—so complete!"

"Alas! if it was not for—but no, I dare not."

"I understand you: well, believe your fears are vain; the change that my happiness causes me is so great, so profound, that I am almost sure of being saved."

"How is that?"

"My physician has told me a hundred times, that often a violent mental shock sufficed to induce or cure my malady. Why should not emotions of happiness produce the same effect?"

"If you believe this, my lord, it will be so—it is so—you are cured! Why this is, indeed, a blessed day! Ah! as you say, her ladyship is a good angel descended from heaven; and I begin to be almost alarmed myself; it is, perhaps, too much felicity for one day; but I must think—if to reassure you it only needs a small sorrow—I have it!"

"How?"

"One of your friends has received, very fortunately and seasonably, as it happens, a sword cut—not at all serious, it is true; but no matter, it is enough to make you a little sorry, that there may be, as you desire it, a little trouble on this happy day. It is true, that in regard to that, it had been better if the thrust had been more dangerous; but we must be contented as it is."

"Will you be quiet? Of whom do you speak?"

"Of his grace the Duke of Lucenay. He is wounded! a scratch on the arm. He came yesterday to see you, and he said he would come this morning and ask for a cup of tea."

"Poor Lucenay! why did you not tell me?"

"Last night I was not able to see my lord."

After a moment's thought, D'Harville replied, "You are right; this light sorrow will doubtless satisfy jealous destiny. But an idea has just struck me; I have a mind to have this morning a bachelor breakfast, all friends of M. de Lucenay, to congratulate him on the happy result of his duel: he will be enchanted."

"Joy forever! Make up lost time. How many covers, so that I can give the orders?"

"Six, in the little winter breakfast parlor."

"And the invitations?"

"I will go and write them. A man from the stables can take them round on horseback. It is early; they will all be found at home. Ring."

D'Harville entered his cabinet, and wrote the following notes, without any other address than the name of the invited:—

"My Dear * * *—This is a circular; an impromptu affair is in agitation. Lucenay is to come and breakfast with me this morning; he counts only on a *tete-a-tete*; cause him a very agreeable surprise by joining me, and a few other of his friends, whom I have also advised.

"At noon precisely.

"A. D'HARVILLE."

"Let some one mount a horse immediately," said D'Harville, to a servant who answered the bell, "and deliver these letters." Then, turning to Joseph, he directed him to address them as follows: "M. le Vicomte de Saint Remy. Lucenay cannot do without him," said D'Harville to himself. "M. de Monville—one of his traveling companions. Lord Douglas—his faithful partner at whist. Baron de Sezannes—the friend of his youth. Have you written?"

"Yes, my lord."

"Send these letters without losing a moment," said D'Harville.

"Ah, Philippe! ask M. Doublet to come to me." The servant retired. "Well! what is the matter?" asked D'Harville of Joseph, who looked at him with amazement.

"I cannot get over it, sir! I never saw you so gay; and, besides, you, who are commonly so pale, have a fine color—your eyes sparkle."

"Happiness! old Joseph, happiness! Oh! now you must assist me in a scheme. You must go and find

out from Juliette who has charge of her ladyship's diamonds."

"Yes, it is Mademoiselle Juliette, my lord, who takes care of them; I helped her, not a week ago, to clean them."

"You go and ask her the name and address of the jeweler of her mistress; but she must not say a word on the subject to my lady."

"Ah! I understand! A surprise."

"Go quickly. Here is M. Doublet. My dear M. Doublet, I am going to frighten you," said he, laughing. "I am going to make you utter cries of distress."

"Me! my lord?"

"You!"

"I will do all in my power to satisfy your lordship."

"I am going to spend a great deal of money, M. Doublet—an enormous amount of money."

"What of that, my lord? We are able to do it—well able to do it."

"For a long time I've been possessed with the notion of building. I have it in contemplation to add a gallery on the garden to the right wing of the hotel. After a long hesitation, I have quite decided. You must tell my architect to-day so that he can come and talk over the plans. Well, M. Doublet, you don't groan over this expense?"

"I can assure your lordship that I do not groan."

"This gallery will be destined for *fetes*; I wish it to be built, as it were, by enchantment; now, enchantments being very dear, you must sell fifteen or twenty thousand livres of stock, to be ready to furnish the funds, for I wish the work commenced as soon as possible." Joseph entered.

"Here is the address of the jeweler, my lord; his name is Baudoin."

"My dear M. Doublet, you will go, I beg you, to this jeweler, and tell him to bring here, in an hour, a diamond necklace worth about two thousand louis. Women can never have too many jewels, now that dresses are trimmed with them. You will arrange with the jeweler for the payment."

"Yes, my lord. It is on account of the surprise that I do not groan this time. Diamonds are like buildings, the value remains; and, besides, this surprise to the marchioness! It is as I had the honor to say the other day—there is not in the world a happier man than your lordship."

"Good M. Doublet!" said D'Harville, smiling; "his felicitations are always so inconceivably *apropos*"

"It is their sole merit, my lord; and they have, perhaps, this merit because they come from the bottom of the heart. I go to the jeweler," said Doublet, retiring.

As soon as he was gone, D'Harville paced the floor, his arms folded, his eyes fixed and meditative.

Suddenly his countenance changed; it no longer expressed the content of which the attendant and the old servant had just been the dupe, but a calm, cold, and mournful resolution. After having walked some time, he seated himself, as if overcome by the weight of his troubles, with his face buried in his hands. Then he suddenly arose, wiped away a tear which moistened his burning eyelid, and said, with an effort, "Come, courage."

He wrote letters to several persons about insignificant objects, but in the letters he appointed or put off different meetings several days. This correspondence finished, Joseph came in; he was so gay that he so far forgot himself as to sing in his turn.

"Joseph, you have a very fine voice," said his master smiling.

"So much the worse, my lord, for I never knew it; something sings so loudly within that it must be heard without."

"You will put these letters in the post-office."

"Yes, my lord; but where will you receive these gentlemen?"

"Here in my cabinet; they will smoke after breakfast, and the odor of the tobacco will not reach her

lady-ship."

At this moment the noise of a carriage was heard in the courtyard.

"It is her ladyship going out; she ordered the horses this morning at an early hour," said Joseph.

"Run and beg her to come here before she goes out."

"Yes, my lord."

Hardly had the domestic gone, than D'Harville approached a glass, and examined himself minutely. "Well, well," said he in a gloomy tone; "that's right—the cheeks flushed, the eye sparkling—joy or fear—no matter—as long as they are deceived. Let us see now—a smile on the lips. There are so many kinds of smiles. But who can distinguish the false from the real? who can penetrate under this lying mask, to say, this smile conceals a black despair? no one, happily, no one! Stay, yes, love could never be mistaken; no, its instinct would enlighten it. But I hear my wife—my wife! Come to your post, inauspicious buffoon."

"Good-day, Albert," said Madame d'Harville, with a sweet smile, giving him her hand. "But what is the matter, my friend? You appear so happy and gay!"

"It is, that at the moment you came in, dear little sister, I was thinking of you. Besides, I was under the influence of an excellent resolution."

"That does not surprise me."

"What took place yesterday—your admirable generity, the noble conduct of the prince—gave me much to think about, and I am a convert to your ideas. You would not have excused me last night if I had too easily renounced your love, I am sure, Clemence."

"What language, what a happy change!" cried Madame d'Harville. "Oh! I was very sure that in addressing myself to your heart, to your reason, you would comprehend me. Now I have no longer any doubt for the future."

"Nor I, Clemence, I assure you. Yes, since the resolution I have taken last night, the future, which seemed to me dark and gloomy, has become singularly cleared up—simplified."

"Nothing is more natural, my friend; now we move toward one object, leaning fraternally on each other: at the end of our career we will find ourselves as we are to-day. In fine, I desire that you shall be happy, and this shall be so, for I have placed it there," said Clemence, putting her finger on his forehead, ere she resumed, with a charming expression, lowering her hand to his heart: "No, I am mistaken; it is here that this good thought will incessantly watch for you, and for me also; and you shall see what is the obstinacy of a devoted heart."

"Dear Clemence," answered D'Harville, with constrained emotion; then, after a pause, he added gayly, "I begged you to come here before your departure to inform you that I could not take tea with you this morning. I have a number of persons to breakfast with me; it is a kind of impromptu assemblage to congratulate M. de Lucenay on the happy issue of his duel."

"What a coincidence! M. de Lucenay comes to breakfast with you, while I go, perhaps very indiscreetly, to invite myself to do the same with Madame de Lucenay; for I have much to say to her about my unknown *protegees*. From there I intend to go to the prison of Saint Lazare, with Madame de Blinval, for you do not know all my ambition; at this moment I am intriguing to be admitted into the Discharged Prisoners' Aid Society."

"Truly, you are insatiable," said the marquis; "thus," added he, restraining with great difficulty his emotion, "thus I shall see you no more—to-day!" he hastened to add.

"Are you vexed that I go out this morning so early?" asked Madame d'Harville, quickly, astonished at the tone of his voice. "If you ask it, I will put off my visit to Madame de Lucenay."

The marquis was on the point of betraying himself; but said, in the most affectionate manner, "Yes, my dear, I am as much vexed to see you go out as I shall be impatient to see you return; these are defects I shall never correct myself of."

"And you will do well, dear; for I should be very angry."

A bell announcing a visit resounded throughout the hotel.

"Here are, doubtless, some of your guests," said Madame d'Harville; "I leave you—by the way, what

are you going to do to-night? If you have not disposed of your evening, I wish you would accompany me to the opera; perhaps, now, music will please you more!"

"I place myself under your orders with the greatest pleasure."

"Are you going out soon? Shall I see you again before dinner?"

"I am not going out. You will find me here."

"Then, when I return, I will come and see if your bachelor breakfast has been amusing."

"Adieu, Clemence."

"By, 'by! I leave you the field clear; I wish you much pleasure. Be very gay!" And after having cordially pressed the hand of her husband, Clemence went out by one door a moment before M. de Lucenay entered by another.

"She wishes me much amusement—she tells me to be gay—she went away tranquilly—smiling! this does honor to my dissimulation. By Jove! I did not think myself so good an actor. But here is Lucenay."

The Duke de Lucenay entered the room; his wound had been so slight that he did not carry his arm in a sling. He was one of those men whose countenances are always cheerful and contemptuous, movements always restless, and mania to make a bustle insurmountable. Yet, notwithstanding his caprices, his pleasantries in very bad taste, and his enormous nose, he was not a vulgar man, thanks to a kind of natural dignity and courageous impertinence which never abandoned him.

"How indifferent you must suppose me to be as regards anything concerning you, my dear Henry!" said D'Harville, extending his hand to Lucenay; "but it was only this morning I heard of your disagreeable adventure."

"Disagreeable! come now, marquis! I got the worth of my money, as they say. I never laughed so much in my life! M. Robert appeared so solemnly determined not to pass for having a cold. You don't know what was the cause of the duel? The other night at the embassy, I asked him, before your wife and the Countess M'Gregor, how he got on with his cough; between us, he had not this inconvenience. But never mind. You understand—to say that before handsome women is annoying."

"What folly! I recognize you there. But who is this M. Robert?"

"I' faith! I don't know anything about him; he is a gentleman whom I met at the watering-places; he passed before us in the winter-garden at the embassy; I called him to play off this joke; he answered the second day after by giving me, very gallantly, a nice little thrust with his sword. But don't let us talk of this nonsense. I come to beg a cup of tea." Saying this, Lucenay threw himself at full length on the sofa; after which, introducing the end of his cane between the wall and the frame of a picture placed over his head, he commenced moving it backward and forward.

"I expected you, my dear Henry, and I have arranged a little surprise for you."

"Oh, what is it?" cried Lucenay, pushing the picture into a very ticklish position.

"You'll end by pulling that picture on your head."

"That's true, by Jove! you have the eye of an eagle. But your surprise, what is it?"

"I have sent for some friends to breakfast with us."

"Ah, good! marquis, bravo! bravissimo! archibravissimo!" screamed Lucenay, striking heavy blows on the sofa cushions. "And whom shall we have?"

"Saint Remy."

"No; he has been in the country for some days."

"What the devil can he manage to do in the country in winter! Are you sure he is not in Paris?"

"Very sure; I wrote him to be my second; he was absent; I fell back on
Lord Douglas and Sezannes."

"That is fortunate; they breakfast with us."

"Bravo! bravo!" cried Lucenay, anew. Then he turned and twisted himself on the sofa, accompanying his loud cries with a series of somersaults that would have astonished a rope-dancer. The acrobatic

evolutions were interrupted by the arrival of Saint Remy.

"I have no need to ask if Lucenay is here," said the viscount, gayly.
"He can be heard below."

"How! is it you? beautiful sylvan! countryman! wolf's cub!" cried the duke, much surprised; "I thought you were in the country."

"I came back, yesterday; I received the invitation just now, and here I am, quite delighted at this surprise," and Saint Remy gave his hand to Lucenay, and then to the marquis.

"I take this very kind in you, my dear Saint Remy. Is it not natural that the friends of Lucenay should rejoice at the happy issue of this duel, which, after all, might have had a very grievous result?"

"But," resumed the duke obstinately, "what have you been doing in the country in midwinter, Saint Remy? that beats me."

"How curious he is!" said the viscount, addressing D'Harville. "I wish to wean myself from Paris, since I must so soon quit it."

"Ah! yes, this beautiful whim to attach yourself to the legation of France at Gerolstein. None of your nonsense and stuff about diplomacy; you will never go there. My wife says so, and everybody repeats it."

"I assure you that Madame de Lucenay is mistaken, like every one else."

"She told you before me that it was a folly!"

"I have committed so many in my lifetime!"

"Elegant and charming follies, very well, so as to ruin yourself, as they say, by your Sardanapalus's magnificence—I admit that; but to go and bury yourself in such a hole of a court as Gerolstein! Come, now, this is folly, and you are too sensible to do a stupid thing."

"Take care, my dear Lucenay; in abusing this German court you will have a quarrel with D'Harville, the intimate friend of the grand duke, who, besides, received me most kindly the other night at the embassade of——where I was presented to him."

"Really! my dear Henry," said D'Harville, "if you knew the grand duke as I know him, you would comprehend that Saint Remy could have no repugnance to go and pass some time at Gerolstein,"

"I believe you, marquis, although, your grand duke is said to be proudly original; but that doesn't prevent that a beau like Saint Remy, the finest flower among blossoms, cannot live, excepting at Paris; his value is only known at Paris."

The other guests had just arrived, when Joseph entered, and said a few words in a low tone to his master.

"Gentlemen, will you allow me," said the marquis; "it is the jeweler who brings me some diamonds to choose for my wife—a surprise. You know, Lucenay, you and I being husbands of the old schools."

"Oh! if you talk of a surprise," cried the duke, "my wife gave me one yesterday; a famous one, I tell you."

"Some splendid present?"

"She asked me for a hundred thousand francs."

"And as you are a magnifico, you—"

"Lent them! they will be mortgaged on her Arnonville farm—short accounts make long friends. But never mind; to lend in two hours one hundred thousand francs to some one who wants them, is generous and rare. Is it not, spendthrift? You who are an expert at loans," said the Duke de Lucenay, laughing, without dreaming of the bearing of his speech.

Notwithstanding his audacity, the viscount at first slightly blushed, but he said with effrontery, "One hundred thousand francs! enormous. How can a woman ever have need of such an amount. With men that's another story."

"I don't know what she wanted with the money. It is all the same to me. Some bills, probably some

urgent creditors; that's her look-out. And, besides, you well know, my dear Saint Remy, that in lending her my money, it would have been in the worst taste in the world to ask what she wanted it for."

"It is, however, a very excusable curiosity in those who lend, to wish to know what the borrower wants to do with the money," said the viscount, laughing.

"Saint Remy," said D'Harville, "you, who have such excellent taste, must aid me in choosing the set I intend for my wife; your approbation will sanction my choice—be it law."

The jeweler entered, carrying several caskets in a large leather bag.

"Ah! here is M. Baudoin!" said Lucenay.

"At your grace's service."

"I am sure that it is you who ruin my wife with your infernal and dazzling temptations," said Lucenay.

"Her grace has only had her diamonds reset this winter," said the jeweler, slightly embarrassed. "I have this moment left them with her grace, on my way here."

Saint Remy knew that Madame de Lucenay, to assist him, had changed her diamonds for false ones; this conversation was very disagreeable to him, but he said boldly, "How curious these husbands are! do not answer, M. Baudoin."

"Curious! goodness, no," answered the duke; "my wife pays; she is richer than I am."

During this conversation, Baudoin had displayed on a bureau several admirable necklaces of rubies and diamonds.

"How splendid! how divinely the stones are cut!" said Lord Douglas.

"Alas! my lord," answered the jeweler, "I employed in this work one of the best artisans in Paris; unfortunately, he has gone mad, and I shall never find his equal. My broker tells me that it is probably misery which has turned his brain, poor man."

"Misery! you confide diamonds to a man in poverty!"

"Certainly, my lord, and I have never known an instance of an artisan concealing or secreting anything confided to him, however poor he might be."

"How much for this necklace?" asked D'Harville.

"Your lordship will remark that the stones are of splendid cutting, and the purest water, almost all of the same size."

"Here are some wordy precautions most menacing for your purse," said
Saint Remy, laughing; "expect now, D'Harville, some exorbitant price."

"Come, M. Baudoin, your lowest price?" said D'Harville.

"I do not wish to make your lordship haggle, so I say the lowest is forty-two thousand francs."

"Gentlemen!" cried Lucenay, "let us admire D'Harville in silence. To arrange a surprise for his wife for forty-two thousand francs! The devil! don't go and noise that abroad; it will be a detestable example."

"Laugh as much as you please, gentlemen," said the marquis, gayly. "I am in love with my wife, I do not conceal it; I boast of it!"

"That is easily seen," said Saint Remy; "such a present speaks more than all the protestations in the world."

"I take this necklace, then," said D'Harville, "if you approve of the black enamel setting, Saint Remy."

"It sets off to advantage the brilliancy of the stones; they are beautifully arranged."

"I decide, then, for this necklace," said D'Harville. "You will have to settle with M. Doublet, my steward, Baudoin."

"M. Doublet has advised me, my lord," said the jeweler, and he went out, after having put in his sack, without counting them, the different sets of jewels which he had brought, and which Saint Remy had

for a long time handled and examined during this conversation.

D'Harville, in giving this necklace to Joseph, who awaited his orders, whispered to him, "Mlle. Juliette must put these diamonds quietly with her lady's, without her suspecting it, so that the surprise will be complete."

At this moment the butler announced that breakfast was served; the guests passed into the breakfast-room and seated themselves at the table.

"Do you know, my dear D'Harville," said the duke, "that this house is one of the most elegant and best arranged in Paris?"

"It is commodious enough, but it wants space; my project is to add a gallery on the garden. Madame d'Harville desires to give some grand balls, and our three saloons are not large enough; besides, I find nothing more inconvenient than the encroachments made by a fete on the apartments which one habitually occupies, and from which, for the time, you are exiled."

"I am of your opinion," said Saint Remy; "nothing is in worse taste, more in the 'city' fashion, than these forced removals by authority of a ball or concert. To give fetes really splendid, without any inconvenience to one's self, a particular suite of apartments must be arranged exclusively for them; and, besides, vast and splendid saloons, destined for grand balls, ought to have a different character from rooms in ordinary occupation: there is between the two species of apartments the same difference as between a splendid fresco and a cabinet picture."

"He is right," said D'Harville; "what a pity that Saint Remy has not twelve or fifteen hundred thousand livres a year! what wonders we should enjoy!"

"Since we have the happiness to enjoy a representative government," said the Duke de Lucenay, "ought not the country to vote a million a year to Saint Remy, and charge him to represent at Paris French taste and fashion, which would thus decide the fashion of Europe and the world?"

"Adopted!" was cried in chorus.

"And this million should be annually raised in form of a tax on those abominable misers who, possessors of enormous fortunes, shall be arraigned, tried, and convicted of living like skinflints," added Lucenay.

"And as such," said D'Harville, "condemned to defray the magnificences which they ought to display."

"While waiting for the decision which will legalize the supremacy which Saint Remy now exercises in fact," said D'Harville, "I ask his advice for the gallery I am about to construct."

"My feeble lights are at your disposal, D'Harville."

"And when shall this inauguration take place, my dear fellow?"

"Next year, I suppose, for I am going to commence immediately."

"What a man of projects you are!"

"I have many others. I contemplate a complete change at Val Richer."

"Your estate in Burgundy?"

"Yes; there are some admirable plans to execute there, if my life is spared."

"Poor old man! But have you not lately bought a farm near Val Richer to add to your estate?"

"Yes, a very good affair that my notary advised."

"Who is this rare and precious notary who advises such good things?"

"M. Jacques Ferrand."

At this name a slight shade passed over the viscount's brow.

"Is he really as honest a man as he is reputed to be?" asked he, carelessly, of D'Harville, who then remembered what Rudolph had related to Clemence concerning the notary.

"Jacques Ferrand? what a question; why, he is a man of antique probity!" said Lucenay. "As respected as respectable. Very pious—that hurts no one. Excessively avaricious—which is a guarantee for his

clients."

"He is, in fine, one of our notaries of the old school, who ask you for whom you take them when you speak of a receipt for money confided to them."

"For no other cause than that I would confide my whole fortune to him."

"But where the devil, Saint Remy, did you get your doubts concerning this worthy man, of proverbial integrity?"

"I am only the echo of vague rumors, otherwise I have no reason to defame this phenix of notaries. But to return to your projects, D'Harville; what are you going to build at Val Richer? The chateau is said to be superb."

"You shall be consulted, my dear Saint Remy, and sooner, perhaps, than you think, for I delight in these works; it seems to me there is nothing more pleasant than to have your plans spread out for years to come. To day this project—in a year this one—still later some other: add to this a charming wife whom one adores, is the motive of all your plans, and life passes gently enough."

"I believe you; it is a real paradise on earth."

"Now," said D'Harville, when breakfast was over, "if you will smoke a cigar in my cabinet, you will find some excellent ones there."

They arose from the table and returned to the cabinet of the marquis: the door of his sleeping apartment, which communicated with it, was open. The sole ornament of this room was a panoply of arms. Lucenay, having lighted a cigar, followed the marquis into his chamber.

"Here are some splendid guns, truly; faith, I do not know which to prefer, the French or the English."

"Douglas," cried Lucenay, "come and see if these guns will not compare with the best Mantons."

Lord Douglas, Saint Remy, and the two other guests entered the chamber of the marquis to examine the arms.

D'Harville took a pistol, cocked it, and said, laughing, "Here, gentlemen, is the universal panacea for all woes, the spleen, or ennui." He placed the muzzle laughingly to his mouth.

"I prefer another specific," said Saint Remy; "this is only good in desperate cases."

"Yes, but it is so prompt," said D'Harville. "Click! and it is done; the will is not more rapid. Really! it is marvelous."

"Take care, D'Harville, such jokes are always dangerous, and accidents might happen," said Lucenay, seeing the marquis again place the pistol to his lips.

"Do you think that if it was loaded I would play these tricks?"

"Doubtless, no, but it is always wrong."

"Look here, sirs, this is the way they do it; the barrel is introduced delicately between the teeth, and then—"

"How foolish you are, D'Harville, when you once get a-going," said
Lucenay, shrugging his shoulders.

"The finger is placed on the trigger," added D'Harville.

"Is he not a child—childish at his age?"

"A little movement on the lock," continued the marquis, "and one goes straight to the land of spirits."

With these words the pistol went off.

D'Harville had blown his brains out!

We will renounce the task; we cannot describe the affright, the amazement, of the guests. The next day was seen in a newspaper:

"Yesterday an event, as unforeseen as deplorable, agitated the whole Faubourg St. Germain. One of those imprudent acts, which lead every year to such fatal accidents, has caused a most lamentable

affair. Here are the facts which we have gathered, the authenticity of which we can guarantee.

"The Marquis D'Harville, possessor of an immense fortune, hardly twenty-six years of age, noted for the elevation of his character and the goodness of his heart, married to a lady whom he adored, had invited a few friends to breakfast. On leaving the table, they passed into the sleeping apartment of M. d'Harville, where were displayed several valuable arms. In showing some of his guests, M. d'Harville, in jest, placed a pistol, which he did not know was loaded, to his lips. In his security, he drew the trigger; it went off, and the unhappy young nobleman fell dead, with his skull fractured. The frightful consternation of the surrounding friends may easily be imagined, to whom, but a moment before, in the bloom of youth, he had just been conversing of his projects for the future. And as if all the circumstances attending this painful event should be more cruel from contrast, the same morning M. d'Harville, wishing to surprise his wife, had just purchased a valuable necklace. And it is just at this moment, when, perhaps, life never appeared more smiling, more desirable, that he falls a victim to a deplorable accident.

"Before such a misfortune all reflections are useless; we can only remain, as it were, annihilated by the inscrutable decrees of Providence."

We quote the papers merely to show that general belief attributed the death of D'Harville to a deplorable accident. It is hardly necessary to say, that D'Harville carried with him to the tomb the mysterious secret of this voluntary death. Yes, voluntary; calculated and meditated with as much coolness as genorosity, so that Clemence could not have the slightest suspicion of the true cause of this suicide.

Thus the project of which D'Harville had conversed with his friends and his intendant, his confidential communications to his old servant, the surprise which he arranged for his wife, were just so many snares laid for public credulity.

How could a man be supposed about to kill himself, who was so much occupied with plans for the future—so desirous of pleasing his wife? His death was therefore attributed, and could only be attributed, to an imprudence. As to the resolution, an incurable despair had dictated it.

"My death alone can dissolve these ties—it must be—I shall kill myself." And this is the reason why D'Harville had accomplished this grave and melancholy sacrifice.

If a suitable law of divorce had existed, would he have committed suicide? No! He would have repaired in part the evil he had done; restored his wife to liberty, permitted her to find happiness in another union. The inexorable immutability of the law, then, often renders certain faults irremediable; or, as in this case, only allows them to be effaced by a new crime.

CHAPTER XII.

SAINT LAZARE.

We think we ought to inform the most scrupulous of our readers that the prison of Saint Lazare, specially devoted to prostitutes and female thieves, is daily visited by several ladies, whose charities, name, and social position command general respect. These ladies, brought up amid the splendors of fortune, who with good reason are classed among the most elevated in society, come every week to pass long hours with the miserable prisoners. Observing in these degraded beings the least aspiration after virtue, the least regret for a past crime, they encourage the better tendencies and repentance; and, by the powerful magic of the words "duty," "honor," "virtue," sometimes they rescue from the depths of degradation one abandoned, despised, ruined being.

Accustomed to the refinements of the best society, these courageous women leave their houses, pressing their lips to the virginal cheeks of their daughters, pure as the angels of heaven, and go to the gloomy prisons to brave the gross indifference, or the criminal conversation, of thieves and prostitutes.

Faithful to their mission of high morality, they valiantly descend into the infected receptacle, place the hand on all these ulcerated hearts, and if some feeble pulsation of honor reveals to them the slightest hope of saving them, they contend and tear from an almost irrevocable perdition the wretch of whom they do not despair. The scrupulous reader, to whom we address ourselves, will calm, then, his sensibility, in thinking that he will only hear and see, after all, what these venerated women see and

hear every day.

After having, we hope, appeased the reader's scruples, we introduce him to Saint Lazare, an immense edifice, of imposing and gloomy aspect, situated in the Rue de Faubourg Saint Denis.

Ignorant of the terrible drama that was passing at home, Madame d'Harville had gone to the prison, after having obtained some information from Madame de Lucenay concerning the two unhappy women whom the cupidity of Jacques Ferrand had plunged into distress. Madame de Blinval, one of the patronesses before spoken of, not being able to accompany Clemence to Saint Lazare, she came alone. She was received with much kindness by the director, and by several inspectresses, known by their black dresses and a blue ribbon with a silver medal.

One of these, a woman of advanced age, of a soft and grave expression, remained alone with Madame d'Harville, in a small room adjoining the office.

Madame Armand, the inspectress who had remained alone with Madame d'Harville, possessed to an extreme degree of foreknowledge and insight into the character of the prisoners. Her word and judgment was of paramount authority in the house.

She said to Clemence: "Since your ladyship has been kind enough to request me to point out those inmates who, from good conduct or sincere repentance, should merit your interest, I believe I can recommend one unfortunate, whom I believe more unhappy than culpable; for I do not think I deceive myself in affirming, that it is not too late to save this girl, a poor child of sixteen, or seventeen at most."

[Illustration: THE INSPECTION OF THE DORMITORY]

"For what has she been confined?"

"She is guilty of being found on the Champs Elysees in the evening. As it is forbidden her class, under very severe penalties, to frequent, either day or night, certain places, and the Champs Elysees is among the number of these prohibited places, she was arrested."

"And she appears interesting to you?"

"I have never seen more regular or more ingenuous features. Imagine, my lady, a picture of the Virgin. What gave still more to her appearance a most modest expression was, that when she came here she was dressed like a peasant girl of the environs of Paris."

"She is, then, a country girl?"

"No, my lady. The inspectors recognized her. She lived in a horrible house in the city, from which she was absent two or three months but as she had not her name erased from the police registers, she remained under the control of the officers, who sent her here."

"But perhaps she left Paris to endeavor to reinstate herself?"

"I think so. I felt at once interested in her. I interrogated her as to the past; I asked her if she came from the country, telling her to be of good cheer, if, as I hoped, she wished to return to the paths of virtue."

"What did she reply?"

"Lifting on me her large blue, melancholy eyes, full of tears, she said to me, in a tone of angelic sweetness, 'I thank you, madame, for your kindness, but I cannot speak of the past; I have been arrested—I was wrong—I do not complain.' 'But where do you come from? Where have you been since you left the city; if you have been to the country to seek an honest existence, say so; prove it: we will write to the police to obtain your discharge. You shall be erased from the police lists, and your good resolutions shall be encouraged.' 'I entreat you, madame, do not question me; I cannot answer you,' she replied. 'But when you leave here, do you wish to return to that horrible house again?' 'Oh, never,' she cried, 'What will you do then?' 'Heaven knows!' she replied, letting her head fall on her breast."

"This is very strange! She expresses herself—"

"In very good terms, madame; her deportment is timid, respectful, but without meanness. I will say more. Notwithstanding the extreme sweetness of her voice and her look, there is at times in her accent, in her attitude, a kind of sorrowful pride which confounds me. If she did not belong to the unhappy class of which she is a part, I should almost think that this pride is that of a soul conscious of its elevation."

CHAPTER XIII.

MONT SAINT JEAN.

The clock of the prison struck two.

To the severe frost which had reigned for some days, a temperature soft, mild, almost spring-like, had succeeded; the sunbeams were reflected on the water of a large square basin, with a stone margin, situated in the middle of the yard, planted with trees, and surrounded by high, gloomy walls, pierced with a number of grated windows; wooden benches were placed here and there in this vast inclosure, which served as the prisoners' exercise ground.

The tinkling of a bell announcing the hour of recreation, the prisoners noisily rushed into the court through a strong wicket-door which was opened for them. These women, dressed in uniform, wore black caps and long blue woolen frocks, confined by a belt and iron buckle. There were two hundred prostitutes there, condemned for infringements of the laws which register them, and place them without the common law.

At the sight of this collection of lost creatures, one cannot prevent the sad thought, that many among them have been pure and virtuous, at least some time. We make this restriction, because a great number have been vitiated, corrupted, depraved, not only from their youth, but from their most tender infancy.

When the prisoners rushed into the court, screeching and shouting, it was easy to see that joy alone at escaping from labor did not render them so noisy. After having pushed through the only door that led to the yard, the crowd separated, and made a circle around a deformed being, whom they overwhelmed with hootings.

She was a woman of about thirty-six or forty, short, thick-set, crooked, her neck sunk between unequal shoulders. They had pulled off her cap, and her hair, of a rather faded yellow, uncombed, tangled, striped with gray, fell over her low and stupid face. She was dressed in a blue frock, like the other prisoners, and carried under her arm a bundle tied up in a miserable, ragged handkerchief. She tried to ward off the threatened blows with her left arm.

Nothing could be more sadly grotesque than the features of this poor creature. It was a ridiculous and hideous face, lengthened to a snout, wrinkled, tanned, and dirty, pierced with nostrils, and small red eyes, squinting and bloodshot; by turns supplicating or angry, she implored and scolded; but they laughed more at her complaints than at her threats. This woman was the butt of the prisoners. One fact alone, however, should have saved her from their bad treatment; she was about to become a mother. But her ugliness and imbecility, and the habit they had of looking upon her as a victim devoted to the general amusement, rendered her persecutors implacable, notwithstanding their ordinary respect for maternity.

Among the most furious of the enemies of Mont Saint Jean (this was the name of the drudge) could have been remarked La Louve—a tall girl of about twenty, active, masculine, with rather regular features; her coarse, black hair was shaded with red; her face was disfigured with pimples; her thick lips were slightly covered with a bluish down; her dark eyebrows, very thick and heavy, met above her large brown eyes; something violent, ferocious, and brutal in her expression, a kind of habitual laugh, which, lifting her upper lip when she was angry, showing her white and scattering teeth, explains her surname of La Louve (She-Wolf). Nevertheless, this face expressed more audacity and insolence than cruelty—in a word, rather vicious than thoroughly bad, this woman was yet susceptible of some good feelings.

"Oh, dear, what have I done to you?" cried Mont Saint Jean. "Why do you treat me so?"

"Because it amuses us. Because you are only fit to be tormented. It is your trade. Look at yourself; you will see you have no right to complain."

"But you know I do not complain until I can't stand it any longer."

"Well, we'll leave you alone if you will tell us why you are called
Mont Saint Jean."

"Yes, yes, tell us that."

"I have told you this-a hundred times. An old soldier, whom I once loved, was called so because he

was wounded in the battle of Mont Saint Jean. I took his name. Are you content now? You make me repeat the same things."

"If he looked like you he was a beauty! He must have been one of the invalids."

"I am ugly, I know. Say what you please: all the same to me; but don't strike me, that's all I ask."

"What have you got in that old handkerchief?" said La Louve.

"Yes, yes, what is it? Come, show it."

"Oh no, I entreat you!" said the poor creature, holding the bundle tightly in her hands.

"You must give it up."

"Yes; take it from her, La Louve."

"What is it?"

"Well, it is baby's clothes I have commenced for my child. I make them with the old pieces of linen I pick up. It is of no consequence to you, is it?"

"Oh, let us see the baby-linen of Mont Saint Jean! Come, come," cried
La Louve, snatching the bundle from the hands of Mont Saint Jean.

The wretched handkerchief was torn to pieces in the struggle, and its contents, composed of rags and bits of stuff of all colors, were strewn on the ground and trampled under foot, amid shouts of laughter.

"What rags! What trash! An old rag shop! Takes more thread than stuff!
Here, pick up your duds, Mont Saint Jean!"

"How wicked you are! How bad you must be!" cried the poor creature running here and there after the scraps and rags, which she tried to pick up, notwithstanding the blows they gave her. "I have never harmed any one," said she, weeping. "I have offered, if they would let me alone, to do anything for them they wanted; to give them half of my rations, although I am very hungry. Ah, well! no, no, it is just the same. But what must I do for peace? They have not even pity on a poor woman in my condition! They must be more savage than wild beasts! I had so much trouble to collect those little scraps of linen. How do you think I shall do, since I have no money to buy anything?" Suddenly she cried, in an accent of joy, "Oh, now you have come, La Goualeuse, I am saved! Speak to them for me! They will listen to you, surely, for they love you as much as they hate me."

The Goualeuse (the Songstress) arriving, the last of the prisoners had entered the yard.

CHAPTER XIV.

GOUALEUSE AND LOUISE.

Before we continue the account of this horrible scene, we must return to the Marchioness d'Harville and Madame Armand, whose conversation had been for a moment interrupted. At the ringing of the bell, the inspectress had hastened to one of the doors which opened into the prison yard, to be ready to prevent by her presence, or calm by her authority, any tumult or quarrels that might arise among the scholars, whose passions, restrained for some time by discipline and employment, only wanted the hour of idleness and recreation to be aroused and excited. Madame Armand had witnessed, in mournful silence, the cruel treatment of which Mont Saint Jean was a victim, and she had already advanced to snatch her from her tormentors, when Fleur-de-Marie appeared.

"She is saved!" said she to herself, and returned to the parlor where
Madame d'Harville awaited her.

"But this is quite a romance that you have just related," cried the latter, without giving Madame Armand time to apologize for her absence. "What are the relations of this girl, whose beauty, language, and manners form such a strange contrast to her past degradation and present situation with the other prisoners? If she is endowed with the elevation of mind that you suppose, she must suffer much from associating with her miserable companions."

"Everything concerning this girl is a subject of astonishment. Hardly has she been here three days, yet already she possesses a kind of influence over the other prisoners."

"In so short a time?"

"They show her not only interest, but almost respect."

"How? These unfortunates—"

"Have sometimes an instinct of singular delicacy in perceiving the noble qualities of others; yet they often hate those whose superiority they are obliged to admit."

"But they do not hate this young girl?"

"Far from that, madame; not one of them knew her before she entered here. They were at first struck with her beauty. Her features, although of rare beauty, are, it is true, veiled with a touching, unhealthy paleness. This sweet and melancholy face inspired them at first with more interest than jealousy. Then she became very quiet— another subject of astonishment for these creatures, who, for the most part, endeavor always to drown the voice of conscience by force of noise and tumult. In short, although dignified and reserved, she showed herself compassionate, which prevented her companions from being exasperated at her coldness. This is not all. A month ago there came here an unruly creature, called La Louve, so violent, audacious, and ferocious is her character. She is a girl of about twenty; tall, masculine, rather a fine face, but very coarse. We are often obliged to put her in confinement to subdue her turbulence. Only the day before yesterday she came out of the cell, very much irritated at the punishment she had just received. It was meal-time: the poor girl of whom I have spoken did not eat; she said sadly to her companions, 'Who wants my bread?' 'I,' said La Louve, first. 'I,' said a poor deformed creature afterward, called Mont Saint Jean, who serves as a laughingstock, and sometimes, in spite of us, as a butt to the other prisoners. The girl gave her bread to the latter, to the great rage of La Louve. 'I asked you first,' cried she furiously. 'It is true, but this poor woman has more need of it than you,' answered the girl. La Louve snatched the bread from the hands of Mont Saint Jean, and began to vociferate, brandishing her knife. As she is very irascible, and very much feared, no one dared to take the part of poor Goualeuse."

"What do you call her, madame?"

"La Goualeuse. It is the name, or rather surname, under which she has been confined here. Almost all of them have similar borrowed names."

"It is very singular."

"It signifies, in their hideous slang, the Songstress; for this young girl has, they say, a very fine voice; and I readily believe it, for her tone is enchanting."

"And how did she escape from this villainous Louve?"

"Rendered still more furious by La Goualeuse's coolness, she ran toward her with an oath and uplifted knife. All the prisoners screamed with terror. Goualeuse alone regarded without fear this formidable creature. Smiling bitterly, she said, in her angelic voice, 'Oh, kill me! kill me! I desire it; but do not make me suffer much.' These words, it was reported to me, were pronounced with a simplicity so touching, that almost all the prisoners had tears in their eyes."

"I believe it, said Lady d'Harville, painfully affected.

"The worst characters," answered the inspectress, "happily have sometimes moments of reflection—a kind of return to the correct path. On hearing these words, expressed with such resignation, La Louve, touched to the heart, as she afterward said, threw her knife on the ground, trampled it under foot, and cried, 'I was wrong to threaten you, Songstress, for I am stronger than you; you were not afraid of my knife; you are courageous—I love courage; so now, if any one attempts to hurt you, I'll defend you.'"

"What a singular character."

"The example of La Louve increased the influence of La Goualeuse; and at present, a thing almost without a precedent, hardly any of the prisoners address her familiarly; the greater part respect her, and even offer to render her any little service that can be rendered among prisoners. I asked some of the prisoners who slept in the same room with her, what was the cause of the deference shown her. 'That's more than we can tell,' they answered; 'it is plain to be seen she is not one of our sort.' 'But who told you so?' 'No one told us; we see.' 'By what?' 'In a thousand things. For instance, last night, before she went to bed, she went on her knees and said her prayers; as she prays, so La Louve says, she must have a right to pray!'"

"What a strange observation!"

"These poor creatures have no sentiment of religion, yet they never utter here a sacrilegious or impious word. You will see, madame, in all our rooms a kind of altar, where the statue of the Virgin is surrounded with offerings and ornaments made by themselves. But to return to La Goualeuse. Her companions said to me, 'We see that she is not our sort, from her soft manners, her sadness, the way in which she speaks.' And then said La Louve, who was present at this conversation, 'It must be that she is not one of us; for this morning, in our sleeping-room, without knowing why, we were ashamed to dress ourselves before her!"

"What strange delicacy in the midst of so much degradation!" cried
Lady d'Harville. "They have a profound sense of their degradation?"

"No one can despise them as much as they despise themselves. Among some of them, whose repentance is sincere, this original stain of vice remains indelible in their eyes, even when they find themselves in a better situation; others become insane, so much does the sense of their former aberration remain fixed and implacable. I should not be surprised if the profound sorrow of the Goualeuse proceeds from some such cause."

"If this should be so, what torture for her! a remorse which nothing can soothe!"

"Happily, madame, for the honor of the human race, this remorse occurs oftener than is supposed; avenging conscience never completely sleeps, or rather, strange thing, sometimes one would say that the spirit watches while the body sleeps. It is an observation that I made only this night again in reference to my *protegee*. Very, often, when the prisoners are asleep, I make the rounds of the sleeping apartments. Your ladyship cannot imagine how much the physiognomies of these women differ in expression while they sleep. A great number of them, whom I had seen during the day careless, bold, brazen, impudent, seemed completely to have changed when sleep had deprived their features of all the audacity of wickedness; for vice, alas! has its pride. Oh, what sorrowful revelations on these countenances, then dejected, melancholy, and sad! What involuntary starts! What mournful sighs torn from them by a dream, doubtless impressed with an inexorable reality! I spoke to you just now, madame, of this girl called La Louve. About fifteen days ago she insulted me brutally before all the prisoners. I shrugged my shoulders; my indifference but exasperated her. Then she thought to wound me by uttering something disgraceful concerning my mother, whom she had often seen here on a visit to me. Ah, how horrid! I acknowledge, stupid as this attack was, she hurt me. La Louve saw it, and triumphed. That night I went to make an inspection in the sleeping apartment; I reached the bed of La Louve, who was to be put in the cell next morning; I was struck with the sweetness of her face, compared with the hard and insolent expression which was habitual to her; her features seemed supplicating, full of sadness and contrition; her lips were half-open, her breathing oppressed; finally, a thing which appeared to me incredible, for I thought it impossible, tears—tears fell from her eyes. I looked at her in silence for some moments, when I heard her pronounce these words, 'Pardon! pardon her, mother!' I listened more attentively, but all that I could hear was my name, Madame Armand, pronounced with a sigh."

"She repented, during her sleep, of having abused your mother?"

"I thought so, and it made me less severe."

"And the next day, did she express any regret for her past conduct?"

"None; she showed herself as wild as ever."

"But, madame, you must need great courage, much strength of mind, not to recoil before the unpleasantness of a task which brings such rare returns!"

"The consciousness of fulfilling a duty sustains and encourages me— besides, sometimes, one is recompensed by some happy discovery."

"No matter; women like you, madame, are seldom to be found."

"No, no; I assure you what I do others do, and with more success and intelligence than I. One of the inspectresses of the other quarter of Saint Lazaro, destined for those accused of other crimes, will interest you much more. She related to me the arrival, this morning, of a young girl, accused of infanticide. Never have I heard anything more touching. The father of the poor unfortunate has become insane from grief, on learning the shame of his child. It appears that nothing could be more frightful than the poverty of this family, who lived in a wretched garret in the Rue du Temple!"

"The Rue du Temple!" cried Madame d'Harville, astonished. "What is the name of the family?"

"Morel. Her name is Louise Morel."

"This poor family has been recommended to me," said Clemence, blushing, "but I was far from expecting to hear such terrible news— and Louise Morel—"

"Says she is innocent; she swears her child was dead; and her words have the accent of truth. Since you have interested yourself in her family, if you would have the kindness to see her, this mark of your goodness would calm her despair, which they say is fearful."

"Certainly, I will see her, and the Goualeuse also; for all you tell me about this poor girl affects me sincerely. But what must I do to obtain her liberty? Then I will find her a place; I will take charge of her."

"With the relations your ladyship has, it will be very easy for you to get her discharge to-day or to-morrow; it depends entirely on the prefect of the police. The recommendation of a person of quality would be decisive with him. But I have wandered far, madame, from the observation that I made on the slumber of the Goualeuse. On this subject, I must confess, that I should not be astonished that, to the sentiments of profound grief for her first fault, is joined another sorrow, not less cruel."

"What do you mean to say, madame?"

"Perhaps I am deceived; but I should not be astonished that this young girl, emancipated, as it were, from the degradation into which she was first plunged, had experienced perhaps a virtuous love, which was at once her happiness and misery."

"Why do you think so?"

"The obstinate silence she keeps as to the place where she passed the three months which followed her departure from the City, makes me think that she fears to be reclaimed by the persons with whom, perhaps, she found a refuge."

"And why this fear?"

"Because she would then have to avow a past life, of which they are doubtless ignorant."

"Really, this peasant's dress—"

"Besides, another circumstance has strengthened my suspicions. Last night, as I made my inspection, I drew near the Goualeuse's bed; she slept profoundly; her face was calm and serene; her thick flaxen hair, half escaping from under her cap, fell in profusion on her neck and shoulders. She had her small hands clasped over her bosom, as if she had fallen asleep while in the act of prayer. I contemplated with compassion this angelic countenance, when, in a low voice, and in a tone at once respectful, sorrowful and endearing, she pronounced a name."

"And this name?"

After a moment's silence, Madame Armand said gravely, "Although I consider as sacred that which one hears another express in their sleep, you interest yourself so generously in this unfortunate, madame, that I can confide to you this secret. The name was Rudolph."

"Rudolph!" cried Madame d'Harville, thinking of the prince. Then, reflecting that, after all, the Grand Duke of Gerolstein could have no connection with the Rudolph of poor Goualeuse, she said to the inspectress, who seemed astonished at her exclamation, "This name surprised me, madame, for by a singular chance, one of my relations bears it also; but all you have told me of the Goualeuse interests me more and more. Can I not see her to-day? Now?"

"Yes, madame, I will go, if you wish, to find her, I can also ask about Louise Morel, who is in the other part of the prison."

"I shall be much obliged," answered Madame d'Harville, and she remained alone.

"It is singular," said she; "I cannot account for the strange impression which the name of Rudolph caused me. Truly, I am mad! between *him* and such a creature, what relations can exist?" Then, after a pause, she added, "He was right! how much all this interests me! the mind, the heart, expand when they are applied to such noble occupations! As he says, it seems as if one participated in the power of Providence, when relieving those who are deserving. And these excursions in a world of whose existence we have no suspicion are so interesting, so *amusing*, as *he* was pleased to say! What romance could give me such touching emotions, excite to this point my curiosity! This poor Goualeuse, for example, inspires me with profound pity, and this unfortunate daughter of the artisan, whom the prince

had so generously relieved in my name! Poor people! their frightful misery served as a pretext to save me. I have escaped shame, death, perhaps, by a hypocritical falsehood; this deceit oppresses me; but I will expiate it by force of benefactions. This will be easy! it is so sweet to follow the noble counsels of Rudolph, it is rather to love than to obey him! Oh! I feel it—I know it. I experience a sweet delight in acting through him; for I love him. Oh, yes, I love him! yet he will be for ever ignorant of this eternal passion of my life."

While Madame d'Harville awaits the Goualeuse, we will return to the prison-yard.

CHAPTER XV.

WOLF AND LAMB.

Fleur-de-Marie, the Songstress, wore the blue dress and black cap of the prisoners; but even in this common costume she was charming. Yet since she was carried off from the farm of Bouqueval, her features were much altered; her natural paleness, slightly tinted with rose, was now as dead as the whitest alabaster; her expression had also changed; it had now assumed a kind of dignified sadness. Fleur-de-Marie knew that to endure courageously the grievous sacrifices of expiation is almost to obtain a kind of regeneration.

"Ask their pardon for me, La Goualeuse," said Mont Saint Jean. "See how they drag in the dirt all that I had collected with so much trouble; what good can it do them?"

Fleur-de-Marie did not say a word, but she began actively to collect, one by one, from under the feet of the prisoners, all the rags she could find. One of the prisoners retaining mischievously under her foot a piece of coarse muslin, Fleur-de-Marie, stooping, raised her enchanting face toward this woman, and said, in her sweet voice, "I beg you to let me take this, in the name of the poor weeping woman."

The prisoner withdrew her foot. The muslin was saved, as well as all the other rags, which the Goualeuse secured piece by piece. There remained only one little cap, which two of them were contending for, laughing.

Fleur-de-Marie said to them, "Come, be good now, and give her that little cap."

"My eye! is it for a baby harlequin, this cap? Made of gray stuff, with peaks of green and black fustian, and a bedtick lining!" This description of the cap was received with shouts of laughter.

"Laugh at it as much as you please, but give it to me," said Mont Saint Jean; "don't drag it in the gutter, as you did the rest. I beg your pardon, La Goualeuse, for having made you soil your hands for me," added she, in a grateful voice.

"Give me the harlequin cap," said La Louve, who caught it, and shook it in the air as a trophy.

"I entreat you to give it to me," said La Goualeuse.

"No; because you will give it to Mont Saint Jean."

"Certainly!"

"Ah! bah! such a fag! it's not worth the trouble."

"It is because Mont Saint Jean has nothing but rags to dress her child with that you should have pity on her, La Louve," said Fleur-de-Marie, sadly, extending her hand toward the cap.

"You sha'n't have it!" answered La Louve, brutally; "must one always give up to you because you are the weakest? You take advantage of this."

"Where would be the merit of giving it to me if I were the strongest?" answered La Goualeuse, with a smile full of grace.

"No, no, you wish to twist me about again with your little soft voice; you sha'n't have it."

"Come, now, La Louve, don't be naughty."

"Leave me alone, you tire me."

"I entreat you!"

"Stop! don't make me angry—I have said no, and no it is!" cried La Louve, very much irritated.

"Have pity upon her; see how she weeps!"

"What is that to me? So much the worse for her; she is our target."

"That's true, that's true, don't give it up," murmured several of the prisoners, carried away by the example of La Louve.

"You are right—so much the worse for her!" said Fleur-de-Marie, with bitterness. "She is your butt; she ought to be resigned to it; her groans amuse you, her tears make you laugh. You must pass the time in some way; if you should kill her on the spot, she has no right to say anything. You are right, La Louve —it is just! this poor woman has done no harm; she cannot defend herself; she is one against the whole — you overpower her—that is very brave and very generous."

"Are we cowards, then?" cried La Louve, carried away by the violence of her character, and by her impatience of all contradiction. "Will you answer? are we cowards, eh?" said she, more and more irritated.

Murmurs, very threatening for the Goualeuse, began to be heard. The offended prisoners approached and surrounded her, vociferating, forgetting or revolting against the ascendancy that the young girl had until then obtained over them.

"She calls us cowards! By what right does she scold us? Is it because she is greater than we are? We have been too good to her, and now she wants to put on airs with us. If we choose to torment Mont Saint Jean, what has she got to say about it? Since it is so, you shall be worse beaten than before, do you hear, Mont Saint Jean?"

"Hold, here is one to begin with," said one of them, giving her a blow. "And if you meddle with what don't concern you, La Goualeuse, we'll treat you in the same way."

"Yes, yes!"

"This isn't all!" cried La Louve; "La Goualeuse must ask our pardon for having called us cowards! If not, and we let her go on, she'll finish by eating us up; we are very stupid not to see that. She must ask our pardon. On her knee! on both knees! or we'll treat her like Mont Saint Jean, her *protegee*. On your knees—on your knees! Oh! we are cowards, are we?"

Fleur-de-Marie was not alarmed at these furious cries; she let the storm rage, but as soon as she could be heard, casting a calm and melancholy glance around her, she replied to La Louve, who vociferated anew, "Dare to repeat that we are cowards!"

"You? no, no; it is this poor woman whose clothes you have torn, whom you have beaten, dragged in the mire, who is a coward! Do you not see how she weeps, how she trembles in looking at you? It is she who is a coward, since she is afraid of you."

The discernment of Fleur-de-Marie served her perfectly. She might have invoked justice and duty to disarm the stupid and brutal conduct of the prisoners, they would not have listened to her; but in addressing them with this sentiment of natural generosity, which is never extinct even in the most contemptible natures, she awoke a feeling of pity.

La Louve and her companions still murmured; Fleur-de-Marie continued: "Your target does not deserve compassion, you say; but her child deserves it. Alas! does it not feel the blows given to the mother? When she cries for mercy, it is not for herself, it is for her child! When she asks for some of your bread, if you have too much, because she has more hunger than usual, it is not for her, but for her child! When she begs you, with tears in her eyes, to spare these rags, which she has had so much trouble to collect, it is not for her, but for her child! This poor little cap, which you have made so much fun of, is laughable, perhaps; yet only to look at it makes me feel like weeping. I avow it. Laugh at us both, Mont Saint Jean and me, if you will." The prisoners did not laugh. La Louve even looked sadly at the little cap she held in her hand. "Come, now!" continued Fleur-de-Marie, wiping her eyes with the back of her white and delicate hand; "I know you are not so hard. You torment Mont Saint Jean from want of employment, not from cruelty. But you forget that she has her child. Could she hold it in her arms that it should protect her, not only would you not strike her, for fear of hurting the poor innocent, but if it was cold, you would give to its mother all you could to cover it, eh, La Louve?"

"It is true: who would not pity a child?"

"It is very plain."

"If it was hungry you would take the bread out of your own mouth; would you not, La Louve?"

"Yes, and willingly. I am no worse than others."

"Nor we neither."

"A poor little innocent!"

"Who would have a heart to hurt it?"

"Must be a monster!"

"No hearts!"

"Wild beasts!"

"I told you truly," said Fleur-de-Marie. "That you were not cruel. You are kind; your error is not reflecting that Mont Saint Jean deserves as much compassion as though she had her child in her arms, that's all."

"That's all!" cried La Louve, with warmth; "no, that's not all. You were right, La Goualeuse; we were cowards, and you were brave in daring to tell us so; and you are brave in not trembling after having told us. You see we were right in constantly insisting that *you were not one of us*—it must always come to that. It vexes me; but so it is. We were all wrong just now. You were pluckier than the whole gang of us!"

"That's true; this little blonde must have had courage to tell us the truth right in our faces."

"After all, it is true, when we strike Mont Saint Jean, we do strike her child."

"I didn't think of that."

"Nor I either."

"But La Goualeuse thinks of everything."

"And to strike a child is shameful!"

"There isn't one of us capable of doing it."

"Nothing is more easily moved than popular passion-nothing more abrupt and rapid than the return from evil to good and from good to evil." The few simple and touching words from Fleur-de-Marie had caused a sudden reaction in favor of Mont Saint Jean, who wept gently.

Suddenly La Louve, violent and hasty in everything, took the little cap she held in her hand, made a kind of purse of it, fumbled in her pocket, and drew out twenty sous, threw them into the cap, and cried, presenting it to her companions, "I give twenty sous toward buying baby-linen for Mont Saint Jean. We'll cut it all out and sew it ourselves, so that the making-up sha'n't cost a copper!"

"Yes, yes."

"That's it! let us club together."

"I'm agreed!"

"Famous idea!"

"Poor woman!"

"She is as ugly as a monster; but she is a mother, like any one else."

"I give ten sous."

"I thirty."

"I twenty."

"I four sous; got no more."

"I have nothing; but I will sell my ration for tomorrow-who'll buy?"

"I," said La Louve; "I put ten sous for you; but you'll keep your ration, and Mont Saint Jean's baby shall be togged out like a princess."

To express the surprise and joy of Mont Saint Jean would be impossible; her grotesque and ugly visage became almost touching. Happiness and gratitude beamed the Fleur-de-Marie was also very happy, although she had been obliged to say to La Louve, when she held the little cap toward her, "I have no money; but I will work as much as you like."

"Oh! my good little angel from Paradise," cried Mont Saint Jean, falling at the feet of La Goualeuse, and trying to take her hand to kiss it. "What is it I have done that you should be so charitable toward me, and all these *ladies* also? Is it possible, my good angel? For my child—everything that I want! Who could have believed it? I shall go off my head, I am sure. Why, I was just now the scapegoat of every one! In a moment, because you said something in your dear little voice of a seraph, you turn them from evil to good; and now they love me, and I love them. They are so good! I was wrong to get angry. Wasn't I a fool, and unjust, and ungrateful? All they have done to me was only for a laugh; they didn't wish me any harm—it was for my good; for here is the proof. Why, now, if they were to kill me on the spot, I would not say a word."

"We have eighty-four francs and seven sous," said La Louve, having finished counting the money she had collected. "Who will be treasurer? Mustn't give it to Mont Saint Jean; she is too stupid."

"Let Goualeuse take charge of the money," they all cried unanimously.

"If you listen to me," said Fleur-de-Marie, "you will beg Madame Armand, the inspectress, to take charge of this sum, and make the necessary purchases; and then she will know the good action you have done, and, perhaps, will ask to have your time reduced. Well, La Louve," added she, taking her companion by the arm, "don't you now feel happier than when you were casting to the winds, just now, the poor rags of Mont Saint Jean?"

La Louve at first did not answer. To the generous warmth which had for a moment animated her features had succeeded a kind of savage defiance.

Fleur-de-Marie looked at her with surprise, not understanding this sudden change.

"La Goualeuse, come; I want to talk to you," said La Louve, in a sullen manner; and leaving the other prisoners, she led Fleur-de-Marie near to the basin which was in the center of the court. La Louve and her companion seated themselves, isolated from the rest of their companions.

The winter's sun shed its pale rays upon them, the blue sky was partially obscured by white and fleecy clouds; some birds, deceived by the mildness of the atmosphere, were warbling in the black branches of the large chestnut-trees in the court; two or three sparrows, bolder than the rest, came to drink and to bathe in a little brook which flowed from the fountain; the stone margin was covered with green moss, and here and there from the interstices rose some tufts of green herbs, which the frost had spared. This description of the prison basin may seem trifling, but Fleur-de-Marie lost not one of these details; with her eyes fixed sadly on the clouds as they broke the azure of the sky, or reflected the golden rays of the sun, she thought, with a sigh, of the magnificence of nature, which she much loved, admired poetically, and of which she was deprived.

"What do you wish to say to me?" asked La Goualeuse of her companion, who, seated alongside of her, remained somber and silent.

"It is necessary that we have a settlement," cried La Louve, harshly, "this can't go on."

"I don't understand you, La Louve."

"Just now, in the court, I said to myself, 'I will not yield to La Goualeuse,' and yet I have again given way to you." "But—"

"I tell you this can't last so."

"What have you against me, La Louve?"

"Why, I am no longer the same since your arrival; no, I have no more courage, strength, or hardihood."

Interrupting herself, she pushed up the sleeve of her dress and showed to La Goualeuse her strong white arm, pointing out to her, pricked in with indelible ink, a poniard half plunged in a red heart; over

this emblem were these words:

"Death to Dastards! MARTIAL. For life!"

"Do you see that?" cried La Louve.

"Yes; it makes me afraid," said La Goualeuse, turning away her head.

"When Martial, my lover, wrote this with a red-hot needle, he thought me brave; if he knew my conduct for three days past, he would drive his knife in my body, as this poniard is planted in this heart; and he would be right, for be has written there '*Death to Dastards*' and I am one."

"What have you done cowardly?"

"Everything."

"Do you regret what you have done just now?"

"Yes!"

"I do not believe you."

"I tell you that I regret it, for it is another proof of the power you have over us all. Did you not hear what Mont Saint Jean said when she was on her knees to thank you?"

"What did she say?"

"She said, in speaking of us, that with nothing you turn us from evil to good. I could have strangled her when she said that, for, to our shame, it is true. Yes, in a moment you change us from black to white: we listen to you, we give way to our impulses, and we are your dupes."

"My dupe—because you have generously assisted this poor woman!"

"It shall not be said," cried La Louve, "that a little girl like you can trample me under foot."

"I! how?"

"Do I know how? You come here—you commence by offending me."

"Offend you?"

"Yes: you ask who wants your bread: I answer first 'I.' Mont Saint
Jean only asks for it afterward and you give her the preference.
Furious at this, I rush on you with my knife raised."

"And I said to you, 'Kill me if you will, but do not make me suffer too much,'" answered La Goualeuse; "that was all."

"That was all! Yes, that was all! and yet, these words alone caused the knife to fall from my hands; made me ask pardon from you, who had offended me. Is it natural? Why, when I return to my senses, I pity myself. And the night when you arrived here, when you knelt to say your prayers, why, instead of laughing at you and arousing the whole company—why was it that I said, 'Leave her alone; she prays because she has the right to do so.' And, the next morning, why were we all ashamed to dress before you?"

"I do not know, La Louve."

"Really!" said this violent creature, with irony, "you don't know! It is, doubtless, as we have told you sometimes in jest, that you are of another family than ours. Perhaps you believe that?"

"I never said so."

"You never said so, but you act so."

"I pray you to listen to me."

"No! it has been of no service for me to listen to you—to look at you. Up to now I have never envied any one. Well, two or three times I have surprised myself in envying—can anything be more sneaking? —in envying your face—like the Holy Virgin's! your soft, sad manner! Yes, I have envied even your fair hair, and your blue eyes. I—who have always detested fair faces, since I am a brunette—wish to resemble you!"

"No, La Louve! me?"

"A week ago I should have left my mark on any one who would have dared to tell me this. However, I do not envy you your lot; you are as sad as a Magdalen. Is it natural? speak!"

"How can you expect me to account to you for the impressions I cause?"

"Oh, you know well enough what you do with your touch-me-not air."

"But what design can I have?"

"Do you think I know? It is exactly because I cannot understand all this that I suspect you. There is another thing: until now I have always been gay or angry, but never a thinker; and you have made me think. Yes, there are some words you say which, in spite of me, have touched my heart, and make me think all manner of sad things."

"I am sorry to have made you sad, La Louve; but I do not remember to have said any—"

"Oh!" cried La Louve; "what you do is often as touching as what you say! You are so malignant!"

"Do not be angry, La Louve! explain yourself."

"Yesterday, in the workshop, I saw you plainly. You had your eyes down, fixed on your work; a tear fell on your hand; you looked at it for a moment, and then you carried your hand to your lips, as if to kiss away this tear; is it not true?"

"It is true," said La Goualeuse, blushing.

"That has the appearance of nothing! But, at that moment you looked so unhappy—so unhappy, that I felt myself all heartache—every feeling stirred up. Say now? do you think this is amusing? I have always been as hard as a rock about everything concerning myself. No one can boast of ever having seen me weep; and it must be that in looking at your little face I should feel cowardice at my heart! Yes, for all that is pure cowardice; and the proof is, that for three days I have not dared to write to Martial, my conscience accuses me so much. Yes, keeping company with you has weakened my character; it must stop; I have enough of it; I wish to remain as I am, and not have people laugh at me."

"Why should they laugh at you?"

"Because they would see me acting a stupid good-natured part, who made them all tremble here! No, no, I am twenty; I am as handsome as you, in my style; I am wicked; I am feared, and that's what I want. I laugh at the rest. Perish all who say the contrary!"

"You are angry with me, La Louve!"

"Yes, you are for me a bad acquaintance; if this is continued, in fifteen days, instead of being called Wolf, they will call me Sheep. Thank you! it's not me they'll baptize so. Martial would kill me. In short, I want none of your company; I am going to ask to be put in another hall; if they refuse, I'll flare up so that they will put me in the dungeon until my time is out. That's what I have to say to you, La Goualeuse."

"I assure you, La Louve," said Fleur-de-Marie, "that you feel an interest in me, not because you are soft, but because you are generous—brave hearts alone feel the misfortunes of others."

"There is neither generosity nor courage in this," said La Louve, brutally; "it is cowardice. Besides, I do not wish you to tell me that I am touched—softened; it is not true."

"I will not say so any more, La Louve; but since you have shown some interest for me, you will let me be grateful to you for it, will you not?"

"To-night I shall be in another hall from you, or alone in the dungeon; and soon I shall be away from here."

"And where will you go?"

"Home; Rue Pierre Lescot. I have my own furnished room."

"And Martial!" said La Goualeuse, who hoped to continue the conversation by speaking of an object interesting to her; "you'll be very happy to see him?"

"Yes; oh, yes!" answered she. "When I was arrested he was recovering from sickness—a fever which he had, because he is always on the water. For sixteen or seventeen nights I never left him for a

moment. I sold half that I possessed to pay for a doctor and medicines. I can boast of it; and I do boast of it. If my man lives, he owes it to me. I yesterday burned a candle before the Virgin for him. It is foolish; but never mind, some very good effects have proceeded from this, for he is convalescent."

"Where is he now? what does he do?"

"He lives near the Asnieres Bridge, on the shore."

"On the shore?"

"Yes, with his family, in a solitary house. He is always warring with the river-keepers; and when once he is in his boat, with his double-barreled gun, it's no good to approach him!" said La Louve, proudly.

"What is his trade?"

"He fishes by stealth at night; his father had some *misunderstanding* with justice. He has still a mother, two sisters, and a brother. It would be better for him not to have such a brother, for he is a scoundrel, who will be guillotined one of these days; his sisters also. However, never mind, their necks belong to themselves."

"Where did you first meet Martial?"

"In Paris. He wished to learn the trade of a locksmith; a fine trade, always red-hot iron and fire around one, and danger, too; that suited him, but, like me, he had a bad head—couldn't agree with the slow-pokes: so he returned to his family, and began to maraud on the river. He came to Paris to see me, and I went to see him at Asnieres; it is very near; but if it had been further, I should have gone, even if I had been obliged to go on my hands and knees."

"You will be very happy to go to the country, you, La Louve," said the Goualeuse, sighing; "above all, if you love, as I do, to walk in the fields."

"I prefer to walk in the woods—in the large forests, with Martial!"

"In forests? are you not afraid?"

"Afraid! Is a wolf afraid? The thicker and darker the forest, the more I like it. A lonely hut, where I should live with Martial, who should be a poacher; to go with him at night, to set traps for the game; and then, if the guards come to arrest us, to fire on them, hiding in the bushes—ah! that's what I like!"

"You have lived in a, forest. La Louve?"

"Never."

"Who gave you such ideas?"

"Martial. He was a poacher in Rambouillet Wood. About a year ago he was *looked upon* as having fired upon a guard who had fired upon him—villain of a guard! It was not proved in court, but Martial was obliged to leave. So he then came to Paris to learn a trade; as I said, he left and went to maraud on the river; it is less slavish. But he always regrets the woods, and will return there some day or other."

"And, La Louve, where are your parents?"

"Do you think I know!"

"Is it a long time since you have seen them?"

"I do not know if they are dead or alive."

Fleur-de-Marie, although plunged very young into an atmosphere of corruption, had since respired an air so pure, that she experienced a painful oppression at the horrid story of La Louve. Suppressing the emotion which the sad confession of her companion had caused her, she said to her, timidly, "Listen to me without being angry."

"Come, say on; I hope I have talked enough; but, in truth, all the same, since it is the last time we shall converse together."

"Are you happy, La Louve?"

"What do you mean?"

"With the life you lead?"

"Here at Saint Lazare?"

"No; at your home, when you are free."

"Yes, I am happy."

"Always?"

"Always."

"You would not change your lot for any other?"

"For what other? There's no other lot for me."

"Tell me, La Louve," continued Fleur-de-Marie, after a moment's silence, "do you not sometimes like to build castles in the air here in prison? It is so amusing."

"Castles in the air?"

"About Martial."

"Martial?"

"Yes."

"Ma foi, I never have."

"Let me build one for you and Martial."

"What's the use?"

"To pass the time."

"Well, let us see this castle."

"Just imagine, for example, that by chance you should meet some one who should say to you, 'Abandoned by your father and mother, your childhood has been surrounded by bad examples; that you must be pitied as much as blamed for having become—'"

"Having become what?"

"What you and I—have become," answered Goualeuse, in a soft voice. "Suppose this person were to say to you, 'You love Martial—he loves you; leave your present mode of life, and become his wife.'"

La Louve shrugged her shoulders.

"Do you think he would take me for his wife?"

"Except his poaching, has he ever committed any other culpable action?"

"No; he is a poacher on the river, as he was in the woods; and he is right. Are not fish, like game, the property of those who can take them? Where is the mark of their owner?"

"Well, suppose, having renounced this, he wishes to become an honest man; suppose that he inspired, by the frankness of his good resolutions, enough confidence in an unknown benefactor to be given a place—as gamekeeper, for instance. To a poacher, it would be to his liking. It is the same trade, only lawful."

"Lord! yes; it is life in the woods."

"Only this place would be given to him on the sole condition that he would marry you and take you with him."

"I go with Martial?"

"Yes; you would be happy, you say, to live together in a forest. Would you not like better, instead of a miserable poacher's hut where you would hide yourselves like criminals, to have a nice little cottage, of which you should be the active, industrious housekeeper?"

"You make fun of me. Can this be possible?"

[Illustration: THE SCAFFOLD]

"Who knows? though it is only a castle."

"Ah, true; very well."

"I say, La Louve, it seems to me I already see you established in your cottage in the forest, with your husband, and two or three children. What happiness!"

"Children! Martial!" cried La Louve; "oh, yes, they would be *proudly* loved."

"How much company they would be for you in your solitude. Then, when they began to grow up, they could render you some assistance. The smallest could pick up the dead branches for your fire; the largest could drive to pasture the cow which has been given to your husband for his activity; for, having been a poacher himself, he would make all the better gamekeeper."

"Just so; that's true. Ah, these castles in the air are amusing. Tell me some more, La Goualeuse."

"They will be very much pleased with your husband. You will receive from his master some presents; a nice garden. But marry! you will have to work, La Louve, from morning to night." "Oh, if that was all, once along with Martial, work wouldn't make me afraid. I have strong arms."

"And you would have enough to occupy them, I answer for it. There is so much to do. There are the meals to prepare, clothes to mend; one day the washing, another day the baking, or the house to clean from top to bottom; so that the other gamekeepers would say, 'Oh, there is not a housekeeper like Martial's wife; from cellar to garret her house is as nice as a new pin; and the children always so neat and clean. It is because she is so industrious.'"

"Tell me, La Goualeuse, is it true I would be called Madame Martial?"

"It is a great deal better than to be called La Louve, is it not?"

"Certainly; I prefer the name of any man to the name of a beast. But, bah! bah! wolf I am born, and wolf I shall die."

"Who knows? Do not recoil from a hard but honest life that brings happiness. So, work would not alarm you?"

"Oh, no."

"And then, besides, it is not all labor: there are moments of repose. In the winter evenings, while your children are asleep, and your husband smoking his pipe, cleaning his gun, or caressing his dogs, you could have a nice quiet time."

"Bah! bah! a quiet time, sit with my arms folded. Goodness, no; I would prefer to mend the family linen in the evening, in the chimney-corner; that is not so tiresome. The days are so short in winter."

At the words of Fleur-de-Marie, La Louve forgot more and more of the present in these dreams of the future. La Louve did not conceal the wild tastes with which her lover had inspired her. Fleur-de-Marie had thought, with reason, that if her companion would suffer herself to be sufficiently moved at this picture of a rough, poor, and solitary life, to ardently desire to live such a one, this woman would deserve interest and pity.

Enchanted at seeing her companion listen with curiosity, La Goualeuse continued, smiling: "And, then you see *Madame Martial*—let me call you so, what do you care?"

"On the contrary, it flatters me," said La Louve, shrugging her shoulders, but smiling. "What folly—to play *Madame!* What children we are! Never mind, go on—it is amusing. You said, then——"

"I say, Madame Martial, that in speaking of your mode of living in winter, in the woods, we only think of the worst part of the season."

"No, that is not the worst. To hear the wind whistle at night in the forest, and from time to time the wolves howl, far off—far off; I would not find it tiresome, not I, if I am alongside of a good fire, with my man and my brats; or even all alone with my children, while he is gone to make his rounds. Oh! a gun doesn't frighten me. If I had my children to defend, I'd be good then. La Louve would take good care of her cubs!"

"Oh! I believe you—you are very brave; but coward me prefers spring to winter. Oh! the spring, Madame Martial, the spring! when the leaves burst forth; when the pretty wood-flowers blossom, which smell so good—so good, that the air is perfumed. Then it is that your children will tumble gayly on the new grass, and the forest will become so thick and bushy, that your house can hardly be seen for the

foliage; I think I can see it from here. There is a bower before the door that your husband has planted, which shades the seat of turf where he sleeps during the heat of the day, while you go and come, and tell the children not to wake their father. I do not know if you have remarked it, but at noon in the middle of summer, it is as silent in the woods as during the night. Not a leaf stirs, not a bird is heard to sing."

"That is true," repeated La Louve, mechanically, who, forgetting more and more the reality, believed almost that she saw displayed before her eyes the smiling pictures described by the poetic imagination of Fleur-de-Marie, instinctively a lover of the beauties of nature.

Delighted with the profound attention which her companion lent her, she continued, allowing herself to be carried away by the charm of the thoughts she evoked. "There is one thing that I like almost as well as the silence of the woods; it is the patter of the large drops of rain in the summer, falling on the leaves; do you like this also?"

"Oh yes—I like also, very much, the summer rain."

"When the trees, moss, and grass are all well moistened, what a fine fresh odor! And then, how the sun, peeping through the trees, makes all the drops of water sparkle which hang from the leaves after the shower. Have you remarked this also?"

"Yes, but I didn't remember it till you told it me. How droll it is! you tell it so well, La Goualeuse, that one seems to see everything as you speak; and—I do not know how to explain this to you; but what you have said—smells good—is refreshing—like the summer rain of which you spoke."

Thus, like the beautiful and the good, poetry is often contagious. La Louve's brutal and savage nature had to submit in everything to the influence of Fleur-de-Marie. She added, smiling, "We must not believe that we are alone in loving the summer rain. How happy the birds are! how they shake their wings in warbling joyously—not more joyously, however, than your children, free, gay, and lively as they are: see how, at the close of day, the youngest runs through the woods to meet his brother, who brings the heifers from the pasture; they soon heard the tinkling of their bells."

"Why, La Goualeuse, it seems to me that I can see the smallest, yet the boldest, who has been placed by his brother, who sustains him, astride the back of one of the cows."

"And one would say that the poor beast knew what burden she was bearing, she walks with so much precaution.

"But now it is supper time: your eldest, while the cattle were grazing, has amused himself in filling a basket for you with wild strawberries, which he has brought covered with violets."

"Strawberries and violets—oh! that must be a balm. But where the mischief do you get such ideas, La Goualeuse?"

"In the woods, where the strawberries ripen, where the violets bloom; it is only to look and collect, Madame Martial. But let us speak of the housekeeping: it is night, you must milk your cows, prepare the supper under the arbor, for you hear your husband's dogs bark, and soon the voice of their master, who, tired as he is, comes home singing. And why should he not sing, when, on a fine summer evening, with a contented mind, he regains his house, where a good wife and fine children await him?"

"True, one could not do otherwise than sing," said La Louve, becoming more and more thoughtful.

"At least, if one does not weep from joy," continued Fleur-de-Marie, herself affected. "And such tears are as sweet as songs. And then, when night has closed in, what happiness to remain under the arbor, to enjoy the serenity of a fine evening; to breathe the perfume of the forest; to hear the children prattle; to look at the stars! Then the heart is so full that it must be relieved by prayer. How not thank Him to whom one owes the freshness of the night, the perfume of the woods, the sweet light of the starry heavens? After these thanks or this prayer, you go to sleep peacefully until the morning, and then again you thank the Creator; for this poor, industrious, but calm and honest life, is that of every day."

"Of every day!" repeated La Louve, her head on her bosom, her eyes fixed, her breathing oppressed; "for it is true, God is good to give us the power to live happy on so little."

"Well, now, say," continued Fleur-de-Marie, gently, "say, ought he not be blessed and thanked next to Heaven, who would give you this peaceful and industrious life, instead of the miserable one you lead in the mud in the streets of Paris?"

The word "Paris" called La Louve to the reality.

A strange phenomenon had just been occurring in the mind, the soul of this creature. A natural picture of an humble working life, a simple recital, now lighted up by the soft glimmerings of a domestic fireside, gilded by some joyous rays of the sun, refreshed by the gentle winds of the forest, or perfumed by the odor of wild flowers, had made on La Louve an impression more profound, more striking, than all the exhortations of transcendent morality could have effected. Yes, as Fleur-de-Marie spoke, La Louve had yearned to be an indefatigable housekeeper, an honest wife, a pious and devoted mother. To inspire, even for a moment, a violent, immoral, degraded woman, with a love of family, the respect of duty, the desire to labor, gratitude toward the Creator, and that by promising her merely what God gives to all, the sun of Heaven and the shade of the forest, what man owes to the sweat of his brow, bread and shelter—was it not a triumph for Fleur-de-Marie? Would the moralist the most severe, the preacher the most fulminating, have obtained more by their menacing threats of every vengeance, human and Divine?

The angry feelings shown by La Louve when she awoke from her dream to the reality, showed the effects or influence of the words of her companion. The more her regrets were bitter on awakening to the sense of her horrible position, the more the triumph of the Goualeuse was manifest.

After a moment of silent reflection, La Louve suddenly raised her head, passed her hand over her face, and arose from her seat, threatening and angry.

"You see that I had reason to avoid you, and not listen to you, because it only does me harm! Why have you talked in this way to me?— to laugh at me? to torment me? And because I was fool enough to tell you that I would like to live in a forest with Martial! But who are you, then? Why do you turn my head in this way? You do not know what you have done, unlucky girl! Now in spite of myself, I shall always be thinking of that wood, that house, those children, all that happiness, which I never shall have —never, never! And if I cannot forget what you have told me, my life will be a torment, a hell; and all by your fault—yes, by your fault!"

"So much the better!—oh! so much the better!" said Fleur-de-Marie.

"You dare to say so?" cried La Louve, with threatening eyes.

"Yes, so much the better; for if your miserable mode of living from henceforth proves a hell, you will prefer that of which I have spoken."

"And what good for me to prefer it, since I cannot enjoy it? why regret being a girl of the streets, since I must die one?" cried La Louve, more and more irritated, seizing hold of the small hand of Fleur-de-Marie. "Answer—answer! Why have you made me wish for a life I cannot have?"

"To wish for an honest and industrious life is to be worthy of such a life, I have told you," answered Fleur-de-Marie, without seeking to disengage her hand.

"Well, what then, when I shall be worthy? what does it prove? how advance me?"

"To see realized that which you regard as a dream," said Fleur-de-Marie, in a voice so serious and convincing that La Louve, again overpowered, abandoned the hand of La Goualeuse, and remained struck with astonishment. "Listen to me, La Louve," added Marie, in a voice full of compassion; "do not think me so cruel as to awaken in you these thoughts, these hopes, if I were not sure, in making you ashamed of your present condition, to give you the means to escape from it."

"You cannot do that!"

"I—no; but some one who is good, great, almost all-powerful."

"All-powerful?"

"Listen again, La Louve. Three months since, like you, I was a poor, lost, abandoned creature. One day, he, of whom I speak with tears of gratitude,"—Fleur-de-Marie wiped her tears—"came to me; he was not afraid, debased and despised although I was, to speak to me words of consolation—the first I ever heard! I told him my sufferings, misery, and shame, without concealing anything, just as you have now related to me your life, La Louve. After having listened to me with kindness, he did not blame—but pitied me, he did not deride me for my degradation, but extolled the happy and peaceful life of the country."

"Like you just now."

"Then my situation appeared the more frightful, as the possible future which he pointed out seemed

to me more enchanting."

"Like me also."

"Yes; and like you I said, 'What good, alas! to show this Paradise to me, who am condemned to a hell upon earth?' But I was wrong to despair; for he of whom I speak is sovereignly just, sovereignly good, and incapable of causing a false hope to shine in the eyes of a poor creature who asked neither pity, nor hope, nor happiness from any one."

"And what did he do for you?"

"He treated me like a sick child; I was, like you, plunged in air corrupt, he sent me to respire a salubrious and vivifying atmosphere; I lived also among hideous and criminal beings; he confided me to beings made after his own image, who have purified my soul, elevated my mind; for, to all those he loves and respects, he gives a spark of his celestial intelligence. Yes, if my words move you, La Louve, if my tears cause your tears to flow, it is his mind, his thoughts inspire me! if I speak to you of a future more happy, which you will obtain by repentance, it is because I can promise you this future in his name, although he is now ignorant of the engagement I make. In short, if I say to you, 'Hope!' it is because he always hears the voice of those who desire to become better; for God has sent him on this earth to further the belief in Providence."

Thus speaking, the countenance of Fleur-de-Marie became glowing and inspired; her pale cheeks were colored for a moment with a slight carnation; her beautiful blue eyes softly sparkled; she beamed forth a beauty so noble, so touching, that La Louve, profoundly affected at this conversation, looked at her companion with admiration, and cried, "Where am I? Do I dream? I have never heard nor seen anything like this; it is not possible! but who are you, once more? oh! I said truly that you were not one of us! But how is it that you who speak so well, who can do so much, who know such powerful people, are here, a prisoner with us? is it to tempt us? You are, then, for good—what the devil is for evil!"

Fleur-de-Marie was about to reply, when Madame Armand came and interrupted her to conduct her to Madame d'Harvile. She said to La Louve, who remained dumb from surprise, "I see with pleasure that the presence of La Goualeuse in this prison has been beneficial to you and your companions. I know that you have made a collection for poor Mont Saint Jean; that is good and charitable, La Louve. It shall be reckoned to you. I was sure that you were better than you appeared to be. In recompense for your good action, I think I can promise you that your imprisonment shall be abridged by many days." And Madame Armand departed, followed by Fleur-de-Marie.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE PROTECTRESS.

The inspectress entered, with Goualeuse, the room where Clemence was; the pale cheeks of the girl were slightly flushed from her earnest conversation with La Louve.

"My lady the marchioness, pleased with the excellent accounts I have given of you," said Madame Armand to Fleur-de-Marie, "desires to see you, and perhaps will deign to obtain permission for you to leave here before the expiration of your time."

"I thank you, madame," answered Fleur-de-Marie, timidly, to Madame
Armand, who left her alone with the noble lady.

Clemence, struck with the beautiful features of her *protegee*, and her graceful and modest bearing, could not help remembering that the Goualeuse had, in her sleep, pronounced the name of Rudolph, and that the inspectress believed her to be preyed upon by a deep and concealed love. Although perfectly convinced that the Grand Duke Rudolph could not be in question, Clemence allowed that, at least in point of beauty, La Goualeuse was worthy of the love of a prince. At the sight of her protectress, whose expression, as we have said, was that of ineffable goodness, Fleur-de-Marie felt herself irresistibly drawn toward her.

"My child," said Clemence, "in praising much the sweetness of your disposition and the exemplary propriety of your conduct, Madame Armand complains of your want of confidence in her."

Fleur-de-Marie held down her head without replying.

"The peasant dress in which you were clothed when you were arrested, your silence on the subject of where you resided before you came here, prove that you conceal something."

"Madame—"

"I have no right to your confidence, my poor child; I wish to ask you no improper questions; only I am assured, that if I ask your release from prison it will be granted. Before I ask, I wish to talk with you of your projects and resources for the future. Once free, what will you do? If, as I doubt not, you are decided to follow in the good path you have entered, have confidence in me—I will put you in a way to gain your living honorably."

La Goualeuse was affected to tears at the interest Madame d'Harville evinced for her. She said, after a moment's thought, "You deign, madame, to show yourself so benevolent and generous, that I ought, perhaps, to break the silence which I have hitherto preserved as to the past. An oath compelled me."

"An oath?"

"Yes, madame; I have sworn to conceal from justice, and from the persons employed in this prison, in what manner I have been brought here; yet, if you will, madame, make me a promise—"

"What promise?"

"To keep my secret. I can, thanks to you, madame, without breaking my oath, relieve some respectable people, who, doubtless, are very uneasy about me."

"Count on my discretion; I will only tell what you authorize me to say."

"Oh, thank you, madame! I feared so much that my silence toward my benefactors would look like ingratitude."

The sweet tears of Fleur-de-Marie, her language, so well chosen, struck Madame d'Harville with renewed astonishment.

"I cannot conceal from you," said she, "that your bearing, your words, all astonish me much. How, with an education such as you appear to have had, how could you—-"

"Fall so low, madame?" said the Goualeuse, bitterly.

"Yes, alas!"

"It is but a short time since I received it. I owe it to a generous protector, who, like you, madame, without knowing me, without ever having the favorable accounts which they have given you here of me, took compassion on me."

"And who is this protector?"

"I am ignorant, madame."

"You are ignorant?"

"He has only made himself known to me by his inexhaustible goodness.
Thanks to heaven! I found myself in his way."

"Where did you meet him?"

"One night, in the city, madame," said La Goualeuse, casting down her eyes, "a man wanted to strike me; this unknown benefactor courageously defended me. Such was my first encounter with him."

"He was, then, a man of the common order?"

"The first time I saw him he had their dress and language, but afterward—"

"Afterward?"

"The manner in which he spoke to me, the profound respect shown him by the people to whom he confided me, all proved to me that he had disguised himself as one of the men who frequent the city."

"But for what purpose?"

"I do not know."

"And the name of this mysterious protector, do you know it?"

"Oh, yes, madame, thank heaven!" said Goualeuse, with warmth; "for I can bless and adore without ceasing this name. My deliverer is known as Rudolph, madame."

Clemence blushed deeply.

"And has he no other name?" asked she, quickly, of Fleur-de-Marie.

"I do not know, madame. At the farm where he sent me, he was only known by the name of Rudolph."

"And his age?"

"He is still young, madame."

"And handsome?"

"Oh, yes! handsome, noble—as his heart."

The grateful, feeling manner with which Fleur-de-Marie pronounced these words, caused a disagreeable sensation to Madame d'Harville. An invincible, an inexplicable presentiment told her that this Rudolph was the prince.

"The observations of the inspectress were well founded," thought Clemence. "The Goualeuse loves Rudolph; it was his name she pronounced in her sleep. Under what strange circumstances had the prince and this poor girl met? Why did Rudolph go disguised into the city?" She could not resolve these questions; only she remembered that Sarah had formerly, wickedly and falsely, related to her some pretended eccentricities of Rudolph, and of his strange amours. Was it not, indeed, strange that he had taken from a life of misery this creature, of ravishing beauty and of no common mind?

Clemence had noble qualities, but she was a woman, and she loved Rudolph profoundly, although she had determined to bury this secret in the very depths of her heart. Without reflecting that this, no doubt, was one of those generous actions which the prince was accustomed to do secretly; without reflecting that, perhaps, she confounded with love a sentiment of warm gratitude; without reflecting, finally, that of this sentiment, even if it were more tender, Rudolph might be ignorant, the lady, in the first feeling of bitterness and injustice, could not prevent herself considering the Goualeuse as a rival. Her pride revolted in feeling that she blushed; that she suffered, in spite of herself, at a rivalry so abject. She resumed, then, in a cold manner, which cruelly contrasted with the affectionate benevolence of her first words, "And how is it, girl, that your protector leaves you in prison? How did you get here?"

"Madame," said Fleur-de-Marie, timidly, struck with this change of language: "have I displeased you in any way?"

"How could you have displeased me?" demanded Madame d'Harville, with haughtiness.

"It seems to me that just now you spoke to me with more kindness, madame."

"Truly, girl, must I weigh each of my words, since I consent to interest myself in you? I have the right, I think, to address you questions?"

Hardly were these words pronounced than Clemence, for many reasons, regretted their severity. In the first place, by a praiseworthy return of generosity; then because she thought, by offending her rival, she could learn nothing more of what she wished to know.

In effect, the countenance of La Goualeuse, one moment open and confiding, became instantly reserved.

Like the sensitive plant, which at the first touch closes its delicate leaves, and folds them within its bosom, the heart of Fleur-de-Marie contracted painfully.

Clemence resumed gently, not to awaken the suspicions of her *protegee* by too sudden a change. "In truth, I repeat to you, I cannot comprehend that, having so much to praise in your benefactor, you should be a prisoner here; how, after having sincerely returned to the paths of rectitude, could you cause yourself to be arrested in a place to you interdicted? All this seems to me extraordinary. You speak of an oath which so far has imposed silence upon you; but this oath even is so strange!"

"I have told the truth, madame."

"I am sure of it; one has only to see and hear you to believe you incapable of a falsehood. But, what is

incomprehensible in your situation, augments, irritates my impatient curiosity; it is only to that that you must attribute the sharpness of my words just now. Come, I avow I was wrong; for, although I had no other right to your confidence than my earnest wish to be useful to you, you have offered to tell me that which you have told to no one, and I am very sensible, believe me, my poor child, of this proof of your faith in the interest I have for you. Hence, I promise you, in guarding scrupulously your secret, if you confide it to me, I will do all in my power to meet your wishes."

Thanks to this palliating speech, Madame d'Harville regained the confidence of La Goualeuse, for a moment impaired. Fleur-de-Marie, in her innocence, reproached herself for having misinterpreted the words which had wounded her.

"Pardon me, madame," said she; "I was doubtless wrong not to tell you at once what you wished to know; but you asked me the name of my rescuer; in spite of myself, I cannot resist the pleasure of speaking of him."

"Nothing is better; it proves how grateful you are toward him. But why have you left the good people with whom he had placed you? Does your oath have reference to this?"

"Yes, madame; but thanks to you, I believe now, still keeping my word, I shall be able to satisfy my benefactors as to my disappearance." "Come, my poor child, I listen." "It is about three months since M. Rudolph placed me at a farm situated four or five leagues hence." "He conducted you there himself?" "Yes, madame; he confided me to the care of a lady as good as she was venerable, whom I soon loved as a mother. She and the cure of the village, at the request of M. Rudolph, took charge of my education." "And M. Rudolph often came to the farm?" "No, madame; he came there only three times while I was there." Clemence could not conceal a thrill of joy. "And when he came to see you, it made you very happy, did it not?" "Oh, yes, madame! it was for me more than happiness: It was a sentiment mixed with gratitude, respect, admiration, and even a little fear." "Fear!" "From him to me—from him to others—the distance is so great!" "But what is his rank?" "I am ignorant if he has any rank, madame." "Yet you speak of the distance which exists between him and others." "Oh, madame! that which places him above the rest of the world is the elevation of his character—his inexhaustible generosity for those who suffer; it is the enthusiasm with which he inspires everybody. The wicked even cannot hear his name without trembling; they respect him as much as they fear him. But pardon me, madame, for having again spoken of him—I ought to be silent; for I should give you but an imperfect idea of him whom I ought to content myself with adoring to myself. As well attempt to express by words the grandeur of Heaven! This comparison is perhaps sacrilegious, madame. But will it offend to compare to Goodness itself the man who has given me a consciousness of good and evil—who has dragged me from the abyss—to whom I owe a new existence?" "I do not blame you, my child; I comprehend your feelings. But how have you abandoned this farm, where you were so happy?"

"Alas, it was not voluntary, madame!"

"Who forced you, then?"

"One night, a short time since," said Fleur-de-Marie, trembling at the recital, "I went to the parsonage of the village, when a wicked woman, who had treated me cruelly in my childhood, and a man, her accomplice, who was concealed with her in a ravine, threw themselves upon me, wrapped me up, and carried me off in a carriage."

"For what purpose?"

"I do not know, madame. My waylayers were acting, I think, under the orders of some powerful persons."

"What then ensued?"

"Hardly had the vehicle moved, than the bad woman, whose name was La Chouette (Screech-Owl), cried, 'I have got some vitriol; I am going to wash the face of La Goualeuse, to disfigure her.'"

"How horrid! Unfortunate child! What saved you from that danger?"

"The accomplice of this woman, a blind man, called the Schoolmaster."

"He defended you?"

"Yes, madame, on this occasion and on another. This time a struggle ensued between him and La Chouette. Availing himself of his strength, he forced her to throw out of the window the bottle which contained the vitriol. This was the first service he rendered me, after having assisted in carrying me off. The night was very dark. At the end of an hour and a half the carriage stopped, I believe on the high

road which crosses the plain of Saint Denis; a man on horseback waited for us here. 'Well,' said he, 'have you got her at last?' 'Yes, we have her,' answered La Chouette, who was furious at having been prevented from disfiguring me. 'If you wish to get rid of this little thing there is a good way; I will stretch her on the road—drive the wheels of the carriage over her head—it will look as if she was run over by accident.'"

"Oh, this is frightful!"

"Alas, madame! La Chouette was well capable of doing what she said. Happily, the man on horseback said that he did not wish to harm me; that it was only necessary to keep me shut up for two months in some place where I could neither get out nor write to any one. Then La Chouette proposed to take me to a man called Bras-Rouge, who kept a tavern in the Champs Elysees. In this tavern there were several subterranean chambers; one of them, La Chouette said, could answer for my prison. The man on horseback accepted this proposition. Then he promised me that, after remaining two months with Bras-Rouge, I should be so provided for that I would not regret the farm at Bouqueval."

"What a strange mystery!"

"This man gave some money to La Chouette, promising her some more when I should be taken from Bras-Rouge, and set out on a gallop. We continued our route toward Paris. A short time before we arrived at the gates, the Schoolmaster said to La Chouette, 'You wish to shut up La Goualeuse in one of Bras-Rouge's cellars; you know very well that, being near the river, these cellars in winter are always inundated. Do you wish to drown her?' 'Yes,' answered La Chouette."

"But what had you done to this horrible woman?"

"Nothing, madame: and yet, since my infancy, she has always shown this feeling toward me. The Schoolmaster answered, 'I will not have the Goualeuse drowned; she shall not go to Bras-Rouge.' La Chouette was as much surprised as I was, madame, to hear this man defend me thus. She became furious, and swore that she would take me to Bras-Rouge in spite of him. 'I defy you,' said he,' for I have La Goualeuse by the arm; I will not let her go, and I'll strangle you if you come near her.' But what do you mean to do with her?' cried La Chouette, 'since she must be put out of the way for two months.' 'There is a way,' said the Schoolmaster; 'we are going to the Champs Elysees; we will stop the carriage near the guard-house; you will go and look for Bras-Rouge at his tavern. It is midnight; you will find him there; bring him with you; he will take La Goualeuse to the post, and declare she is a gay girl, whom he found near his tavern. As they are condemned to three months' imprisonment when they are caught on the Champs Elysees, and Goualeuse is still on the police lists, she will be arrested, and sent to Saint Lazare, where she will be as well guarded and concealed as in the cellar of Bras-Rouge.' 'But,' replied La Chouette, 'the Goualeuse will not suffer herself to be arrested; once at the guard-house, she will tell all, she will denounce us. Supposing, even, that she is imprisoned, she will write to her protectors; all will be discovered.' 'No, she will go to prison willingly,' answered the School-master; 'she must swear that she will not denounce us to any one as long as she remains at Saint Lazare, nor afterward either. She owes as much to me, for I have prevented her being disfigured by you, and drowned at Bras-Rouge's; but if after having sworn not to speak, she should do it, we will set the farm at Bouqueval a-fire.' Then, addressing me, he said, 'Decide! swear the oath I ask, you shall go to prison for two months; otherwise I abandon you to La Chouette, who will take you to the cellar, where you'll be drowned. Come, decide. I know If you swear you will keep your oath.'"

"And you have sworn?"

"Alas! yes, madame; I feared so much to be disfigured by La Chouette, or to be drowned in a cellar; that appeared to me so frightful. Any other kind of death would nave appeared less fearful. I should not, perhaps, have endeavored to escape."

"What a gloomy idea at your age!" said Madame d'Harville, looking at La Goualeuse with surprise. "Once away from this place, returned to your benefactors, will you not be very happy? Has not your repentance effaced the past?"

"Can the past be effaced? Can the past be forgotten? Can repentance destroy the memory, madame?" cried Fleur-de-Marie, in a tone so despairing that Clemence shuddered.

"But all faults can be redeemed, unhappy child!"

"But the recollection of the stain—madame, does it not become more and more terrible in measure as the mind is purified, as the soul becomes elevated? Alas! the more you mount the deeper appears the abyss from which you have emerged."

"Then you renounce all hope of re-establishment and pardon?"

"On the part of others—no, madame; your goodness proves that indulgence is never wanting to the penitent."

"You will, then, be the only one without pity toward yourself?"

"Others may be ignorant, may pardon and forget what I have been. I, madame, never can forget."'

"And sometimes you wish to die?"

"Sometimes!" said La Goualeuse, smiling bitterly, "yes, madame, sometimes."

"Yet you feared to be disfigured by that horrible woman? you cling to your beauty, then, poor child? That announces that life has some charms for you. Courage, then—courage!"

"It is, perhaps, a weakness to think so; but if I were handsome, as you say, madame, I should wish to die handsome, in pronouncing the name of my benefactor."

The eyes of Madame d'Harville filled with tears.

Fleur-de-Marie had said these words so simply; her angelic features, pale and cast down, her mournful smile, were so much in unison with her words, that no one could doubt the reality of her gloomy desire. Madame d'Harville was endowed with too much sensibility not to feel what was fatal and inflexible in this thought of La Goualeuse- *"I shall never forget what I have been"* —a fixed, constant idea, which would predominate and torture the life of Fleur-de-Marie. Clemence, ashamed at having for a moment misunderstood the generosity, always so disinterested, of the prince, also regretted that she should have had for a moment a feeling of jealousy toward La Goualeuse, who had expressed, with so much warmth, her gratitude toward her protector. Strange thing—the admiration which this poor prisoner showed so vividly for Rudolph, augmented, perhaps, still more the profound love which Clemence was forever to conceal from him. She resumed, to drive away her thoughts: "I hope that, in future, you will be less severe toward yourself. But let us speak of your oath; now I can understand your silence. You did not wish to denounce the wretches?"

"Although the Schoolmaster took part in my abduction, he had twice defended me—I was afraid of being ungrateful toward him."

"And you lent yourself to the designs of these monsters?"

"Yes, madame, I was so much alarmed! La Chouette went to seek Bras-Rouge; he took me to the guard-house, saying he found me roving about his inn; I did not deny it; I was arrested, and brought here."

"But your friends at the farm must be very much alarmed."

"Alas, madame, in my fright I did not reflect that my oath would prevent me from informing them; now it gives me much pain, but I believe that, without breaking my oath, I can beg you to write to Madame George, at the farm of Bouqueval, to have no uneasiness about me, without telling her where I am, for I have promised to be silent."

"My child, these precautions will become useless if, at my recommendation, you are pardoned; to-morrow you shall return to the farm, without having broken your oath; you can then consult your benefactors, to know how far you are restricted by this oath, drawn from you by threats."

"You think, madame, that, thanks to your kindness, I can hope to leave here soon?"

"You deserve so much interest, that I shall succeed, I am sure, and I doubt not that after to-morrow you can go yourself to reassure your benefactors."

"How can I have merited so much kindness on your ladyship's part? How can I show my gratitude?"

"By continuing to conduct yourself as you have done. I only regret I can do nothing for your future welfare-it is a pleasure that your friends have reserved."

Madame Armand entered suddenly, with an alarmed air.

"Madame," said she to Clemence, with hesitation, "I am grieved at the message I have to deliver to you."

"What do you mean to say, madame?"

"The Duke de Lucenay is below-he comes from your house, madame."

"You frighten me; what is it?"

"I am ignorant, madame, but M. de Lucenay has information for you, he says, as sad, as it was unforeseen. He learned at his wife's that you were here and he came in all haste."

"Sad news!" said Madame d'Harville. Then suddenly she cried in a heart-rending tone, "My daughter-my child, perhaps! Oh, speak, madame!"

"I am ignorant, madame."

"Oh! in mercy, madame, take me to M. de Lucenay," cried Madame d'Harville, going out, quite bewildered, and followed by Madame Armand.

"Poor mother!" said the Gonaleuse, sadly; "oh, now, it is impossible! At the moment even when she was showing so much benevolence toward me, such a blow to fall! No, no-once more, it is impossible!"

CHAPTER XVII.

A FORGED INTIMACY.

We will conduct the reader to the house in the Rue du Temple, the day of the suicide of M. d'Harville, about three o'clock in the afternoon. Pipelet, the porter, alone in the lodge, was occupied in mending a boot. The chaste porter was dejected and melancholy. As a soldier, in the humiliation of his defeat, passes his hand sadly over his scars, Pipelet breathed a profound sigh, stopped his work, and moved his trembling finger over the transverse fracture of his huge hat, made by an insolent hand. Then all the chagrin, inquietude, and fears of Alfred Pipelet were awakened in thinking of the inconceivable and incessant pursuits of the author.

Pipelet had not a very extended or elevated mind; his imagination was not the most lively nor the most poetical, but he possessed a very solid, very logical, very common sense.

Cabrion, a painter, formerly a tenant, had seen fit to make the porter a butt of the most audacious practical jokes, inundating him with caricatures, laughable labels, and startling appearances before his unexpectant appalled sight. Unfortunately, by a natural consequence of the rectitude of his judgment, not being able to comprehend practical jokes, Pipelet endeavored to find some reasonable motive for the outrageous conduct of Cabrion, and on this subject he posed himself with a thousand insoluble questions. Thus, sometimes, a new Paschal, he felt himself seized with a vertigo in trying to sound the bottomless abyss which the infernal genius of the painter had dug under his feet. How many times, in the overflowings of his imagination, he had been forced to commune within himself thanks to the frenzied skepticism of Madame Pipelet, who, only looking at facts, and disdaining to seek after causes, grossly considered the incomprehensible conduct of Cabrion toward Alfred as simple comicality.

Pipelet, a serious man, could not admit of such an interpretation; he groaned at the blindness of his wife; his dignity as a man revolted at the thought that he could be the plaything of a combination so vulgar as a *lark!* He was absolutely convinced that the unheard-of conduct of Cabriori concealed some mysterious plot under a frivolous appearance.

It was to solve this fatal problem that the man in the big hat exhausted his powerful logic. "I would sooner lay my head on the scaffold," said this austere man, who, as soon as he touched them, increased immensely the importance of any propositions. "I would sooner lay my head upon the scaffold than admit that, in the mere intention of a stupid pleasantry, Cabrion could be so obstinately exasperated against me; a *farce* is only played for the gallery. Now, in his last undertaking, this obnoxious creature had no witness; he acted alone and in obscurity, as always; he clandestinely introduced himself into the solitude of my lodge to deposit on my forehead a hideous kiss! I ask any disinterested person, for what purpose? It was not from bravado—no one saw him; it was not from pleasure—the laws of nature opposed it; it was not from friendship—I have but one enemy in the world—it is he. It must, then, be acknowledged that there is a mystery there which my reason cannot penetrate! Then to what does this diabolical plot, concerted and pursued with a persistence which alarms me, tend? That I cannot comprehend: it is this impossibility to raise the veil, which, by degrees, is undermining and consuming me."

Such were the painful reflections of Pipelet at the moment when we present him to our readers. The

honest porter had just torn open his bleeding wounds, by carry—his hand mechanically to the fracture of his hat, when a piercing voice, coming from one of the upper stories of the house, made these words resound again: "Mr. Pipelet, quick! quick! come up! make haste!"

"I do not know that voice," said Alfred, after a moment of anxious listening, and he let his arm, inclosed in the boot he was mending, fall on his knees.

"Mr. Pipelet! make haste!" repeated the voice, in a pressing tone.

"That voice is completely strange to me. It is masculine; it calls me, that I can affirm. It is not a sufficient reason that I should abandon my lodge. Leave it—desert it in the absence of my wife—never!" cried Alfred, heroically, "never!"

"Mr. Pipelet," said the voice, "come up quick, Mrs. Pipelet is off in a swoon."

"Anastasia!" cried Alfred, rising from his seat: then be fell back again, saying to himself, "child that I am—it is impossible; my wife went out an hour ago. Yes, but might she not have returned without my seeing her? This would be rather irregular; but I must declare that it is possible."

"Mr. Pipelet, come up; I have your wife in my arms!"

"Some one has my wife in their arms!" said Pipelet, rising abruptly.

"I cannot unlace Mrs. Pipelet all alone!" added the voice.

These words produced a magical effect upon Alfred: his face flushed, his chastity revolted.

"The masculine and unknown voice speaks of unlacing Anastasia!" cried he: "I oppose it, I forbid it!" and he rushed out of the lodge; but on the threshold he stopped.

Pipelet found himself in one of those horribly critical, and eminently dramatical positions, so often described by poets. On the one hand, duty retained him in his lodge: on the other, his chaste and conjugal susceptibility called him to the upper stories of the house. In the midst of these terrible perplexities, the voice said:

"You don't come, Mr. Pipelet? so much the worse—I cut the strings, and I shut my eyes!"

This threat decided Pipelet.

"Mossieur!" cried he, in a stentorian voice, "in the name of honor I conjure you to cut nothing—to leave my wife intact! I come!" and Alfred rushed upstairs, leaving, in his alarm, the door of the lodge open. Hardly had he left it, than a man entered quickly, took from the table a hammer, jumped on the bed, at the back part of the obscure alcove, and vanished. This operation was done so quickly, that the porter, remembering almost immediately that he had left the door open, returned precipitately, shut it, and carried off the key, without suspecting that any one could have entered in this interval. After this measure of precaution, Alfred started again to the assistance of Anastasia, crying, with all his strength, "Cut nothing—I am coming— here I am—I place my wife under the safeguard of your delicacy!"

Hardly had he mounted the first flight, before he heard the voice of
Anastasia, not from the upper story, but in the alley.

The voice, shriller than ever cried, "Alfred! here you leave the lodge alone! Where are you, old gadabout?"

At this moment, Pipelet was about placing his right foot on the landing-place of the first story; he remained petrified, his head turned toward the bottom of the stairs, his mouth open, his eyes fixed, his foot raised.

"Alfred!" cried Mrs. Pipelet anew.

"Anastasia is below—she is not above, occupied in being sick," said Pipelet to himself, faithful to his logical argumentation. "But then this unknown and masculine voice, who threatened to unlace her, is an impostor. He has been playing a cruel game with my emotions! What is his design? There is something extraordinary going on here! No matter: do your duty, happen what may! After having responded to my wife, I shall mount to enlighten this mystery and verify this voice."

Pipelet descended, very much troubled, and found himself face to face with his wife.

"It is you?" said he.

"Well! yes, it is me; who would you have it to be?"

"It is you—my eyes do not deceive me!"

"Ah, now! what is the matter, that makes your big eyes look like billiard balls? You look at me as if you were going to eat me."

"Your presence reveals to me that something has been passing here— things—"

"What things? Come, give me the key of the lodge; why do you leave it? I come from the office of the Normandy diligences, where I went in a hack, to carry the trunk of M. Bradamanti, who did not wish it to be known that he was about to leave town to-night, and who could not depend on that little scoundrel Tortillard (Hoppy)—and he is right!"

Saying these words, Mrs. Pipelet took the key, which her husband held in his hand, opened the lodge, and went in before her husband.

Hardly had they entered, when a person, descending the staircase lightly, passed rapidly and unperceived before the lodge. It was the "masculine voice" which had so deeply excited the inquietudes of Alfred.

Pipelet rested himself heavily on his chair, and said to his wife in a trembling voice, "Anastasia, I do not feel at my accustomed ease; things occurring here—events—"

"Now you repeat that again; but things occur everywhere; what is the matter? Come, let us see—why, you are all wet—all in a perspiration! what effort have you been making? He's all a-trickling—the old darling!"

"Yes, I perspire, as I have reason to;" Pipelet passed his hand over his face, dripping with moisture; "for there are regular revolutionary events passing here."

"Again I ask, what is it? You never can remain quiet. You must always be trotting about like a cat, instead of remaining in your chair to take care of the lodge."

"If I trot, it is for you."

"For me?"

"Yes; to spare you an outrage for which we both should have groaned and blushed, I have deserted a post which I consider as sacred as the sentry-box."

"Some one wished to commit an outrage on me—on me!"

"It was not on you, since the outrage of which you were threatened was to have been accomplished upstairs, and you were gone out—"

"May Old Harry run away with me, if I understand a single word of what you are singing there. Ah, ah! is it that you are decidedly losing your noddle? I shall begin to think that you are absent-minded—the fault of that beggarly Cabrion! Since his games of the other day, I don't know you; you look struck all of a heap. That being will be always your nightmare."

Hardly had Anastasia pronounced the words than a strange thing came to pass. Alfred remained sitting, his face turned toward the bed. The lodge was lighted by the sickly light of a winter's day, and by a lamp. At the moment his wife pronounced the name Cabrion, Pipelet thought he saw in the shade of the alcove the immovable, cunning face of the painter. It was he, his pointed hat, long hair, thin face, satanic smile, queer beard, and paralyzing gaze. For a moment, Pipelet thought himself in a dream; he passed his hand over his eyes, believing that he was the victim of an illusion. It was not an illusion. Nothing could be more real than this apparition. Frightful thing! nobody could be seen, but only a head, of which the living flesh stood out in bold relief from the obscurity of the alcove. At this sight Pipelet fell over backward, without saying a word; he raised his right arm toward the bed, and pointed at this terrible vision, with a gesture so alarming, that Mrs. Pipelet turned to seek the cause of an alarm of which she soon partook, in spite of her habitual courage. She recoiled two steps, seized with force the hand of Alfred, and cried, "Cabrion!"

"Yes," murmured Pipelet, in a hollow voice, almost extinct, shutting his eyes.

The stupor of the pair paid the greatest honor to the talent of the artist who had so admirably painted on the pasteboard the features of Cabrion. Her first surprise over, Anastasia, as bold as a lion, ran to the bed, got on it, and tore the picture from the wall.

The amazon crowned this valiant enterprise by shouting, as a war-cry, her favorite exclamation, "Go ahead!"

Alfred, with his eyes closed, his hands stretched forth, remained immovable, as he had always been accustomed to do in the critical moments of his life. The convulsive oscillations of his hat alone revealed, from time to time, the continued violence of his interior emotions.

"Open your eyes, old darling," said Mrs. Pipelet, triumphantly; "it's nothing! it's a picture; the portrait of that scoundrel Cabrion! Look, see how I stamp upon him!" and Anastasia, in her indignation, threw the picture on the ground, and trampled it under her feet, crying, "That's the way I would like to treat his flesh and bones, the wretch!" then picking it up, "see!" said she, "now it has my marks; look now!"

Alfred shook his head negatively, without saying a word, and making a sign to his wife to take away the detested picture.

"Has ever any one seen such impudence? This is not all; he has written at the bottom, in red letters, 'Cabrion, to his good friend Pipelet, for life,'" said the portress, examining the picture by the light.

"His good friend for life!" murmured Alfred; raising his hands as if to call heaven to witness this new outrageous irony.

[Illustration: Louise in Prison]

"But how could he do it?" said Anastasia. "This portrait was not there this morning when I made the bed, very sure. You took the key with you just now: nobody could have entered while you were absent? How, then, once more, could this portrait get there? Could it be you, by chance, who put it there, old darling?"

At this monstrous hypothesis, Alfred bounced from his seat; he opened his eyes wide and threatening.

"I fasten in my alcove the portrait of this evil-doer, who, not content with persecuting me by his odious presence, pursues me at night in my dreams—the daytime in a picture! Would you make me mad, Anastasia? mad enough to be chained?"

"Well! for the sake of making peace, you might have agreed with
Cabrion during my absence. Where would be the great harm?"

"I make up with—oh, merciful powers! you hear her?"

"And then, he might have given you his portrait, as a pledge of friendship. If this is so, do not deny it."

"Anastasia!"

"If this is so, it must be confessed you are as capricious as a pretty woman."

"Wife!"

"In short, it must have been you who placed the portrait!"

"I—oh!"

"But who is it then?"

"You, madame."

"**I!**"

"Yes," cried Pipelet wildly, "it is you; I have reason to believe it is you. This morning, having my back turned toward the bed I could see nothing."

"But, old darling, I tell you it must be you, otherwise I shall think it was the devil."

"I have not left the lodge, and when I went upstairs to answer to the call of the masculine organ, I had the key; the door was shut. You opened it; deny that!"

"Ma foi; it is true!"

"You confess, then?"

"I confess that I comprehend nothing. It's a game, and it is prettily played."

"A game!" cried Pipelet, carried away by frenzied indignation. "Ah! there you are again! I tell you, I, that all this conceals some abominable plot; there is something under all this—a plot. The abyss is hidden under flowers—they try to stun me to prevent my seeing the precipice from which they wish to plunge me. It only remains for me to place myself under the protection of the laws. Happily, the Lord is on our side;" and Pipelet turned toward the door,

"Where are you going, old darling?"

"To the commissary's, to lodge my complaint, and this portrait as proof of the persecutions I am overwhelmed with."

"But what will you complain of?"

"What will I complain of? How! my most inveterate enemy shall find means by proceeding fraudulently to force me to have his portrait in my house, even on my nuptial bed, and the magistrates will not take me under the aegis? Give me the portrait, Anastasia—give it to me—not the side where the painting is, the sight revolts me! The traitor cannot deny it; it is in his hand; Cabrion to his good friend Pipelet, for life. For life! Yes, that's it; for my life, without doubt, he pursues me, and he will finish by having it. I live in continual alarm: I shall think that this infernal being is here, always here— under the floor, in the walls, in the ceiling! at night he sees me reposing in the arms of my wife; in the daytime he is standing behind me, always with his satanic smile; and who will tell me that even at this moment he is not here, concealed somewhere, like a venomous insect? Come, now! are you there, monster? Are you here?" cried Pipelet, accompanying this furious imprecation with a circular movement of the head, as if he had wished to interrogate all parts of the lodge.

"I am here, good friend!" said most affectionately the well-known voice of Cabrion.

These words seemed to come from the bottom of the alcove, merely from the effects of ventriloquism; for the infernal artist was standing outside the door of the lodge, enjoying the smallest details of this scene; however, after having pronounced these last words, he prudently made off, not without leaving, as we shall see, a new subject of rage, astonishment, and meditation to his victim. Mrs. Pipelet, always courageous and skeptical, looked under the bed, and in every hole and corner, without success, while M. Pipelet, undone by the last blow, had fallen on the chair in a state of utter despair.

"It's nothing, Alfred," said Anastasia; "the scoundrel was concealed behind the door, and while I looked one way, he escaped the other. Patience, I'll catch him one of these days, and then, let him look out! he shall taste the handle of my broom!"

The door opened, and Mrs. Seraphin, housekeeper of Jacques Ferrand, entered.

"Good-day, Mrs. Seraphin," said Mrs. Pipelet, who, wishing to conceal from a stranger her domestic sorrows, assumed a very gracious and smiling air; "what can I do to serve you?"

"First, tell me, then, what is your new sign?"

"New sign?"

"The little sign."

"A little sign?"

"Yes, black with red letters, which is nailed over the door of your alley."

"In the street?"

"Why, yes, in the street, just over your door."

"My dear Mrs. Seraphin, may I never speak again, if I understand a word; and you, old darling?" Alfred remained dumb.

"In truth, it concerns Mr. Pipelet," said Mrs. Seraphin; "he must explain this to me."

Alfred uttered a sort of low, inarticulate groan, shaking his hat, a pantomime signifying that Alfred found himself incapable of explaining anything to others, being sufficiently preoccupied with an infinity of problems, each one more difficult of solution than the other.

"Pay no attention, Mrs. Seraphin," said Anastasia. "Poor Alfred has got the cramp; that makes him—"

"But what is this sign, then, of which you speak?"

"Perhaps our neighbor—"

"No, no; I tell you it is a little sign nailed over your door."

"Come, you want to joke."

"Not at all; I saw it as I came in. There is written on it in large letters, 'Pipelet and Cabrion, Dealers in Friendship, etc. Apply within.'"

"That's written over our door, do you hear, Alfred?"

Pipelet looked at Mrs. Seraphin with a wild stare. He did not comprehend; he did not wish to comprehend.

"It is in the street—on a sign!" repeated Mrs. Pipelet, confounded at this new audacity.

"Yes, for I have just read it. Then I said to myself, 'What a funny thing! Pipelet is a cobbler by trade, and he informs the passer-by that he is engaged in a *commerce d'amitie* with Cabrion. What does it signify? There is something concealed, it is clear; but as the sign says inquire within, Mrs. Pipelet will explain it." "But look there," cried Mrs. Seraphin, suddenly, "your husband looks as if he was sick; take care, he will fall backward!"

Mrs. Pipelet received Alfred in her arms, in a fainting state. This last blow had been too violent; the man nearly lost all consciousness as he pronounced these words:

"The creature has publicly posted me."

"I told you, Mrs. Seraphin, Alfred has the cramp, without speaking of an unchained blackguard, who undermines him with his sorry tricks. The poor old darling cannot resist it! Happily, I have a drop of bitters here; probably it will put him on his legs."

In fact, thanks to the infallible remedy of Mrs. Pipelet, Alfred by degrees recovered his senses; but, alas! hardly had he come to, than he had to undergo another trial.

A middle-aged person, neatly dressed, and with a pleasing face, opened the door, and said, "I have just seen on a sign placed over this door, 'Pipelet and Cabrion, Dealers in Friendship.' Can you, if you please, do me the honor to inform me what this means—you being the porter of this house?"

"What this means!" cried Pipelet in a thundering voice, giving vent to his indignation, too long suppressed; "this means that Mr. Cabrion is an infamous impostor, sir!"

The man, at this sudden and furious explosion, drew back a step. Alfred, much exasperated, with a fiery look and purple face, had stretched his body half out of the lodge, and leaned his contracted hands on the lower half of the door, while the figures of Mrs. Seraphin and Anastasia could be vaguely seen in the background, in the semi-obscure light of the lodge.

"Learn, sir," cried Pipelet, "that I have no dealings with this scoundrel Cabrion, and that of friendship still less than any other!"

"It is true; and you must be very queer, old noodle that you are to come and ask such a question," cried Madame Pipelet, sharply, showing her quarrelsome face over the shoulder of her husband.

"Madame!" said the man sententiously, falling back another step, "notices are made to be read; you put them up, I read; I have the right to do so, but you have no right to say such rude things."

"Rude things yourself, you beggarly wretch!" replied Anastasia, showing her teeth. "You are a low-bred fellow. Alfred, your boot-tree, till I take the length of his muzzle, to teach him to come and play the Joe Miller at his age, old clown!"

"Insults when one comes to ask the meaning of a notice placed over your own door? It shall not pass over in this way, madame!"

"But, sir!" cried the unhappy porter.

"But, sir," answered the quiz, pretending to be angry, "be as friendly as you please with your Mr. Cabrion, but zounds! don't stick it in large letters under the noses of the passers-by! I find myself under the necessity of telling you that you are a pitiful wretch, and that I shall go and make my complaint to the authorities!" and the quiz departed in a great rage.

"Anastasia!" said Mr. Pipelet, in a sorrowful tone, "I shall not survive this, I feel it; I am wounded to

death. I have no hope of escaping him. You see, my name is publicly stuck up alongside of this wretch. He dares to say that I have a friendly trade with him, and the public will believe it. I inform you—I say it—I communicate it; it is monstrous, it is enormous it is an infernal idea: but it must finish; the measure is full; either he or I must fall in this struggle!" and, overcoming his habitual apathy, Pipelet, determined on a vigorous resolution, seized the portrait of Cabrion, and rushed toward the door.

"Where are you going to, Alfred?"

"To the commissary's. At the same time I am going to tear down this infamous sign; then with this portrait and this sign in my hand, I will cry to the commissary, 'Defend me! avenge me! deliver me from Cabrion!'"

"Well said, old darling; stir yourself, shake yourself; if you cannot get the sign down, ask the next door to help you, and lend you his ladder."

"Rascally Cabrion! Oh, if I had him, and I could do it, I'd fry him on my stove. I should like so much to see him suffer. Yes, people are guillotined who do not deserve it as much as he does. The wretch! I should like to see him on the scaffold, the villain!"

Alfred showed under these circumstances the most sublime equanimity. Notwithstanding his great causes of revenge against Cabrion, he had the generosity to feel sentiments akin to pity for him.

"No," said he; "no; even if I could, I would not ask for his head."

"As for me, I would. Go do it!" cried the ferocious Anastasia.

"No," replied Alfred; "I do not like blood; but I have a right to claim the perpetual seclusion of this evil-doer; my repose requires it; my health commands it; the law accords me this reparation; otherwise, I leave la France—ma belle France! That is what they'll gain!"

And Alfred, swallowed up in his grief, walked majestically out of the lodge, like one of those imposing victims of ancient fatality.

CHAPTER XVIII.

CECILY.

Before we relate the conversation between Mrs. Seraphin and Mrs. Pipelet, we will inform the reader that Anastasia, without suspecting the least in the world the virtue and devotion of the notary, blamed extremely the severity he had shown toward Louise Morel and Germain. Naturally she included Mrs. Seraphin in her reprobation; but like a skillful politician, for reasons which we will show by and by, she concealed her feeling for the housekeeper under a most cordial reception. After having formally disapproved of the unworthy conduct of Cabrion, Mrs. Seraphin added, "What has become of M. Bradamanti (Polidori)? Last night I wrote to him—no answer; this morning I came to find him—no one. I hope this time I shall be more fortunate."

Mrs. Pipelet feigned to be very much vexed.

"Ah!" cried she, "you must have bad luck."

"How?"

"M. Bradamanti has not come in."

"It is insupportable!"

"It is vexing, my poor Mrs. Seraphin!"

"I have so much to say to him."

"It is just like fate."

"So much the more, as I have to invent so many pretexts for coming here; for if M. Ferrand ever suspected that I knew a quack, he being so devout and scrupulous, you can judge of the scene."

"Just like Alfred. He is so prudish, that he is startled at everything." "And you do not know when Bradamanti will come in?"

"He made an appointment for six or seven o'clock in the evening, for he told me to say to the person to call again if he had not returned. Come back this evening, you will be sure to find him." Anastasia added to herself: "You can count on this: in one hour he will be on the road to Normandy."

"I will return then to-night," said Mrs. Seraphin, much annoyed; "but I have something else to say to you, my dear Mrs. Pipelet. You know what has happened to this wench of a Louise, whom every one thought so virtuous?"

"Don't speak of it," answered Mrs. Pipelet, raising her eyes with compunction, "it makes my hair stand on end."

"I want to tell you that we have no servant; and that if by chance you should hear a girl spoken of, virtuous, hard-working, honest, you will be very kind if you will address her to me. Good subjects are so difficult to find, that one has to look on all sides for them."

"Be quite easy, Mrs. Seraphin. If I hear of any one, I will inform you. Good places are as difficult to find as good subjects;" then she added mentally, "Very likely I'd send you a poor girl to be starved to death in your hovel! Your master is too miserly and too wicked—to denounce, in one breath, poor Louise and poor M. Germain."

"I need not tell you," said Mrs. Seraphin, "how quiet our house is; a girl gains much by getting there, and this Louise must have been an incarnate imp to have turned out so bad, notwithstanding all the good and holy advice M. Ferrand gave her."

"Certainly, so depend upon me; if I hear any one spoken of that I think will answer, I will send them to you."

"There is one thing more," said Mrs. Seraphin; "M. Ferrand prefers that this servant should have no family, because, you comprehend, having no occasion to go out, she will run less risk; so, if by chance she could be found, monsieur would prefer an orphan, I suppose; in the first place, because it would be a good action, and then because, having no friends, she would have no pretext to go out. This miserable Louise is a good lesson for him, my poor Mrs. Pipelet! That's what makes him so hard to please in the choice of a domestic. Such a scandalous affair in a pious house like ours—how horrid! well, goodbye; to-night, when I go to see M. Bradamanti, I'll call upon Madame Burette."

"Good-bye, Mrs. Seraphin—you will certainly see him to-night."

Mrs. Seraphin took her departure.

"Isn't she crazy after Bradamanti!" said Mrs. Pipelet. "What can she want with him? and wasn't he crazy for fear he should see her before he left for Normandy? I was afraid she wouldn't go, as M. Bradamanti expects the lady who came last night; I couldn't see her, but this time I'll try to unmask her. But who can this lady of M. Bradamanti's be? A lady or a common woman? I'd like to know, for I am as curious as a magpie. It is not my fault—I'm made so. It is my character. Ah, hold! an idea, a famous one too—to find out her name! I'll try it. But who comes there? Ah! it is my prince of lodgers. Hail, Mr. Rudolph," said Mrs. Pipelet, putting herself in the attitude of carrying arms, the back of her left hand to her wig.

It was Rudolph, as yet ignorant of the death of M. d'Harville. "Good-day, Madame Pipelet," said he on entering. "Is Mile. Rigolette at home? I wish to speak to her."

"The poor little puss is always at home at her work! Does she ever take a holiday?"

"And how is Morel's wife? Does she cheer up any?"

"Yes, Mr. Rudolph, many thanks to you, or to the protector of whom you are the agent, she and her children are so happy now! They are like fish *in* water; they have fire, air, good beds, good food, a nurse to take care of them, without reckoning little Rigolette, who working like a little beaver, without appearing to, keeps them under her eye? and, besides, a negro doctor has been to see them. Mr. Rudolph, I said to myself, 'Ah! but this is the coalheaver doctor, this black man; he can feel their pulse without soiling his hands!' But never mind, color is skin deep; he seems to be a first-rate hand, all the same. He ordered a potion for Madame Morel, which relieved her at once."

"Poor woman, she must be very sad."

"Oh! yes, Mr. Rudolph, what else? her husband mad, and then her Louise in prison. Louise is her heart's grief; for an honest family it is terrible; and when I think that just now Mother Seraphin came here to say such things about her. If I had not a gudgeon to make her swallow, old Seraphin would not have got off so easy, but for a quarter of an hour I gave her fair words. Didn't she have the brass to come and ask me if I knew of any young body to take the place of Louise, at that beggar of a notary's? Ain't he close and miserly? Just imagine, they want an orphan, if she can be found. Do you know why, Mr. Rudolph? Because she would never want to go out. But that is not it—trash, a lie! The truth is, that they want to get hold of a girl who, having no one to advise her, could be ground out of her wages at their pleasure. Isn't it true?"

"Yes, yes," answered Rudolph, in a thoughtful manner.

Learning that Mrs. Seraphin sought an orphan to take the place of Louise, Rudolph foresaw in this circumstance a means, perhaps certain of obtaining the punishment of the notary. While Mrs. Pipelet was speaking, he arranged in his mind the part a tool of his might play, as a principal instrument in the just punishment which he wished to inflict on the executioner of Louise Morel.

"I was sure you would think as I did," said Madame Pipelet; "yes, I repeat it, and I would sooner die than send any one to them. Am I not right, Mr. Rudolph?"

"Mrs. Pipelet, will you render me a great service?"

"Lord o' mercy! Mr. Rudolph, do you wish me to throw myself across the fire, curl my wig with boiling oil? or would you prefer I should bite some one? Speak, I am wholly yours! I and my heart are your slaves, except—"

"Make yourself easy, Mrs. Pipelet; this is not what I mean. I want a place for a young orphan. She is a stranger; she has never been at Paris, and I wish to send her to M. Ferrand's."

"You suffocate me! How? In his barrack? to that Old miser's?"

"It is nevertheless a situation. If the girl should not like it, she can leave; but, at least, she will for the time earn her living, and I shall be easy on her account."

"Marry! Mr. Rudolph, it's your affair: you are warned. If, notwithstanding, you find the place good, you are the master; and, besides, I must be just—speaking of the notary—if there's something against, there's also something for him. He is as miserly as a dog, hard as an ass, bigoted as a sacristan, it is true; but he is as honest as one can be. He gives small wages, but he pays like a man. The food is bad. In fine, it is a house where one must work like a horse, but where there is no risk of a young girl's reputation. Louise was an exception."

"Madame Pipelet, I am going to confide a secret to your honor."

"On the faith of Anastasia Pipelet, whose maiden name was Galimard, as true as there is a holiness in heaven, and Alfred wears only green coats, I shall be as dumb as a fish."

"You must not say a word to Mr. Pipelet."

"I swear it on the head of my old darling! If the motive is honest."

"Oh, Mrs. Pipelet!"

"It is between ourselves, my prince of lodgers. Go on."

"The girl of whom I have spoken has committed a fault."

"I twig! If I had not at fifteen married Alfred, I should have perhaps committed fifty-hundreds of faults! I, that you see—I was a regular saltpeter mine unchained! Happily, Pipelet extinguished me in his virtue; without that I should have committed follies. If your girl has only committed one fault, there is yet some hope."

"I think so also. The girl was a servant in Germany, at one of my relatives'; the son of this relative has been the accomplice of the fault: you comprehend?"

"Whew! I comprehend-as if I had committed the *faux pas* myself."

"The mother drove away the servant; but the young man was mad enough to leave his paternal home, and bring this poor girl to Paris."

"Oh, these young folks—"

"After this came reflections—all the wiser as the money they had was all gone. My young relative called upon me; I consented to give him enough to return to his mother, but on condition that he should leave this girl here, and I would endeavor to place her."

"I could not have done better for my own son, if Pipelet had been pleased to grant me one."

"I am enchanted with your approbation; only as the young girl has no recommendations, and is a stranger, it is very difficult to find a place. If you would tell Mrs. Seraphin that one of your relations in Germany had addressed and recommended this young girl to you, and the notary would take her in his service, I should be doubly pleased. Cecily—that is her name—having been only led astray, would be made correct, certainly, in a house so strict as that of the notary. It is for this reason I wish to see her enter the service of M. Ferrand. I need not tell you that, presented by you—a person so respectable—"

"Oh! Mr. Rudolph—"

"So estimable—"

"Oh, my prince of lodgers-"

"She will be certainly accepted by Madame Seraphin; while, presented by me—"

"Understood! It is as if I presented a young man. Oh, well! done! it suits me. Stick old Seraphin! So much the better! I have a bone to pick with her. I will answer for the affair, Mr. Rudolph! I'll make her see stars at noon. I'll tell her I had a cousin, ever so long ago, settle in Germany, one of the Galimards—my family name; that I have just received the news that she is defunct, her husband also, and that their daughter, now an orphan, will be on my hands immediately."

"Very well. You will take Cecily yourself to M. Ferrand, without saying anything more to Mrs. Seraphin. As it is twenty years since you have seen your cousin, you will have nothing to answer, except that since her departure for Germany you have received no news from her."

"Ah, now! but if the young woman only jabbers German?"

"She speaks French perfectly; I will give her her lesson; all you have to do is to recommend her strongly to Mrs. Seraphin; or, rather, I think, no—for she would suspect, perhaps, that you wished to force her. You know it suffices often merely to ask for a thing to have it refused."

"To whom do you tell this? That's the way I always served cajolers. If they had asked nothing, I do not say—"

"That always happens. You must say, then, that Cecily is an orphan and a stranger, very young and very handsome; that she is going to be a heavy charge for you; that you feel but slight affection for her, as you had quarreled with your cousin, and that you are not much obliged for such a present as she has made you."

"Oh, my! how cunning you are. But be easy—we two'll fix the pair. I say, Mr. Rudolph, how we understand each other. When I think that if you had been of my age in the time when I was a train of powder—*ma foi*, I don't know—and you?"

"Hush! if Mr. Pipelet—"

"Oh, yes! poor dear man! You don't know a new infamy of Cabrion's? But
I will tell you directly. As to your young girl, be easy; I bet that
I'll lead old Seraphin to ask me to place my relation with them."

"If you succeed, my dear Mrs. Pipelet, there is a hundred francs for you. I am not rich, but—"

"Do you mock at me, Mr. Rudolph? Do you think I do this from interested feelings? It is pure friendship—a hundred francs!"

"But remember that if I had this girl for a long time under my charge it would cost me more than that at the end of some months."

"It is only to oblige you that I shall take the hundred francs, Mr. Rudolph; but it was a famous ticket in the lottery for us when you came to this house. I can cry from the roof, you are the prince of lodgers. Holloa! a hack! It is doubtless the little lady for M. Bradamanti. She came yesterday; I could not see her. I am going to trifle with her, to make her show her face; without counting that I have invented a way to find out her name. You'll see me work; it will amuse you."

"No, no, Mrs. Pipelet, the name and face of this lady are of no importance to me," said Rudolph,

retreating to the back part of the lodge.

"Madame!" cried Anastasia, rushing out before the lady who entered, "where are you going, madame?"

"To M. Bradamanti's," said the female, visibly annoyed at thus being stopped in the passage.

"He is not at home."

"It is impossible; I have an appointment with him."

"He is not at home."

"You are mistaken."

"I am not mistaken at all," trying all the time to catch a glimpse of her face. "M. Bradamanti has gone out, certainly gone out—very certainly gone out—that is to say, except for a lady."

"Well! it is I! you annoy me; let me pass."

"Your name, madame? I shall soon know if it is the person M. Bradamanti told me to pass in. If you have not that name, you must step over my body before you shall enter."

"He told you my name?" cried the lady, with as much surprise as inquietude.

"Yes, madame."

"What imprudence!" murmured the lady; then, after a moment's pause, she added impatiently, in a low voice, as if she feared to be overheard, "Well! I am Lady d'Orbigny!"

At this name Rudolph started. It was the stepmother of Madame d'Harville. Instead of remaining in the shade he advanced; and, by the light of the day and the lamp, he easily recognized her, from the description Clemence had more than once given him.

"Lady d'Orbigny!" repeated Mrs. Pipelet, "that's the name; you can go up, madame."

The step-mother of Clemence passed rapidly before the lodge.

"Look at that!" cried the portress, in a triumphant manner; "gammoned the citizen! know her name—she is called D'Orbigny; my means were not bad, Mr. Rudolph? But what is the matter? You are quite pensive!"

"This lady has been here before?" asked Rudolph.

"Yes, last night; as soon as she was gone, M. Bradamanti went out, probably to take his place in the diligence for to-day; for on his return, last night, he begged me to go with his trunk to the office, as he could not depend upon that little devil Tortillard."

"And where is M. Bradamanti going to? do you know?"

"To Normandy—to Alencon."

Rudolph remembered that the estate of Aubiers, where M. d'Orbigny resided, was situated in Normandy. There could be no doubt the quack was going to see the father of Clemence for no good purpose.

"It is the departure of M. Bradamanti that will finely provoke old Seraphin!" said Madame Pipelet. "She is like a mad wolf after M. Cesar, who avoids her as much as he can; for he told me to conceal from her that he was going to leave to-night; thus, when she returns, she will find nobody at home! I'll profit by this to speak of your young woman. Apropos, how is she called—Ciec?"

"Cecely."

"It is the same as if you said Cecile with an *i* at the end. All the same; I must put a piece of paper in my snuff-box to remember this name—Cici—Casi—Cecily, good, I have it."

"Now I go to see Mlle. Rigolette," said Rudolph; and, singularly preoccupied with the visit of Madame d'Orbigny to Polidori, he ascended to the fourth story.

CHAPTER XIX.

RIGOLETTE'S FIRST GRIEF.

Rigolette's chamber shone with coquettish nicety; a heavy silver watch, placed on the chimney, marked four o'clock; the very cold weather having passed, the economical workwoman had not put any fire in her stove. Hardly could one see from the window any part of the sky, the rough, irregular mass of roofs, garrets, and high chimneys, on the other side of the street, forming the horizon.

Suddenly a ray of the sun, astray as it were, glancing between two high roofs, came to light up, for some moments, with its purple tints, the windows of the room.

Rigolette was working, seated near the casement, sewing, with her feet on a stool, placed before her. Thus, as a noble amuses himself sometimes, through caprice, in concealing the walls of a cottage by the most splendid draperies, for a moment the setting sun illuminated the little apartment with a thousand sparkling fires, cast its golden rays on the gray and green chintz curtains, made the highly-polished furniture sparkle, the waxed floor to glisten like brass, and surrounded with gilded wire the bird-cage.

But, alas! notwithstanding the provoking joyousness of this ray of the sun, its two canaries flew about with an unquiet air, and, contrary to custom, did not sing.

It was because, contrary to custom, also, Rigolette did not sing. None of the three warbled without the others. Almost always the fresh and matinal song of one awoke the song of the others, who, more lazy, did not leave their nests at so early an hour. Then it was a challenge, a contest of clear, sonorous, brilliant, silvery notes, in which the birds did not always have the advantage.

Rigolette sung no more, because, for the first time in her life, she experienced a *sorrow*.

Until then, the sight of the misery of the Morels had often afflicted her, but such scenes are too familiar to the poorer classes to make any durable impression.

After having each day assisted these unfortunates as much as was in her power, sincerely wept with them, and for them, the girl felt affected, yet satisfied; affected with their misfortunes, and satisfied with her conduct toward them. But this was no *sorrow*.

Soon the natural gayety of her character resumed its empire. And besides, without egotism, but from comparison, she found herself so happy in her little chamber, on leaving the horrible den of the Morels, that her ephemeral sadness was soon dissipated.

Before we inform the reader of the cause of the first grief of Rigolette, we wish to assure him completely as to the virtue of this young girl. We regret to use the word virtue—a grave, pompous, and solemn word, which always carries along with it ideas of a grievous sacrifice, of a painful contest with the passions, austere meditations on the end of things here below. Such was not the virtue of Rigolette. She had neither struggled nor meditated. She had worked, laughed, and sung.

It depended on a question of time. She had no leisure to be in love.

Before all—gay, industrious, managing—order, work, gayety, had, unknown to her, defended, sustained, and saved her. Perhaps this morality will be found light, easy, and joyous; but what matters the cause, provided the effect subsists? What matters the direction of the roots, if the flower blooms brilliant and perfumed. But let us descend from our Utopian sphere, and return to the cause of Rigolette's first grief.

Except Germain, a good and serious young man, the neighbors of the grisette had taken, at first, her familiarity and neighborly kindness for very significant encouragement; but these gentlemen had been obliged to acknowledge, with as much surprise as vexation, that they found in Rigolette an amiable and gay companion for their Sunday recreations, a kind neighbor, and "nice little girl," but nothing more. Their surprise and their vexation quailed by degrees to the frank and charming disposition of the grisette, and her neighbors were proud on Sunday to have on their arm a pretty girl who did them honor (Rigolette cared little for appearances), and who only cost the partaking of their modest pleasures, which her presence and sprightliness enhanced. Besides, the dear girl was so easily contented; in the days of penury she dined so well and so gayly on a piece of hot cake, nipped with all the force of her little white teeth; after which she amused herself so much with a walk on the boulevards or streets.

Francois Germain alone founded no foolish hopes on the girl's familiarity. Either from penetration or

delicacy of mind, he saw at once all that could be agreeable in the mode of living offered by Rigolette. That which, of course, would happen, happened. He became desperately in love with his neighbor, without daring to speak of this love. Far from imitating his predecessors, who, soon convinced of the vanity of their pursuits, had consoled themselves elsewhere, Germain had deliciously enjoyed his intimacy with the girl, passing with her not only Sundays, but every evening that he was not occupied.

During these long hours, Rigolette had conducted herself, as always, lively and gay; Germain tender, attentive, serious, and often a little melancholy. This sadness was the only inconvenience; for his manners, naturally uncommon, could not be compared to the ridiculous pretensions of Girandeau, the traveling clerk, nor to the noisy eccentricities of Cabrion; M. Girandeau by his inexhaustible loquacity, and the painter by his hilarity not less so, had the advantage of Germain, whose gentle gravity awed a little his lively neighbor.

Rigolette had not, until now, any marked preference for either of her three lovers; but as she was not wanting in judgment, she found that Germain alone united all the qualities necessary to make a reasonable woman happy.

These antecedents disposed of, we will say why Rigolette was sad, and why neither she nor her birds sung.

Her round, blooming face was rather pale; her large black eyes, ordinarily bright and sparkling, were cast down and dull; her expression showed unaccustomed fatigue. She had worked more than half the night. From time to time she regarded sadly a letter placed open upon a table beside her; this letter was from Germain, and contained what follows:

"Conciergerie Prison.

"MADEMOISELLE.—The place whence I write will tell you the extent of my misfortune. I am incarcerated as a thief—I am criminal in the eyes of the world, though I dare to write to you. It would be frightful for me to think that you also looked upon me as a degraded and guilty being. I implore you, do not condemn me before having read this letter. If you cast me off, this last blow will overwhelm me quite.

"For some time past I have not lived in the Rue du Temple, but I knew through poor Louise that the Morel family, in whom we were so much interested, were more and more wretched. Alas I my pity for these poor people has ruined me! I do not repent it, but my fate is a cruel one. Yesterday, I remained quite late at M. Ferrand's, occupied with some pressing writings. In the room where I worked was a desk; each day my patron locked up in it the work I had done. This night he appeared restless and agitated; he said to me, 'Do not go until these accounts are finished; you will place them in the desk, of which I leave you the key,' and he went out.

"My work being finished I opened the drawer to put it away; mechanically my eyes fell upon an open letter, where I read the name of Jerome Morel, the artisan. I confess, seeing that it referred to that unfortunate man, I had the indiscretion to read this letter; I thus learned that the artisan was to be arrested the next morning for a note of thirteen hundred francs, at the suit of M. Ferrand, who, under an assumed name, would cause him to be imprisoned. This notice was from the agent of my patron. I knew the situation of the family well enough to foresee what a horrible blow this would be for them. I was as sorry as I was indignant. Unfortunately, I saw in the same drawer an open box containing some gold; there was about two thousand francs. At this moment I heard Louise on the staircase; without reflecting on the gravity of my action, profiting by the occasion which chance offered, I took thirteen hundred francs; I went into the passage and placed the money in the hand of Louise, telling her, 'Your father is to be arrested to-morrow at daylight for thirteen hundred francs: here they are; save him, but do not say you had this money from me. M. Ferrand is a bad man.'

"You see, mademoiselle, my intention was good though my conduct was culpable; I conceal nothing. Now hear my excuse.

"During a long time, by economy, I have saved and placed at a banker's the small sum of fifteen hundred francs. About a week ago he notified me that the term of his obligation toward me being arrived, he held my funds subject to my order, if I did not wish them to remain with him.

"I thus possessed more than I took from the notary. I could the next day replace it; but the cashier of the bank did not reach his office before twelve o'clock, and at daybreak they were to arrest poor Morel. It was necessary to place him in a situation to pay, otherwise, even if I were to go and take him from prison, the arrest might have already killed his wife; besides, the very considerable expenses attending this would have been at the cost of the artisan. You comprehend that all these misfortunes would not have happened, if I could have returned the thirteen hundred francs before M. Ferrand discovered

their loss.

"I left the house, no longer under the impression of indignation and pity which had made me act in this manner. I reflected on all the dangers of my position; a thousand fears assailed me. I knew the severity of the notary; he could, after my departure, return and go to the bureau, find out the *theft*; for in his eyes, to the eyes of everybody, it is a theft.

"These ideas quite upset me; although it was late, I ran to the banker's to beg him to return my money instantly. I should have explained this extraordinary demand; afterward I would have returned to M. Ferrand, and replaced the money I had taken.

"The banker, by a fatal chance, had been for two days at Belleville, his country house. I awaited the daylight with increasing agony; at length I arrived at Belleville. Everything seemed leagued against me; the banker had left for Paris; I flew back, I got my money; I went to M. Ferrand's—all was discovered.

"But this is only a part of my misfortunes; now the notary accuses me of having stolen fifteen thousand francs in notes, which were, he said, in the drawer with the two thousand francs in gold. It is a false accusation, an infamous lie. I avow myself guilty of the first charge; but by all that is sacred, I swear to you, mademoiselle, that I am innocent of the second. I have seen no bills in the drawer; there was only the gold, as I said before.

"Such is the truth, mademoiselle; I am under the charge of an overwhelming accusation, and yet I affirm that you ought to think me incapable of telling a falsehood. But who will believe me? Alas! as M. Ferrand told me, he who has stolen a small sum can easily steal a large one, and his words deserve no confidence.

"I have always found you so good and devoted to the unfortunate, mademoiselle, I know you are so faithful and frank, that your heart will guide you, I hope, in the appreciation of the truth—I ask nothing more. Give faith to my words, and you will find me as much to be pitied as blamed; for, I repeat, my intention was good; circumstances impossible to foresee have ruined me.

"Oh, Mile. Rigolette, I am very unhappy. If you knew what kind of people I am destined to live among until the day of my trial! Yesterday they took me to a place which is called the station-house of the Prefecture of Police. I cannot tell you what I experienced when, after having mounted a gloomy staircase, I arrived before a door with an iron wicket, which they opened, and soon closed upon me. I was so much troubled, that at first I could distinguish nothing. A hot, disagreeable air struck me in the face; I heard a great noise of voices mingled with sinister laughs, accents of rage and low songs; I held myself immovable near the door, looking at the stone flaggings, daring neither to advance nor raise my eyes, believing that every one was looking at me. They did not trouble themselves about me; one prisoner more or less is of no consequence to them; at length I raised my head. What horrible figures! how many clothed in rags! how many ragged clothes soiled with mud! All the externals of vice and misery. There were about forty or fifty, seated, standing, or lying on benches fastened to the walls; vagabonds, robbers, assassins, in fine, all who had been arrested that night or day.

"When they perceived me, I found a sad consolation in seeing that they did not recognize me as one of their fellows. Some of them looked at me with an insolent and jeering air; then they began to talk among themselves, in a low tone, and in a hideous language I did not comprehend. At the end of a short time, the most audacious of them came and struck me on the shoulder, and asked me for some money to pay my footing.

"I gave them some money, in hopes to purchase repose; it was not enough; they required more; I refused. Then several of them surrounded me, loading me with threats and insults; they were about to throw themselves upon me, when happily, attracted by the noise, a keeper entered. I complained to him; he made them give up the money I had given them, and told me that, if I wished, I could, for a small amount, be put alone in a cell. I accepted with gratitude, and left these bandits in the midst of their threats for the future. The keeper placed me in a cell, where I passed the rest of the night. It is hence that I write to you this morning, Mlle. Rigolette. Immediately after my examination, I shall be conducted to another prison, which is called La Force, where I fear I shall meet many of my lock-up companions. The keeper, interested by my grief and tears, has promised me to send you this letter, although it is strictly forbidden. I expect, Mlle. Rigolette, a last service of our old friendship, if now you should not blush at this friendship.

"If you are willing to grant my demand, here it is.

"You will receive with this a small key, and a line for the porter of the house where I reside, Boulevard Saint Denis, No. 11. I inform him that you can dispose of all that belongs to me, and that he must obey your orders. He will show you my room. You will have the kindness to open my secretary

with the key I send you; you will find a large envelope covering many papers, which I wish you to take care of; one of them was destined for you, as you will see by the address; others have been written concerning you, in our happy days. Do not be angry— you never else would have known it.

"I beg you also to take the small sum of money which is in the secretary, also a sachet of satin, inclosing a little cravat of orange silk, that you wore on our last Sunday walk, and gave me the day I left the Rue du Temple. I wish that, with the exception of some linen, which you will send to La Force, you would sell the furniture and effects I possess: acquitted or condemned, I shall not be the less ruined and obliged to leave Paris. Where shall I go? What are my resources? Heaven only knows!

"Madame Bouvard, as saleswoman in the Temple, who has already sold and bought for me, will doubtless arrange all this: she's an honest woman; this arrangement will spare you much embarrassment, for I know how precious your time is.

"I have paid my rent in advance; I beg you to give a small gratuity to the porter. Pardon me, mademoiselle, for imposing on you with these details, but you are the only person in the world to whom I dare and can address myself.

"I might have asked this service from one of the clerks at M. Ferrand's, but I feared his discretion respecting sundry papers: many of them concerning you, as I have already told you; others have reference to some sad events of my life.

"Oh! believe me, Mlle. Rigolette, if you grant it, this last proof of your former affection will be my sole consolation in the great trouble which crushes me; in spite of myself, I hope you will not refuse me.

"I ask, also, permission to write you sometimes—it will be so soothing, so precious, to be able to pour out, to disclose to a benevolent heart, the sorrows which overwhelm me.

"Alas! I am alone in the world; no one feels any interest in me. This isolated condition was always painful—judge now what it is!

"And yet I am honest; and I have the consciousness of never having injured any one; of having always, even at the peril of my life, shown my aversion for evil, as you will see by the papers, which I beg you to keep and read. But when I say this, who will believe me? M. Ferrand is respected by everybody; his reputation is well established; he will crush me; I resign myself, in advance, to my fate.

"In brief, Mlle. Rigolette, if you believe me, you will not have, I hope, any contempt for me; you will pity me, and you will sometimes think of a sincere friend; then, if I cause you much—much pity, perhaps you will push your generosity so far as to come, some day-*a Sunday* (alas! what recollections does not the word awaken)—to brave the reception-room of my prison.

"But, no, no! to see you in such a place—I never can dare. Yet you are so kind, that—

"I am obliged to stop, and send you this, with the key and the note to the porter, which I shall write in haste, as the keeper has come to tell me I am to be taken before the judge. Adieu, adieu, Mlle. Rigolette.

"Do not cast me off. I have no hope but in you—in you alone.

"FRANCOIS GERMAIN.

"P.S.—If you answer address your letter to the prison of La Force."

The reader can now comprehend the cause of the first grief of La Rigolette. Her excellent heart was profoundly affected at a calamity of which she had not had until then any suspicion. She believed implicitly in the entire veracity of the story of Germain. Not very severe, she even found that her old neighbor enormously exaggerated his fault. To save an unfortunate father, he had taken the money, which he knew he could return. This action, in the eyes of the grisette, was only generous.

By one of those inconsistencies natural to women, and above all, to those of her class, this girl, who until then had felt for Germain, as for her other neighbors, a joyous and cordial friendship, now acknowledged a decided preference.

As soon as she knew he was unfortunate, unjustly accused, and a prisoner, she thought no more of his rivals.

With Rigolette it was not yet love; it was a lively, sincere affection, filled with commiseration and resolute devotion: a very new sentiment for her, from the bitterness which was joined to it. Such was her mental situation when Rudolph entered her room, after having discreetly knocked at the door.

"Good-day, my neighbor," said Rudolph; "I hope I do not disturb you?"

"No, neighbor; I am, on the contrary, very glad to see you, for I have much sorrow!"

"Why do I find you pale? you seem to have been weeping!"

"I should think I have wept! There is reason for it. Poor Germain! Here, read;" and Rigolette handed to Rudolph the letter. "If this is not enough to break one's heart! You told me you were interested in him. Now is the time to show it," added she, while Rudolph read attentively. "Is this villain, Ferrand, thirsting for the blood of everybody? First it was Louise, now it is Germain. Oh! I am not cruel; but if some misfortune should happen to this notary I should be content! To accuse such an honest young man of having stolen one thousand three hundred francs! Germain! truth and honesty itself, and then so regular, so mild, so sad—is he not to be pitied, among all these scoundrels-in prison! Oh! M. Rudolph, from to-day I begin to see that all is not *couleur de rose* in life."

"And what do you mean to do my neighbor?"

"Do? why, everything he asks, and as soon as possible. I should have already been off, but for this work, which I must finish and take to the Rue Saint Honore as I go to Germain's room to get the papers he speaks of. I have passed a part of the night in working, so as to gain some hours in advance. I am going to have so many things to do, besides my work, that I must get in readiness. In the first place, Madame Morel wishes me to see Louise in her prison? It is, perhaps, very difficult, but I will try. Unfortunately, I do not know who to address myself to."

"I have thought of that."

"You, my neighbor?"

"Here is a magistrate's order."

"What happiness! Can you not get me one also for the prison of this unfortunate Germain? it will give him so much pleasure."

"I will give you, also, the means to see Germain."

"Oh, thank you, M. Rudolph."

"You are not afraid, then, to go to the prison?"

"Very certain my heart will beat the first time. But never mind. When Germain was happy, did I not always find him ready to anticipate all my wishes? To take me to the theater, or a walk? to read to me at night? to assist me in arranging my flowers? to wax my floor? Well! now he is in trouble, it is my turn; a poor little mouse like me can't do much, I know; but all I can do I will do—he can count on it; he shall see whether I am a good friend! M. Rudolph, there is one thing that vexes me; it is his suspicion—he believes me capable of despising him! I ask you why? This old miser of a notary accuses him of theft; but what is that to me? I know it is not true. The letter of Germain proves as clear as day that he is innocent, whom I should never have thought guilty. Only to see him, to know him, shows he is incapable of a wrong action. One must be as wicked as M. Ferrand to maintain such false assertions."

"Bravo, neighbor, I like your indignation!"

"Oh! stop—I wish I was a man, to go see this notary, and say to him: 'Oh! you maintain that Germain has robbed you; well, look here, take that, you old liar, he won't steal this from you.' And I'd beat him to a mummy."

"You'd have very expeditious justice," said Rudolph, smiling at the animation of Rigolette.

"It is so revolting; and, as Germain says in his letter, everybody will take the master's part against him, because his master is rich, and thought much of, while Germain is a poor young man without protection; unless you come to his assistance, M. Rudolph, who know so many benevolent persons. Can nothing be done?"

"He must wait for his trial. Once acquitted, as I think he will be, numerous proofs of interest will be shown him, I assure you. But listen, my neighbor. I know from experience that I can count on your discretion."

"Oh, yes, M. Rudolph. I have never been a babbler."

"Well, no one must know, even Germain himself must be ignorant that he has friends who are watching over him, for he has friends."

"Really."

"Very powerful and very devoted."

"It would give him so much courage to know it."

"Doubtless; but perhaps he could not keep the secret. Then, M. Ferrand, alarmed, would be on his guard, his suspicions aroused; and as he is very cunning, he would make it difficult to get at him; which would be lamentable, for not only must the innocence of Germain be proved, but his calumniator unmasked."

"I understand you, M. Rudolph."

"Just so with Louise; I bring you this permission to see her, so that you can tell her not to speak to any one of what she had revealed to me. She will know what this means."

"That is sufficient, M. Rudolph."

"In a word, Louise must be careful not to complain in her prison of the conduct of her master; it is very important. But she must conceal nothing from the lawyer who will be sent by me to prepare for her defense; recommend all this to her."

"Be quite easy, neighbor; I will forget nothing. I have a good memory. But I speak of kindness, when it is you who are good and generous! If any one's in trouble, you are there at once!"

"I have told you, neighbor, I am only a poor clerk. When, in roving about, I find good people who deserve protection, I inform a benevolent person who has all confidence in me, and they are assisted."

"Where do you lodge, now that you have given up your room to the
Morels?"

"I lodge—in furnished lodgings."

"Oh, how I detest that. To be where everybody else has been—it is as if everybody had been in your own room."

"I am only there at night, and then—"

"I conceive—it is less disagreeable. My home, M. Rudolph, rendered me so happy; I had arranged a life so tranquil, that I should not have believed it possible to have a sorrow. Yet you see! No, I cannot tell you what a blow the misfortunes of Germain have caused me. I have seen the Morels and others—much to be pitied, it is true; but misery is misery. Among poor folks they expect it; it does not surprise them, and they help one another as they can. But to see a poor young man, honest, and good, who has been your friend for a long time, accused of theft, and imprisoned pell-mell with rogues and cut-throats! Oh, M. Rudolph! it is true I have no strength against this; it is a misfortune I have never thought of; it upsets me."

Rigolette's large eyes filled with tears.

"Courage, courage! your gayety will return when your friend is acquitted."

"Oh, he must be acquitted! They will only have to read to the judges the letter which he has written me—that will be enough, will it not, M. Rudolph?"

"In reality, this simple and touching letter has all the marks of truth. You must let me take a copy; it will be useful in his defense."

"Certainly, M. Rudolph. If I did not write like a real cat, in spite of the lessons Germain gave me, I should propose to copy it for you; but my writing is so coarse, so crooked, and besides, there are so many—so many faults."

"I only ask you to lend me this letter until tomorrow."

"There it is, neighbor; but you will take good care of it? I have burned all the *billets doux* which M. Cabrion and M. Girandeau wrote me at the commencement of our acquaintance, with bleeding hearts and doves on the top of the paper; but this poor letter of Germain, I will take good care of; it and others also, if he writes them. For, in truth M. Rudolph, it is a proof in my favor that he asks these little services."

"Without doubt it proves that you are the best little friend that one can have. But I reflect—instead of

going by and by alone to M. Germain's, shall I accompany you?"

"With pleasure, neighbor. Night approaches, and I prefer not to be alone in the streets after dark, especially as I have to go near the Palais Royal. But to go so far will be tiresome and fatiguing to you, perhaps?"

"Not at all; we will take a hack."

"Really! Oh, how it would amuse me to go in a carriage, if I had not so much sorrow. And I must have sorrow, for this is the first day since I lived here that I have not sung. My birds are all astonished. Poor little things! they do not know what it means; two or three times Papa Cretu has sung a little to entice me. I wished to amuse him; but after a moment I began to weep; Ramonette then tried, but I could answer no more."

[Illustration: MENACED IN PRISON]

"What singular names you have given your birds—Papa Cretu, Ramonette?"

"M. Rudolph, my birds are the joy of my solitude; they are my best friends. I have given them the names of good people who were the joy of my childhood, my best friends. Without reckoning, to finish the resemblance, that Papa Cretu and Ramonette were as gay and tuneful as the birds of heaven. My adopted parents were thus called. They are ridiculous names for birds, I know; but it only concerns me. Now, it was on this very subject that I saw Germain had a good heart."

"He had, eh?"

"Certainly; M. Girandeau and M. Cabrion—M. Cabrion, above all—were forever making jokes on the names of my birds. 'To call a canary Papa Cretu, did you ever?' M. Cabrion never finished, and then he would laugh—such laughs. 'If it were a cock,' said he, 'very well, you I might call it Cretu (combed). It is the same with the other one; Ramonette sounds too much like Ramoneur (chimney sweep).' At length he made me so angry that I would not go out with him for two Sundays, just to teach him; and I told him, very seriously, that if he recommenced his jokes, which were unpleasant to me, we should never go out together again."

"What a courageous resolution!"

"It cost me a good deal, M. Rudolph—I looked so eagerly for my Sunday excursions. I had a sorrowful heart, I tell you, to remain home all alone of a fine day; but never mind, I preferred rather to sacrifice my Sunday than to continue to hear M. Cabrion make fun of what I respected. Except for this, and the ideas attached to it, I would have preferred to give other names to my birds. There is, above all, one name I should have loved to adoration—Humming-Bird. Well, I cannot do it, because I never shall call my birds otherwise than Cretu and Ramonette; it would seem to me that I sacrificed them, that I forgot my kind adopted parents-wouldn't it, M. Rudolph?"

"You are right-a thousand times right. Germain did not make fun of these names?"

"On the contrary; only the first time it appeared droll to him, as to every one else—it is very simple; but when I explained my reasons, as I had explained them to M. Cabrion, the tears came into his eyes. From that day I said, `M. Germain has a kind heart; he has nothing against him but his sadness.' And do you see, M. Rudolph, that he has brought me misfortune to reproach him for his sadness. Then I did not comprehend how one could be sad. Now I comprehend it but too well. But now my work is finished, will you give me my shawl, neighbor It is not cold enough for a cloak, is it?"

"We shall go in a carriage, and I will bring you back."

"It is true, we shall go and return quicker; it will be so much time gained."

"But, on reflection, how are you going to manage? Your work will suffer from your visit to the prisons?"

"Oh no, no! I have laid my plans. In the first place, I have my Sundays; I will go and see Louise and Germain on these days—it will serve me for a walk and recreation; then, in the week, I shall go to the prison once or twice; each time will cost me three good hours a day. Well, to make up for this, I will work one hour more each day, and I will go to bed at twelve o'clock instead of eleven; that will give me a clear gain of seven or eight hours each week, which I can use in going to see Louise and Germain. You see, I am richer than I appear to be," added Rigolette, smiling.

"And do you not fear this will fatigue you?"

"Bah! I can do it—one can do anything; and, besides, it will not last forever."

"Here is your shawl, neighbor. I shall not be so indiscreet as to bring my lips too close to this charming neck."

"Oh, neighbor! take care, you prick me."

"Come, the pin is crooked."

"Well, take another—there, on the pincushion. Oh, I forget! Will you do me a favor, neighbor?"

"Command, neighbor."

"Make me a good pen, very coarse, so that I can, on my return, write to poor Germain that his commissions are executed. He shall have my letter to-morrow morning early."

"And where are your pens?"

"There, on the table; the knife is in the drawer. Stop, I am going to light my candle, for it grows quite dark."

"I shall want it to mend the pen."

"And, besides, I can't see to tie my bonnet."

Rigolette took a match, and lit an end of candle, which was in a very shining candlestick.

"Dear me! wax candle, neighbor—what luxury!"

"The little I burn costs me a trifle more than a tallow candle, but it is so much neater."

"Not much dearer?"

"Oh, no. I buy these ends of candles by the pound, and a half-pound serves me a month."

"But," said Rudolph, mending the pen carefully, while the grisette tied her bonnet before the glass, "I see no preparations for your dinner."

"I haven't a shadow of hunger. I took a cup of milk this morning; I will take another to-night, with a little bread! I shall have enough."

"Will you not come and eat dinner with me when we come away from
Germain's?"

"I thank you, neighbor; I have my heart too full; another time with pleasure. What do you say to the evening of the day that poor Germain comes out of prison? I invite myself, and afterward we will go to the play. Is it agreed?"

"It is, neighbor; I assure you that I shall not forget this engagement. But to-day you refuse me?"

"Yes, M. Rudolph; I should be too stupid to-day; besides, it would take up too much time. Only think—it is now, if ever, that I must not be lazy."

"Come, I will give up this pleasure for to-day."

"Here, take my bundle, neighbor; go before, I will shut the door."

"Here is an excellent pen—now, your bundle."

"Take care you don't tumble it—it is poult de soie—it shows the folds—hold it in your hand—that way—lightly. Well, pass on, I will light you."

Rudolph descended, preceded by Rigolette. As they passed the lodge they saw Pipelet, who, with his arms hanging down, advanced toward them from the bottom of the alley. In one hand he held the sign, which announced to the public that he would "deal in friendship" with Cabrion; and in the other, the portrait of the infernal painter.

The despair of Alfred was so overwhelming that his chin rested on his breast, and nothing could be seen but the top of his hat. On seeing him approach, with his head down, toward Rudolph and Rigolette, one would have said it was a goat or a negro butt preparing for combat. Anastasia appeared on the threshold, and cried at the sight of her husband. "Well, old darling! here you are, hey? What did the commissary say to you? Alfred, pay attention; now you are going to poke yourself against my prince

of lodgers. Who has stolen your eyes? Pardon, M. Rudolph; that beggar Cabrion stupefies him more and more— he certainly will make him turn to a jackass, my poor love! Alfred, answer!"

At this voice, so dear to his heart, Pipelet raised his head; his features were imprinted with a melancholy bitterness.

"What did the commissary say to you?" repeated Anastasia.

"Anastasia, we must collect the little that we possess, clasp our friends in our arms, pack our trunks, and expatriate ourselves from France-from my 'belle France!'-for, sure now of impunity, the monster is capable of pursuing me everywhere."

"Then, the commissary!"

"The commissary!" cried Pipelet, with savage indignation; "the commissary laughed in my face."

"Your face! an aged man, who has so respectable an air, that you'd look as stupid as a goose if one did not know your virtues."

"Well, notwithstanding that, when I had respectfully deposed before him my heap of complaints and griefs against this infernal Cabrion, this magistrate, after looking at and laughing—yes, laughing—I say, laughing indecently—over the sign and portrait which I produced as justificatory of my complaint, replied, 'My good man, this Cabrion is a funny fellow—a jester—pay no attention to his jokes. I advise you now, in a friendly manner, to laugh at them, for really there is cause.' 'To laugh!' cried I; 'to laugh! but grief is devouring me—my existence is imbittered by those scoundrels—they pester me—they will cause me to lose my reason—I demand that they be locked up—exiled, at least from my street.' At these words the commissary smiled, and obligingly showed me the door. I understood this gesture of the magistrate, and here I am."

"Magistrate of nothing at all!" cried Mrs. Pipelet.

"All is finished! Anastasia, all is finished! No more hope! There is no longer any justice in France! I am atrociously sacrificed!" and by way of peroration, Pipelet threw, with all his strength, the portrait and sign to the end of the alley. Rudolph and Rigolette had, in the obscurity, slightly smiled at Pipelet's despair. After having addressed some words of consolation to Alfred, whom Anastasia was calming in the best way she could, the "prince of lodgers" left the house of the Rue du Temple with Rigolette, and got into a hackney coach to go to the residence of Francois Germain.

CHAPTER XX.

THE WILL.

Francois Germain lived on the Boulevard Saint Denis, No. 11. During the long ride from the Rue du Temple to the Rue Saint Honore, where the woman lived who supplied Rigolette with work, Rudolph was able to appreciate still more the girl's excellent feelings. Like all characters instinctively good and devoted, she was not conscious of the delicacy and generosity of her conduct, which seemed to her quite natural.

Nothing would have been easier for Rudolph than to have made a liberal provision for Rigolette, as well for her present wants as the future, so that she could have gone charitably to console Louise and Germain, without counting the time she lost in these visits from her work, her only resource; but the prince feared to weaken the merit of the grisette's devotion in rendering it too easy; quite decided to recompense the rare and charming qualities which he had discovered in her, he wished to follow her to the end of this new and interesting trial. At the end of an hour the carriage, on its return from her Rue Saint Honore, stopped on the Boulevard Saint Denis, No. 11, before a house of modest appearance.

Rudolph assisted Rigolette to alight; she entered the porter's lodge and communicated to him the intentions of Germain, without forgetting the promised gratuity. From his amenity of disposition, the clerk was everywhere loved. The *confrere* of Pipelet was much concerned to learn that the house should lose so honest and quiet a lodger: such were his expressions. The grisette, furnished with a light, rejoined her companion; the porter was to follow, after a little while, to receive instructions. The chamber of Germain was on the fourth story. On arriving at the door, Rigolette said to Rudolph, giving

him the key, "Here, neighbor, open—my hand trembles too much. You will laugh at me; but, in thinking that poor Germain will never return here, it seems to me I am about to enter a chamber of the dead."

"Come, be reasonable now, neighbor—have no such ideas!"

"I was wrong, but it was stronger than I;" and she wiped away a tear.

Without being as much moved as his companion, Rudolph nevertheless experienced a painful impression on entering the modest apartment. He knew that the unfortunate young man must have passed many sad hours in this solitude. Rigolette placed the light on a table. Nothing could be more plain than the furniture of this sleeping-room, composed of a bed, a chest of drawers, a secretary of black walnut, four straw-bottomed chairs, and a table; white cotton curtains covered the windows and the bed recess; the only ornaments on the mantelpiece were a decanter and a glass. From the appearance of the bed, which was made, it could be seen that Germain had thrown himself upon it without taking off his clothes the night preceding his arrest.

"Poor fellow," said Rigolette, sadly, examining, with interest, the interior of the chamber: "it is easy to see that lie no longer has me for a neighbor. It is in order, but not neat; there is dust everywhere, the curtains are smoked, the windows are dirty, the floor is not washed. Oh! what a difference! Rue du Temple was not handsome, but it was more gay, because everything shone with neatness, like my own room."

"It was because you were there, to give your advice."

"But see, now," cried Rigolette, showing the bed, "he did not go to rest the other night, so much was he disturbed. Look here! his handkerchief, which he has left, has been steeped in tears. That is plain to be seen;" and she took it, adding, "Germain has kept a little orange silk cravat of mine, which I gave him when we were happy; I am sure he will not be angry."

"On the contrary, he will be very happy at this proof of your affection."

"Now let us think of serious matters; I will make a package of linen, which I shall find in the drawers, to take to him in prison; Mother Bouvard, whom I shall send here to-morrow, will manage the rest. First, however, I'll open the secretary and take out the papers and money which M. Germain begged me keep for him."

"But while I think of it," said Rudolph, "Louise Morel gave me, yesterday, one thousand three hundred francs in gold, which Germain had given her to pay the debt of her father, which I had already done; I have this money; it belongs to Germain, since he has paid back the notary; I will give it to you; you can add it to the rest."

"As you please, M. Rudolph; yet I would rather not have so large a sum with me at home, there are so many robbers nowadays. Papers are very well—there is nothing to fear; but money is dangerous."

"Perhaps you are right, neighbor; shall I take charge of this sum? If Germain has need of anything, you must let me know at once. I will leave you my address, and I will send you what he wants."

"I should not have dared to ask this service from you; it will be much better, neighbor. I will give you also the money I shall receive from the sale of his effects. Let us see the papers," said the girl, opening the secretary and several drawers. "Ah, it is probably this. Here is a large envelope. Oh, my gracious! look here, M. Rudolph, how sad it is what's written on this." And she read, in a faltering tone:

"In case I should die a violent death, or otherwise, I beg the person who should open this secretary to carry these papers to Mlle. Rigolette, seamstress, Rue du Temple, No. 17."

"Can I break the seal, M. Rudolph?"

"Doubtless; does he not say that among these papers there is one particularly addressed to you?"

The girl broke the seal. Several papers were inclosed; one of them, bearing the superscription, "*To Mademoiselle Rigolette*" contained these words: "Mademoiselle—When you read this letter, I shall no longer exist. If, as I fear, I die a violent death, in falling a victim to willful murder, some information, under the title of *Notes of my Life* may give a clew to my assassins."

"Ah! M. Rudolph," said Rigolette, "I am no longer astonished that he was so sad. Poor Germain! always pursued by such ideas!"

"Yes; he must have been much afflicted. But his worst days are over, believe me."

"I hope so, M. Rudolph. But, however, to be in prison, accused of robbery!"

"Be comforted. Once his innocence recognized, instead of falling into an isolated state, he will find friends. You, in the first place; then a beloved mother, from whom he has been separated since his childhood."

"His mother! He has still a mother?"

"Yes. She thinks him lost to her. Judge of her joy when she will see him again. Do not speak to him of his mother. I confide this secret to you, because you interest yourself so generously in his favor."

"I thank you, M. Rudolph; you may be assured I will keep your secret," and Rigolette continued the reading of the letter:

"If you will, mademoiselle, look over these notes, you will see that I have been all my life very unhappy, except during the time I passed with you. What I should never have dared to tell you, you will find written here, entitled '*My sole days of happiness.*'

"Almost every evening, on leaving you, I thus poured out the consoling thoughts that your affection inspired, and which alone tempered the bitterness of my life. What was friendship when with you, became love when absent from you. I have concealed this until this moment, when I shall be no more for you than perhaps a sad souvenir. My destiny was so unhappy, that I should never have spoken to you of this sentiment; although sincere and profound, it would only have made you unhappy.

"One wish alone remains to be fulfilled, and I hope that you will accomplish it. I have seen with what admirable courage you work, and how much method and economy was necessary for you to live on the small amount you earn so industriously. Often, without telling, you, I have trembled in thinking that a malady, caused, perhaps, by excess of labor, might reduce you to a situation so frightful that I could not even think of it without alarm. It is very grateful to me to think that I can at least spare you the horrors, and, perhaps, in a great degree, the miseries, which you, in the thoughtlessness of youth, do not foresee, happily."

"What does he mean, M. Rudolph?" said Rigolette, astonished.

"Continue, we shall see."

"I know on how little you can live, and what a resource the smallest sum would be to you in a time of difficulty. I am very poor, but, by economy, I have set aside one thousand five hundred francs, deposited at a banker's; it is all that I possess. By my will, which you will find here, I bequeath it to you; accept it from a friend, a good brother, who is no more."

"Oh! M. Rudolph," said Rigolette, bursting into tears, and giving the letter to the prince, "this gives me too much pain. Good Germain, thus to think of me! Oh! what a heart! what an excellent heart!"

"Worthy and good young man!" replied Rudolph, with emotion. "But calm yourself, my child. Germain is not dead; this anticipation will only serve as a witness of his love for you."

"It is true. To be beloved by so good a young man is very flattering, is it not, M. Rudolph?"

"And some day, perhaps, you will participate in this love?"

"M. Rudolph, it is very trying; poor Germain is so much to be pitied! I'll put myself in his place—if at the moment when I thought myself abandoned, despised by all the world, a person, a good friend, came to me, still more kind than I could hope for—I should be so happy!" After a moment's pause, Rigolette resumed with a sigh, "On the other hand, we are both so poor, that perhaps it would not be reasonable. Look here, M. Rudolph, I do not wish to think of that; perhaps I am mistaken; but I will do all I can for Germain, as long as he remains in prison. Once free, it will always be time enough to see if it is love or friendship I feel for him; then if it is love, neighbor, it will be love. But it grows late, M. Rudolph; will you collect these papers, while I make up a bundle of linen? Oh! I forgot the sachet inclosing the little orange cravat, which I have given him. It is in this drawer, without a doubt. Oh! see how pretty it is, all embroidered! Poor Germain has guarded it like a relic! I well remember the last time I wore it, and when I gave it to him. He was so happy, so happy."

At this moment some one knocked at the door.

"Who is there?" demanded Rudolph.

"I want to speak to Madame Mathieu," answered a hoarse and husky voice, with an accent which denoted the speaker to be one of the lowest order. Madame Mathieu was a diamond broker living in this house, who employed Morel.

This voice, singularly accented, awakened some vague recollections in the mind of Rudolph. Wishing to enlighten them, he went and opened the door. He found himself face to face with a fellow whom he recognized at once, so fully and plainly was the stamp of crime marked on his youthful and besotted face.

Either this wretch had forgotten the features of Rudolph, whom he had seen only once, or the change of dress prevented him from recognizing him, for he manifested no astonishment at his appearance.

"What do you want?" said Rudolph.

"Here is a letter for Madame Mathieu. I must give it into her own hands," answered the man.

"She does not live here: inquire opposite," said Rudolph.

"Thank you, friend; they told me it was the door to the left; I am mistaken."

Rudolph did not know the name of the diamond broker; he had therefore no motive to interest himself about the woman to whom the rogue came as a messenger. Nevertheless, although he was ignorant of the crimes of this bandit, his face had such a guilty look of perversity, that he remained on the threshold of the door, curious to see the person to whom he brought this letter. Hardly had the man knocked at the opposite door when it was opened, and the broker, a large woman of about fifty years of age, appeared, holding a candle in her hand.

"Madame Mathieu?" said the messenger.

"That's my name."

"Here is a letter; I want an answer." He made a step in advance, as if to enter the room; but she made a motion for him not to advance, unsealed the letter, read it, and answered, with a satisfied air:

"You will say it is all right, my lad; I will bring what they wish; I will go to-morrow at the same time as before. Give my compliments to this lady."

"Yes, ma'am. Don't forget the messenger."

"Go ask those who sent you; they are richer than I am;" and she closed the door.

Rudolph re-entered Germain's room, seeing the messenger rapidly descending the staircase.

The latter met on the boulevard a man of a villainous and ferocious appearance, who waited for him before a shop. Although several persons might have heard him, but not understood him, it is true, he appeared so much pleased that he could not help saying to his companion, "Come, toss off your tipple, Nick! the old girl's toddled into the trap; she'll meet Screech Owl; Mother Martial will give us a lift in squeezing the sparklers out of her, and then we will carry the cold meat away in your boat."

"Look sharp, then; I must be at Asnieres early; I am afraid my brother Martial will suspect something." And the rogues, after having held this conversation, quite unintelligible to those who might have heard it, directed their steps toward the Rue Saint Denis.

A few moments after, Rigolette and Rudolph left the abode of Germain, got into the carriage, and drove to the Rue du Temple. When the carriage stopped, and the portress came to open the door, Rudolph saw by the street light a friend of his, who was waiting for him at the passage door.

That presence announced some great event, or, at least, something unexpected, for he alone knew where to find the prince.

"What is the matter, Murphy?" said Rudolph, quickly, while Rigolette collected the papers in the vehicle.

"A great misfortune, your highness!"

"Speak, for Heaven's sake!"

"The Marquis d'Harville."

"You alarm me!"

"He gave a breakfast this morning to several of his friends. Everything was going off well; he, above all, had never been more gay, when a fatal imprudence—"

"Go on, go on!"

"In playing with a pistol which he did not know was loaded—"

"He has wounded himself?"

"Worse!"

"Well?"

"Something very terrible!"

"What do you say?"

"He is dead!"

"D'Harville! oh, this is frightful!" cried Rudolph in such a heart-rending tone, that Rigolette, who had just descended from the carriage with her bundles, said: "What is the matter, M. Rudolph?"

"Some very bad news that I have just told my friend, mademoiselle," said Murphy to the girl, for the prince was so much affected that he could not answer.

"Is it some really great misfortune?" asked Rigolette, tremblingly.

"A very great misfortune," answered the other.

"Oh! this is frightful!" said Rudolph, after a silence of some moments; then, recollecting Rigolette, he said to her: "Pardon me, my child, if I do not go with you to your room; to-morrow I will send you my address, and a permit to go to Germain's prison. I will soon see you again."

"Oh! M. Rudolph, I assure you I am very sorry for the bad news you have heard. I thank you for having accompanied me to-night. Good-bye."

The prince and Murphy got into the coach, which took them to the Rue Plumet.

Immediately Rudolph wrote to Clemence the following note:

"Madame,—I learn this moment the unexpected blow which has overwhelmed you, and takes from me one of my best friends: I shall not endeavor to describe my sorrow.

"Yet I must inform you of things foreign to this cruel event. I have just learned that your step-mother, who has been for some days in Paris, without doubt, leaves to-night for Normandy, taking with her Polidori, alias Bradamanti. This will tell you of the dangers your father is threatened with, and allow me to give you some advice. After the frightful affair of this morning, your desire to leave Paris will be nothing extraordinary. So set off at once for Aubiers, to arrive there, if not before, at least as soon as your step-mother. Be assured, madame, far or near, I shall still watch over you; the abominable projects of your step-mother shall be baffled.

"Adieu, madame: I write this in haste. My heart is almost broken when I think of last evening, when I left him more tranquil, more happy, than he had been for a long time.

"Believe me, madame, in my profound and sincere devotion.

"RUDOLPH."

Following this advice, Madame d'Harville, three hours after the receipt of this letter, was on the road to Normandy. A post-chaise, which left Rudolph's, followed the same route.

Unfortunately, from the trouble into which she was plunged by this complication of events, and the precipitation of her departure, Clemence forgot to acquaint the prince that she had met Fleur-de-Marie at Saint Lazare.

It will be remembered, perhaps, that the evening previous, La Chouette had threatened Mrs. Seraphin to disclose the fact of the existence of La Goualeuse, affirming that she knew (and she told the truth) where the young girl then was. It will also be remembered that after this conversation Jacques Ferrand, fearing the revelation of his criminal misdeeds, had determined that it was for his interest to put the Goualeuse out of the way, whose existence, once known, might compromise him dangerously. He had, therefore, caused to be written to Bradamanti a note to summon him to come and hatch some new schemes, of which Fleur-de-Marie was to be the victim.

Bradamanti, occupied with the interests, not less pressing, of the stepmother of Madame d'Harville,

who had her own reasons for conducting the quack to the bedside of M. d'Orbigny, doubtless finding it more to his advantage to serve his old friend, paid no attention to the invitation of the notary, and set out for Normandy without seeing Mrs. Seraphin.

The storm gathered around Jacques Ferrand; in the course of the day La Chouette had returned to reiterate her threats, and, to prove that they were not in vain, she had declared to the notary that the little girl, formerly abandoned by Mrs. Seraphin, was then a prisoner at Saint Lazare, under the name of La Goualeuse, and that if they did not give her ten thousand francs in three days, this girl should receive some papers which would inform her that she had been in her infancy confided to the care of Jacques Ferrand.

According to his custom, the notary denied all this with audacity, and drove off La Chouette as an impudent liar, although he was convinced and frightened by her threats.

In the course of the day the notary found means to assure himself that the Goualeuse was a prisoner at Saint Lazare, and so noted for her good conduct that her release was expected soon.

Furnished with this information, Jacques Ferrand, having arranged a most diabolical scheme, felt that, to execute it, the assistance of Bradamanti was more and more indispensable; hence the frequent attempts of Mrs. Seraphin to see the quack. Learning the same evening of his departure, forced to act by the imminence of his fears and danger, he remembered the Martial family—those river pirates established near Asnieres Bridge, to whom Bradamanti had proposed to send Louise Morel, in order to get rid of her with impunity.

Having absolutely need of an accomplice, to carry out his wicked designs against Fleur-de-Marie, the notary took every precaution, in the case a new crime should be committed; and the next morning, after the departure of Bradamanti for Normandy, Mrs. Seraphin went in great haste to see the Martials.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE RIVER PIRATE'S HAUNT.

The following scenes took place on the evening of the day that Mrs. Seraphin had, according to the notary's orders, paid a visit to the Martials, established on the point of a small island, not far from Asnieres Bridge. Martial, the father, who had died on the scaffold like his own father, left a widow, four sons, and two daughters. The second of these sons was already condemned to the galleys for life. Of this numerous family there remained on the island the mother; three sons; the eldest (the lover of La Louve) twenty-five, the other twenty, the youngest twelve; two daughters; one eighteen, the second nine. Instances of such families, wherein is perpetuated a kind of frightful inheritance in crime, are but too frequent. This must be so, because society thinks only of punishing, never of preventing the evil.

The gloomy picture which follows, of the river pirates, has for its object to show what, in a family, inheritance of evil may be, when society either legally or kindly does not interfere to preserve the unfortunate, orphaned by the law, from the terrible consequences of the judgment visited on their father.

The head of the Martial family, who had first settled on this little island, was a dredger (*ravageur*).

They, as well as the *debardeurs*, and the *dechireurs* of boats, remain almost the entire day plunged in the water to their waists, to follow their trade.

The *debardeurs* bring to land floating wood.

The *dechireurs* knock to pieces the rafts which bring down the wood. Quite as aquatic as the preceding operatives, the labor of *ravageurs* has a very different object. Advancing in the water as far as they can, they are enabled, by means of long rakes, to drag the mud and sand from the bed of the river; then, collecting this in large wooden bowls, they wash it, and thus collect a large quantity of pieces of metal of all kinds, iron, copper, lead, and brass.

Often they find in the sand fragments of gold or silver jewels, carried into the Seine either by the gutters or from the masses of snow and ice collected in the streets in winter and thrown into the river.

We do not know by virtue of what tradition, or by what usage, these industrious people, generally honest, peaceable, and laborious, are so formidably named.

Old Martial first inhabitant of the island, being a ravageur (a sorry exception), the people living on the banks of the river called it the ravageur's island.

The dwelling of the river pirates is situated at the south end of the isle. On a sign which hangs near the door can be seen:

"THE DREDGERS' ARMS.
Good Wines, Fish fried and boiled.
Boats to Let."

It will be seen that to his other business the head of this family had added an innkeeper's, fisherman's, and the keeping of boats for hire. The widow of this executed criminal continued to keep the house. Vagabonds, wandering quacks, and itinerate keepers of animals came to pass Sundays and other non-working days in parties of pleasure.

Martial (the lover of La Louve), the eldest son of the family, least vicious of all, fished by stealth, and, for pay, took the part of the weak against the strong.

One of his brothers, Nicholas, the future accomplice of Barbillon in the murder of the diamond broker, was apparently a ravageur, but in fact a pirate along the Seine and its banks. Finally, Francois, the youngest son, took care of those who wished to go boating.

We will just mention Ambrose Martial, imprisoned for life for robbery and attempt at murder The eldest girl, nicknamed Calabash, assisted her mother in the kitchen and to wait upon the guests; her sister, Amandine, aged nine years, gave what aid she could to them.

On this night, thick, heavy clouds, driven by the winds, obscured the sky; hardly one star could be seen through the increasing gloom. The house, with its irregular gables, was completely buried in darkness, except the two windows of the ground-floor, from which streamed a red light, reflected like long trains of fire on the troubled waters near the landing-place, close to the house. The chains of the boats moored there mingled their rattling with the mournful sighing of the wind through the poplars, and the heavy splashing of the water on the shore. Part of the family was assembled in the kitchen, a large, low room; opposite the door were two windows, between which was a large dresser; on the left, a high fireplace; to the right, a staircase which led to the upper story; at the side of this, the entrance to a large room, furnished with several tables, destined for the guests. The light of a lamp, joined to the flames of the hearth, shone on a number of saucepans and other cooking utensils of copper, hung on the walls, or arranged on shelves with crockery; a large table stood in the center of the kitchen. The widow was seated by the fire with her three children. Tall and thin, she appeared to be about forty-five years of age. She was dressed in black; a mourning kerchief, tied round her head with two loose ear-like ends, concealed her hair, and almost covered her pale, wrinkled forehead; her nose was long, straight, and pointed; her cheek-bones prominent, and cheeks fallen in; her yellow, sickly-looking skin was deeply marked with the small-pox; the corner of her mouth, always drawn down, rendered still harsher the expression of her cold, stern, sinister-looking face, immovable as a mask of marble. Her dull blue eyes were surmounted by gray brows. She and her two daughters were occupied with some sewing.

The eldest resembled her mother—the same cold, calm, wicked look; her thin nose, mouth, and pale look. Only her earthy skin, yellow as saffron, gave her the nickname of Calabash. She wore no mourning: her dress was brown; her black lace cap displayed two bands of uncommonly light flaxen hair, with no luster. Francois, the youngest son, was seated on a bench, mending a small mesh, a very destructive sort of fishing net, strictly forbidden use on the Seine. Notwithstanding his sunburned appearance, his skin was fair; red hair covered his head; his features were well turned, his lips thick, his forehead projecting, his eyes sharp and piercing: there was no resemblance to his mother or eldest sister. His expression was timid yet cunning; from time to time, through, the kind of mane which fell over his face, he cast obliquely on his mother a look of defiance, or exchanged with his sister Amandine a glance of intelligence and affection.

She, seated by his side, was occupied, not in marking, but in unmarking some linen stolen the night previous. She was nine years old, and resembled her brother as much as her sister did her mother; her features, without being any more regular, were less coarse than Francois'; although covered with freckles, her skin was of dazzling purity; her lips were thick, but vermilion, her hair red, but fine, silky, and brilliant; her eyes small, but soft and expressive.

When they exchanged looks, Amandine pointed to the door; at the sign Francois answered by a sigh;

then, calling the attention of his sister by a rapid gesture, he counted distinctly from the end of his netting needle ten threads of the net. This meant, in their own symbolical language, that their brother Martial would not return before ten o'clock.

On seeing these two quiet, wicked-looking women, and these two poor, restless, mute, trembling little children, one could easily guess they were two tormentors and two victims.

Calabash, noticing that Amandine had ceased a moment from work, said to her, in a harsh voice, "Will you soon have done with that chemise?"

The child held down her head without replying; with fingers and scissors, she quickly finished picking out the marks made with red cotton, and then handing the work to her mother, said timidly, "Mamma, I have finished it."

Without making any reply, the widow threw her another piece of linen. The child could not catch it in time, and let it fall. Her sister gave her, with her iron hand, a heavy slap on the arm, saying "Little stupid fool!"

Amandine resumed her work, after having exchanged a hasty glance with her brother; a tear glistened in her eye. The same silence continued to reign in the kitchen. The wind howled without, and the sign creaked mournfully on its hinges. The only sounds within were the bubbling of a saucepan placed before the fire. The two children observed with secret alarm that their mother did not speak. Although she was habitually very quiet, this complete taciturnity and certain contractions of her lips announced that the widow was in that which they called her white rage, that is to say, a prey to some concentrated irritation.

The fire appeared to be going out from want of fuel.

"Francois, a stick of wood!" said Calabash.

The young net-mender looked behind the chimney-piece, and answered,
"There is no more there."

"Go to the wood-pile," said Calabash.

Francois murmured some unintelligible words, but did not stir.

"Francois, did you hear me?" said Calabash sharply.

The widow placed on her knees a napkin, which she was unmarking, and looked at her son.

He had his head down, but he thought he felt the terrible look of his mother was upon him. Fearing to meet her formidable face, the child remained immovable.

"Are you deaf, Francois'?" resumed Calabash, much irritated.

"Mother—do you see?"

Amandine, without being perceived, nudged her brother to urge him tacitly to obey Calabash. Francois did not stir. The eldest sister looked at her mother, as if to demand the punishment of the offender. The widow understood her, and pointed with her long, bony finger to a long willow switch, which stood in the corner.

Calabash leaned back, took this instrument of correction, and handed it to her mother.

Francois had perfectly understood the gesture of his mother; he jumped up quickly, and with one bound was out of his mother's reach.

"You want mother to beat you soundly?" cried Calabash, "do you?"

The widow, holding the rod in her hand, bit her lips, and looked at Francois with a steady eye, without pronouncing a word. From the slight agitation of Amandine's hands, who sat with her head down, while her neck was suffused with red, it could be seen that the child, although accustomed to such scenes, was alarmed at the fate which awaited her brother, who, having taken refuge in a corner of the kitchen, seemed alarmed and yet rebellious.

"Take care of yourself; mother will get up, and then it will be too late," said Calabash.

"All the same to me," answered Francois, turning pale. "I prefer to be beaten, as I was yesterday, to going to the wood-pile at night."

"And why?" said Calabash, impatiently.

"I am afraid of the wood-pile!" answered Francois, shuddering in spite of himself.

"You are afraid, fool! of what?"

Francois hung his head without answering.

"Will you speak? What are you afraid of?"

"I don't know; but I'm afraid."

"You have been there a hundred times, and even last night?"

"I don't want to go there any more."

"There's mother; she's getting up."

"So much the worse for me," cried the child. "Let her beat me; let her kill me; but I will not go to the wood-pile—at night, above all."

"But, once more, I ask you, why not?" said Calabash.

"Well, because there's some one—"

"Some one?"

"Buried there," murmured the trembling boy.

The widow, notwithstanding her impassibility, could not repress a slight shudder; her daughter imitated her; one would have said that the two had received an electric shock.

"Some one buried in the wood-house!" said Calabash, shrugging her shoulders.

"Yes," said Francois, in a voice so low that he could hardly be heard.

"Liar!" cried Calabash.

"I tell you that not long ago, while piling the wood, I saw, in a dark corner of the wood-house, a dead man's bone; it stuck out of the ground, which was damp round about," replied Francois.

"Do you hear him, mother? Is he not a fool?" said Calabash, making a significant sign to the widow. "They are some mutton bones I threw there."

"It was not a mutton bone," answered the child; "it was bones buried— dead men's bones: a foot which stuck out of the ground. I saw it."

"And you instantly told this to your brother, your good friend
Martial—did you not?" said Calabash. Francois did not answer.

"Wicked little spy!" cried Calabash, furiously. "Because he is as cowardly as a cow, he will get us guillotined, as father was."

"Since you call me a spy," cried Francois, exasperated, "I shall tell everything to Martial. I have not told him yet, for I have not seen him since; but when he returns to-night, I—"

The child dared not finish, for his mother advanced toward him, calm but inexorable. Although she habitually held herself much bent over, her size was very large for a woman. Holding the switch in one hand, with the other the widow took her son by the arm, and, in spite of the alarm, resistance, prayers, and tears of the child, dragging him after her, she compelled him to mount the stairs. In a moment was heard the sound of heavy blows, mingled with cries and sobs. When this noise ceased, a door was shut violently, and the widow descended. She placed the whip in its place, seated herself alongside of the fire, and resumed her work without saying a word.

CHAPTER XXII.

After a few moments' silence, the widow said to her daughter, "Go and get some wood; we will arrange the woodhouse to-night, on the return of Nicholas and Martial."

"Martial! Will you also tell him that?"

"Some wood," repeated the widow, interrupting her daughter.

She, accustomed to this iron will, lighted a lantern and went out. At the moment she opened the door it could be seen that the night was very dark, and one could hear the whistling of the wind through the poplars, the clanging of the chains which held the boats, and the wash of the river. These noises were profoundly sad.

During the preceding scene, Amandine, painfully affected at the fate of Francois, whom she loved tenderly, had dared neither to raise her eyes nor wipe her tears, which fell drop by drop obscuring her sight. In her haste to finish the work which was given her, she had wounded her hand with the scissors; the blood flowed freely, but the poor child thought less of the pain than the punishment which she might expect for having stained the linen with her blood. Happily, the widow, absorbed in profound thought, perceived nothing. Calabash returned bringing a basket filled with wood. At a look from her mother, she answered by a nod, intended to say that the dead man's foot did appear above the earth.

The widow bit her lip and continued to work, but she appeared to handle the needle more quickly. Calabash replenished the fire, and resumed her seat alongside of her mother.

"Nicholas does not come," said she. "I hope the old woman who was here this morning, in giving him a rendezvous with Bradamanti, has not got him into some bad scrape. She had such a queer air; she would not explain or tell her name, or where she came from." The widow shrugged her shoulders.

"You think there is no danger for Nicholas, mother? After all, perhaps, you are right. The old woman said he must be on the Quai de Billy at seven in the evening, opposite the dock, where he would find a man who wished to speak to him, and who would say 'Bradamanti' for password. Really, that does not seem so very dangerous. If Nicholas is late, it is, perhaps, because he has found something on the way, as he did yesterday—this linen, boned from a washing-boat;" and she showed one of the pieces of linen which Amandine was unmarking; then, speaking to the child, she said, "What does boning mean?"

"This means to take," answered the child, without raising her eyes.

"It means to steal, little fool; do you hear, to steal?"

"Yes, sister."

"And when one knows how to bone like Nicholas there is always something to gain. The linen he picked up yesterday has only cost us the trouble of picking out the marks—eh, mother?" said Calabash, with a burst of laughter which displayed her decayed teeth, as yellow as her skin. The widow did not laugh.

"*Apropos* of getting things gratis," continued Calabash, "we can, perhaps, furnish ourselves from another shop. You know that an old man, two or three days since, came to live in the country-house of M. Griffion, the physician of the Paris Hospital—the lonely house a few steps from the river, opposite the plaster quarry?" The widow bowed her head.

"Nicholas said yesterday that now there was, perhaps, a good job to be done there. And I know, since this morning, that there is some booty there for certain. I must send Amandine to wander around the house; they will pay no attention to her; she will pretend to be playing, will look well about her, and then come and let us know what she has seen. Do you hear what I say?"

"Yes, sister, I will go," answered the trembling child.

"You always say 'I will' but you never do it, you sly puss. The time I told you to take the five francs from the counter of the grocer at Asnieres, while I kept him busy at the other end of his shop—it was very easy; no one suspects a child—why didn't you obey?"

"Sister, my heart failed me: I did not dare."

"The other day you dared to steal a handkerchief from the peddler's pack while he was selling at the tavern. Did he find it out, fool?"

"Sister, you forced me—it was for you; and, besides, it was not money."

"What of that?"

"To take a handkerchief is not so bad as to take money."

"On my word! Martial teaches you these whims doesn't he?" said Calabash, in an ironical manner. "You'll go and tell him everything, little spy! Do you think we are afraid that he'll eat us?" Then, addressing the widow, Calabash added, "Mother, this will end badly for him; he wants to lay down the law here. Nicholas is furious against him; so am I. He sets Amandine and Francois against us, against you. Can it be borne?"

"No!" said the mother, in a short, harsh voice.

"It is especially since his Louve was Saint-Lazared that he has gone on like a madman. Is it our fault that she is in prison? When she is once out of prison, let her come here, and I will serve her out—good measure—though she is strong."

The widow, after a moment's pause, said to her daughter, "You think there is something to be done with the old man who lives in the doctor's house?"

"Yes, mother."

"He looks like a beggar."

"That doesn't prevent his being a noble."

"A noble?"

"Yes; or that he should have gold in his purse, although he goes to Paris on foot every day, and returns in the same manner, with his heavy stick for his carriage."

"How do you know that he has gold?"

"The other day I was at the post-office, to see if there were any letters from Toulon."

At these words, which brought to her mind her son at the galleys, the widow knit her brows and suppressed a sigh.

Calabash continued: "I awaited my turn, when the old man we speak of came in. I twigged him at once by his beard, as white as his hair, and his black eyebrows. In spite of his hair, he must be a determined old man. He said, 'Have you any letters from Angers for the Count of Saint Remy?' 'Yes,' was the answer, 'here is one.' 'It is for me,' said he; 'here is my passport.' While the postmaster examined it, the old man drew out his purse to pay the postage. At one end I saw the gold glittering through the meshes, at least forty or fifty louis," cried Calabash, her eyes twinkling, "and yet he is dressed like a beggar. He is one of those old misers who are stuffed with gold. Come, mother, we know his name; it may serve us to get into the crib when Amandine finds out if he has any servants."

A violent barking of the dogs interrupted Calabash. "Oh, the dogs bark," said she; "they hear a boat. It is either Martial or Nicholas."

After a few moments the door opened, and Nicholas Martial made his appearance. His face was ignoble and ferocious; small, thin, pitiful, it could hardly be imagined that he followed so dangerous a calling; but an indomitable energy supplied the place of the physical strength which was wanting. Over his blue slop he wore a great-coat, without sleeves, made of goat-skin with long hair. On entering he threw on the ground a roll of copper which he had on his shoulder.

"Good-night, and good booty, mother," cried he, in a cracked voice; "there are three more rolls in my boat, a bundle of clothes, and a box filled with I don't know what, for I have not amused myself by opening it. Perhaps I am sold—we shall see."

"And what about the man at the Quai de Billy?" asked Calabash, while the widow looked at her son without saying a word.

He, for sole answer, put his hand in his pocket and jingled together a number of pieces of silver.

"You took all that from him?" cried Calabash.

"No, he shelled out himself two hundred francs, and he will come down with eight hundred more when I shall have—but enough; let us unload the boat; we can jaw afterward. Isn't Martial here?"

"No," said the sister.

"So much the better; we will lock up the booty without him; just as well he shouldn't know."

"You are afraid of him, coward!" said Calabash, crossly.

"Afraid of him? me!" He shrugged his shoulders. "I am afraid he'll sell us, that's all. As to the fear, my sticker has too sharp a tongue."

"Oh, when he is not here, you brag; let him but come, that shuts your bill."

Nicholas appeared insensible to this reproach, and said, "Come, quick! quick! to the boat. Where is Francois, mother? He could help us."

"Mother has shut him upstairs, after having dressed him nicely; he goes to bed without supper," said Calabash.

"Good; but let him come and help us unload the boat all the same—eh, mother? Calabash, him, and me, in a twist, will have all housed."

The widow pointed upward. Calabash understood, and went to look for Francois.

The gloomy visage of Mother Martial had become slightly relaxed since the arrival of Nicholas; she liked him better than Calabash, but not as well as she did her Toulon son, as she called him; for the maternal love of this ferocious creature increased in proportion to the criminality of her offspring. This perverse preference sufficiently explains the dislike of the widow to her youngest children, who displayed no bad tendencies, and her profound hatred for Martial, her eldest son, who, without leading a blameless life, might have passed for a very honest man if he had been compared to Nicholas, Calabash, or his brother, the galley—slave at Toulon.

[Illustration: THE PILLAGE]

"Where have you been plundering to-night?" asked the widow.

"On returning from the Quai de Billy, I cast a sheep's-eye upon a barge fastened to the quay near the Invalides Bridge. It was dark; I said, no light in the cabin—the sailors are on shore—I'll go on board; if I meet any one, I'll ask for a piece of seizing to mend my oar. I went into the cabin—nobody; then I took what I could, some clothes, a large box, and, on the deck, four rolls of copper; for I returned twice. The barge was loaded with copper and iron. But here come Francois and Calabash. Quick, to the boat! Come, be moving—you, too, Amandine. You can carry the clothes. A dog learns to carry before he is taught hunting."

Left alone, the widow busied herself in preparing the supper for the family, placing on the table glasses, bottles, plates, and silver forks and spoons. Just as she finished her preparation, her children returned heavily laden. The weight of the two rolls, which he carried on his shoulders, seemed almost to crush Francois. Amandine was hardly visible under the bundle of clothes which she carried on her head. Nicholas and Calabash carried between them a deal box, on the top of which was placed the fourth roll of copper.

"The box, the box!" cried Calabash, with impatience. "Let us air the case!" The copper was thrown on the ground. Nicholas, armed with a hatchet, endeavored to get it under the cover, so as to force it up. The red flickering light from the earth illuminated this scene of pillage; without, the wind howled with renewed violence. Nicholas, kneeling before the box, tried to break it, and uttered the most horrible oaths on seeing his efforts useless. Her eyes glistening with cupidity, her cheeks flushing, Calabash kneeled on the box, and assisted Nicholas with all her strength. The widow, separated from the group by the table, where she stood at full length, also had her eager gaze fixed on the stolen object.

Finally, a thing, alas! too human, the two children, whose good natural instincts had so often triumphed over the cursed influence of this abominable domestic corruption, forgetting their scruples and their fears, gave way to the attractions of a fatal curiosity. Leaning against one another, their eyes sparkling, their breathing oppressed, Francois and Amandine were not less anxious to know the contents of the box than their brother or sister. At length the top was forced off.

"Ah!" cried the family, in a joyful tone. And all, from the mother to the little girl, crowded around the stolen case. Without doubt, consigned by some Paris merchant to some of his country customers, it contained a large quantity of articles for women's use.

"Nicholas is not sold!" cried Calabash, unrolling a piece of muslin de laine.

"No," answered the pirate, shaking out a package of foulards; "no, I have paid my expenses."

"Levantine! that will sell like bread," said the widow, putting her hand in the box. "The Bras-Rouge's fence, who lives in the Rue du Temple, will buy the stuffs, and Daddy Micou, who keeps furnished lodgings in the Quartier Saint Honore, will arrange for the copper."

"Amandine!" whispered Francois to his little sister; "what a pretty cravat this would make."

"Yes, and it would make a very fine scarf," answered the child, with admiration. "I must say you had some luck, getting on board the barge," said Calabash; "look here, famous shawls; three real silk! Do look, mother?"

"Burette will give at least five hundred francs for the whole," said the widow, after a close examination.

"Then it must be worth at least fifteen hundred francs," said Nicholas, "but a receiver is as bad as a thief! Bah! I do not know how to cheat. I shall be soft enough this time again to do just as Burette wishes, and Micou also; but he is a friend."

"Never mind; the seller of old iron is a robber, just like the rest, but these rascally receivers know one has need of them," said Calabash, trying on one of the shawls, "and they abuse it."

"There's nothing more," said Nicholas, reaching the bottom of the box.

"Now all must be repacked," said the widow.

"I'll keep this shawl," said Calabash.

"You'll keep it!" cried Nicholas, brutally, "if I give it to you. You are always taking—you—Miss Free-and-easy."

"Oh! you then refrain from taking?"

"I? I nail at the risk of my skin. It's not you who'd have been jugged if they'd caught me on the barge."

"Well, there's your shawl! I don't care about it," said Calabash, sharply throwing it back into the case.

"It is not on account of the shawl that I speak; I am not mean enough to value a shawl; for one, more or less, old Burette will not change her price; she buys in a lump," said Nicholas. "But instead of saying that you'd take the shawl you might ask if I would give it you. Come, keep it—keep it, I tell you; or if you won't, I'll pitch it into the fire to make the pot boil."

These words soothed Calabash's bad temper, and she took the shawl. Nicholas was, doubtless, in a generous mood; for, tearing off with his teeth two of the handsomest handkerchiefs, he threw them to Francois and Amandine.

"That's for you, my kids, to put you in the notion to go on the lay. Appetite comes with eating. Now go to bed; I want to talk with mother. Your supper shall be brought upstairs." The children clapped their hands, and waved triumphantly the stolen handkerchiefs which had just been given them.

"Well, you little blockheads!" said Calabash, "will you listen any more to Martial? Has he ever given you such handsome things?" Francois and Amandine looked at each other; then hung their heads without replying.

"Speak!" said Calabash, harshly; "has he ever made you presents?"

"Well, no; he never has," said Francois, looking at his red handkerchief with delight. Amandine said, in a very low tone, "Brother Martial does not make us presents, because he hasn't the means."

"If he would steal, he'd have them," said Nicholas; "eh, Francois?"

"Yes, brother," answered Francois. Then he added: "Oh, the beautiful silk! What a fine cravat for Sunday?"

"What a fine head-dress!" said Amandine.

"Not to say how wild the children of the lime-burner will be when they see you pass," said Calabash, looking at the children to see if they comprehended the bearing of the words. The abominable creature thus called vanity to her assistance to stifle the last scruples of conscience. "The beggars will burst with envy: while you, with your fine silk, will look like little gentry."

"That's true," answered Francois. "I am much more content with my fine cravat, since the little lime-burners will be so jealous; ain't you, Amandine?"

"I am content with my fine kerchief."

"You'll never be anything but a noodle!" said Calabash, disdainfully; and taking from the table a piece of bread and cheese, she gave it to the children and said, "Go upstairs to bed. Here is a lantern. Take care of the fire, and put out the light before you go to sleep."

"And," added Nicholas, "remember, if you say a word to Martial about the box, or the copper, or the clothes, you shall have a dance, so that you'll take fire; not to say taking away the silks."

After the departure of the children, Nicholas and his sister hid the stolen articles in a little cellar under the kitchen.

"Mother! some drink, and let it be choice," cried the robber. "I have well earned my day. Serve supper, Calabash; Martial shall gnaw our bones—good enough for him. Now let us talk of the customer, 'Quai de Billy,' for to-morrow or next day that must come off, if I wish to pocket the money he promised. I am going to tell you, mother; but some drink—thunder! let's have some drink. I'll stand some."

Nicholas rattled the money which he had in his pocket anew; then, throwing off his goatskin jacket and his black woolen cap, he seated himself at table before a ragout of mutton, a piece of cold veal, and salad.

When Calabash had brought some wine and brandy, the widow seated herself at the table, having Nicholas on her right and Calabash on her left; opposite were the unoccupied places of Martial and the two children. The thief drew from his pocket a long, broad knife, with a horn handle and sharp blade. Looking at this murderous weapon with a kind of ferocious satisfaction, he said to the widow, "My rib-tickler still cuts well! Pass me the bread, mother!"

"Speaking of knives," said Calabash, "Francois saw something in the woodhouse."

"What?" said Nicholas, not understanding her.

"He saw one of the trotters—"

"Of the man?" cried Nicholas.

"Yes," said the widow, putting a slice of meat on the plate of her son.

"That's queer, for the hole was very deep," said the brigand, "but since that time should have been heaped up."

"We must throw the lot into the river to-night," said the widow."

"It is more sure," answered Nicholas.

"We can tie a stone to it with a piece of old chain," added Calabash.

"Not so foolish!" said Nicholas, pouring out drink; "come, drink with us, mother; it will make you more lively."

The widow shook her head, drew back her glass, and said to her son,
"And the man at the Quai de Billy?"

"Well," said Nicholas, continuing to eat and drink. "On arriving at the wharf, I tied up my boat, and mounted on the wharf; seven o'clock struck at the military bakehouse of Chaillot; I could hardly see my hand before my face. I walked up and down for about fifteen minutes, when I heard some one walk softly behind me. I stopped; a man wrapped in a cloak approached, coughing; he halted. All that I know of his face is, that his cloak hid his nose, and his hat covered his eyes."

(This mysterious personage was Jacques Ferrand, who, wishing to make away with Fleur-de-Marie, had that morning dispatched Mrs. Seraphin to the Martials, whom he hoped to make his instruments in this new crime.)

"'Bradamanti,' said the tax-payer," continued Nicholas; "the password agreed upon with the old woman. 'Ravageur,' I replied. 'Is your name Martial?' said he to me. 'Rather!' 'A woman came to your island this morning; what did she say?' 'That you had something to say to me from M. Bradamanti.' 'Do you wish to gain some money?' 'Yes, much.' 'Have you a boat?' 'Four! it is our business; boatmen and ravageurs from father to son, at your service.' 'I'll tell you what is to be done—if you are not afraid—' 'Afraid—of what?' 'To see some one *drowned by accident*; only it is necessary to assist the *accident*. Do you comprehend?' 'Oh, you want to make some cove drink of the Seine by chance! that suits me; but, as it is rather a delicate draught, the seasoning will cost rather dear.' 'How much for two?' 'For two! will

there be two persons to make soup of in the river?' 'Yes.' 'Five hundred francs a-head, and not dear.' 'Agreed for a thousand francs.' 'Pay in advance?' 'Two hundred in advance, the remainder afterward.' 'You are afraid to trust me?' 'No, you can pocket my two hundred francs without fulfilling our agreement.' 'And you, old friend, once the affair finished, when I ask you for the remainder, can answer me— go to the deuce!' 'You must run your chance; does this suit you, yes or no? Two hundred francs down, and the night after to-morrow, here, at nine o'clock, I will give you eight hundred francs.' 'And who shall tell you that I have made these two persons drink?' 'I shall know it: that's my affair! Is it a bargain?' 'It is.' 'Here's your money. Now listen to me; you will know the old woman again who came to see you this morning?' 'Yes.' 'To-morrow, or the day after at furthest, you will see her arrive, about four o'clock in the afternoon, on the shore opposite your island with a young girl; the old woman will make you a signal by waving her handkerchief.' 'Yes.' 'How long does it take to go from the shore to your island?' 'Twenty good minutes.' 'Your boats have flat bottoms.' 'Flat as your hand.' 'You must make a hole in the bottom of one of your boats, so as to be able, by opening it, to make it sink in a twinkling; do you comprehend?' 'Very well; you are the devil! I have an old boat that I was about to break up; it will just answer for this last voyage.' 'You set out, then, from your island with this boat; a good boat follows you, conducted by some one of your family. You land; you take the old woman and the young girl on board your boat, and you set off for the island; but, at a reasonable distance from the shore, you feign to stoop to fix something; you open the hole, and you jump lightly into the other boat, while the old woman and the young girl—' 'Drink out of the same cup—that's it.' 'But are you sure of not being disturbed should there be any guests at your tavern?' 'No fear, at this time, in winter, above all, no one comes; it is our dead season; and if any one should come, they would not be in the way; on the contrary —all tried friends.' 'Very well! Besides, you will not be at all compromised; the boat will sink through age, and the old woman with it. In fine, to be well assured that both of them are drowned (remember, by accident), you should, if they appear again, or if they cling to the boat, appear to do all in your power to assist them, and—' 'Aid them—to dive again! Good again.' 'It is better that the job take place after sunset, so that it be dark when they fall into the water.' 'No, for if one cannot see clear, how can they know whether the two women have drunk their fill, or want some more?' 'That is true; then the accident must happen before dark.' 'Very good; but does the old woman suspect anything?' 'No. On arriving she will whisper in your ear: We must drown the girl; a short time before you sink the boat, make me a sign, so that I can escape with you. You must answer in such a manner as to calm any suspicions.' 'So that she thinks to lead the girl to drink?' 'And she will drink with her.' 'It is wisely arranged.' 'Above all, let the old woman suspect nothing.' 'Be easy; she shall swallow it like honey.' 'Well, good luck! If I am pleased, perhaps I shall employ you again.' 'At your service.' Thereupon," said the brigand, ending his story, "I left the man in the cloak, got into my boat, and, passing by the barge, I picked up the booty you have seen."

It will be seen from this recital, that the notary wished, by a double crime, to get rid of Fleur-de-Marie and of Mrs. Seraphin at the same time, by making the latter fall into the snare she believed only laid for La Goualeuse. The reasons for putting the latter out of the way are known to the reader; and in sacrificing Mrs. Seraphin, he silenced one of his accomplices (Bradamanti was the other), who could at any time ruin him by ruining themselves, it is true; but Jacques Ferrand thought his secrets better guarded by the tomb than by personal interest. The widow and Calabash had attentively listened to Nicholas, who had only interrupted himself to drink to excess. For this reason he began to talk with singular warmth.

"That's not all; I have managed another affair with La Chouette and Barbillon, of the Rue aux Feves. It is a famous plant, knowingly got up, and if we don't fail, there'll be something to try, I tell you. It is in contemplation to rob a diamond broker, who has sometimes as much as fifty thousand francs' value in her box."

"Fifty thousand francs!" cried mother and daughter, their eyes sparkling with cupidity.

"Yes, that's all! Bras-Rouge is in the game. Yesterday he decoyed the broker by a letter which Barbillon and I took to her on the Boulevard Saint Denis. Brass-Rouge is a famous fellow! No one suspects him. To make her bite, he has already sold her a diamond for four hundred francs. She will not fail to come, at dusk, to his tavern in the Champs Elysees. We will be there concealed. Calabash may come also, to take care of my boat. If it is necessary to pack up the broker, dead or alive, this will be a nice carriage, and leave no traces behind. There's a plan for you! Rouge of a Bras-Rouge, what a college-bred scamp!"

"I am always suspicious of Bras-Rouge," said the widow. "After the affair of the Rue Montmartre, your brother Ambrose was sent to Toulon, and Bras-Rouge was released."

"Because there was no proof against him, he is so cunning! But betray others—never!"

The widow shook her head, as if she had been only half convinced of the probity of Bras-Rouge. "I

prefer," said she, "the affair of the Quai de Billy—the women-drowning. But Martial will be in the way, as he always is."

"The devil's thunder will not rid us of him then?" cried Nicholas, half drunk, sticking his long knife with fury in the table.

"I told mother that we had had enough of him; that it could not last," said Calabash; "as long as he is here, we can make nothing out of the children."

"I tell you he is capable of denouncing us any day, the sneak," said Nicholas. "Do you see, mother; if you'd have agreed," added he, in a ferocious manner, looking at the widow, "all would have been settled."

"There are other means."

"This is the best."

"At present, no," answered the widow, with a tone so absolute that Nicholas was quiet, ruled by her influence. She added, "To-morrow morning he leaves the island forever."

"How?" said Calabash and Nicholas in a breath.

"He will soon come in; seek a quarrel—boldly—as you have never dared to do. Come to blows, if needs be. He is strong, but you will be two, and I will help you. Above all, no knives—no blood; let him be beaten, not wounded."

"And what then?" asked Nicholas.

"We'll have an explanation; we will tell him to leave the island to-morrow, otherwise we'll repeat this again to-morrow night; such continual quarrels will disgust him, I know; we have let him be too quiet."

"But he is stubborn as a mule; he'll remain on account of the children," said Calabash.

"He is dead beat, but an attack will not scare him," added Nicholas.

"Oh, yes," said the widow; "but every day, every day is too much; he will give up."

"And if he will not?"

"Then I have another plan to force him to leave tonight, or to-morrow morning at latest," answered the widow, with a strange smile.

"Truly, mother?"

"Yes; but I would rather frighten him by quarreling and fighting; if I do not then succeed, I'll try the other way."

"And if the other way don't answer, mother?" said Nicholas.

"There is still another, which always does," replied the widow.

Suddenly the door opened and Martial entered. It blew so hard outside that they had not heard the barking of the dogs announcing the arrival of the gallows widow's first-born.

CHAPTER XXIII.

MOTHER AND SON.

Ignorant of these evil designs, Martial slowly entered into the kitchen.

A few words of La Louve, in her conversation with Fleur-de-Marie, have already informed us of the singular life of this man. Endowed with good natural instincts, incapable of an action positively bad or wicked, Martial did not conduct himself as he should have done. He fished contrary to law, and his strength and audacity inspired so much terror in the river-keepers, that they shut their eyes on his proceedings.

The lover of La Louve resembled Francois and Amandine very much; he was of middling stature, but robust and broad-shouldered; his thick, red hair, cut short, laid in points on his open forehead; his thick, heavy beard, his large cheeks, square nose, bold blue eyes, gave to him a singularly resolute expression.

He wore an old tarpaulin glazed hat; and, notwithstanding the cold, had nothing on but a wretched blouse over his well-worn vest and coarse velveteen trousers. He held in his hand an enormous knotty stick, which he placed alongside of him on the table.

A large dog, with crooked legs, came in with Martial; but he remained near the door, not daring to approach the fire, or the people at the table; experience had proved to old Miraut, that he was, as well as his master, not in very good odor with the family.

"Where are the children?" were the first words of Martial, as he took his seat at the table.

"They are where they are," answered Calabash, sharply.

"Where are the children, mother?" repeated Martial, without paying any attention to his sister.

"Gone to bed," answered the widow, dryly.

"Have they supped, mother?"

"What's that to you?" cried Nicholas, brutally, after having swallowed a large glass of wine, to augment his audacity.

Martial as indifferent to the attacks of Nicholas as he was to Calabash's, said to his mother, "I am sorry the children have already gone to bed, for I like to have them alongside of me when I sup."

"And we, as they trouble us, packed them off," cried Nicholas; "if it don't please you, go and look for them!"

Martial, much surprised, looked fixedly at his brother. Then, as if reflecting on the folly of a quarrel, he shrugged his shoulders, cut a piece of bread with his knife, and helped himself to a slice of meat. The terrier had drawn nearer to Nicholas, although still at a very respectful distance; the bandit, irritated at the contemptuous indifference of his brother, and hoping to make him lose his patience by striking the dog, gave Miraut a furious kick, which made him howl piteously. Martial became purple, pressed in his contracted hands the knife which he held, and struck violently on the table; but, still containing himself, he called his dog, and said gently, "Here, Miraut." The terrier came and laid down at his master's feet. This moderation defeated the projects of Nicholas, who wished to push his brother to extremities to bring about a rupture. So he added, "I don't like dogs—I won't have your dog here." For answer, Martial poured out a glass of wine, and drank it slowly.

Exchanging a rapid glance with Nicholas, the widow encouraged him by a sign to continue his hostilities, hoping that a violent quarrel would bring about a rupture and a complete separation.

Nicholas went and took the willow switch which stood in the corner, and, approaching the terrier, struck him, crying, "Get out of this, Miraut!" Up to this time, Nicholas had often shown his animosity toward Martial, but never before had he dared to provoke him with so much audacity and perseverance. At the yelp from his dog, Martial rose, opened the door, put the terrier outside, and returned to continue his supper. This incredible patience, little in harmony with the ordinary character of Martial, confounded his aggressors. They looked at each other, very much surprised. He, appearing completely a stranger to what was passing, ate heartily, and kept profound silence.

"Calabash, take away the wine," said the widow to her daughter. She hastened to obey, when Martial said, "Stop! I have not finished my supper."

"So much the worse!" said the widow, taking away the bottle.

"Ah! as you like," answered he, and pouring out a large glass of water, he drank it, and smacking his lips, cried, "That's famous water!" This imperturbable coolness still more irritated Nicholas, already much excited by his frequent libations; nevertheless, he recoiled before a direct attack, knowing the superior strength of his brother; suddenly he cried:

"You have done well to knock under, with your dog, Martial; it is a good habit to get into; for you must expect to see La Louve kicked out, just as we have kicked out your dog."

"Oh, yes—for if she has the misfortune to come to the island when she comes out of prison," said Calabash, comprehending the intention of Nicholas, "I will box her soundly."

"And I'll give her a ducking in the mud, near the hovel at the other end of the island," added Nicholas; "and if she comes up again, I'll put her under again with a kick—the hussy."

This insult, addressed to La Louvs whom he loved with unqualified passion, triumphed over the pacific resolutions of Martial; he knit his brows, his blood rushed to his face, the veins on his forehead and neck swelled like ropes; yet he still had command over himself to say to Nicholas, in a voice altered by suppressed rage. "Take care—you seek a quarrel, and you will find a new trick that you do not look for."

"A trick—to me?"

"Yes, better than the last."

"How? Nicholas," said Calabash, with well-feigned attachment, "has Martial beat you? I say, mother, do you hear? I am no more astonished that Nicholas is afraid of him."

"He whipped me, because he took me unawares," cried Nicholas, becoming pale with rage.

"You lie! You attacked me slyly, I kicked you, and I took pity on you, but if you undertake to speak again of La Louve—understand well, of my Louve—then I'll have no mercy—you shall carry my marks for a long time."

"And if I wish to speak of La Louve, I?" said Calabash.

"I will give you a couple of boxes just to warm you; and if you go on,
I'll go on to warm you."

"And if I speak of her?" said the widow, slowly.

"You?"

"Yes, me!"

"You?" said Martial, making a violent effort to contain himself, "you?"

"You will beat me also, is it not so?"

"No! but if you speak of La Louve I'll thrash Nicholas; now go on, it is your affair, and his also."

"You," cried the enraged bandit, raising his dangerous knife, "you thrash me?"

"Nicholas, no knife!" cried the widow, endeavoring to seize the arm of her son. But he, drunk with wine and anger, pushed his mother rudely on one side, and rushed at his brother. Martial fell back quickly, seized his heavy knotted stick, and put himself on the defensive.

"Nicholas, no knife!" repeated the widow.

"Let him alone!" cried Calabash, arming herself with a hatchet.

Nicholas, brandishing his formidable knife, watched a favorable moment to throw himself on his brother. "I tell you," he cried, "that I'll crush you and your Louve, both. Now, mother—now, Calabash! let us cool him; this has lasted too long!" And, believing the time favorable for his attack, the brigand rushed toward his brother with his knife raised.

Martial, very expert with a club, retreated quickly, lifted his stick, made a quick turn with it in the air, describing the figure eight, and let it fall heavily on the arm of Nicholas, who, hurt severely, dropped his knife. "Brigand, you have broken my arm!" cried he, taking hold of his arm with his left hand.

"No, I felt my club rebound," answered Martial, kicking the knife under the table. Then, profiting by the situation of Nicholas, he took him by the collar, pushed him roughly backward toward the door of the little cellar, opened it with one hand, and with the other threw him in and shut the door.

Returning afterward to the two women, he took Calabash by the shoulders, and, in spite of her resistance, her cries, and a blow from the hatchet which wounded him slightly in the hand, he locked her in the lower room of the tavern, which was adjoining the kitchen; then, addressing the widow, still stupefied at this maneuver, as skillful as it was unexpected, he said, coldly, "Now, mother, for us two."

"Well! yes; for us two," cried the widow, and her stoical face became animated, her wan complexion became suffused, her eyes sparkled, anger and hatred gave a terrible character to her features. "Yes; now for us two!" said she, in a threatening tone; "I expected this moment—you shall know at last what I have on my heart."

"And I also will tell you."

"If you live a hundred years you shall recollect this night."

"I shall remember it! My brother and sister wished to murder me; you did nothing to prevent it. But come, speak: what have you against me?"

"What's my grudge?"

"Yes."

"Since the death of your father, you have done nothing but cowardly acts."

"I?"

"Yes, coward! Instead of staying with us to sustain us, you fled to Rambouillet, to poach in the woods with the game-peddler you knew at Bercy."

"If I remained here, I should now have been at the galleys, like Ambrose, or fit to go, like Nicholas; I did not wish to be a robber like the others. Hence your hatred."

"And what was your trade? You stole game; you stole fish; no danger in that, coward!"

"Fish, as well as game, belong to no one; to-day in one place, to-morrow in another; it is for who can get it. I do not steal; as for being a coward—-"

"You fight for money men who are weaker than you are!"

"Because they have beaten those who are weaker than they are!"

"Trade of a coward! Trade of a coward!"

"There are more honest, it is true; it is not for you to tell me of it."

"Why have you not followed these honest callings, instead of lounging here and living at my expense?"

"I give you the first fish I take, and what money I have—it is not much, but it is enough. I cost you nothing. I have tried to be a locksmith, to gain more; but when one from his infancy has idled on the river and in the woods, one can't do anything else; it is done for life. And besides, I have always preferred to live alone, on the river or in the woods; there no one questions me. Instead of that, in other places, if any one should ask me of my father, must I not answer— guillotined! of my brother—galley-slave! of my sister—thief!"

"And of your mother, what would you say!"

"I'd say she was dead."

"And you would do well; it is all as—I disown you, coward! Your brother is at the galleys. Your grandfather and father have bravely finished on the scaffold, in defying the priest and the executioner. Instead of avenging them, you tremble!"

"Avenge them!"

"Yes, to show yourself a real Martial, spit on the knife of Jack Ketch and his red cap, and finish like father and mother, brother and sister."

Habituated as Martial was to the ferocious bombast of his mother, he could not refrain from shuddering.

She resumed, with increasing fury, "Oh! coward, still more 'creatur' than coward! You wish to be honest. Honest? is it that you shall not always be despised, as the son of a murderer, brother of a galley-slave; but you, instead of hugging vengeance, you are afraid; instead of biting, you fly; when they cut off your father's head, you left us, coward! And you knew we could not leave the island without being hunted and howled after like mad dogs. Oh, they shall pay for it, they shall pay for it!"

"One man—ten men can't make me afraid! but to be pointed at by everybody as the son and brother of condemned criminals—well, no! I could not stand it. I preferred to go and poach with Pierre the game-seller."

"Why did you not remain in your woods?"

"I came back on account of my affair with the guard, and above all, on account of the children, because they were of an age to be ruined by bad example!"

"What is that to you?"

"To me? because I do not wish to see them become like Ambrose,
Nicholas, and Calabash."

"Not possible!"

"And alone with you all, they would not have failed, I made myself an apprentice to try to earn something, to take them with me, and leave the island; but at Paris every one knew it; it was always son of the guillotined, brother of the galley slave. I had continual fights. It tired me."

"And that did not tire you to be honest; that succeeded so well, instead of having the heart to return to us, to do as we do—as the children shall do in spite of you—yes, in spite of you. You think you will stuff them with your preachings, but we are here. Francois already belongs to us nearly—the first occasion, and he shall be of the band."

"I tell you no."

"You will see. I know it. There is vice at the bottom; but you restrain him. Amandine, when she is once fifteen, will go alone. Ah! they have thrown stones at us, they have hunted us like mad dogs. They shall see what our family is—except you, coward; for you alone make us blush!"

"It is a pity."

"And as you may be spoiled here with us, to-morrow you will go from this never to return."

Martial looked at his mother with surprise; after a moment's pause he said, "You tried to get up a quarrel at supper to arrive at this."

"Yes, to show you what you may expect if you will stay here in spite of us—a hell—do you understand? —a hell upon earth. Every day disputes, blows, fights; and we shall not be alone like to-night; we will have friends to help us; you'll not hold on a week."

"You think to frighten me?"

"I tell you what will happen to you."

"No matter. I remain."

"You will remain here?"

"Yes."

"In spite of us?"

"In spite of you, and Calabash, and Nicholas, and all others of the same kidney."

"Stop; you make me laugh."

"I tell you I'll remain here until I find the means to earn my living elsewhere with the children; alone, I should not be embarrassed. I should return to the woods; but, on their account, I want more time to find out what I want. Until then I remain."

"Ah! you remain until you can take away the children?"

"As you say!"

"Take away the children?"

"When I say to them come, they will come, and running too, I answer for it."

The widow shrugged her shoulders, and replied, "Listen to me. I told you, just now, if you were to live a thousand years, you would remember this night. I am going to explain to you why; but once more, have you well decided not to go?"

"Yes! yes! a thousand times, yes!"

"Directly you will say no! a thousand times, no! Listen to me well. Do you know what trade your brother follows?"

"I suspect, but I do not want to know."

"You shall know. He steals."

"So much the worse for him."

"And for you."

"For me?"

"He is a burglar, a galley affair; we receive his plunder; if it is discovered, we shall be condemned to the same punishment as receivers, and you also; the family will be carried off, and the children will be turned into the streets, where they will learn the trade of your father and grandfather quite as well as here."

"I arrested as a receiver, as your accomplice! On what proof?"

"No one knows how you live; you are a vagrant on the water—you have the reputation of a bad man—you live with us. Who will you make believe that you are ignorant of our doings?"

"I will prove the contrary."

"We will accuse you as our accomplice."

"Accuse me! why?"

"To reward you for remaining here in spite of us."

"Just now you wished to alarm me in one way; now it is in another; that don't take. I shall prove that I have never stolen. I remain."

"Ah! you remain? Listen, then, once more; do you remember what happened last Christmas night?"

"Christmas night?" said Martial, endeavoring to collect his thoughts.

"Recollect well."

"I do not recollect."

"You do not remember that Bras-Rouge brought here at night a man well dressed, who wished to be concealed?"

"Yes, now I remember; I went upstairs to bed, and I left him at supper with you. He passed the night here; before daylight Nicholas took him to Saint Ouen."

"You are sure Nicholas took him to Saint Ouen."

"You told me so the next morning!"

"Christmas night you were then here?"

"Yes. Well?"

"On that night that man, who had much money with him, was killed in this house."

"He! Here!"

"And robbed, and buried in the little wood-house."

"It is not true," cried Martial, becoming pale with alarm, and not willing to believe in this new crime of his kindred. "You wish to alarm me. Once more I say it is not true."

"Ask your pet, Francois, what he saw in the wood-house."

"Francois, what did he see?"

"One of the feet of the man sticking out of the ground. Take the lantern; go there, and satisfy yourself."

"No," said Martial, wiping the cold sweat from his brow. "No, I do not believe you. You tell me that to

—-"

"To prove to you that, if you live here in spite of us, you run the risk every moment to be arrested as an accomplice in murder and robbery. You were here Christmas night; we will say how you gave us your aid; how can you prove the contrary?"

"Oh!" said Martial, hiding his face in his hands.

"Now will you go?" said the widow, with a sarcastic smile.

Martial was thunderstruck; he did not doubt the truth of what his mother had said; the roving life he led, his residence with a family so criminal, might cause heavy suspicions to fall upon him, and these might be changed into certainties in the eyes of justice, if his mother, his brother, his sister, pointed to him as their accomplice. The widow enjoyed the situation of her son.

"You have the means to escape from this; denounce us!"

"I ought to do it, but I shall not; you know it well!"

"It is for this I have told you all. Now will you go?"

Martial tried to soften his mother; with a mellowed voice he said,
"Mother, I do not believe you capable of this murder."

"As you like, but go away."

"I will go on one condition."

"No conditions."

"You will place the children as apprentices far from this, in the provinces."

"They shall remain here."

"Come now, mother; when you have made them like Nicholas, Ambrose, father—what good will it do you?"

"To do some good business with their aid. We are not yet too many. Calabash remains here with me to keep the tavern. Nicholas is alone; once taught, Francois and Amandine will help him. They threw stones at them also, children as they were; they must revenge themselves."

"Mother, you love Calabash and Nicholas, don't you?"

"What then?"

"They will go to the scaffold like father."

"What then, what then?"

"And does not their fate make you tremble?"

"Their fate shall be mine—neither better nor worse. I steal, they steal; I kill, they kill. Who takes the mother will take the children. We will not be separated. If our heads fall, they shall fall in the same basket, where they will say adieu! We will not turn back; you are the only coward in the family; we drive you away. Get out!"

"But the children—the children!"

"The children will grow up. I tell you, except for you, they would have been already formed. Francois is almost ready; when you are gone, Amandine shall make up for lost time."

"Mother, I entreat you, consent to send the children away as apprentices far from here."

"How many times must I tell you that they are in apprenticeship here?"

The widow articulated these words in such a stern manner that Martial lost all hope of softening this heart of bronze.

"Since it is thus," said he, in a resolute and brief tone, "listen to me in your turn, mother; I remain."

"Ah, ah!"

"Not in this house. I should be murdered by Nicholas, or poisoned by Calabash; but, as I have not the means to lodge elsewhere, the children and I will live in the hovel at the other end of the island: the door is strong; I will make it stronger. Once there, well barricaded, with my gun, my dog, and my club, I fear no one. To-morrow morning I will take away the children; they will come with me, sometimes in my boat, sometimes on the mainland. At night they shall sleep near me in the cabin; we will live on my fishing. This shall continue until I find a place for them; and I will find one."

"Ah! is it so?"

"Neither you, nor my brother, nor Calabash can prevent it. If your thefts and your murders are discovered while I am still on the island, so much the worse; I must run my chance. I shall explain that I returned: that I remained on account of the children, to prevent their becoming rogues. They can judge. But may the thunder crush me if I leave this island, and if the children remain one day more in this house! Yes, I defy you—defy you and yours to drive me from the island!"

The widow knew the resolution of Martial; the children loved their eldest brother as much as they feared him; they would follow him, then, without hesitation, when he wished it. As to him, well armed, resolute, always on his guard—in his boat during the day, barricaded during the in his cabin—he had nothing to fear from any evil designs of his family. The project of Martial could then, on all points, be realized. But the widow had many reasons to prevent the execution.

In the first place, like as honest artisans consider sometimes the number of their children as riches, on account of their services, so the widow counted on Amandine and Francois to assist her in her crimes. Then, what she had said of her desire to avenge her husband and her son was true. Certain beings, nursed, become aged, hardened in crime, enter into open revolt, into a murderous warfare against society, and believe by new acts of guilt to avenge themselves for the just punishment which has overtaken them and theirs. And then, in fine, the wicked designs of Nicholas against Fleur-de-Marie, and still later against the diamond broker, might be defeated by the presence of Martial. The widow had hoped to bring about an immediate separation between herself and Martial, either by fomenting the quarrel with Nicholas, or by revealing to him what risk he ran by remaining on the island. As cunning as she was acute, the widow, perceiving that she was mistaken, felt that it was necessary to have recourse to perfidy to entrap her son in a bloody snare. She resumed then, after a long silence, and with affected bitterness: "I see your plan; you do not wish to denounce us yourself—you wish to do it through the children."

"I?"

"They know now that there is a man buried here; they know that Nicholas has stolen: once in apprenticeship, they will speak; we shall be taken, and we shall all be executed—you, as well as we; that's what will happen if I listen to you—if I allow you to place the children elsewhere. And yet you say you don't wish us any harm! I do not ask you to love me; but do not hasten the moment when we shall be taken."

The softened tones of the widow made Martial believe that his threats had produced a salutary effect: he fell into a frightful snare.

"I know the children," replied he. "I am sure if I tell them to say nothing they will be quiet; besides, I shall always be with them, and will answer for their silence."

"Can any one answer for the words of a child? at Paris, above all, where people are so curious and talkative? It is as much to keep them silent as to aid us that I wish to keep them here."

"Do they not go to the village and to Paris now? Who prevents them from speaking, if they wish to speak? If they were far away from here, so much the better: what they might say would be of no consequence."

"Far from here! and where is that?" said the widow, looking steadily at her son.

"Let me take them away; no consequence to you."

"How would you live?"

"My old master, the locksmith, is a good man. I will tell him what is necessary, and perhaps he will lend me something on account of the children; with that I'll go and bind them out far away from this. We set out in two days, and you will never hear more of us."

"No; I prefer to have them with me. I shall be more sure of them."

"Then I establish myself to-morrow at the hovel, waiting for something better. I have a head also, and you know it."

"Yes, I know it. Oh, how I wish to see you far away from this! Why did you not stay in your woods?"

"I offer to rid you both of myself and the children."

"You would leave La Louve, then—she whom you love so well?"

"That's my business: I know what I have to do; I have a plan."

"If I let you take them away, will you never return to Paris?"

"In three days we will be off, and like the dead for you."

"I prefer to have it so, rather than you should always be here, and be suspicious of them. Come, since it must be so, take them away, and clear out as soon as possible, that I may never see you again."

"Is this settled?"

"It is. Give me the key of the cellar, so that I can release Nicholas."

"No he can sleep off his wine there."

"And Calabash?"

"It is different. You can open the door after I have gone to bed; it makes me feel bad to see her."

"Go; and may the devil confound you!"

"Is it your good-night, mother?"

"Yes."

"Happily, it will be the last," said Martial.

"The last," replied the widow.

Her son lighted a candle, and, opening the kitchen door, whistled to his dog, which came bounding in, and followed his master to the upper story of the mansion.

"Go! your account is finished," muttered the mother, shaking her fist at her son, who had just gone upstairs, "you have brought it upon yourself." Then, assisted by Calabash, who went to look for a bunch of false keys, the widow picked the lock of the cellar where Nicholas was confined, and set him at liberty.

CHAPTER XXIV.

FRANCOIS AND AMANDINE.

Francois and Amandine slept in a room situated immediately over the kitchen, at the extremity of a corridor, into which opened several other rooms, serving as private dining-rooms to the frequenters of the tavern. After having partaken of their frugal supper, instead of extinguishing their lantern, according to the orders of the widow, the two children had watched, leaving their door open, to see Martial when he should come to his room. Placed on a rickety stool, the lantern shed a sickly light through the miserable room. Walls of plaster, a cot for Francois, a child's bedstead, very old, and much too short for Amandine, a heap of broken chairs and benches, the result of some of the drunken brawls and turbulent conduct which had taken place at the tavern; such was the interior of this den.

Amandine, seated on the edge of the cot, tried to dress her head with the stolen gift of her brother Nicholas, Francois, kneeling, presented a fragment of looking-glass to his sister, who, with her head half-turned round, was occupied in tying the ends of the silk into a large rosette. Very attentive, and very much struck with this coiffure, Francois neglected for a moment to hold the glass in such a position that his sister could see. "Raise the glass higher now—I cannot see; there—so—good. Wait a

little; now I have finished. Look! how do you think it looks?"

"Oh, very well—very well! What a fine tie! You'll make one just like it with my cravat, won't you?"

"Yes, directly; but let me walk a little. You go before—backward; hold the glass up so that I can see myself as I walk." Francois executed this difficult maneuver very well, to the great satisfaction of Amandine, who strutted up and down triumphantly, under the rosette and ears of her *foulard.* Very innocent under any other circumstances, this conduct become culpable, as Francois and Amandine both knew the prize was stolen; another proof of the frightful facility with which children, even well endowed, are corrupted almost without knowing it, when they are continually plunged in a criminal atmosphere.

And, besides, the sole mentor of these little unfortunates, their brother Martial, was not himself irreproachable, as we have said: incapable of committing a theft or murder, he did not the less lead an irregular and wandering life. They refused to commit certain bad actions, not from honesty, but to obey Martial, whom they tenderly loved, and to disobey their mother, whom they feared and hated. It is hard to say how much the perceptions of morality with these children were doubtful, vacillating, precarious; with Francois particularly, arrived at that dangerous period where the mind, hesitating, undecided between good and evil, perhaps in one moment may be lost or saved.

"How this red becomes you, sister!" said Francois. "How pretty it is! When we go and play on the shore in front of the plaster-kilns, you must dress yourself so, to make the children wild, who are always throwing stones at us and calling us little *guillotines.* I'll put on my fine red cravat, and we will tell them, 'Never mind, you haven't such handsome handkerchiefs as these.'"

"But I say, Francois," said Amandine, after a pause, "if they knew that they were stolen, they would call us little thieves."

"Who cares if they do?"

"When it is not true, it's all the same; but now—"

"Since Nicholas has given us these, we have not stolen them."

"Yes, but he did; he took them from a boat; and brother Martial says we must not steal."

"But since Nicholas has stolen them, it is none of our business."

"You think so, Francois?"

"Yes, I do."

"Yet it seems to me that I should have preferred that the person to whom they belonged should have given them to us. Don't you think so, Francois?"

"Oh, it's all the same to me. They have been given to us, and that's enough."

"You are very sure?"

"Why, yes, yes; do be quiet."

"Then, so much the better; we have not done what brother Martial forbids, and we have fine handkerchiefs."

"I say, Amandine, if he knew that the other day Calabash made you take that handkerchief from the peddler's pack, when his back was turned!"

"Oh, Francois, do not speak of that!" said the poor child, whose eyes were filled with tears: "brother Martial would love me no more. He would leave us all alone here."

"Don't be afraid, I will not tell him," he said, laughing.

"Oh, don't laugh at that. Francois; I am sorry enough; but I had to do it. Sister pinched me till the blood came, and then she looked at me so—so! and yet twice my heart failed me; I thought I could never do it. Finally, the peddler saw nothing, and sister kept the kerchief. If he had seen me, Francois, they would have put me in prison."

"They did not see you; it is just the same as if you had not stolen."

"You think so?"

"Of course!"

"And in prison, how unhappy one must be!"

"On the contrary."

"How, Francois, on the contrary?"

"Look here! you know the big lame man who lives at Paris with Pere Micou; the man who sells for Nicholas; who keeps furnished lodgings, Passage de la Brasserie?"

"A big lame man?"

"Why, yes; who came here at the end of the autumn from Pere Micou, with a man with monkeys, and two women."

"Oh, yes, yes; the lame man who spent so much money?"

"I think so; he paid for everybody."

"Do you recollect the excursion on the water?"

[Illustration: THE BRIGAND'S ATTACK ON HIS BROTHER]

"I went with them, and the man with the monkeys took his organ on board to have some music in the boat."

"And then, at night, what fine fireworks they had, Francois!"

"Yes; and he was no miser: he gave me ten sous! He drank nothing but sealed wine; they had chickens at all their meals; they had at least eighty francs' worth."

"As much as that, Francois?" "Oh, yes."

"He was very rich, then?"

"Not at all; what he spent was the money which he earned in prison, from whence he had just come."

"He gained all that money in prison?"

"Yes; he said he had seven hundred francs left; that when all was gone, he would do some good job, and if they took him, he didn't care, because he would return to the prison and join his good friends there."

"He wasn't afraid of the prison, then, Francois?".

"Just the contrary; he told Calabash that they were all jolly together; that he never had a better bed or better food than in prison: good meat four times a week, fire all winter, and a good sum when he came out, while there are so many stupid fools of honest workmen who were starving for want of work."

"Did the lame man say that?"

"I heard him; for I was rowing in the boat while he told this to Calabash and the two women, who said it was the same thing in the prison for women; they had just come out."

"But, then, Francois, it can't be so wicked to steal, if one is so well off in prison?"

"I don't know; here, there is no one but brother Martial who says it is wrong to steal, perhaps he is mistaken."

"Never mind, we must believe him, Francois; he loves us so much!"

"He loves us, it is true! when he is here no one dares to beat us. If he had been here to-night, mother wouldn't have whipped me. Old beast! ain't she wicked? Oh! I hate her—hate her. How I wish I was a man, to pay her back all the blows she has given me, and you, who can't bear it as well as I can."

"Oh! Francois, hush, you make me afraid, to hear you say that you would like to strike mother!" cried the poor little thing, weeping, and throwing her arms around the neck of her brother, whom she embraced tenderly.

"No, it is true," answered Francois, repulsing his sister gently; "why are mother and Calabash always so severe and cross to us?"

"I do not know," said Amandine, wiping her eyes; "it is, perhaps, because they guillotined father and sent Ambrose to the galleys."

"Is that our fault?"

"No; but—"

"If I am always to receive blows in the end, I would rather steal, as they wish me to; what good does it do me not to steal?"

"And what would Martial say?"

"Oh! except for him I should have said 'yes' long ago, for I am tired of being flogged; now to-night, mother never was so wicked—she was like a fury—it was very dark, dark; she said not a word, I only felt her cold hand, which held me by the neck, while with the other she beat me, and I thought I saw her eyes glisten."

"Poor Francois! because you said you saw a dead man's bones in the wood-house?"

"Yes, a foot which stuck out of the earth," said Francois, shuddering with affright: "I am sure of it."

"Perhaps formerly there was a burying-ground there?"

"Must think so; but, then, why did mother say she would whip me again if I spoke of it to Martial? I tell you what, it is likely some one has been killed in a dispute, and been buried there so it should not be known." "You are right! for, do you remember, such a thing once liked to have happened?"

"When was that?"

"You know the time that Barbillon struck the man with the knife—the tall man, who is so thin—so thin that he shows himself for money?"

"Ah! yes, the Living Skeleton, as they call him; mother came and separated them, otherwise Barbillon would, perhaps, have killed the great skeleton! Did you see how he foamed, and how his eyes stuck out of his head?"

"Oh! he is not afraid to stick a knife into one for nothing."

"He is a madcap!"

"Oh! yes, so young, and so wicked, Francois!"

"Tortillard is much younger; and he would be quite as bad, if he had the strength."

"Oh! yes, he is very bad. The other day he struck me because I would not play with him."

"He struck you? good—the next time he comes—"

"No, no, Francois, it was only in fun."

"You are sure?"

"Yes, very sure."

"Very well—or—but I do not know where he gets so much money from; when he came here with La Chouette, he showed us some gold pieces of twenty francs."

"How impudent he looked when he told us, 'You could have just the same, if you were not little duffers.'"

"Duffers?"

"Yes, that means stupid fools."

"Oh, yes! true."

"Forty francs—in gold—how many fine things I would buy with that!
And you, Amandine?"

"Oh! I likewise."

"And what would you buy?"

"Let me see," said the child, in a meditative manner; "in the first place I would get a warm coat for brother Martial, so that he should not be cold in his boat."

"But for yourself—for yourself?"

"I would like an infant Saviour, in wax, with his lamb and cross, like the image-man had on Sunday, you know, at the door of the church of Asnieres."

"I hope no one will tell mother Calabash that they saw us at church."

"True, she has so often forbidden us to enter one. It is a pity, for a church is very nice inside, is it not, Francois?"

"Yes, what fine candlesticks!"

"And the picture of the Holy Virgin! how good she looks!"

"And the lamps; and the fine cloth on the table at the end, where the priest said mass, with his two friends dressed like himself, who gave him water and wine."

"Say, Francois, do you recollect last year, the Fete-Dieu, when we saw from here all the little communicants, in their white veils, pass over the bridge?"

"What handsome flowers they had!"

"How they sung, and held the ribbons of their banners!"

"And how the silver fringes of the banners glistened in the sun! That must have cost a deal of money!"

"Goodness—how handsome it was, Francois!"

"I believe you, and the communicants with their badges of white satin on the arm, and wax candles with velvet and gold handles."

"The little boys had banners also, had they not, Francois?"

"Oh! was I not whipped that day because I asked mother why we did not walk in the procession, like other children!"

"Then it was that she told us never to enter a church, unless it was to steal the money-box for the poor, 'or from the pockets of people listening to mass,' added Calabash, laughing and showing her old, yellow teeth."

"Bad creature, she is!"

"Oh, before I would steal in a church, they should kill me! Don't you say so, Francois?"

"There, or elsewhere—what is the difference when one has decided?"

"I do not know, but I should have more fear; I never could."

"On account of the priests?"

"No, perhaps on account of the picture of the Holy Virgin, who looks so good and kind."

"What of that?—the picture can't eat you, little fool!"

"True; but I could not; it is not my fault."

"Speaking of priests, Amandine, do you remember the day when Nicholas struck me so hard, because he saw me bow to the cure who was passing on the shore? I had seen him saluted—I did the same; I did not think there was any harm."

"Yes; but that time Martial said just the same as Nicholas—that we had no need to make a salute to a priest."

At this moment Francois and Amandine heard some one walk in the corridor.

Martial reached his chamber without any further trouble, after his conversation with the widow,

believing Nicholas locked up until the next morning. Seeing a ray of light issuing from the door of the children's room, he went in. They both ran to him and embraced him tenderly.

"Not yet gone to bed, little chatterers?"

"No, brother; we waited for you to come and say good-night," said Amandine.

"And, besides, some one was talking very loud downstairs, as if it was a quarrel," added Francois.

"Yes," said Martial, "I had a dispute with Nicholas, but it is nothing. I am glad to find you up; I have some good news to tell you."

"Us, brother?"

"Would you like to go with me away from here—far away?"

"Oh yes, brother!"

"Well, in two or three days all three of us leave the island."

"How glad I am!" cried Amandine, clapping her hands.

"But where shall we go to?" asked Francois.

"You shall see, inquisitive; but never mind, wherever we go, you shall learn a good trade, which will make you able to earn your living, that is sure."

"Shall I not go any more fishing with you, brother?"

"No, my boy; you shall go as an apprentice to a cabinet-maker or a locksmith. You are strong and active; with courage, and by working hard, at the end of a year you will be able to earn something. Oh, come now, what is the matter? You do not appear to be pleased."

"Because, brother, I—"

"Well, go on."

"Would rather remain with you, fish, mend your nets, than learn a trade."

"Really?"

"To be shut up in a shop all day is so gloomy; and to be an apprentice is so tiresome." Martial shrugged his shoulders.

"You would rather be idle, a vagabond, a rover," said he severely, "before becoming a robber?"

"No, brother; but I would rather live here with you, as we live here— that's all."

"Yes, that's it—to eat, drink, sleep, and amuse yourself with fishing, like a lazybones."

"I like that better."

"It is very probable; but you must like something else. Look here, my poor Francois, it is high time that I take you from this place; without knowing it, you will become as bad as the others. Mother was right—I am afraid you are rather vicious. But you, Amandine, wish to learn a trade?"

"Oh, yes, brother; I would rather learn one than stay here. I shall be so glad to go away with you and Francois?"

"But what have you got on your head?" said Martial, remarking the triumphant head-dress of Amandine.

"A handkerchief which Nicholas gave me."

"He gave me one also," said Francois proudly.

"And where did they come from? It would surprise me if Nicholas should have bought them for you."

The children hung their heads, without replying. After a moment's pause, Francois said resolutely, "Nicholas gave them to us; we don't know where they came from, do we, Amandine?"

"No, no, brother," answered she, stammering and blushing, and not daring to raise her eyes."

"Do not tell a lie!" said Martial sweetly.

"We do not lie!" added Francois, boldly.

"Amandine, my child, tell the truth," said Martial, gently.

"Well, to tell the whole truth," answered Amandine, timidly, "they came from a box of goods which Nicholas brought to-night in his boat."

"Stolen?"

"I think so, brother, from a barge."

"You see, Francois, you told a lie!" said Martial. The boy held down his head, without answering.

"Give me the handkerchief, Amandine; give me yours, also, Francois."

The little girl took off her head-dress, took a last look at the enormous rosette, and gave it to Martial, stifling a sigh of regret. Francois drew his slowly from his pocket, and, like his sister, returned it to Martial.

"To-morrow morning," said he, "I will give these to Nicholas. You should not have taken them, my children; to profit by a theft is the same as to be the thief."

"It's a pity—they are so handsome!" said Francois.

"When you have learned a trade, and earn money, you can buy some quite as handsome. Come, go to bed; it is late, children."

"You are not angry, brother?" said Amandine timidly.

"No, no, my girl; it is not your fault. You live with rogues—you do as they do without knowing it. When you are with honest people, you will do as they do; and you soon shall be there—or deuce take me! Good-night!"

"Good-night, brother;" and, embracing them both, Martial departed.

"What is the matter, Francois? you look so sad!" said Amandine.

"Brother has taken my handkerchief; and, besides, did you not hear?"

"What?"

"He wants to make us apprentices."

"Are you not glad?"

"Faith, no!"

"You would rather remain here, and be beaten every day?"

"I am beaten; but I don't have to work. I am all day in the boat, or fishing or playing, or serving the company, who sometimes give me something for drink, as the lame man did; it is much more amusing than to be shut up from morning till night in a shop, to work like a dog."

"But did you not hear brother say, if we remained here any longer we would become bad?"

"All the same to me, since other children call us already little thieves. Work is too tiresome."

"But here they always beat us!"

"They beat us because we listen more to Martial than to them."

"He is so good to us."

"He is good, he is good, I do not deny; so I love him well. They do not dare to harm us before him. He takes us out to walk, it is truer but that is all; he never gives us anything."

"Brother, he has nothing; what he earns he gives to our mother for board."

"Nicholas has something. I am sure that if we were to listen to him and mother, he would not treat us so; he would give us fine things, like to-day; he would no longer suspect us; we should have money, like

Tortillard."

"But we should have to steal, and that would cause brother Martial so much sorrow!"

"Can't help that!"

"Oh, Francois! Besides, if they caught us, we should go to prison."

"In prison, or shut up all day in a shop, is the same thing. Besides, the lame man said they amused them—selves so much in prison."

"But the sorrow we would cause to Martial—don't you think of that? It is on our account he came back here, and now remains; alone, he could easily get along: he could return and poach in the woods he likes so well."

"Well! let him take us in the woods with him," said Francois: "that would be best of all; I would be with him I love so much, and I should not have to work at a trade I cannot bear."

The conversation of Francois and Amandine was interrupted. Their door locked on the outside with a double turn.

"We are shut up!" cried Francois.

"Oh! what for, brother? What are they going to do with us?"

"Perhaps it is Martial."

"Listen, listen, his dog barks!" said Amandine.

"It sounds to me as if they were hammering something," said Francois; "perhaps they are trying to break open Martial's door!"

"Yes, yes, his dog barks all the time."

"Listen, Francois! now it sounds like driving nails. Oh, dear, I am afraid. What could brother have done? now hear how his dog howls!"

"Amandine, I hear nothing now," said Francois, approaching the door.

The two children, holding their breath, listened with anxiety.

"Now they return," said Francois, in a low tone, "I hear them walking in the corridor."

"Let us jump into bed; mother would kill us if she found us up," said Amandine.

"No!" answered Francois, still listening: "they have just passed our door; they are running downstairs; now they open the kitchen door."

"You think so?"

"Yes, yes; I know the noise it makes."

"Martial's dog keeps on howling," said Amandine; then suddenly she cried, "Francois, brother calls us."

"Martial?"

"Yes, don't you hear him?" And, notwithstanding the thickness of the two closed doors, the stentorian voice of Martial, calling to the children, could be heard. "We cannot go to him—we are locked up," said Amandine: "they wish to do him some harm, for he calls to us."

"Oh, if I could," cried Francois, resolutely, "I would prevent them, if they were to cut me to pieces! But brother does not know that we are locked up; he will think that we will not help him."

"Call to him, Francois, that we are shut up."

He was about to follow the advice of his sister, when a violent blow shook the blind on the outside of the little window of their room.

"They are coming that way to kill us!" cried Amandine, and, in her fright, she threw herself on the bed, and covered her face with her hands.

Francois remained immovable, although he partook of the alarm of his sister. Yet, after the violent blow of which we have spoken, the blind was not opened; the most profound silence reigned throughout the house.

Martial had ceased to call the children.

Somewhat recovered and excited by deep curiosity, Francois ventured to half open the window, and tried to see without through the slats of the blinds.

"Take care, brother," whispered Amandine, who, hearing Francois open the window had partly raised herself up. "Do you see anything?"

"No; the night is too dark."

"Do you hear nothing?"

"No; the wind blows too hard."

"Come back, come back then!"

"Ah! now I see something."

"What?"

"The light of a lantern; it comes and goes."

"Who carries it?"

"I only see the light."

"Oh! now it comes nearer; some one speaks."

"Who is that?"

"Listen, listen! it is Calabash."

"What does she say?"

"She tells them to hold the foot of the ladder steady."

"Oh! do you see, it was in taking away the long ladder which was against our window that they made such a noise just now."

"I hear nothing more."

"What are they doing with the ladder now?"

"I can't see anything more."

"Do you hear nothing?"

"No."

"Oh, Francois, it is, perhaps, to get into brother Martial's room by the window that they have taken the ladder?"

"That may be."

"If you would open the shutter a little to see—"

"I dare not."

"Only a little."

"Oh! no, no. If mother should see it—"

"It is so dark there is no danger."

Francois, yielding to the entreaties of his sister, opened the blinds and looked out.

"Well, brother?" said Amandine, overcoming her fears, and approaching Francois on tiptoe.

"By the light of the lantern," said he; "I see Calabash holding the foot of the ladder, placed against Martial's window."

"What then?"

"Nicholas goes up the ladder; he has his hatchet in his hands; I see it shine."

"Hullo, you are not gone to bed! you are spying us!" cried the widow suddenly, calling to Francois and his sister. Just as she was going into the kitchen she saw the light from the half-opened window. The unfortunate children had neglected to extinguish their light. "I am coming up," added the widow, in a terrible voice; "I am coining to you, little spies."

Such are the events which took place at the Ravageur's Island, the evening before Mrs. Seraphin was to conduct thither Fleur-de-Marie.

CHAPTER XXV.

FURNISHED ROOMS.

Brasserie passage, a dark and gloomy passage, but little known, although situated in the center of Paris, extended on one side from the Rue Traversiere Saint Honore to the Cour Saint Guillaume on the other. About the middle of this wet, muddy, dark, and gloomy street, where the sun scarcely ever penetrates, stood a furnished house.

On a rascally-looking sign was to be seen, "*Furnished Rooms*;" on the right of an obscure alley opened the door of a shop not less obscure, where the proprietor was generally to be found. This man, whose name has been several times mentioned on Ravageur's Island, was Micou; openly a seller of old iron; but secretly he bought and sold stolen metal, such as iron, lead, copper, and tin. To say that Micou was in business and friendly relations with the Martials, is sufficiently to appreciate his morality.

Micou was a corpulent man of about fifty years of age, with a low, cunning look, a pimply nose, and bloated cheeks; he wore an otter-skin cap, and was wrapped up in an old green garrick. Over the little iron stove near which he was warming himself, a board with numbers painted on it was nailed against the wall; there were suspended the keys of the rooms whose lodgers were absent. The window looking into the street was soaped in such a manner that those without could not see what was going on within the shop; this window was heavily barred with iron. Throughout this large shop reigned great obscurity: on the damp and blackish walls were suspended rusty chains of all sorts and sizes; the floor was nearly covered with fragments and clippings of iron and lead. Three peculiar knocks at the door attracted the attention of Micou.

"Come in!" cried he, and Nicholas appeared. He was very pale; his face seemed still more sinister-looking than the evening previous, and yet it will be seen he feigned a kind of noisy gayety during the following conversation. This scene took place the morning after his quarrel with his brother Martial.

"Oh! here you are, good fellow!" said the lodging-house keeper, cordially.

"Yes, Daddy Micou; I come to have some business with you."

"Shut the door."

"My dog and little cart are there—with the swag."

"What do you bring me? folded tripe (stolen sheet-lead)?"

"No, Micou."

"It is not dredge, you are too cunning now; you are no longer a *ravageur*; perhaps it is iron?"

"No, Micou; it is copper. There must be at least one hundred and fifty pounds; my dog has as much as he can draw."

"Go and bring the stuff; we will weigh it."

"You must help me, Micou; I have a lame arm."

"What is the matter with your arm?"

"Nothing—a bruise."

"You must make some iron red hot, put it into some water, and bathe your arm in this almost boiling water; it is a dealer-in-old-iron's remedy, but it is excellent."

"Thank you, Daddy Micou."

"Come, let us bring in the metal: I will help you, lazybones!"

The copper was then brought in from a little cart drawn by an enormous dog, and placed in the shop.

"That barrow is a good idea," said Micou, adjusting the scales.

"Yes; when I have anything to bring, I put my dog and cart into my boat, and I harness him when I land. A jarvey might blab: my dog can't."

"All well at home?" demanded the receiver, weighing the copper: "your mother and sister are in good health?"

"Yes, Micou."

"The children also?"

"The children also."

"And your nephew Andre, where is he?"

"Don't speak of it! he was in luck yesterday. Barbillon and the Big Cripple took him away; he only came back this morning; he is already gone on an errand to the post-office, Rue Jean Jacques Rousseau."

"And your brother Martial, is still savage?"

"I do not know anything about him."

"You don't know anything about him?"

"No," said Nicholas, affecting an indifferent manner; "for two days we have not seen him; perhaps he has returned to his old trade of a poacher—unless his boat, which was very old, has sunk in the river, and he with—"

"That don't give you much concern, good-for-nothing, for you can't feel it much!"

"It is true, one has his own ideas. How many pounds of copper are there?"

"You made a good guess—one hundred and forty-eight pounds, my boy."

"And you will owe me—"

"Exactly thirty francs."

"Thirty francs, when copper is a franc a pound? Thirty francs!"

"We will say thirty-five, and don't turn up your nose, or I will send you to the devil—you, copper, dog and cart."

"But, Micou you cheat me too much! there's no sense in it."

"Prove to me this copper belongs to you, and I will give you fifteen sous a pound for it."

"Always the same song. You are all alike; get out, you nest of thieves! Can one gouge a friend in such style? But this is not all. If I take your merchandise in exchange, you should give me good measure at least!"

"Just so! What do you want? chains or hooks for your boat?"

"No; I want four or five iron plates, very strong, such as would answer to line window-shutters with."

"I have just what you want—the third of an inch thick; a pistol ball could not go through."

"Just the thing!"

"What size?"

"In all, seven or eight feet square."

"Good! what else do you want?"

"Three iron bars, three to four feet long, and two inches square."

"I tore down the other day some grating from a window; that will suit you like a glove. What next?"

"Two strong hinges and a latch; to fix and shut at will, a wicket two feet square."

"A trap, you mean to say?"

"No; a wicket."

"I cannot comprehend what you can want with it?"

"That is possible, but I can."

"Very well, you have only to choose; there are the hinges. What else do you need?"

"That's all."

"It is not much."

"Get my goods ready at once, Daddy Micou, I will take them as I pass;
I have some more errands to do."

"With your cart? I say, I saw a bale of goods in the bottom; is it something more that you have taken from everybody's cupboard, little glutton?"

"As you say, Daddy Micou: but you don't eat this; don't make me wait for my iron, for I must be back to the island by twelve o'clock."

"Don't be uneasy, it is eight o'clock; if you are not going far, in an hour you can return, all will be ready, Will you take a drop?"

"To be sure; you can well afford to pay it!"

Daddy Micou took out of an old chest a bottle of brandy, a cracked glass, a cup without a handle, and poured out the liquor.

"Your health, old 'un!"

"Yours, my boy, and the ladies' at home!"

"Thank you; and your lodgings come on well?"

"So, so. I have always some lodgers for whom I fear the visits of the grabs; but they pay more in consequence."

"Why?"

"How stupid you are! Sometimes I lodge as I buy; to such I no more ask for their passports than I ask you for an invoice."

"Understood! but to those you let as dear as you buy of me cheap."

"Must take care of one's self. I have a cousin who keeps a fine hotel in the Rue Saint Honore, while his wife is a mantua-maker, who employs as many as twenty assistants, either at her shop, or at their own homes."

"Say now, old obstinacy, there must be some pretty ones there?"

"I guess so! there are two or three that I have seen sometimes bringing in their work. Crimini! ain't they nice! One little puss, who works at home, always laughing, called Rigolette. Oh, my lark! what a pity I ain't twenty!"

"Come, come, papa, put yourself out, or I'll cry fire!"

"But she is virtuous, my boy; she is virtuous."

"Get out! and you say that your cousin—"

"Keeps a very good house, and, as she is of the same number as little Rigolette—"

"Virtuous?"

"Exactly."

"Over!"

"She will not have lodgers without passports or papers; but if any present themselves, knowing I am not very particular, she sends them to me."

"And they pay in consequence?"

"Always."

"But are they all friends of the family, those who have no papers?"

"No. Ah, now, speaking of that, my cousin sent me, a few days ago, a customer. May the devil burn me, if I can understand it! Come, another turn?"

"Agreed; the liquor is good. Your health, Micou!"

"Yours, lad! I say, then, that the other day my cousin sent me a customer whom I cannot make out. Just imagine a mother and her daughter, who had a very seedy look, it is true; they carried their luggage in a handkerchief. Well, although they must, of course, be nobody, since they had no papers, and they lodge by the fortnight; since they have been here they do not stir out; no one comes to see them, my pal—no one! and yet, if they were not so thin and so pale, they'd be two fine women, the little one above all. She is not more than fifteen at least; she is as white as a white rabbit, with large black eyes—large as that! What eyes! what eyes!"

"You'll get on fire again; I'll call the engines! What do these women do for a living?"

"I tell you I comprehend nothing about it; they must be virtuous, and yet no papers; without counting that they receive letters without address, their name must be bad to write."

"How is that?"

"They sent, this morning, my nephew Andre to the office of the letters to be called for, to reclaim a letter addressed to Madame X. Z. The letter was to come from Normandy, from a place called Aubiers. They wrote that on a piece of paper, so that Andre might get the letter. You see they can be no great things, women who take the name of X and a Z."

"They will never pay you."

"It is not for an old ape like me to learn to make faces. They have taken a room without a fireplace, for which I make them pay twenty francs a fortnight, and in advance. They are, perhaps, sick; for two days they have not come down. It certainly is not from indigestion; for I do not think they have cooked anything since they have been here."

"If you had only such lodgers as they, Micou—"

"That comes and goes. If I lodge people without passports, I lodge great folks also; I have at this moment two traveling clerks, a post-office carrier, the leader of the orchestra of the Cafe des Aveugles, and an independent lady, all very genteel people. They save the reputation of the house, if the police wish to examine too closely; they are not lodgers by night, not they; they are lodgers in the full light of the sun."

"Whenever it shines in your passage, Daddy—"

"Joker, one more turn."

"And the last, for I must take my hook. By-the-bye, does Robin, the big lame man, lodge here yet?"

"Upstairs, next door to the mother and daughter. He has consumed all his prison money, and I believe he has none left."

"I say, look out; he's broke his ticket-of-leave."

"I know it well; but I can't get rid of him. I believe he is after something. Little Tortillard, the son of Bras-Rouge, came here the other night with Barbillon, to look for him. I am afraid he will do some harm to my good lodgers that damnable Robin. As soon as his term is up, I shall put him out, telling him his room is engaged by an embassador, or by the husband of Madame de Saint Ildefonso?"

"The lady?"

"I should think so! Three rooms and a cabinet on the front, nearly furnished, without counting a garret for her female servant, eighty francs a month, and paid in advance by her uncle, to whom she gives one of her rooms as a stopping-place when he comes from the country. After all, I believe his country house is the Rue Vivienne, Rue Saint Honore, or in the environs of those places."

"Understood! she is an independent lady, because the old one pays her rent."

"Hush, here is her maid."

A woman rather advanced in life, wearing a white apron of doubtful purity, entered the shop. "What can I do for you, Madame Charles?"

"Daddy Micou, your nephew is not here?"

"He has gone on an errand to the post-office; he will soon return."

"M. Badinot wishes he would take this letter to its address; there is no answer, but it is very urgent."

"In a quarter of an hour it shall be on the way."

"Let him hurry."

"Be easy." The maid retired.

"That's the servant of one of your lodgers, Micou?"

"Madame Saint Ildefonso's. But M. Badinot is her uncle; he came yesterday from the country, "answered Micou. "But see, now, what fine acquaintances they have! I told you they were people of style; he writes to a viscount."

"No!"

"Well, look: 'To his Lordship the Viscount of Saint Remy, Rue de Chaillot. Haste, haste! (*Private*).' I hope that when one lodges people who have uncles who write to viscounts, one can very well overlook a poor devil in the fourth story who has no passport!"

"I think so. Well, good-bye for the present, Micou; I am going to fasten my dog and cart to your door; I will carry what I have to carry myself. Have my goods and money ready on my return."

"All shall be ready. But, I say, before you go I must tell you, since you have been here, I have watched you."

"Well?"

"I don't know, but you seem to have something the matter with you."

"I?"

"Yes."

"You are a fool. I am hungry."

"Hungry! it is possible, but I should say that you wish to appear lively, but at the bottom there is something that bites and pinches you—conscience, as they say; and to trouble you it must bite hard, for you are no prude."

"I tell you, you are crazy, Micou," said Nicholas, shuddering in spite of himself.

"One would say that you tremble."

"My arm pains me."

"Then don't forget my recipe: it will cure you."

"Thank you, Father Micou. Good-bye," said Nicholas, taking his departure.

The receiver, after having concealed the copper, busied himself in collecting the different articles for Nicholas, when a new personage entered the shop. He was a man of about fifty, with a knowing face, heavy gray whiskers, and gold spectacles; he was dressed with some care; the large sleeves of his brown paletot, with velvet cuffs, displayed his straw-colored gloves; his boots undoubtedly the evening previous had been brilliantly polished.

Such was M. Badinot, the uncle of Madame de Saint Ildefonso, whose social position was the pride and security of Micou the Fence.

Badinot, formerly a lawyer, but struck off the rolls, and now a chevalier d'industrie, and agent of equivocal affairs, served as a spy for the Baron de Graün (Rudolph's friend), and gave the diplomatist a great deal of information concerning several characters of this narration.

"Madame Charles has just given you a letter?" said Badinot to the receiver.

"Yes, sir; my nephew will soon return; in a moment he will be off again."

"No, give me the letter; I have changed my mind; I will go myself to the Viscount de Saint Remy," said Badinot, emphasizing purposely the aristocratic address.

"Here is the letter, sir; have you no other commission?"

"No, friend Micou," said Badinot, with a patronizing air; "but I have reproaches to make to you."

"To me, sir?"

"Very grave reproaches."

"How, sir?"

"Certainly Madame de Saint Ildefonso pays very dear for your first floor. My niece is one of those lodgers to whom one should pay the greatest respect; she came with confidence to this house, disliking the noise of the large streets; she hoped she would be here as in the country."

"And she is; just like a village. You ought to find it so, sir, who live in the country—it is just like a real village here."

"A village? Very fine—always the most infernal noise."

"Yet it is impossible to find a more quiet house. Over madame, there is the leader of the orchestra of the Cafe des Aveugles and a traveling clerk; over them another clerk; over him again, there is—"

"It is not of these persons I complain; they are very quiet; my niece finds no inconvenience from them; but in the fourth story there is a lame man, whom Madame de Saint Ildefonso met yesterday drunk on the staircase; he uttered horrible, savage cries; she almost fainted, she was so much alarmed. If you think with such occupants your house resembles a village—"

"I swear to you, sir, that I only wait an opportunity to put this lame man out of doors; he has paid me his term in advance, otherwise he would have been already shown how to get out."

"You should not have taken him for a lodger."

"But I hope madame has no other cause of complaint? There is a postman, who is the very cream of honest people! and over him, alongside of the lame man, a woman and her daughter, who keep as close as mice."

"I repeat, Madame de Saint Iledefonso only complains of the lame man; he is the nightmare of the whole house, that knave! and I warn you, if you keep him, he will cause all the respectable people to leave."

"I will send him off, be assured—I do not hold to him."

"And you will do well, for they will not remain."

"Which would not answer my purpose. So, sir, you may regard the lame man as off, for he only has four days to remain here."

"That is too many; however, it is your business. At the very first insult my niece leaves the house."

"Be assured."

"All this is for your interest; profit by it, for I only speak once," said Badinot, in a patronizing manner, as he left the shop.

Is it not needless for us to say that this woman and girl who lived so solitary, were victims of the cupidity of the notary? We will conduct the reader into the miserable room they occupied.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE VICTIMS OF AN ABUSE OF TRUST.

Let the reader imagine a closet situated on the fourth story of the house. A pale, gloomy light hardly penetrated this narrow apartment, through a little window of cracked, dirty glass, with a single shutter; a yellowish, dilapidated paper covered the walls; from the broken ceiling hung long spider-webs. The floor, broken in several places, showed the beams and laths of the room below. A deal table, a chair, an old trunk without a lock, and a flock bed with coarse sheets and an old woolen covering—such was the furniture. On the chair was seated the Baroness de Fermont. In the bed reposed Claire de Fermont (such were the names of the two victims of Jacques Ferrand).

Possessing but one narrow bed, the mother and daughter slept by turns, dividing thus the hours of the night. The mother had too much anguish, too many inquietudes, to get much repose; but the daughter found some moments of rest and forgetfulness.

She was now asleep. Nothing could be more touching, more sorrowful, than the sight of this misery, imposed by the cupidity of the notary on two women, until then accustomed to the sweet enjoyments of a life of ease, and surrounded in their native town with that consideration which an honorable and honored family always inspire.

The Baroness de Fermont was about thirty-six years of age; her countenance at once expresses mildness and excellence; her features, formerly of remarkable beauty, are now sadly changed; her black hair, divided on her forehead and confined behind her head, already shows some tresses of silver. Clothed in a dress of mourning, tattered in several places, the Baroness de Fermont, with her hand supporting her head, leaned against the wretched bed of her child, and regarded her with inexpressible anguish.

Claire was only sixteen; her complexion had lost its dazzling purity; her beautiful dark eyelashes reached to her hollow cheeks. Once humid and rosy, but now dry and pale, her lips, half-opened, displayed the enamel of her teeth; the rude contact of the bedclothes had given a red appearance in several places to the delicate neck, arms, and shoulders of the young girl. From time to time a slight shudder passed over her, as if she had some painful dream. For a long period the Baroness de Fermont had not wept; she looked on her daughter with a dry and inflamed eye, consumed by a slow fever, which was undermining her. Each day she found herself weaker; but fearing to alarm Claire, and not willing, we may say, to alarm herself, she struggled with all her strength against the first symptoms of her sickness. Through motives of similar generosity, the daughter endeavored to conceal her sufferings. These two unhappy creatures, afflicted with the same griefs, were yet to be afflicted with the same disease.

In misfortunes there are often moments when the future prospect is so frightful, that the most energetic minds dare not look it in the face, but shut their eyes, and endeavor to deceive themselves by mad illusions. Such was the position of the Fermonts. To express the tortures of this woman, during the long hours when she was thus contemplating her sleeping child, thinking of the past, the present, and the future, would be to describe what, in the holy and sacred griefs of a mother, there is the most poignant, the most desperate, the most insane; enchanting recollections, sinister fears, terrible foresights, bitter regrets, extreme dejectedness, ejaculations of powerless rage against the author of so much misery, vain supplications, violent prayers, and, finally, frightful doubts of the all-powerful justice of Him who remains inexorable to this cry, dragged from the bottom of the maternal heart—to this sacred cry, of which the echo ought to reach Heaven, "Pity for my child!"

"How cold she is now!" said the poor mother, touching lightly the icy hand and arm of her daughter. "She is very cold; one hour ago she was burning; it is fever; happily, she does not know she has it. How cold she is! this covering is so thin! I would put my old shawl on the bed; but if I take it from the door, where I have hung it, some of those drunken men will come and look through the cracks, as they did

yesterday. What a horrible house! If I had known what kind of place it was before I paid in advance, we should not have stayed here; but I did not know—when one has no papers—could I think that I should ever have need of a passport? When I left Angers in my own carriage, could I have thought—but this infamous—because the notary has pleased to rob me, I am reduced to the most frightful extremity, and against him I can do nothing. Oh, the notary, he does not know the frightful consequences of his robbery!

"Alas! yes, I never dare tell my child my fears—not to grieve her; but I suffer; I have fever; I can hardly sustain myself; I feel within me the germs of a malady—dangerous, perhaps—my bosom is on fire; my heart throbs. Oh, if I should fall sick—if I should die! No, no! I will not—I cannot die—leave Claire—alone, abandoned in Paris—can it be possible? No! I am not sick, after all—what do I feel? A little heat, a heaviness about the head, caused, no doubt, from my uneasiness—from cold—oh, it is nothing serious!

"Come, come, no more of such weakness. It is by cherishing such ideas, it is in listening thus, that one falls really sick. And I have the time, truly! Must I not occupy myself in finding some work for Claire and myself, since this man, who gave us engravings to color—"

Then, after a pause, she added, with indignation, "Oh! this is abominable, to offer this work at the price of Claire's—to take from us this miserable means of existence, because I would not allow my child to go and work at his rooms! Perhaps we may find work elsewhere; but when one knows nobody, it is so difficult! When one is so miserably lodged they inspire no confidence; and yet, the small sum that remains once gone, what shall we do? what will become of us?

"If the laws leave this crime unpunished, I will not—for, if fate pushes me to the end—if I do not find the means to emerge from the atrocious position in which this wretch has placed me and my child, I do not know what I shall do—I shall be capable of killing him—I— this man—then they can do what they will with me. Yes—but my child? my child?

"To leave her alone, abandoned—ah! no, I do not wish to die! for this, I cannot kill this man. What would become of her? She, at sixteen—she is young, and pure as an angel; but she is handsome—but misery, hunger, abandonment—what may they not cause? and then—and then—into what abyss may she not fall?

"Oh! it is frightful—poverty! frightful enough for any one; but perhaps more so for those who have always lived in opulence. I cannot beg—I must absolutely see my child starve before I can beg! What a coward—yet—"

Two or three violent knocks at the door made her tremble, and awoke her daughter with a start.

"Mamma, what is that?" cried Claire, sitting up in bed; then, throwing her arms around her mother's neck, who, very much alarmed, pressed her child to her bosom, "Mamma, what is it?" repeated Claire.

"I do not know, my child; but do not be afraid, it is nothing: some one knocked; it is, perhaps, the letter we expect."

At this moment the worm-eaten door shook again, under repeated blows with the fist.

"Who is there?" said Madame de Fermont in a trembling voice.

A coarse, rough voice answered, "Are you deaf, neighbors?"

"What do you want? I do not know you," said Madame de Fermont, trying to conceal the agitation of her voice.

"I am Robin, your neighbor; give me some fire to light my pipe: come, make haste!"

"It is that lame man, who is always drunk," said the mother to her child.

"Are you going to give me any fire! or I'll break all open, in the name of thunder?"

"Sir, I have no fire."

"You must have some matches, then; everybody has them; do you open— come?"

"Sir, go away."

"You won't open?—one, two—"

"I beg you to go away, or I will call."

"Once—twice—three times—no, you won't! Then I'll break all down, then."

And the wretch gave such a furious kick against the door, he burst it in, the miserable lock breaking at the first assault. The two women screamed with alarm. Madame de Fermont, notwithstanding her weakness, threw herself before the rough, and barred his entrance.

"This is outrageous: you shall not come in," cried the unhappy mother;
"I shall cry for help."

"For what—for what?" answered he: "mustn't we be neighborly? If you had opened, I should not have broken in."

Then, with the stupid obstinacy of drunkenness, he added staggering, "I wish to come in; I will come in, and I will not go out until I light my pipe."

"I have neither fire nor matches. In the name of heaven, sir, retire."

"It's not true; you say that so I sha'n't see the little one in bed. Yesterday you stopped up all the holes in the door. She is pretty; I want to see her. Take care of yourself; I'll scratch your face if you don't let me come in. I tell you that I will see the little one in bed, and I will light my pipe, or I'll smash everything, and you along with it!"

"Help! help!" cried Madame de Fermont, who felt the door giving way under the violent push of the lame man.

Intimidated by the cries, the man stepped backward and shook his fist at Madame de Fermont, saying, "You shall pay me for this; I will return to-night—I'll catch hold of your tongue, and you cannot cry."

And the Big Cripple, as they called him at Ravageurs' Island, descended the stairs, uttering horrible oaths. Madame de Fermont, fearing that he might return, and seeing the lock broken, drew the table against the door to barricade it. Claire had been so alarmed at this horrible scene that she had fallen on her cot almost without emotion, with a violent attack of the nerves. Madame de Fermont, forgetting her own alarm, ran to her daughter, pressed her in her arms, made her drink a little water, and, with the most tender caresses, succeeded in calming her.

"Be composed, my poor child—the bad man has gone away." Then the wretched mother cried, with a touching accent, "Yet it is this notary who is the cause of all our troubles. Compose yourself, my child," resumed she, tenderly embracing her daughter; "this wretch is gone."

"Oh, mamma, if he should come back again? You see you have called for help, and no one has come. Oh! I entreat you; let us leave this house. I shall die here with fear."

"How you tremble! you have a fever!"

"No, no," said the young girl, to pacify her mother; "it is nothing; it is fright; it will pass over; and you, how are you? Give me your hands. How burning hot they are! Ah! you are suffering; you wish to conceal it from me."

"Do not think so: I am better than ever; it is the emotion which this man has caused me which makes me thus. I slept on the chair very soundly; I only awoke when you did."

"Yet, mamma, your poor eyes are very red, much inflamed!"

"Ah! well, my child, on a chair sleep is not so refreshing, you know!"

"Really, do you not suffer?"

"No, no, I assure you; and you?"

"Nor I; only I tremble still from fear. I entreat you, mamma, let us leave this house."

"And where shall we go to? You know with how much trouble we found this wretched place; and, besides, we have paid two weeks in advance; they will not return us our money; and we have so little left—so little, that we should manage as closely as possible."

"Perhaps some day M. de Saint Remy will answer your letter."

"I no longer hope it; it is so long since I have written."

"He might not have received your letter: why do you not write him again? From hence to Angers is

not so far; we shall soon have an answer."

"My poor child, you know how much this has cost me already."

"What do you risk? he is so good, notwithstanding his roughness. Was he not one of my father's old friends, and, besides, he is our relation."

"But he is poor himself; his fortune is very small. Perhaps he does not reply, to avoid the mortification of being obliged to refuse us."

"But if he has not received your letter, mamma?"

"And if he has received it, my child; of two things choose one: either he is in such a situation that he cannot come to our aid, or he feels no interest for us; then why expose ourselves to a refusal or a humiliation?"

"Come, courage, mamma, we have one hope left. Perhaps this morning will bring us a happy answer."

"From Lord d'Orbigny?"

"Without doubt. This letter, of which you formerly made a draught, was so simple, so touching—exposed so naturally our misfortunes, that he will have pity on us. Really, I do not know what tells me you are wrong to despair of assistance."

"He has so little reason to interest himself about us: he had, it is true, formerly known your father, and I had often heard my brother speak of Lord d'Orbigny as of a man with whom he had been on friendly terms before he left Paris with his young wife."

"It is just on that account that I have hopes; he has a young wife, she will be compassionate; and, besides, in the country one can do so much good. He will take you, I suppose, for housekeeper; I will take care of the linen. Since Lord d'Orbigny is very rich, in a large house there is always employment."

"Yes; but we have so little right to his interest. We are so unfortunate."

"That is frequently a title in the eyes of charitable people. Let us hope that Lord d'Orbigny and his wife are so."

"Well, in case we need expect nothing from him, I will overcome my false shame, and will write to the Duchess de Lucenay—this lady of whom M. de Saint Remy spoke so often, whose generosity and good heart he so often praised. Yes, the daughter of the Prince de Noirmont. He knew her when she was very small, and he treated her almost as his child, for he was intimately connected with the prince. Madame de Lucenay must have many-acquaintances; she could, perhaps, find us a place."

"Doubtless, mamma, but I understand your reserve; you do not know her at all, while my poor father and uncle knew Lord d'Orbigny a little."

"Finally, in the case that Madame d'Orbigny can do nothing for us, I will have recourse to a last resource."

"What is it, mamma?"

"It is a very weak one—a very foolish hope, perhaps; but why not try it? the son of M. de Saint Remy is—-"

"M. de Saint Remy has a son!" cried Claire, with astonishment.

"Yes, my child, he has a son."

"He never spoke of him—he never came to Angers."

"True, for reasons you cannot know. M. de Saint Remy, having left
Paris fifteen years ago, has not seen his son since."

"Fifteen years without seeing his father! can it be possible?"

"Alas! yes, you see. I tell you that the son of M. de Saint Remy, being well known in the fashionable world, and very rich—"

"Very rich! and his father is poor?"

"All the fortune of M. de Saint Remy, the son, came from his mother."

"But no matter; how can he leave his father—"

"His father would accept nothing from him."

"Why is that?"

"This is once more a question to which I cannot reply, my dear child; but I heard my poor brother say that the generosity of this young man was generally praised. Young and generous, he ought to be good. Thus, learning from me that my husband was the intimate friend of his father, perhaps he might interest himself in procuring us some work or employment; he has so many brilliant and numerous relations, that this would be easy."

"And then we could find out from him, perhaps, if M. de Saint Remy, his father, should have left Angers before you wrote to him; that would explain his silence."

"I believe that M. de Saint Remy, my child, has no intercourse with his father. In fine, it is only to try."

"Unless M. d'Orbigny should answer you in a favorable manner; and I repeat it, I do not know why, but, in spite of myself, I have hope."

"But already many days have elapsed, my child, since I have written, and nothing—nothing yet. A letter put in the office before four o'clock in the afternoon, arrives the next morning at Aubiere; five days have now passed since we might have received an answer."

"Perhaps he is thinking, before he writes, in what way he can be useful to us."

"God hear you, my child!"

"It appears very plain to me, mamma, if he could do nothing for us, he would have informed you at once."

"Unless he will do nothing at all."

"Ah, mamma, can it be possible? not deign to answer us, and leave us to hope four days, eight days perhaps—for when one is unfortunate they hope always."

"Alas! my child, there is sometimes so much indifference for the woes which one does not know!"

"But your letter."

"My letter cannot give him an idea of our troubles, of our sufferings of each moment. Can my letter picture to him our unfortunate life, our humiliations of every description, our existence in this frightful house, the alarm we have experienced even just now? Can my letter describe to him the horrible future which awaits us, if—but stop, my child, do not let us speak of this. Mon Dieu! you tremble—you are cold."

"No, mamma; pay no attention to it; but tell me, suppose everything fails, that the little money which remains in that trunk is spent, can it be possible that in a rich place like Paris we should both die of hunger and misery, for want of work, and because a bad man has taken what you had?"

"Hush, poor child."

"But, mamma, could It be?"

"Alas!"

"But God, who knows all, who can do all, how could He abandon us, He whom we have not offended?"

"I entreat you, my child, do not have such gloomy ideas; I would rather see you hope, even against hope. Come, rouse me up with your dear illusions; but I am but too apt to be discouraged, you know well."

"Yes, yes; let us hope; it is better. The nephew of the porter will soon return from the post-office with a letter. One more errand to pay from your little treasure, and through my fault. If I had not been so feeble to-day and yesterday, we could have gone ourselves, as we did before, but you would not leave me alone here to go yourself."

"Could I, my child? Judge then, just now this wretch who broke in the door, if you had been alone."

"Oh! mamma, hush; only to think of it makes me shudder."

At this moment some one knocked sharply at the door.

"Heavens, it is he," cried Madame de Fermont, and she pushed with all her strength the table against the door. Her fears, however, ceased when she heard the voice of Micou.

"Madame, my nephew, Andre, has come from the post-office. It is a letter with an X and a Z for address; it comes from a distance. There are eight sous postage and the commission—it is twenty sous."

"Mamma, a letter from the country; we are saved; it is from M. de Saint Remy or M. d'Orbigny. Poor mother, you shall suffer no more, no longer be uneasy about me; you shall be happy. God is just—God is good!" cried the young girl, and a ray of hope lighted up her sweet and charming face.

"Oh! sir, thank you; give—give me quickly," said Madame de Fermont, pushing back the table and half opening the door.

"It is twenty sous, madame," said the fence, showing the letter so impatiently desired.

"I am going to pay you, sir."

"Oh! madame, there is no hurry. I am going to the roof; in ten minutes I will descend, and take the money as I pass." Micou handed the letter to Madame de Fermont, and disappeared.

"The letter is from Normandy. On the stamp is *Aubiers*; it is from M. d'Orbigny!" cried Madame de Fermont examining the address.

"Well, mamma, was I right?"

"Oh, how my heart beats! Our good or bad fortune is, however, here," said Madame de Ferment, in a faltering voice, showing the letter.

Twice her trembling hand approached the seal to break it. She had not the courage. Can one hope to paint the terrible anguish suffered by those who, like Madame de Fermont, await from a letter hope or despair?

The burning and feverish emotion of a player whose last pieces of gold are staked on a single card, and who, breathless, the eye inflamed, awaits the decisive throw which saves or ruins him forever: this emotion, so violent, would hardly give an idea of the terrible anguish of which we speak. In an instant the soul is lifted up with the most radiant hopes, or plunged into the blackest despair. The unfortunate being passes in turn through the most contrary emotions; ineffable feelings of happiness and gratitude toward the generous heart which had pity on his sorrows—a sad and bitter resentment against the selfish or indifferent.

"What weakness!" said Madame de Fermont, with a sad smile, seating herself on the bed of her daughter: "once more, my poor Claire, our fate is there. I burn to know it, and I dare not. If it is a refusal, alas! it will be always soon enough."

"And if it should be a promise of succor? say, mamma; if this poor little letter contains good and consoling words, which will assure us as to the future, in promising us a modest employ in the house of M. d'Orbigny, each minute we lose, is it not a moment of happiness lost?"

"Yes, my child; but if, on the contrary—"

"No, mamma; you are mistaken, I am sure of it—when I told you that M. d'Orbigny would not have waited, so long to answer your letter, except to give you a favorable answer. Let me look at the letter, mamma; I am sure to guess, only from the writing, if the news is good or bad. Hold, I am sure of it now," said Claire, taking the letter; "you have only to look at the bold, good, and strong hand, to see that the writer must be accustomed to give to those who suffer."

"I entreat you, Claire, no more of these foolish hopes, or I can never open the letter."

"My God! good little mamma, without opening it I can tell you what it contains; listen: 'Madame, your condition and that of your daughter is so worthy of interest, that I beg you will have the goodness to come immediately to me, in case you would like to take charge of my house.'"

"My child, once more I entreat you—no insane hopes; the reverse will be frightful. Come, courage," said Madame de Fermont, taking the letter from her daughter, and preparing to break the seal.

"Courage for you—very well!" said Claire, smiling, and carried away by a feeling of confidence so natural at her age. "As for me, I have no need of it: I am so sure of what I advance. Stop, do you wish me to open the letter? shall I read it? give it me, timid mamma."

"Yes—I would rather—here. But no, no; it is better that I should." Madame de Fermont broke the seal with indescribable emotion. Her daughter, also, in spite of her apparent confidence, could hardly breathe.

"Read it aloud, mamma," said she.

"The letter is not long; it is from the Countess d'Orbigny," said
Madame de Fermont looking at the signature.

"So much the better; it is good. Do you see, mamma, this excellent young lady has been pleased to answer you herself."

"We shall see."

"MADAME-M. le Comte d'Orbigny, very much indisposed for some time past, could not reply to you during my absence."

"You see, mamma, it was not his fault."

"Listen, listen."

"Having arrived this morning from Paris, I hasten to write to you, madame, after having conferred on the subject of your letter with M. d'Orbigny. He has but a faint recollection of the relation which you suppose to have existed between him and your brother. As to the name of your husband, madame, it is not unknown to M. d'Orbigny; but he cannot recollect under what circumstances he heard it mentioned. The pretended spoliation, of which so lightly you accuse M. Jacques Ferrand, whom we have the good fortune to have for a notary, is, in the eyes of M. d'Orbigny, a cruel calumny, of which, doubtless, you have not counted the bearing. My husband, as well as myself, madame, know and admire the well-known probity of the respectable and pious man you attack so blindly. This is to inform you, madame, that M. d'Orbigny, feeling, doubtless, for the unfortunate position in which you are placed, and of which it is not in his province to find out the real cause, finds it out of his power to assist you.

"Be pleased to receive, madame, with this expression of the regrets of
M. d'Orbigny the assurance of my most distinguished sentiments.

"COMTESSE D'ORSIGNY."

The mother and daughter looked at each other, incapable of uttering a word.

Micou knocked at the door and said, "Madame, can I come in for the postage and commission? It is twenty sous."

"Oh! it is right; such good news! well worth what we spend in two days for our living," said Madame de Fermont, with a bitter smile; and leaving the letter on the bed, she went toward an old trunk without a lock, stooped down, and opened it. "We are robbed!" cried the unhappy woman, with horror. "Nothing —no more;" added she, in a mournful tone. And powerless, she leaned on the trunk.

"What do you say, mamma? The bag of money?"

But Madame de Fermont arose quickly, went out of the chamber, and, addressing the receiver, she said, with a sparkling eye, and cheeks colored with indignation and alarm, "Sir, I had a bag of money in this trunk; some one has robbed me—yesterday, doubtless, for I went out for an hour with my daughter. This money must be found. Do you hear? You are responsible."

"Some one robbed you! It is not true; my house is honest," said the receiver, harshly and insolently. "You say that, so as not to pay me the twenty sous."

"I tell you that this money, all that I possessed in the world, some one has stolen; it must be found, or I'll make a complaint. Oh! I shall spare nothing, respect nothing—I notify you!"

"That would be very fine of you, who have no papers; go and make your complaint; go at once! I defy you." The unhappy woman was overcome. She could not go out and leave her daughter alone in bed, since the fright she had received in the morning, and, above all, after the threats addressed to her by the receiver. He continued, "It is a cheat; you had no more a bag of silver than a bag of gold; you don't want to pay me the postage, hey? Good! all the same; when you pass before my door, I will tear off your old black shawl from your shoulders; it is very threadbare, but it is worth at least twenty sous."

"Oh! sir," cried Madame de Fermont, bursting into tears, "have pity on us. This small sum was all we had—my daughter and I; that stolen, we have nothing left—nothing, do you understand? nothing-but to

starve." "What would you have me to do? If it is true that you are robbed, and silver, too, it has been spent long since: the money—"

"Alas!"

"The lad who stole them would not have been simple enough to mark the money and keep it here, so that he might be caught—if it is some one in this house, which I do not believe—for, as I said only this morning to the uncle of the lady on the first floor, here is no place for plunder! if you are robbed, it is your misfortune. For should you make a hundred thousand complaints, you would not recover a sou—you would gain nothing by it, I tell you—believe me. Well," cried the receiver, seeing Madame de Fermont stagger, "what's the matter? You turn pale? Take care of your mother, she is sick," added he, advancing in time to save her from falling. The fictitious energy which had so long sustained her gave way under this new affliction.

"Mother, what is the matter?" cried Claire, still in bed.

The receiver, yet active and strong for his age, seized with a transitory feeling of pity, took Madame de Fermont in his arms, pushed open the door, and entered, saying, "Mademoiselle, pardon me for coming in while you are in bed, but I must bring in your mother; she has fainted; it can't last."

On seeing this man enter, Claire uttered a cry of alarm, and concealed herself as well as she could under the bedclothes. The receiver seated Madame de Fermont on the chair near the bed, and retired, leaving the door half-open, the Big Cripple having broken the lock.

One hour after this, the violent malady, which for so long a time had threatened Madame de Fermont, showed itself. Attacked by a violent fever and frightful delirium, the unfortunate woman was laid in the bed of her child, who, alone, alarmed and almost as ill as her mother, had neither money nor resources, and feared at any moment to see the ruffian enter who lived upon the same floor.

CHAPTER XXVII.

IN THE RUE DE CHAILLOT.

We will precede, by some hours, M. Badinot, who had gone in haste to the Viscount de Saint Remy. This last mentioned person lived in the Rue de Chaillot, occupying a charming little house in this solitary quarter, very near the Champs Elysees, the most fashionable promenade in Paris. It is useless to enumerate the advantages which M. de Saint Remy derived from a position so wisely chosen. We will only say, a person could enter his house very secretly, through a little garden-door, which opened on a small and very lonesome street.

In fine, by a miraculous chance, one of the finest horticultural establishments in Paris had also, in this out-of-the-way passage, an exit not much used. The mysterious visitors of Saint Remy, in case of a surprise or unlooked-for renconter, were armed with a pretext perfectly plausible and rural for having adventured in the lane. They went (they might say) to choose rare flowers at a celebrated florist's renowned for the beauty of his conservatories. These visitors, besides, would only have told half a falsehood; the viscount, with distinguished taste, had a charming green-house, which extended, in part, along the little street we have spoken of; the little door opened into this delicious winter garden, which reached a boudoir situated on the ground-floor of the house.

Madame de Lucenay had demanded a key of this little door. The interior of the mansion of Saint Remy presented a singular appearance; it was divided into two establishments—the ground-floor, where he received ladies; the first story, where he received gentlemen to dinner and play: in fine, those he called his friends.

Thus, on the ground-floor was a room which shone with gold, mirrors, flowers, silks, and lace; a small music-room, where were a harp and pianos (Saint Remy was an excellent musician), a cabinet of pictures and curiosities the boudoir communicating with the green-house, a dining-room, a bathing-room, and a small library. It is useless to say that all these rooms, furnished with exquisite taste, had for ornaments some Watteaus but little known, some Bouchers unheard of, groups of statuary in biscuit; and on their stands of jasper, a few valuable copies, in white marble, of some of the finest groups of the "Musee." Joined to this, in summer, for perspective, the deep shade of a verdant green; quiet, loaded with flowers, peopled with birds, watered by a little brook of living water, which, before it

spreads itself over the short grass, falls from a black and rustic rock, shining like a ribbon of silver gauze, and is lost in a pearly wave, in a limpid basin, where two fine swans show their graceful forms.

And when night came, calm and serene, how much shade, how much perfume, what silence in sweet-scented groves, whose thick foliage served as a canopy to the rustic sofas made of reeds and Indian mats.

In the winter, on the contrary, except the glass which opened into the conservatory, all was closed; the transparent silk of the blinds, the heavy mass of lace and muslin curtains, rendered the light still more mysterious; on every disposable place large masses of exotics seemed to spring out of vases glittering with gold and enamel.

Such was the viscount. At Athens he would have been, doubtless, admired, exalted, deified, as the equal of Aleibiades; at the time of which we speak, the viscount was nothing more than an unworthy forger, a miserable cheat.

The first story had an entirely different appearance, altogether masculine. There was nothing coquettish, nothing feminine; the furniture was of a style simple and serene; for ornaments, fire-arms, pictures of race-horses, which had earned for the viscount a good number of gold and silver vases, placed on the tables; the *tabogie* (smoking-room) and the saloon for play joined a lively-looking dining-room, where eight persons (the number always strictly limited when it was a question of a choice meal) had often appreciated the excellence of the cook, and the not less excellent merit of the cellar, before commencing with him some games of whist for five or six hundred louis, or to rattle the noisy dice box.

The apartments being thus thrown open to the reader, he will now please to follow us to more familiar regions, to enter the carriage court, and mount the little staircase which leads to the very comfortable room of Edward Patterson, chief of the stables.

This illustrious coachman had invited to breakfast M. Boyer, confidential valet de chambre of the viscount. A very pretty English servant-girl having retired, after having brought in a silver teapot, our two gentlemen were left alone.

Edward was about forty years of age; never did a more skillful or fatter coachman cause his seat to groan under a rotundity more imposing, nor to ornament with a powdered wig a face more rubicund, nor to collect more elegantly, in his left hand, the quadruple ribbons of a four-in-hand; as good a judge of horses as Tattersall of London, having been, in his youth, as good a trainer as the celebrated elder Chifney, the viscount had found in Edward a rare thing, an excellent coachman and a man very capable of directing the training of some race-horses which he had had for wagers. Edward, when he did not display his sumptuous brown and silver livery on the emblazoned hammer-cloth of his seat, looked very much like an honest English farmer; it is under this guise we now shall present him to our readers, adding, that in his broad and red face one could easily perceive the diabolical and unmerciful cunning of a horse-jockey.

M. Boyer, his guest, the confidential valet, was a tall, slender man, with gray hair, rather bald, and with a sly, cool, discreet, and reserved expression; he used very choice language, had polite, easy manners, rather literary, political opinions of the Conservative stamp, and could creditably play his part of first violin in a quartet of amateurs; at short intervals he took, with the best grace in the world, a pinch of snuff from a golden box mounted with fine pearls, after which he brushed negligently, with the back of his hand, the folds of his fine linen shirt, quite as fine as that of his master.

"Do you know, my dear Edward," said Boyer, "that your servant, Betty, makes quite a supportable plain cook?"

"She is a good girl," said Edward, who spoke French perfectly, "and I shall take her with me if I should decide on housekeeping; and on this subject, since we are here alone, my dear Boyer, let us talk business; you understand it very well."

"Why, yes, a little," said Boyer, modestly, and taking a pinch of snuff. "That is learned so naturally, when one occupies himself with the affairs of others."

"I have then, very important advice to ask of you; it is on this account that I begged the favor of your company to a cup of tea this morning."

"Quite at your service, my dear Edward."

"You know that besides the race-horses, I had a contract with my lord for the complete maintenance of his stables, cattle, and people; that is to say, eight horses and five or six grooms and jockeys, for the sum of twenty-four thousand francs a year, my wages included."

"It was reasonable."

"During four years, my lord punctually paid me; but about the middle of last year he said to me, 'Patterson, I owe you about twenty-four thousand francs; how much do you estimate, at the lowest price, my horses and vehicles?' 'My lord, the eight horses would not sell for less than three thousand francs each, one with the other, and then they would be given away' (and it is true, Boyer, for the phaeton pair cost five hundred guineas), 'that would make twenty-four thousand francs for the horses. As to the carriages, there are four, say twelve thousand francs, which, in all, would make thirty-six thousand francs.' 'Well,' answered my lord, 'buy them all from me at this price, on condition that, for the twelve thousand francs remaining after your claim is paid, you will keep and leave at my disposition, horses, servants and carriages for six months.'"

"And you wisely agreed to the bargain? It was a golden affair."

"Certainly it was; in two weeks the six months will have expired, and I enter into possession."

"Nothing can be plainer. The papers were drawn up by M. Badinot, the viscount's agent. In what have you need of my advice?"

"What ought I to do? Sell the establishment on account of my lord's departure (and it will sell well), or shall I set up as a horse-dealer, with my stable, which will make a fine beginning? What do you advise?"

"I advise you to do what I shall do myself."

"How?"

"I am in the same position that you are."

"How?"

"My lord detests details. When I came here I had, through economy, and by inheritance, some sixty thousand francs. I paid the expenses of the house, as you did the stables. About the same time that you did, I found myself in advance some twenty thousand francs; and for those who furnished the supplies, some sixty thousand. Then the viscount proposed to me, as he did to you, to reimburse myself by buying of him the furniture of the house, comprising the plate—which is fine—the pictures, and so on, the whole estimated at the very lowest price, one hundred and forty thousand francs. There were eighty thousand francs to pay; with the remainder I engaged, as long as it lasted, to defray the expenses of the table, servants, and so forth, and for nothing else: it was a condition of the bargain."

"Because that on these expenses you would gain something more."

"Necessarily; for I have made arrangements with those who furnish the supplies that I will not pay until after the sale," said Boyer, taking a huge pinch of snuff, "so that at the end of this month—"

"The furniture is yours, as the horses and carriages are mine."

"Evidently. My lord has gained by this, to live as he always liked to live, to the last moment—as a tip-top don—in the very teeth of his creditors, for furniture, silver, horses, vehicles, all had been paid for at his coming of age, and had become my property and yours."

"Then my lord is ruined?"

"In five years."

"And how much did he inherit?"

"Only a poor little million, cash down," said M. Boyer, quite disdainfully, taking another pinch of snuff. "Add to this million about two hundred thousand francs of debts, it is passable. It is then, to tell you, my dear Edward, that I have had an idea of letting this house, admirably furnished as it is, to some English people. Some of your compatriots would have paid well for it."

"Without doubt. Why do you not do it?"

"Yes, but I fancy things are risky, so I have decided to sell. My lord is so well known as a connoisseur, that everything would bring a double price, so that I should realize a round sum. Do as I shall, Edward; realize, realize, and do not adventure your earnings in speculations. You chief coachman of the Viscount de Saint Remy! It will be, who can get you. Only yesterday some one spoke to me of a minor just of age, a cousin of the Duchess de Lucenay, young Duke de Montbrison, arrived from Italy with his

tutor, and about seeing life. Two hundred and fifty thousand livres income, in good land; and just entering into life—twenty years old. All the illusions of confidence—all the infatuation of expense—prodigal as a prince. I know the intendant. I can tell you this in confidence: he has already nearly agreed with me as first valet de chambre. He countenances me, the flat!" And M. Boyer shrugged his shoulders again, having recourse to his snuff-box.

"You hope to foist him out?"

"Rather! he is imbecile or impertinent. He puts me there as if he had no fear of me! Before two months are over I shall be in his place."

"Two hundred and fifty thousand livres income!" said Edward, reflecting, "and a young man. It is a good seat."

"I will tell you what there is to do. I will speak for you to my protector," said M. Boyer, ironically. "Enter there—it is a fortune which has roots, to which one can hang on for a long time. Not this miserable million of the viscount's—a real snowball—one ray of Parisian sun, and all is over. I saw here that I should only be a bird of passage: it is a pity, for this house does us honor; and up to the last moment, I will serve my lord with the respect and esteem which are his due."

"My dear Boyer, I thank you, and accept your proposition; but suppose I was to propose to the young duke this stable? It is all ready; it is known and admired by all Paris."

"Exactly so; you might make a mint."

"But why do you not propose this house to him, so admirably furnished?
What can he find better?"

"Edward, you are a man of mind; it does not surprise me, but you give me an excellent idea. We must address ourselves to my lord, he is so good a master that he would not refuse to speak for us to the young duke. He can tell him that, leaving for the Legation of Gerolstein, where he is an *attache*, he wishes to dispose of his whole establishment. Let us see: one hundred and sixty thousand francs for the house, all furnished, plate and pictures; fifty thousand francs for the stables and carriages; that makes two hundred and thirty thousand to two hundred and forty thousand francs. It is an excellent affair for a young man who wants everything. He would spend three times this amount before he could get anything half so elegant and select together as this establishment; for it must be acknowledged, Edward, there is no one can equal my lord in knowing how to live."

"And horses!"

"And good cheer! Godefroi, his cook, leaves here a hundred times better than when he came. My lord has given him excellent counsels— has enormously refined him."

"Besides, they say my lord is such a good player."

"Admirable! Gaining large sums with even more indifference than he loses; and yet I have never seen any one lose more gallantly."

"What is he going to do now?"

"Set out for Germany, in a good traveling carriage, with seven or eight thousand francs, which he knows how to get. Oh! I feel no embarrassment about my lord: he is one who always falls on his feet, as they say."

"And he has no more money to inherit?"

"None; for his father has only a small competency."

"His father?"

"Certainly."

"My lord's father is not dead?"

"He was not about five or six months since. We wrote to him for some family papers."

"But he never comes here?"

"For a good reason. These fifteen years he has lived in the country, at Angers."

"But my lord never goes to see him?"

"His father?"

"Yes."

"Never, never—not he!"

"Have they quarreled?"

"What I am going to tell you is no secret, for I had it from the confidential agent of the Prince de Noirmont."

"The father of Madame de Lucenay?" said Edward, with a cunning and significant look, of which Boyer, faithful to his habits of reserve and discretion, took no notice, but resumed, coldly:

"The Duchess de Lucenay is the daughter of the Prince de Noirmont; the father of my lord was intimately connected with the prince. The duchess was then very young, and Saint Remy the elder treated her as familiarly as if she had been his own child. Notwithstanding his sixty years, he is a man of iron character, courageous as a lion, and of a probity that I shall permit myself to designate as marvelous. He possessed almost nothing, and had married, from love, the mother of the viscount, a young person rather rich, who brought a million, at the christening of which we have just had the honor to assist," and Boyer made a low bow. Edward did the same.

"The marriage was very happy until the moment when my lord's father found, as was said, by chance, some devilish letters, which proved evidently that, during an absence, some three or four years after his marriage, his wife had had a tender weakness for a certain Polish count."

"That often happens to the Poles. When I lived with the Marquis de Senneval, Madame the Marchioness—*une enragee*—"

Boyer interrupted his companion. "You should know, my dear Edward, the alliances of our great families before you speak, otherwise you reserve for yourself cruel mistakes."

"How?"

"The Marchioness of Senneval is the sister of the Duke of Montbrison, where you desire to engage."

"Oh!—the devil!"

"Judge of the effect if you had spoken of her in this manner before the envious or detractors: you would not have remained twenty-four hours in the house."

"It is true, Boyer. I will try to know the alliances."

"I resume. The father of my lord discovered, then, after twelve or fifteen years of a marriage until then happy, that he had reason to complain of a Polish count. Fortunately, or unfortunately, the viscount was born nine months after his father, or rather, Saint Remy had returned from this fatal journey, so that he could not be certain whether it was his child or not. Nevertheless, the count separated at once from his wife, not wishing to touch a sou of the fortune she had brought him, and retired to the country, with about eighty thousand francs which he possessed; but you shall see the rancor of this diabolical character. Although the outrage was dated back fifteen years when he discovered it, yet he set off, accompanied by M. de Fermont, one of his relations, in pursuit of the Pole, and found him at Venice, after having sought for him in almost all the cities of Europe."

"What an obstinate!"

"A devilish rancor, I tell you, my dear Edward! At Venice, a terrible duel was fought, in which the Pole was killed. All was done fairly; but, my lord's father showed, they say, such ferocious joy at seeing the Pole mortally wounded, that his relation, M. de Fermont, was obliged to drag him away; the count wishing to see, as he said, his enemy expire under his eyes."

"What a man! what a man!"

"The count returned to Paris, went to the house of his wife, announced to her that he had just returned from killing the Pole, and left her. Since then, he has never seen her nor his son, but has lived at Angers, like a real 'wehr-wolf' as they say, with what remains of his eighty thousand francs, well curtailed, as you may suppose, by his race after this Pole. At Angers he sees no one, except the wife and daughter of his relation, M. de Fermont, who has been dead for some years. And, besides, it would seem as if this was an unfortunate family, for the brother of Madame de Fermont blew his brains out a few weeks since, it is said."

"And the viscount's mother?"

"He lost her a long time since. It is on that account that my lord, on his coming of age, has enjoyed the fortune of his mother. So you plainly see, my dear Edward, that as regards inheritance, my lord has nothing, or almost nothing, to expect from his father."

"Who besides must detest him?"

"He would never see him after the fatal discovery, persuaded that he is the son of the Pole."

The conversation of the two personages was interrupted by a footman of gigantic size, carefully powdered, although it was hardly eleven o'clock.

"His lordship has rung twice," said the giant.

Boyer appeared distressed at this neglect; he arose precipitately, and followed the servant with as much eagerness and respect as if he had not been the proprietor of the mansion of his master.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE OLD COUNT DE SAINT REMY.

Two hours had passed since Boyer had gone to attend the viscount, when the father of the last mentioned knocked at the gate of the house in the Rue de Chaillot.

The Count de Saint Remy was a man of tall stature, still active and vigorous, notwithstanding his age; the almost copper color of his skin contrasted strangely with the silvery whiteness of his beard and hair; his heavy, still black eyebrows overshadowed piercing but sunken eyes. Although, from a kind of misanthropy, he wore clothes quite rusty, there was in his whole appearance that which commanded respect. The door of his son's house flew open, and he entered. A porter in a grand livery of brown and silver, profusely powdered, and wearing silk stockings, appeared on the threshold of an elegant lodge, which had as much resemblance to the smoky den of the Pipelets as a cobbler's stall could have to the sumptuous shop of a fashionable "emporium."

"M. de Saint Remy?" demanded the viscount, in a low tone.

The porter, instead of replying, examined with much contempt the white beard, the threadbare coat, and the old hat of the stranger, who held in his hand a large cane.

"M. de Saint Remy?" repeated the count, impatiently, shocked at the impertinent examination of the porter.

"Not at home." So saying, Pipelet's rival drew the cord, and with a significant gesture, invited the unknown to retire.

"I will wait," said the count, and he passed on.

"Stay, friend! one does not enter that way into houses!" cried the porter, running after and taking him by the arm.

"How, scoundrel!" answered the old man, raising his cane; "you dare to touch me!"

"I will dare something else, if you do not walk out at once. I have told you that my lord was out, so walk off."

At this moment, Boyer, attracted by the sound of voices, made his appearance. "What is the matter?" demanded he.

"M. Boyer, this man will absolutely enter, although I have told him that my lord is out."

"Let us put a stop to this," replied the count, addressing Boyer; "I wish to see my son—-if he has gone out, I will wait."

We have said that Boyer was ignorant neither of the existence nor of the misanthropy of the father,

and sufficiently a physiognomist, he did not for a moment doubt the identity of the count, but bowed low to him, and answered, "If your lordship will be so good as to follow me, I am at his orders."

"Go on," said Saint Remy, who accompanied Boyer, to the profound dismay of the porter.

Preceded by the valet, the count arrived on the first story, and still following his guide, was ushered into a little saloon, situated immediately over the boudoir of the ground floor.

"My lord has been obliged to go out this morning," said Boyer, "and if your lordship will have the kindness to wait, it will not be long before he returns." And the valet disappeared.

Remaining alone, the count looked around him with indifference, until suddenly he discovered the picture of his wife, the mother of Florestan de Saint Remy. He folded his arms on his heart, held down his head, as if to avoid the sight of this victim, and walked about with rapid steps.

"And yet I am not certain—-he may be my son—-sometimes this doubt is frightful to me. If he is my son, then my abandoning him, my refusal ever to see him, are unpardonable. And then to think my name—of which I have ever been so proud—belongs to the son of a man whose heart I could have torn out! Oh! I do not know why I am not bereft of my senses when I think of it." Saint Remy, continuing to walk with agitation, raised mechanically the curtain which separated the saloon from Florestan's study and entered the apartment.

He had hardly disappeared for a moment, than a small door, concealed by the tapestry, opened softly, and Madame de Lucenay, wrapped in a shawl of green Cashmere, and wearing a very plain black velvet bonnet, entered the saloon which the count had just left. The duchess, as we have said before, had a key to the little private garden-door; not finding Florestan in the apartments below, she had supposed that, perhaps, he was in his study, and without any fear had come up by a small staircase which led from the boudoir to the first story. Unfortunately, a very threatening visit from M. Badinot had obliged him to go out precipitately.

Madame de Lucenay, seeing no one, was about to enter the cabinet, when the curtains were thrown back, and she found herself face to face with the father of Florestan. She could not restrain a cry of alarm.

"Clotilde!" cried the count, stupefied.

The duchess remained immovable, contemplating with surprise the old white-bearded man, so badly clothed, whose features did not appear altogether strange.

"You, Clotilde!" repeated the count, in a tone of sorrowful reproach, "you here—in my son's house?"

These last words decided Madame de Lucenay; she at length recognized the father of Florestan, and cried, "M. de Saint Remy!" Her position was so plain and significant, that the duchess disdained to have recourse to a falsehood to explain the motive of her presence in this house; counting on the paternal affection which the count had formerly shown her, she extended her hand, and said, with an air—gracious, cordial, and fearless—which belonged only to her, "Come, do not scold! you are my oldest friend! Do you remember, more than twenty years ago, you called me your dear Clotilde?"

"Yes, I called you thus, but—"

"I know in advance all that you will say to me; you know my motto; *What is, is; what shall be, shall be.*"

"Ah, Clotilde!"

"Spare me your reproaches; let me rather speak to you of my joy at seeing you! your presence recalls so many things; my poor father, in the first place; and then my fifteenth year. Ah! fifteen—sweet fifteen!"

"It was because your father was my friend, that—"

"Oh, yes!" answered the duchess, interrupting him, "he loved you so much! Do you remember he called you, laughingly 'Green Ribbon.' You always said to him, 'You will spoil Clotilde; take care!' and he would answer, embracing me, 'I believe I spoil her; and I must hurry and spoil her more, for soon fashion will carry her off, and spoil her in its turn.' Excellent father that I lost!"

A tear glistened in the fine eyes of Madame de Lucenay, and giving her hand to Saint Remy, she said to him, in an agitated voice, "True, I am happy, very happy to see you again; you awaken souvenirs so precious, so dear to my heart! If you have been in Paris for any time," continued Madame de Lucenay,

"it was very unkind in you not to come to see me; we should have talked so much of the past; for you know I begin to arrive at the age when there is a great charm in talking to old friends."

Perhaps the duchess could not have spoken with more nonchalance if she had been receiving a visit at Lucenay House.

Saint Remy could not refrain from saying, earnestly, "Instead of talking of the past, let us talk of the present. My son may come in at any moment, and—"

"No!" said Clotilde, interrupting him, "I have the key of the private door, and his arrival is always announced by a bell when he comes in by the gate; at this noise I shall disappear as mysteriously as I came, and leave you alone. What a sweet surprise you are going to cause him! you, who have for so long a time abandoned him!"

"Hold! I have reproaches to make you."

"To me, to me?"

"Certainly! What guide, what assistance had I on entering into society? and, for a thousand things, the counsels of a father are indispensable. Thus, frankly, it has been very wrong in you to—"

Here Madame de Lucenay, giving way to the peculiarity of her character, could not prevent herself from laughing heartily, and saying to the count: "You must avow that the position is at least singular, and that it is very piquant that I should preach to you!"

"It is rather strange; but I deserve neither your sermons nor your praises. I come to my son; but it is not on account of my son. At his age he can no longer need my counsels."

"What do you mean?"

"You must know for what reasons I detest society and hold Paris in horror!" said the count. "Nothing but circumstances of the last importance could have induced me to leave Angers, and, above all, to come here—in this house! But I have conquered my repugnance, and have recourse to every one who can aid me in researches of great interest to me."

"Oh! then," said Madame de Lucenay, with most affectionate eagerness, "I beg you dispose of me, if I can be of any use to you. Is there need of any applications? M. de Lucenay ought to have a certain influence: for, on the days when I go to dine with my great Aunt de Montbrison, he gives a dinner at home to some deputies; this is not done without some motive; this inconvenience must be paid for by some probable advantage. Once more, if we can serve you, command us. There is my young cousin, Duke de Montbrison, connected with all the nobility, perhaps he could do something? In this case, I offer him to you. In a word, dispose of me and mine: you know if I can call myself a devoted friend!"

"I know it; and I do not refuse your assistance; although, however—"

"Come, my dear *Alceste*, we are people of the world, let us act like such, whether we are here or elsewhere, it is of no import, I suppose, to the affair which interests you, and which now interests me extremely, since it is yours. Let us speak of this, and sincerely; I require it."

Thus saying, the duchess approached the fireplace, and, leaning against it, she put out the prettiest little foot in the world to warm it.

With perfect tact, Madame de Lucenay seized the occasion to speak no more of the viscount, and to converse with M. de Saint Remy on a subject to which he attached much importance.

"You are ignorant, perhaps, Clotilde," said the count, "that for a long time past I have lived at Angers?"

"No—I knew it."

"Notwithstanding the isolated state I sought, I had chosen this city, because one of my relations dwelt there, M. de Fermont, who, during my troubles, acted as a brother toward me, having acted as a second in a duel."

"Yes, a terrible duel; my father told me of it," said Madame de Lucenay, sadly; "but happily, Florestan is ignorant of this duel, and also of the cause that led to it."

"I was willing to let him respect his mother," answered the count,
and, suppressing a sigh, he continued, and related to Madame de
Lucenay the history of Madame de Fermont up to the time of her leaving

Angers for Paris.

That history, if the old count had known and related it all, would have run thus. Baron de Ferment's brother, ruined by concealed speculations, had left three hundred thousand francs with Jacques Ferrand. But when the baroness, upon her brother's suicide in desperation, and her husband's death, had claimed it from that honorable man, the notary had challenged her to produce proofs, of which she had not one, and had, moreover, met her with a demand for two thousand francs, a debt of the baron's to the notary. So she began to suffer every hardship from this abuse of trust. Presuming this, we let the count proceed:

"At the end of some time," said he, "I learned that the furniture of the house which she occupied at Angers was sold by her orders, and that this sum had been employed to pay some debts left by Madame de Fermont. Uneasy at this circumstance, I inquired, and learned vaguely that this unfortunate woman and her daughter were in distress—the victims, doubtless, of a bankruptcy. If Madame de Fermont could, in such an extremity, count on any one, it was on me. Yet I received no news from her. You cannot imagine my sufferings—my inquietude. It was absolutely necessary that I should find them, to know why they did not apply to me, poor as I was. I set out for Paris, leaving a person at Angers, who, if by chance any information was obtained, was to advise me."

"Well?"

"Yesterday I had a letter from Angers; nothing was known. On arriving here I commenced my researches. I went first to the former residence of the brother of Madame de Fermont. Here they told me she lived by the Canal Saint Martin."

"And this—"

"Had been her lodgings; but she had left, and they were ignorant of her new abode. Since then all my inquiries have been useless; and I have come here, in hopes that she may have applied to the son of her old friend. I am afraid that even this will be in vain."

For some minutes Madame de Lucenay had listened to the count with redoubled attention; suddenly she said, "Truly, it would be singular if these should be the same as those Madame d'Harville is so much interested for."

"Who?" asked the count.

"The widow of whom you speak is still young, and of a noble presence?"

"She is so. But how do you know?"

"Her daughter handsome as an angel, and about sixteen?"

"Yes, yes!"

"And is named Claire?"

"Oh, in mercy, speak! where are they?"

"Alas, I know not!"

"You do not know?"

"A lady of my acquaintance, Madame d'Harville, came to me to ask if I know a widow who had a daughter named Claire, and whose brother committed suicide. Madame d'Harville came to me because she had seen these words, 'Write to Madame de Lucenay,' traced on the fragment of a letter which this unhappy woman had written to a person unknown, whose aid she entreated."

"She intended to write to you! Why?"

"I am ignorant; I do not know her."

"But she knew you!" cried Saint Remy, struck with a sudden idea.

"What do you say?"

"A hundred times she has heard me speak of your father, of you, of your generous and excellent heart. In her trouble, she must have thought of you."

"This can be thus explained."

"And how did Madame d'Harville get possession of this letter?"

"I am ignorant; all I know is, that, without knowing where this poor mother and child had taken refuge, she was, I believe, on their track."

"Then I count upon you, Clotilde, to introduce me to Madame d'Harville; I must see her to-day."

"Impossible. Her husband has just fallen a victim to a frightful accident. A gun, which he did not know was loaded, went off while in his hands, and killed him on the spot."

"Oh, this is horrible!"

"She departed immediately, to pass her first mourning at her father's in Normandy."

"Clotilde, I conjure you to write to her to-day; ask for whatever information she may possess. Since she interests herself for these poor women, tell her she cannot have a warmer auxiliary than me; my sole desire is to find the widow of my friend, and to partake with her and her daughter the little I possess. It is now my sole family."

"Always the same—-always generous and devoted! Count on me; I will write to-day to Madame d'Harville. Where shall I send her answer?"

"To Asnieres, poste restante."

"What eccentricity! Why do you lodge there and not at Paris?"

"I hate Paris, on account of the souvenirs it awakens," answered Saint Remy, with a gloomy air. "My old physician, Dr. Griffin, has a small country-house on the banks of the Seine, near Asnieres; he does not live there in winter, and offered it to me; it is almost a suburb of Paris; I could, after my researches, find there the solitude which pleases me; I have accepted."

"I will write you, then, at Asnieres; I can, besides, give you now some information which may perhaps serve you, which I received from Madame d'Harville. The ruin of Madame de Fermont has been caused by the roguery of the notary who had the charge of her fortune. He denies the deposit."

"The scoundrel! What is the fellow's name?"

"Jacques Ferrand," said the duchess, without being able to conceal her desire to laugh.

"What a strange being you are, Clotilde! There is nothing in all this but what is serious and sad, yet you laugh!" said the count, surprised and vexed.

"Pardon me, my friend," answered the duchess; "the notary is such a singular man, and they tell such strange things of him. But, seriously, if his reputation as an honest man is no more merited than his reputation as a pious man (and I declare this usurped), he is a wretch!"

"And he lives—-"

"Rue du Gentier."

"He shall have a visit from me. What you have told me coincides with certain suspicions."

"What suspicions?"

"From what I can learn respecting the death of the brother of my poor friend, I am almost led to believe that this unfortunate man, instead of committing suicide, has been the victim of an assassination."

"Goodness! what makes you suppose this?"

"Several reasons, too long to tell you. I leave you now."

"You leave without seeing Florestan?"

"This interview would be too painful for me—you must comprehend. I only braved it in the hopes of obtaining some information about Madame de Fermont, wishing to neglect no means to find her. Now adieu!"

"Oh, you are without pity!"

"Do you not know?"

"I know that your son has never had more need of your counsels."

"Is he not rich—happy?"

"Yes; but he does not know mankind. Blindly prodigal, because he is confiding and generous—in everything, everywhere, and always truly noble. I fear he is abused. If you knew what a noble heart he has! I have never dared to lecture him on the subject of his expense and extravagance; in the first place, because I am at least as foolish as he is; and then for other reasons; but you on the contrary could—"

Madame de Lucenay did not finish; suddenly she heard the voice of Florestan de Saint Remy. He entered precipitately into the cabinet adjoining the saloon. After having quickly shut the door, he said, in an agitated voice, to some one who accompanied him, "But it is impossible!"

"But I repeat to you," answered the clear and piercing voice of M. Badinot, "I repeat to you, that, without this, in four hours you will be arrested. For if he has not this money, our man will go and make a complaint to the attorney-general, and you know the penalty of a forgery like this—the galleys, my poor lord!"

It is impossible to describe the look which Madame de Lucenay and the father of Florestan exchanged on hearing these terrible words.

CHAPTER XXIX.

FATHER AND SON.

On hearing these fearful words addressed to his son by Badinot, the count changed color, and clung to a chair for support. His venerable and respected name dishonored by a man whom he had reason to doubt was his son? His first feeling overcome, the angry looks of the old man, and a threatening gesture which he made as he advanced toward the study revealed a resolution so alarming that Madame de Lucenay caught him by the hand, stopped him, and said, in a low tone, with the most profound conviction, "He is innocent; I swear to you! Listen in silence."

The count stood still; he wished to believe what the duchess had said was true.

She, on her part, was persuaded of his honesty. To obtain new sacrifices from this woman, so blindly generous—sacrifices which alone had saved him from the threats of Jacques Ferrand—the viscount had sworn to Madame de Lucenay, that, dupe of a scoundrel from whom he had received in payment the forged bill, he ran the risk of being regarded as an accomplice of the forger, having himself put it in circulation.

Madame de Lucenay knew that the viscount was imprudent, prodigal, and careless; but never for a moment had she supposed him capable of an infamous action, not even the slightest indiscretion.

By twice lending him considerable sums under very peculiar circumstances, she had wished to render him a friendly service, the viscount only accepting this money on the express condition of returning it; for there was due to him, he said, more than twice this amount.

His apparent luxurious manner of living allowed her to believe it. Besides, Madame de Lucenay, yielding to her natural kind impulses, had only thought of being useful to Florestan, without any care whether he could repay or not. He affirmed it, and she did not doubt. In answering for the viscount's honor, in supplicating the old count to listen to the conversation of his son, the duchess thought that he was going to speak of the abuse of confidence of which he had been a victim, and that he would be thus entirely exculpated in the eyes of his father.

"Once more," continued Florestan, in an agitated voice, "I say this Petit Jean is a scoundrel; he assured me that he had no other bills than those I withdrew yesterday, and three days ago. I thought this one was in circulation: it was payable three months after date, at Adams & Co., London?"

"Yes, yes," said the clear and sharp voice of Badinot. "I know, my dear viscount, that you have adroitly managed your affairs; your forgeries were not to be discovered until you were far away. But you have been caught by those more cunning than yourself."

"Oh! it is very well to tell me this now, wretch that you are!" cried Florestan, furiously; "did you not yourself introduce this person to me, who has negotiated the paper?"

"Come, my dear aristocrat," answered Badinot, coldly, "be calm! You are very skillful in counterfeiting commercial signatures; it is really wonderful; but that is no reason why you should treat your friends with disagreeable familiarity. If you go on in this way—I leave you to arrange as you please."

"Do you think one can preserve calmness in such a position? If what you tell me is true—if this complaint is lodged against me to-day, I am lost."

"It is exactly as I tell you, unless you should have recourse again to your charming providence with the blue eyes."

"That is impossible."

"Then be resigned. It is a pity it was the last note! for twenty-five thousand paltry francs, to go and take the air of the south at Toulon—it is ridiculous, absurd, stupid! How could a cunning man like you suffer yourself to be thus cornered?"

"What is to be done? what is to be done? nothing here belongs to me; I have not twenty louis of my own."

"Your friends?"

"Oh! I owe to all who could lend me; do you think me such a fool as to have waited until to-day to ask them?"

"That is true; pardon me—come, let us talk tranquilly, it is the best way to arrive at a reasonable solution. Just now I wanted to tell you how you were attacked by those who were more cunning than yourself. You did not listen to me."

"Well, speak, if it can be of any use."

"Let us recapitulate: you said to me about two months since, 'I have about one hundred and thirteen thousand francs in bills on different banking-houses, which have some time to run; can you find means to negotiate them for me, my dear Badinot—'"

"Well! what next?"

"Stop! I asked to see them. Something told me that the bills were forgeries, although perfectly well done. I did not suspect that you, it is true, possessed a caligraphic talent so far advanced; but having the charge of your fortunes, ever since you had no more fortune, I knew you were completely ruined. I had drawn up the deed by which your horses, your carriages, the furniture of this hotel, belonged to Boyer and Patterson. It was not wonderful for me to be astonished at seeing you possess commercial securities of so much value, was it?"

"Do me the favor to spare me your astonishment and let us arrive at the facts."

"Here they are. I had not enough experience or timidity to care to meddle directly in affairs of that description; I recommended a third person to you, who, not less sharp-sighted than I am, suspected the game you wished to play."

"That is impossible-he would not have discounted these bills if he had thought them false."

"How much money did he give you for the one hundred and thirteen thousand francs?"

"Twenty-five thousand francs cash, and the remainder in debts to be recovered."

"And how much did you ever recover from these?"

"Nothing, you know well enough; they were imaginary; but he certainly risked twenty-five thousand francs."

"How unfledged you are, my dear lord! Having my commission of a hundred louis to receive, I took good care not to tell this third person the real state of your affairs. He thought you still quite rich, and he knew, besides, that you were adored by a great lady, who was very rich, and who would never have you in embarrassment; he was then pretty sure to get back what he advanced; he ran some risk, to be sure; but he also had a chance of making a great deal of money, and his calculation was a good one; for, the other day you paid him one hundred thousand francs to withdraw the forgery of fifty-eight thousand

francs, and yesterday thirty thousand francs for the second; for this last, he had been contented with receiving its real value. How you procured these thirty thousand francs yesterday may the devil run away with me if I know! for you are a man unique. So you see that at the end of the account, if Petit Jean forces you to pay the last draft for twenty-five thousand francs, he will have received from you one hundred and fifty-five thousand francs for twenty-five thousand francs which he paid you; now, I had reason to say that you were in the hands of those more cunning than yourself."

"But why did he tell me that this last bill, which he presented to-day, was negotiated?"

"Not to alarm you; he also had told you that, with the exception of the fifty-eight thousand francs, the others were in circulation; the first, once paid, yesterday came the second, and to-day the third."

"The scoundrel!"

"Listen to me, then: every one for himself, as a celebrated lawyer said, and I like the maxim. But let us talk coolly: this proves to you that Petit Jean (and, between us, I should not be surprised if, notwithstanding his holy reputation, Jacques Ferrand was half concerned in these speculations), this proves to you, I say, that Petit Jean, allured by your first payments, speculates on this last bill, quite sure that your friends will not allow you to be dragged before the judges. It is for you to see if these friends are so well used, so drained, that not another golden drop can be squeezed from them, for, if in three hours you have not the twenty-five thousand francs, my noble lord, you are caged."

"If you were to repeat this to me forever—"

"Perhaps you would consent to pluck a last feather from the wing of that generous duchess."

"I repeat to you, it must not be thought of. To find in three hours twenty-five thousand francs more, after all the sacrifices she has already made—it would be madness to think of it."

"To please you, fortunate mortal, one would try an impossibility."

"Oh! she has already tried it: this was to borrow one hundred thousand francs from her husband, and she succeeded; but these are experiments that cannot be tried twice. Let us see, my dear Badinot, until now you have never had any reason to complain of me. I have always been generous; try to obtain some delay from this miserable Petit Jean. You know I always can find means to recompense those who serve me; this last affair once hushed, I will take a new flight—you shall be content with me."

"Petit Jean is as inflexible as you are unreasonable."

"I!"

"Try only to interest once more your generous friend in your sad fate. The devil! Tell her right out the truth; not as you have already said, that you are the dupe, but that you are the forger himself."

"No, never will I make such an acknowledgment; it would be shame without any advantage."

"Do you prefer that she should learn it to-morrow by the 'Police Gazette'?"

"I have three hours left—I can fly."

"Where will you go without money? Judge now! on the contrary, this last forgery taken up, you will find yourself in a superb position; you would have no more debts. Come, come, promise me to speak once more to the duchess. You are such a rake, you know how to make yourself so interesting in spite of your faults; at the very worst, perhaps, you will be esteemed the less, or even no more, but you will be lifted out of this scrape. Come, promise me to see your friend, and I will run to Petit Jean, and do my best to obtain an hour or two more."

"Hell! must I drink of shame to the very dregs?"

"Come now! good luck—be tender, charming, fond; I run to Petit Jean: you will find me here until three o'clock; later it will no longer be in time: the public prosecutor's office is closed after four o'clock."

Badinot took his departure.

When the door was closed, Florestan was heard to cry, in profound despair, "Lost!"

During this conversation, which unmasked to the count the infamy of his son, and to Madame de Lucenay the infamy of the man whom she had so blindly loved, both remained immovable, scarcely

breathing, under the weight of this frightful revelation.

It would be impossible to describe the mute eloquence of the sorrowful scene which passed between this young woman and the count, when there was no longer any doubt of the crime of Florestan. Extending his arm toward the room where his son remained, the old man smiled with bitter irony, cast a withering look on Madame de Lucenay, and seemed to say to her:

"Behold him for whom you have braved all shame, made every sacrifice!
Behold him you have reproached me for abandoning!"

The duchess understood the look; for a moment she hung her head under the weight of her shame. The lesson was terrible.

Then by degrees, to the cruel anxiety which had contracted the features of Madame de Lucenay succeeded a kind of noble indignation. The inexcusable faults of this woman were at least palliated by the fidelity of her love, by the boldness of her devotion, by the grandeur of her generosity, by the frankness of her character, and by her inexorable aversion for everything that was cowardly and dishonest.

Still too young, too handsome, too much sought after, to experience the humility of having been made use of, this proud and decided woman, once the illusion of love having vanished, felt neither hatred nor anger; instantaneously, without any transition, a mortal disgust, an icy disdain, killed her affection, until then so lively; it was no longer a woman deceived by her lover, but it was the lady of fashion discovering that a man of her society was a cheat and a forger.

In supposing even that some circumstances might have extenuated the ignominy of Florestan, Madame de Lucenay would not have admitted them; according to her views, the man who overstepped certain limits of honor, either through vice or weakness, no longer existed in her eyes, honor being for her a question of existence or non-existence. The only sorrowful feeling experienced by the duchess, was excited by the terrible effect which this unexpected revelation produced on the count, her old friend. For some moments he appeared not to see nor hear; his eyes were fixed, his head hung down, his arms suspended, his paleness livid, and from time to time a convulsive sigh escaped from his bosom. With a man as resolute as he was energetic, such a state of dejection was more alarming than the most furious bursts of rage.

Madame de Lucenay looked at him with much anxiety. "Courage, my friend," said she to him, in a low tone, "for you, for me, for this man—I know what remains for me to do."

The old man looked at her fixedly; then, as if he had been aroused from his stupor by some violent shock, he raised his head, his features assumed a threatening appearance, and, forgetting that his son might hear him, he cried: "And I, also, for you, for me, for this man—I know what I have to do."

"Who is there?" cried Florestan, surprised.

Madame de Lucenay, fearing to meet the viscount, disappeared through the small door, and descended the private staircase.

Florestan, having again demanded who was there, and receiving no answer, entered the saloon.

The long beard of the old man changed him so much, he was so poorly dressed, that his son, who had not seen him for many years, did not at first recognize him; he advanced rapidly toward him with a menacing air, and said, "Who are you? What do you want here?"

"I am the husband of that woman!" answered the count, showing the portrait of Madame de Saint Remy.

"My father!" cried Florestan, retreating in alarm; and he endeavored to recall to mind the features so long forgotten. Erect, formidable, his looks irritated, his face purple with rage, his white hair thrown back, his arms crossed on his breast, the count, over-awed, confounded his son, who, with his head down, dared not to raise his eyes upon him. Yet Saint Remy, from some secret motive, made a violent effort to remain calm and to conceal his feelings of resentment.

"Father!" said Florestan, in a faltering voice, "you were there!" "I was there."

"You have heard—"

"All."

"Oh!" cried the viscount, mournfully, concealing his face in his hands.

There was a moment's pause. Florestan, at first as much astonished as vexed at the unexpected apparition of his father, soon began to think what he could make out of this incident. "All is not lost," said he to himself; "the presence of my father is a stroke of fate. He knows all; he will not have his name dishonored; he is not rich, but be must have more than twenty-five thousand francs. Let us play close—address, emotion, and a little tenderness. I will let the duchess alone, and I am saved!"

Then, giving to his charming features an expression of mournful dejection, moistening his eyes with the tears of repentance, assuming his most thrilling tones, his most pathetic manner, he cried, joining his hands with a gesture of despair: "Oh, my father: I am very unhappy! after so many years—to see you again, and at such a moment! I must appear so culpable to you! But deign to listen to me, I entreat you —I supplicate you; permit me, not to justify myself, but to explain to you my conduct; will you, my father?"

Old Saint Remy answered not a word: his features remained immovable: he seated himself, and with his chin resting on the palm of his hand, looked at his son in silence.

If Florestan had known the thoughts which filled the mind of his father with hatred, fury, and vengeance, alarmed at the apparent calmness of the count, he would not have tried to dupe him.

But, ignorant of the suspicions attached to his birth, ignorant of the fault of his mother, Florestan doubted not the success of his trick, believing he had only to soften a father who, at once a misanthrope and very proud of his name, would be capable, rather than see his name dishonored, to decide on any sacrifice.

"My father," he resumed timidly, "permit me to try, not to exculpate myself, but to tell you how, from involuntary misleadings, I have reached, almost in spite of myself, actions—infamous—I acknowledge." The viscount took the silence of his father for a tacit consent, and continued:

"When I had the misfortune to lose my mother—my poor mother, who loved me so well—I was not twenty. I found myself alone, without counsel, without protection. Master of a considerable fortune, accustomed to luxury from my childhood, I had made it a habit, a want. Ignorant of the difficulty of earning money, I lavished it without measure. Unfortunately—and I say unfortunately, because this ruined me—my expenses, foolish as they were, by their elegance were remarkable. By good taste I eclipsed people who were ten times richer than I was. This first success intoxicated me. I became a man of luxury as one becomes a warrior or a statesman; yes, I loved luxury, not from vulgar ostentation, but I loved it as the painter loves a picture, as the poet loves poetry; like every other artist, I was jealous of my work; and my work was my luxury. I sacrificed everything to its perfection. I wished it fine, grand, complete, splendidly harmonious in everything, from my stables to my table, from my dress to my house. I wished in everything to be a model of taste and elegance. As an artist, in fine, I was greedy of the applause of the crowd, and of the admiration of people of fashion; this success, so rare, I obtained."

In speaking thus, the features of Florestan lost by degrees their hypocritical expression; his eyes shone with a kind of enthusiasm; he told the truth; he had been at first reduced by this rather uncommon manner of understanding luxury. He looked inquiringly at his father; he thought he appeared rather softened.

He resumed, with growing warmth: "Oracle and regulator of the fashions, my praise or censure made the law; I was quoted, copied, extolled, admired, and that by the best company in Paris, that is to say, Europe, the world. The women partook of the general infatuation; the most charming disputed for the pleasure of coming to some very select fetes which I gave; and everywhere, and always, nothing was heard but of the incomparable elegance and exquisite taste of these fetes, which the millionaires could neither equal nor eclipse; in fine, I was the Glass of Fashion. This word will tell you all, my father, if you understand it."

"I understand it, and I am sure that at the galleys you will invent some refined elegance in the manner of carrying your chain, that will become the fashion in the yard, and will be called a la Saint Remy," said the old man, with bitter irony; then he added, "and Saint Remy is my name!"

It caused Florestan to exercise much control over himself to conceal the wound caused by this sarcasm.

He continued, in a more humble tone: "Alas! my father, it is not from pride that I recall the fact of this success; for, I repeat to you, this success ruined me. Sought after, envied, flattered, praised, not by interested parasites, but by people whose position much surpassed mine, and over whom I only had the advantage derived from elegance— which is to luxury what taste is to the arts—my head was turned; I did not calculate that my fortune must be spent in a few years; little did I heed it. Could I renounce this

feverish, dazzling life, in which pleasure succeeded to pleasure, enjoyments to enjoyments, fetes to fetes, intoxications of all sorts to enchantments of all sorts? Oh, if you knew, my father, what it is to be everywhere noticed as the hero of the day; to hear the whisperings which announce your entrance into a saloon; to hear the women say, 'It is he!—there he is!' Oh! if you knew——"

"I know," said the old man, interrupting his son, and without changing his position; "I know. Yes, the other day, in a public square, there was a crowd, suddenly I heard a noise, like that with which you are received when you go anywhere; then the looks of all, the women especially, were fixed on a very handsome young man, just as they are fixed on you, and they pointed him out, just as they do you, saying, 'It is he! there he is!' just exactly as they say of you."

"But this man, my father?"

"Was a forger they were placing in the pillory."

"Ah!" exclaimed Florestan, with suppressed rage; then, feigning profound affliction, he added: "My father, have you no pity—what can I say to you now? I do not seek to deny my faults—I only wish to explain to you the fatal cause of them. Ah, well! yes, should you again overwhelm me with cruel sarcasms, I will try to go to the end of this confession—I will try to make you understand this feverish vanity which has ruined me, because then, perhaps, you will pity me. Yes, for one pities a fool—and I was a fool. Shutting my eyes, I abandoned myself to the dazzling vortex, into which I dragged along with me the most charming women, the most amiable men. Stop myself— could I do it? As well say to the poet who exhausts himself, and whose genius is consuming his health, 'Pause in the midst of the inspiration which carries you away!' No! I could not; I—I! abdicate this royalty which I exercised, and return, ruined, ashamed, mocked, to the state of a plebeian—unknown; give this triumph to my rivals, whom I had until then defied, ruled, crushed! No, no, I could not! not voluntarily, at least. The fatal day came, when, for the first time, my money was wanting. I was as surprised as if this moment never could happen. Yet I had still my horses, my carriages, and the furniture of this house. My debts paid, I should still have sixty thousand francs— perhaps—what should I do with this trifle? Then, my father, I took the first step in infamy. I was still honest. I had only spent what belonged to me; but then I began to contract debts which I could not pay. I sold all I possessed to two of my people, in order to settle with them, and to be able, for six months longer, to enjoy this luxury which intoxicated me, in spite of my creditors. To provide for my wants at play and foolish expenses, I borrowed, in the first place, from the Jews; then, to pay the Jews, from my friends. These resources exhausted, commenced a new era of my life. From an honest man I had become a chevalier d'industrie, but I was not yet criminal. However, I hesitated. I wished to take a violent resolution. I had proved in several duels that I was not afraid of death. I thought I would kill myself."

"Indeed?" said the count, ironically.

"You do not believe me, my father?"

"It was too soon, or too late!" added the old man, quite immovable, and in the same attitude.

Florestan, thinking he had alarmed his father in speaking to him of his project of suicide, thought it necessary to get up the scene again for a little stage effect. He opened a closet and took from it a little green crystal vial, and said to the count, placing it on the mantelpiece: "An Italian quack sold me this poison."

"And—it was for yourself?" said the old man, still leaning on his elbow.

Florestan understood the bearing of his father's words. His face now expressed real indignation, for he spoke the truth. One day, he had had the idea of killing himself—an ephemeral fantasy; people of his stamp are too cowardly to resolve coldly and without witnesses upon death, which they will boldly meet in a duel through a point of honor. He cried, then, in a tone of truth, "I have fallen very low, but at least not so low as that, my father! It was for myself I reserved the poison!"

"And you were afraid?" said the count, without change of position.

"I confess it, I recoiled before this dreadful extremity; nothing was yet desperate, the persons whom I owed were rich, and could wait. At my age, with my relations, I hoped for a moment, if not to repair my fortune, at least to assure myself an honorable independent position in its place. Several of my friends, perhaps, less capable than myself had made rapid strides in diplomacy. I had a velleity of ambition. I had only to request, and I was attached to the legation of Gerolstein. Unfortunately, some days after this nomination, a gambling debt contracted with a man I hated placed me in the most cruel embarrassment. I had exhausted every resource. A fatal idea occurred to me. Believing myself certain of impunity, I committed an infamous action. You see, my father, I conceal nothing from you. I confess the ignominy of my conduct. I seek to extenuate nothing. One of two resolutions remains for me to take,

and I have now to decide which. The first is to kill myself, and to leave your name dishonored, for if I do not pay to-day even the twenty-five thousand francs, the complaint is made, the affair known, and, dead or living, I am ruined. The second means is to throw myself in the hands of my father, to say to you, save your son, save your name from infamy, and I swear to leave to-morrow for Africa, to enlist as a soldier, and either to be killed or to return some day honorably reinstated. What I now tell you, my father, is true. In face of the extremity which overwhelms me, I have no other way. Decide; either I die covered with shame, or thanks to you, I will live to repair my faults. These are not the threats and words of a young man, my father. I am now twenty-five; I bear your name; I have courage enough either to kill myself, or to become a soldier, for I will not go to the galleys."

The count arose.

"I will not have my name dishonored," said he coldly to Florestan.

"Oh, my father! my savior!" cried the viscount, warmly; and he was about to throw himself into the arms of his father, when he, with an icy gesture, checked the impulse.

"They wait for you until three o'clock, at the house of this man who has the forgery?"

"Yes, my father; and it is now two o'clock."

"Let us pass into your cabinet—give me something to write with."

"Here, my father." The count seated himself before the desk of his son, and wrote with a firm hand:

"I engage to pay this night, at ten o'clock, the 25,000 francs which are owed by my son.

"COUNT DE SAINT REMY."

"Your creditor insists upon having the money; notwithstanding his threats, this engagement of mine will make him consent to a new delay; he can go to Mr. Dupont, banker, in the Rue de Richelieu, No. 7, who will inform him of the value of this note."

"Oh, father! however can—"

"You may expect me to-night; at ten o'clock. I will bring you the money. Let your creditor be here."

"Yes, father, and after to-morrow, I start for Africa. You shall see if I am ungrateful. Then, perhaps, when I have reinstated myself, you will accept my thanks."

"You owe me nothing; I have said my name shall be no further dishonored; it shall not be," said M. de Saint Remy, calmly; and taking his cane, which he had placed on the bureau, he turned toward the door.

"Father, your hand at least!" said Florestan, in a supplicating tone.

"Here, to-night, at ten-o'clock," replied the count, refusing his hand. And he departed.

"Saved!" cried Florestan, joyfully, "saved!" then, after a moment's reflection, he added, "saved! almost. No matter; so far good. Perhaps to-night I will acknowledge the other thing; he is in train; he will not stop halfway and let his sacrifice be useless, because he refuses a second. Yet why tell him? Who will know it? Never mind; if nothing is discovered, I will keep the money that he will give me to pay this last debt. I had a great deal of trouble to move him, this devil of a man! The bitterness of his sarcasms made me doubt my success; but my threat of suicide, the fear of having his name dishonored, decided him; that was the lucky stroke. He is, doubtless, not so poor as he pretends to be, if he possesses a hundred thousand francs. He must have saved money, living as he does. Once more, I say his coming was a lucky chance. He has a cross look, but, at the bottom, I think he is a good fellow; but I must hasten to this bailiff." He rang the bell. Boyer appeared.

"Why did you not inform me that my father was here? you are very negligent."

"Twice I endeavored to speak to you when you came through the garden with M. Badinot; but, probably, preoccupied by your conversation with M. Badinot, you made a motion with the hand not to be interrupted. I did not permit myself to insist. I should be deeply wounded if my lord could believe me guilty of negligence."

"Very well; tell Edward to harness immediately Orion—no—Plower, to the cabriolet."

Boyer bowed respectfully; as he was about to retire, some one knocked at the door.

"Come in!" said Florestan.

A second valet appeared, holding in his hand a small salver. Boyer took hold of the salver with a kind of jealous officiousness, and came and presented it to the viscount, who took from it a rather voluminous envelope, sealed with black wax. The valets retired ceremoniously. The viscount opened the package. It contained twenty-five thousand francs, in treasury notes; with no other information.

"Decidedly," cried he, with joy, "the day is lucky—sacred! this time, completely saved. I shall go to the jeweler's—and yet—perhaps—no, let us wait—they can have no suspicion of me—twenty-five thousand francs are good to keep; pardieu! I was a fool ever to doubt my star; at the moment it seems most obscured does it not appear more brilliant than ever? But where does this money come from? the writing of the address is unknown to me; let me look at the seal—the cipher; yes, yes, I am not mistaken —an N and an L—it is Clotilde! How has she known?—and not a word—it is strange! How apropos! Oh I reflect—I made a rendezvous for this morning—these threats of Badinot upset me. I had forgotten Clotilde—after having waited some time, she has gone. Doubtless, this is sent as a delicate hint that she fears I shall forget her on account of my monetary embarrassments. Yes, it is an indirect reproach for not addressing myself to her as usual. Good Clotilde—always the same!—generous as a queen! What a pity to come again from her—still so handsome! Sometimes I regret it; but I have never asked her until, at the last extremity, I have been forced to it."

"The cabriolet is ready," said Boyer.

"Who brought this letter?"

"I am uninformed, my lord."

"Exactly—I will ask at the door; but tell me, is there no one below?" added the viscount, looking at Boyer in a significant manner.

"There is no longer any one, my lord."

"I was not deceived," thought Florestan. "Clotilde has waited for me, and has gone away."

"Will my lord have the goodness to grant me two minutes?" said Boyer.

"Speak, but make haste."

"Mr. Patterson and I have understood that his Grace the Duke of Montbrison was about to establish himself; if your lordship would have the goodness to propose to let him have his house all furnished, as well as the stables, it would be a good occasion for us to dispose of all; and, perhaps, might also suit my lord."

"You are right, Boyer! I should much prefer it. I will see Montbrison, and will speak to him about it. What are your conditions?"

"Your lordship understands that we ought to try to profit as much as we can by his generosity."

"And gain by your bargain? nothing can be plainer! Come, what is the price?"

"For the whole, two hundred and sixty thousand francs, my lord."

"How much do you and Patterson make?"

"About forty thousand francs, my lord."

"Very pretty! However, so much the better; for, after all, I am satisfied with you, and if I had had a will to make, I should have left this sum to you and Patterson." The viscount went out to go, in the first place, to his creditor and Madame de Lucenay, whom he did not suspect of having overheard his conversation with Badinot.

CHAPTER XXX.

THE INTERVIEW.

Lucenay House was one of those princely habitations of the Faubourg Saint Germain which the unobstructed view renders so magnificent. A modern house could have been placed with ease in the space occupied by the staircase of one of these palaces; and an entire ward on the ground they covered.

Toward nine o'clock in the evening of this same day, the enormous gateway was opened to a glittering carriage, which, after having described a scientific curve in the immense court stopped before a covered porch, which led to an antechamber.

While the stampings of the two vigorous and mettlesome horses resounded on the pavement, a gigantic footman opened the emblazoned door, and a young man descended slowly from this brilliant vehicle, and not less slowly mounted the five or six steps of the porch.

This was the Viscount de Saint Remy.

On leaving his creditor, who, satisfied with the engagement made by the Count de Saint Remy, had granted the delay asked, and agreed to come to Rue Chaillot at ten o'clock, Florestan was come to thank Madame de Lucenay for the new service she had rendered; but, not having met the duchess in the morning, he came in great spirits, certain to find her at the hour she habitually reserved for him.

From the obsequiousness of the two footmen in the antechamber who ran to open the door as soon as they recognized the carriage; from the profoundly respectful air with which the rest of the liveried servants spontaneously arose as the viscount passed, one could easily see that he was looked upon as the second, if not the real master of the mansion.

When the Duke de Lucenay entered his house, his umbrella in his hand, and his feet in huge overshoes (he detested riding in the daytime), the same domestic evolutions were repeated, and always respectfully; yet to the eyes of an observer, there was a great difference of expression between the reception given to the husband, and that which was reserved for the *cicisbeo*.

The same respectful eagerness was manifested in the saloon of the valets when Florestan entered there; in a moment, one of them preceded him, to announce him to Madame de Lucenay.

Never had Florestan been more conceited; never did he feel more easy, more sure of himself, more irresistible. The victory which he had gained in the morning over his father; the new proof of attachment from Madame de Lucenay; the joy at having so miraculously escaped from so cruel a position; his renewed confidence in his star, gave to his handsome face an expression of boldness and good humor which rendered him still more seducing. In fine, he never was more pleased with himself; and he had reason.

A last glance in a mirror completed the excellent opinion that
Florestan had of himself.

The valet opened the folding doors of the saloon, and announced, "His lordship the Viscount de Saint Remy."

The astonishment and indignation of the duchess were indescribable. She thought the count must have told his son that she also had overheard all.

We have said before, that, on learning the infamy of Florestan, the love of Madame de Lucenay was at once changed into utter disdain.

Being engaged out that evening, she was, although without diamonds, dressed with her usual taste and magnificence: this splendid toilet; the rouge which she wore boldly; her beauty, quite striking at night; her figure of "the goddess sailing on clouds," rendered still more striking a dignity, which no one possessed more than she did, and which she pushed, when it was necessary, to a most superlative haughtiness.

The proud, determined character of the duchess is known to the reader; let him imagine her look, when the viscount, smiling, advanced toward her, and said in loving tones, "My dear Clotilde, how kind you are! how much you——" The viscount could not finish.

The duchess was seated, and had not stirred; but her actions, the glance of her eye, revealed a contempt at once so calm and so withering, that Florestan stopped short. He could not say a word, or make a step in advance. Never had Madame de Lucenay conducted herself thus toward him. He could not believe it to be the same woman whom he had always found so tender and affectionate. His first surprise over, Florestan was ashamed of his weakness; he resumed his habitual audacity; making a step toward Madame de Lucenay to take her hand, he said to her in the most caressing manner, "Clotilde,

how is this? I have never seen you so handsome, and yet—"

"Oh! this is too impudent!" cried the duchess, recoiling with such unequivocal disgust and pride, that Florestan once more was surprised and confounded.

However, assuming a little assurance, he said to her: "You will inform me, at least, Clotilde, the cause of this sudden change? What have I done? What do you wish?"

Without replying to him, Madame de Lucenay looked at him from head to foot, with an expression so insulting that Florestan felt the flush of resentment mount to his forehead, and he cried, "I know, madame, you are habitually very hasty in your ruptures. Is it a rupture you wish?"

"The pretension is curious!" said Madame de Lucenay, with a burst of sardonic laughter. "Know that when a lackey robs me—I do not break with him—I turn him out."

"Madame!"

"Let us put a stop to this," said the duchess, in a decided and haughty tone. "Your presence is repugnant to me! What do you want here? Have you not got your money?"

"I was right then. I guessed it was you. These twenty-five thousand francs—"

"Your last forgery is withdrawn, is it not? The honor of your family name is saved. It is saved. Go away. Ah! believe—I much regret this money—it would have succored so many honest people; but it was necessary to think of your father's shame and of mine."

"Then, Clotilde, you know all! Oh! look you now; nothing remains for me but to die," cried Florestan in the most pathetic and despairing tone.

A burst of indignant laughter from the duchess replied to this tragical exclamation, and she added, between two fits of hilarity, "I never could have thought that infamy could make itself so ridiculous!"

"Madame!" cried Florestan, almost blind with rage.

The folding doors were thrown open suddenly, and a valet announced,
"His Grace the Duke de Montbrison!"

Notwithstanding his habitual self-command, Florestan could hardly restrain himself, which a man more accustomed to society than the duke would certainly have remarked. Montbrison was scarcely eighteen.

Let the reader imagine the charming face of a young girl, fair, white, and red, whose rosy lips and smooth chin shall be slightly shaded with an incipient beard; add to this, large brown eyes, still slightly timid, a figure as graceful as that of the duchess, and he will have, perhaps, an idea of the appearance of this young duke, the most ideal Cherubino that a Countess and a Susanna had ever put on a woman's cap, after admiring the whiteness of his ivory neck.

The viscount had the weakness or the audacity to remain.

"How kind you are, Conrad, to have thought of me tonight!" said Madame de Lucenay in the most affectionate tone, extending her beautiful hand to the young duke who hastened to shake hands with his cousin; but Clotilde shrugged her shoulders, and said to him gayly, "You may kiss them, cousin: you wear your gloves."

"Pardon me, cousin," said the youth; and he pressed his lips on the charming hand she presented him.

"What are you going to do this evening, Conrad?" demanded the duchess, without taking the least notice of Florestan.

"Nothing, cousin; when I leave here, I am going to my club."

"Not at all: you shall accompany M. de Lucenay and me to Madame de Senneval's; it is her night; she has already asked me several times to present you."

"Cousin, I shall be too happy to place myself under your orders."

"And besides, frankly, I do not like to see you so soon accustom yourself to this taste for clubs; you have every requisite to be perfectly well received and even sought after in society. So you must go oftener."

"Yes, cousin."

"And as I am with you pretty much on the footing of a grandmother, my dear Conrad, I am disposed to be very maternal. You are emancipated it is true; but still I think you will have need for a long time of a tutor. And you must absolutely accept of me."

"With joy, with delight, my cousin!" said the young duke with vivacity.

It is impossible to describe the mute rage of Florestan, who remained standing, leaning against the chimney-piece.

Neither the duke nor Clotilde paid any attention to him. Knowing how quickly Madame de Lucenay decided on anything, he imagined that she pushed her audacity and contempt so far that she wished to play the coquette openly and before him with the young duke.

It was not so; the duchess felt for her young cousin an affection quite maternal. But the young duke was so handsome, he seemed so happy at the gracious reception of his young cousin, that Florestan was exasperated by jealousy, or rather by pride; his heart writhed under the cruel stings of envy, inspired by Conrad de Montbrison, who, rich and charming, entered so splendidly this life of pleasures, which he was leaving—he, ruined, despised, disgraced.

Saint Remy was brave—with the bravery of the head, if we may so express it, which, through anger or vanity, causes one to face a duel; but vile and corrupted, he had not that courage of the heart which triumphs over evil propensities, or which at least gives one the energy to escape infamy by a voluntary death.

Furious at the sovereign contempt of the duchess, thinking he saw a successor in the young duke, Saint Remy resolved to match the insolence of Clotilde, and, if it was necessary, to select a quarrel with Conrad. The duchess, irritated at the audacity of Florestan, did not look at him; and Montbrison, in his attraction toward his cousin, forgetting the usages of society, had neither bowed nor said a word to the viscount, whom he knew perfectly.

He advanced toward Conrad, whose back was turned toward him, touched his arm lightly, and said, in an ironical and dry tone, "Good-evening, your grace; a thousand pardons for not having perceived you before."

Montbrison, feeling that he had been wanting in politeness, turned quickly, and said, cordially, "Sir, I am confused, truly, but I dare hope that my cousin, who has caused my want of attention, will be pleased to make my excuses, and—"

"Conrad!" said the duchess, incensed at the impudence of Florestan, who persisted in remaining and braving her; "Conrad, it is right; no excuses; it is not worth the trouble."

Montbrison, believing that his cousin reproached him in a playful manner for being too formal, said gayly to the viscount, who was white with rage, "I shall not insist, sir, since my cousin forbids. You see her tutelage commences."

"And this tutelage will not stop there, my dear sir, be quite assured. Thus, in this view of the case (which her grace the duchess will readily approve, I do not doubt), an idea has just struck me to make you a proposition."

"Me, sir?" said Conrad, beginning to dislike the sneering tone of Florestan.

"You. I leave in some days for Gerolstein. I wish to dispose of my house, all furnished, and my stables; you also should make *an arrangement*." The viscount emphasized these last words, looking at Madame de Lucenay. "It would be very piquant, would it not, your grace?"

"I do not comprehend you, sir," said Montbrison, more and more astonished.

"I will tell you, Conrad, why you cannot accept the offer which has been made you," said Clotilde.

"And why cannot his grace accept my offer, madame?"

"My dear Conrad, that which is proposed to be sold to you is already sold to others. You comprehend? You would have the inconvenience of being robbed as on the highway."

Florestan bit his lips with rage. "Take care, madame," cried he.

"How? threats here?" said Conrad.

"Come now, Conrad, pay no attention," said Madame de Lucenay, eating a bonbon imperturbably. "A

man of honor ought not, nor may not, commit himself with this gentleman. If he insists, I will tell you wherefore."

A terrible scene was perhaps about to take place, when the doors were again thrown open, and the Duke de Lucenay entered, and, according to custom, with much noise and disturbance.

"How, my dear! not ready?" said he to his wife. "Why, it is astonishing—surprising! Good-evening, Saint Remy; good-evening, Conrad. Oh, you see before you the most despairing of men—that is to say, I cannot sleep; I cannot eat; I am stupefied; I cannot get used to it. Poor D'Harville, what an event!" And M. de Lucenay, throwing himself backward on a sofa, threw his hat from him with a gesture of despair, and, crossing his left leg over the right knee, he took his foot in his hand, continuing to utter exclamations of grief.

The emotions of Conrad and Florestan had time to be subdued before M. de Lucenay, the least observing man in the world, had perceived anything.

Madame de Lucenay, not from embarrassment—she was not a woman to be untimely embarrassed—but the presence of Florestan was repugnant and unsupportable, said to the duke, "When you are ready, we will go. I am to present Conrad to Madame de Senneval."

"No!" said the duke; and, throwing down a cushion, he arose quickly, and began to walk about, violently gesticulating. "I cannot help but think of poor D'Harville; can you, Saint Remy?"

"Truly, a frightful event!" said the viscount, who, with hatred and rage in his heart, sought the looks of Montbrison; but he, after the last words of his cousin, not from want of courage, but from pride, turned away from a man so terribly debased.

"Pray, my lord," said the duchess to her husband, "do not regret M. d'Harville in a manner so noisy, and, above all, so singularly. Ring, if you please, for my servants."

"Only to think," said M. de Lucenay, seizing hold of the bell-pull, "three days ago he was full of life, and now, what remains of him? Nothing, nothing, nothing!" These last three exclamations were accompanied by three pulls of the bell so violent, that the cord broke which he held in his hand, separated from the upper string, and fell upon a candelabra filled with waxlights, and overturned two; one fell upon the mantelpiece, and broke a beautiful little vase of Sevres china; the other rolled on the ground, and set fire to a rug of ermine, which, for a moment in a blaze, was almost immediately extinguished by Conrad.

At the same moment, two valets, summoned by the loud ringing, arrived in haste, and found M. de Lucenay with the bell rope in his hand, the duchess laughing violently at this ridiculous cascade of candies, and Montbrison partaking the hilarity of his cousin.

Saint Remy alone did not laugh.

[Illustration: CAPITAL AND LABOR IN HARMONY]

Lucenay, quite habituated to such accidents, preserved a serious countenance; he threw the rope to one of the servants, and said, "The coach!"

When he became a little more calm, the duchess said, "Really, sir, there is no one else in the world but yourself who could have caused a laugh at so lamentable an event."

"Lamentable! you may well say frightful! horrible! Now, only see, since yesterday I have been thinking how many persons there are, even in my own family, who I would rather should have died than poor D'Harville. My nephew Emberval, for instance, who is so tiresome with his stammering; or your aunt Merinville, who is always talking of her nerves, her blues, and who swallows every day, while waiting for her dinner, an abominable potpie, just like a bricklayer's wife! Do you think much of your aunt Merinville?"

"Hush! your grace is crazy!" said the duchess, shrugging her shoulders.

"But it is true," answered the duke; "one would give a hundred indifferent persons for a friend. Is it not so, Saint Remy?"

"Doubtless."

"It is always that old story of the tailor. Do you know, Conrad, the story of the tailor?"

"No, cousin."

"You will understand at once the allegory. A tailor was condemned to be hung; there was no other tailor in the village; what do the inhabitants do? They said to the judge, 'Your honor, we have only one tailor, and we have three shoemakers; if it is all the same to you to hang one of the shoemakers in the place of the tailor, we shall have quite enough with two shoemakers.' Do you comprehend the allegory, Conrad?"

'Yes, cousin."

"And you, Saint Remy?"

"I also."

"The coach," said one of the servants.

"Oh! but why do you not wear your diamonds?" said M. de Lucenay, unexpectedly; "with this dress they would look devilish well."

Saint Remy shuddered.

"For one poor little time that we go out together," continued the duke, "you might have honored me with your diamonds. They are really very handsome. Have you ever seen them, Saint Remy?"

"Yes; his lordship knows them by heart," said Clotilde. "Give me your arm, Conrad."

Lucenay followed the duchess with Saint Remy, who was almost beside himself with rage.

"Are you not coming with us to the Sennevals'?" said Lucenay to him.

"No, impossible," answered he hastily.

"By the way, Saint Remy, Madame de Senneval is another one—what do I say, one?—two-whom I would sacrifice willingly; for her husband is also on my list."

"What list?"

"Of those persons whom I would willingly see die, if poor D'Harville could have remained."

While Montbrison was assisting his cousin with her mantle, Lucenay said to him, "Since you are going with us, Conrad, order your carriage to follow ours, unless you will go, Saint Remy; then you can give me a place, and I will tell you a story worth two of the tailor's."

"I thank you," said Florestan, dryly: "I cannot accompany you."

"Then, good-bye. Have you had a dispute with my wife? See, she is getting into the carriage without speaking to you!"

"Cousin!" said Conrad, waiting through deference for the duke.

"Get in, get in," cried he: and stopping for a moment in the porch, he admired the viscount's equipage.

"Are these your sorrels, Saint Remy?"

"Yes."

"And your fat driver—what a figure! Just see how he holds his horses in his hands! I must confess, there is no one but a Saint Remy who has the best of everything."

"Madame de Lucenay and her cousin are waiting," said Florestan, with bitterness.

"It is true; how rude I am! Soon again, Saint Remy. Oh, I forgot; if you have nothing better to do, come and dine with us to-morrow. Lord Dudley has sent me from Scotland some grouse and heathcocks. Just imagine something monstrous. It is agreed, is it not?"

The duke joined his wife and Conrad. Saint Remy remained alone, and saw the carriage depart; his own drew up, and as he took his seat he cast a look of rage, hatred, and despair on this house, where he had so often entered as a master, and which he now left, ignominiously driven away.

"Home," he said, roughly.

"To the hotel," said the footman to Patterson, shutting the door.

The bitter and sorrowful thoughts of Florestan on his way home can easily be imagined. As he entered, Boyer, who was waiting for him at the lodge, said, "My lord, the count is upstairs."

"It is well."

"There is also a man there, to whom the count has given an appointment at ten o'clock."

"Well, well. Oh, what a day!" said Florestan, as he was going upstairs to meet his father, whom he found in the saloon where the morning's interview had taken place. "A thousand pardons, father, for not being here when you arrived; but I——"

"The man who holds this forged draft is here?"

"Yes, father, below."

"Send for him to come up."

Florestan rang the bell; Boyer answered.

"Tell M. Petit Jean to come here."

"Yes, my lord;" and Boyer disappeared.

"How kind you are, father, to remember your promise!"

"I always remember what I promise."

"How grateful! How can I ever prove——"

"I will not have my name dishonored; it shall not be."

"It shall not be; no; and it shall never be more, I swear to you, father."

The count looked at his son in a singular manner, and repeated, "No, it shall never be more!" Then, with a sneering laugh, he added, "You are a conjuror!"

"I read my resolution in my heart."

The count made no reply, but walked up and down the room with his hands in the large pockets of his overcoat.

"M. Petit Jean," said Boyer, introducing a man with a low and cunning expression of face.

"Where is that bill?" said the count.

"Here it is, sir," said Petit Jean (a man of straw of Jacques Ferrand) presenting it.

"Is that it?" said the count to his son.

"Yes, father."

The count drew from the pocket of his waistcoat twenty-five notes of one thousand francs each, handed them to his son, and said, "Pay!"

Florestan paid, and took the draft with a profound sigh of satisfaction.

M. Petit Jean placed the bills carefully in an old pocket-book, and retired. Saint Remy went with him out of the room, while Florestan prudently tore up the note.

"At least the twenty-five thousand francs from Clotilde remain. If nothing is discovered, it is a consolation. But how she has treated me! Now, what can my father have to say to Petit Jean?"

The noise of a key turned in a lock made the viscount shudder.

His father re-entered; his pallor had increased.

"I thought I heard some one lock the door of my cabinet, father?"

"Yes, I locked it."

"You, father!" cried Florestan, surprised.

The count placed himself so that his son could not descend the private stairs which led to out-doors.

Florestan, alarmed, began to remark the sinister look of his father, and followed all his movements with anxiety. Without being able to explain it, he felt alarmed. "Father, what is the matter?"

"This morning, on seeing me, your sole thought has been this: Father will not have his name dishonored; he will pay, if I can manage to make him believe in my assumed repentance."

"Oh! can you think that—"

"Do not interrupt me. I have been your dupe; you have neither shame nor regret, nor remorse: you are rotten to the heart; you have never had an honest sentiment; you have not robbed as long as you had enough to satisfy your caprices; that is what is called probity by rich people of your stamp; then followed want of decency, then baseness, crime, and forgery. This is only the first period of your life—it is beautiful and pure compared to that which awaits you."

"If I did not change my conduct, I acknowledge; but I will change, father. I have sworn it to you."

"You would not change."

"But—"

"You could not change! Driven from the society to which you have been accustomed, you would soon become criminal, like the wretches with whom you would associate: a robber inevitably, and, if necessary, an assassin. There is your future life."

"I an assassin!"

"Yes, because you are a coward!"

"I have fought duels, and I have proved—"

"I tell you, you are a coward! You have preferred infamy to death! A day will come when you will prefer the impunity of your new crimes to the life of others! That cannot be; I arrive in time to save, henceforth, at least, my name from public dishonor. It must be finished."

"How, father, finished! what do you mean to say?" cried Florestan, more and more alarmed at the expression of his father and his increasing paleness.

Suddenly some one knocked violently at the door of the cabinet. Florestan made a movement, as if to open it, but his father seized him with an iron hand, and withheld him.

"Who knocks?" demanded the former.

"In the name of the law, open, open!" said a voice.

"This forgery was not, then, the last?" said the count, in a low voice, looking at his son with a terrible scowl.

"Yes, father, I swear it," answered Florestan, trying in vain to release himself from the hold.

"In the name of the law open!" repeated the voice.

"What do you want?" demanded the count.

"I am an officer of police; I come to make a search on account of a robbery of diamonds, of which M. de Saint Remy is accused. M. Baudoin, jeweler, has the proofs. If you do not open, sir, I shall be obliged to break in the door."

"A robber already! I was not deceived," said the count, in a low tone.
"I came to kill you—I have delayed too long."

"To kill me!"

"My name is enough dishonored! let us finish: I have two pistols here— you are going to blow out your brains, otherwise I will do it for you, and I will say you killed yourself to escape shame."

And the count, with frightful *sang-froid*, drew from his pocket a pistol, and with his disengaged hand gave it to his son, saying:

"Come, proceed, if you are not a coward."

After new and fruitless efforts to escape from the bands of the count, his son fell backward, overcome

with fright and pale with horror. From the terrible and inexorable looks of his father, he saw there was no pity to expect from him.

"Father!" he cried.

"You must die!"

"I repent!"

"It is too late! Do you hear? they will break down the door!"

"I will expiate my faults!"

"They are going to enter! Must I, then, kill you?"

"Pardon!"

"The door will give way! You will have it so." And the count placed the pistol against the breast of his son.

The viscount saw that he was lost. He took a sudden and desperate resolution; no longer struggling with his father, he said, with firmness and resignation, "You are right, my father; give me this pistol. There is infamy enough attached to my name; the life that awaits me is frightful, it is not worth contending for. Give me the pistol. You shall see if I am a coward." And he extended his hand. "But, at least, a word, one single word of consolation, of pity, of farewell," said Florestan. His trembling lips and ashy paleness evinced the emotion of his trying situation.

"If this should be my son!" thought the count, hesitating to give him the instrument, "if this is my son, I ought still less to hesitate at this sacrifice." The door of the cabinet was broken in with a tremendous crash.

"Father—they come—oh! I feel now that death is a benefaction.
Thanks, thanks! but at least your hand, and pardon me!"

Notwithstanding his firmness, the count could not prevent a shudder, and said, in a broken voice, "I pardon you."

"Father, the door opens; go to them; do not let them suspect you, at least. And then, if they enter here, they will prevent me from finishing. Adieu."

The footsteps of several persons were heard in the adjoining apartment.

Florestan pointed the pistol to his heart.

It was discharged at the moment when the count, to escape this horrible scene had turned away, and rushed out of the room, the curtains closing after him.

At the noise of the explosion, at the sight of the count, pale and trembling, the commissary stopped suddenly at the threshold of the door, making a sign for his officers not to advance.

Informed by Badinot that the viscount was closeted with his father, the magistrate at once comprehended everything, and respected his great sorrow.

"Dead," cried the count, concealing his face in his hand; "dead!" repeated he, overwhelmed. "It was right—better death than infamy, but it is frightful!"

"My lord," said the magistrate, sadly after a few moments' silence, "spare yourself a sorrowful spectacle; leave this house. Now there remains for me a duty to perform still more painful than that which brought me here."

"You are right, sir," said Saint Remy. "As to the victim of the robbery, you can tell him to call at M. Dupont's, banker."

"Rue du Richelieu. He is well known," answered the magistrate.

"At what amount are the stolen diamonds estimated?"

"At about thirty thousand francs, my lord; the person who bought them, through whom the robbery was discovered, gave that amount for them to your son."

"I can yet pay this, sir. Let the jeweler call the day after to-morrow on my banker; I will settle with

him."

The commissary bowed, and the count departed. As soon as he was gone, the magistrate, profoundly touched at this unexpected scene, turned toward the saloon, the curtains of which were down. He raised them with emotion.

"Nobody!" cried he, astonished, looking round the room, and not seeing the least trace of the tragic event which was supposed to have occurred.

Then, remarking the small door in the tapestry, he ran thither. It was locked on the other side. "A trick," cried he in a rage; "he has undoubtedly made his escape in this way."

And, in fact, the viscount, before his father, pointed the pistol at his heart, but he had afterwards very dexterously discharged it under his arm, and immediately fled.

Notwithstanding the most active researches in all parts of the house, he was not to be found.

During the conversation between his father and the commissary, he had rapidly gained the boudoir, thence the conservatory, the back street and finally the Champs Elysees.

CHAPTER XXXI.

GOOD-BYE IN PRISON.

The morning after these last-mentioned events a touching scene took place in Saint Lazare, at the hour of the recreation of the prisoners.

On this day, during the promenade of her companions, Fleur-de-Marie was seated on a bench near the basin, already called hers. By a sort of tacit agreement, the prisoners abandoned this place, which she loved, for the sweet influence of the girl had much increased. Goualeuse preferred this seat near the fountain, because the moss which grew around the border of the reservoir recalled to her mind the verdure of the fields, and even the limpid water with which it was filled made her think of the little river of Bouqueval village.

To the sad gaze of a prisoner, a tuft of grass is a meadow, a flower is a garden.

Confiding in the kind promise of Madame d'Harville, Fleur-de-Marie had been expecting for two days to leave Saint Lazare. Although she had no reason for inquietude at the delay, she from her habitual misfortunes, hardly dared to hope soon for freedom.

Naturally, from the expectation of so soon seeing her friends at Bouqueval and Rudolph, Fleur-de-Marie should have been transported with joy.

It was not so. Her heart beat sadly; her thoughts returned without ceasing to the words and lofty looks of Madame d'Harville, when the poor prisoner had spoken with so much enthusiasm of her benefactor.

With singular intuition, Goualeuse had thus discovered a part of the lady's secret.

"The warmth of my gratitude for M. Rudolph has wounded this young lady, so handsome, and of a rank so elevated," thought Fleur-de-Marie. "Now I comprehend the bitterness of her words! she expressed disdainful jealousy! She, jealous of me! then she loves him, and I love him, also! My love must have betrayed itself in spite of me! To love him—I—a creature forever ruined! ungrateful, and wretch that I am! Oh! if that were so, rather death a hundred times."

Let us hasten to say, the unhappy child, who seemed doomed to every kind of martyrdom, exaggerated what she called her love. To her profound gratitude toward Rudolph was joined an involuntary admiration of the grace, strength, and beauty which distinguished him above all; nothing less material, nothing more pure than this admiration, but it existed lively and powerful, because physical beauty is always attractive.

And then, besides, the voice of blood, so often denied, mute, unknown, or disowned, sometimes makes itself heard; these bursts of passionate tenderness, which drew Fleur-de-Marie toward Rudolph,

and alarmed her because in her ignorance she misconstrued their tendency, resulted from mysterious sympathies as evident, but also as inexplicable, as the resemblance of features. In a word, Fleur-de-Marie, learning that she was Rudolph's daughter, could have at once accounted for her feelings toward him; then, completely enlightened, she could admire without any scruple the beauty of her father.

Thus is explained the dejectedness of Fleur-de-Marie, although she expected at any moment to leave Saint Lazare.

Fleur-de-Marie, melancholy and pensive, was then seated on a bench near the basin, regarding with a kind of mechanical interest the gambols of two daring birds that came to sport on the curbstone. She ceased for a moment to work on a little child's frock which she was hemming. It is necessary to say that this belonged to the generous offering made to Mont Saint Jean by the prisoners, thanks to the touching intervention of Fleur-de-Marie.

The poor, deformed *protegee* of La Goualeuse was seated at her feet; quite busy in making a little cap; from time to time she cast on her benefactress a look at once grateful, timid, and devoted—the look of a dog to his master.

The beauty, charms, and adorable sweetness of Fleur-de-Marie inspired this degraded woman with as much affection as respect.

There is always something holy and grand, even in the aspirations of a heart debased, which, for the first time, opens itself to gratitude; and, until then, no one had caused Mont Saint Jean to experience the religious ardor of a sentiment so new to her. At the end of a few moments, Fleur-de-Marie shuddered slightly, wiped away a tear, and resumed her sewing.

"You will not, then, take a little rest during the recreation, my angel?" said Mont Saint Jean to Goualeuse.

"As I have given no money to buy the lavette, I must furnish my proportion in work," answered the girl.

"Your part! why, without you, instead of this fine white linen, and warm fustian, to clothe my child, I should only have had those rags which were trampled in the mud. I am very grateful toward my companions; they have been very kind to me, it is true: but you! oh, you! How, then, shall I explain myself?" added the poor creature, hesitatingly, and very much embarrassed to express her thoughts. "Hold!" resumed she; "there is the sun, is it not? there is the sun!"

"Yes, Mont Saint Jean, I listen," answered Fleur-de-Marie, inclining her enchanting face toward the hideous visage of her companion.

"You will laugh at me," answered she, sadly; "I want to speak, and I don't know how."

"Say on, Mont Saint Jean."

"Have you not the eyes of an angel!" said the prisoner, looking at Fleur-de-Marie in a kind of ecstasy; "your beautiful eyes encourage me. Come, I will try to say what I wish. There is the sun, is it not? It is very warm, it makes our prison gay, it is pleasant to see and feel, is it not?"

"Without doubt."

"Well, let us suppose—this sun did not make itself, and if one is grateful to it, so much the more reason—"

"To be grateful toward Him who created it, you mean, Mont Saint Jean!
You are right; hence, you should pray to Him, adore Him—it is God."

"That's it, there's my idea," cried the prisoner, joyfully; "that's it; I ought to be grateful to my companions, but I ought to pray to you, adore you, La Goualeuse, for it is you who have rendered them good to me, instead of being wicked as they were."

"But, if I am good, as you say, Mont Saint Jean, it is God who has made me so; it is, then, He whom you must thank."

"Ah! marry—perhaps so, then, since you say so," answered the prisoner; "if it pleases you to have it so, very well."'

"Yes, my poor Mont Saint Jean, pray to Him often. This will be the best way of proving to me that you love me a little."

"Love you, La Goualeuse! But, do you not recollect what you told the others, to prevent them from beating me? 'It is not her alone you beat, it is also her child.' Well! for the same reason, I do not love you for myself alone, but also for my child."

"Thank you, thank you, Mont Saint Jean; you give me pleasure to hear you say that."

At this moment, Madame Armand, the inspectress, entered the court. After having sought for Fleur-de-Marie with her eyes, she came to her with a satisfied and smiling air. "Good news, my child!"

"What do you say, madame?" cried La Goualeuse, rising.

"Your friends have not forgotten you; they have obtained your liberty.
The director has just received the notice."

"Can it be possible, madame! Oh! what happiness!" The emotion of Fleur-de-Marie was so violent, that she turned pale, put her hand to her heart, which beat violently, and fell back on her seat.

"Calm yourself, my child," said Madame Armand, kindly: "happily, such shocks are without danger."

"Ah, madame, how grateful I ought to be!"

"It is, doubtless, Madame d'Harville who has obtained your liberty. There is an old lady here who is charged to conduct you to your friends. Wait for me; I will return for you; I have a few words to say in the workroom." It would be difficult to describe the expression of deep grief which spread over the features of Mont Saint Jean on learning that her good angel was to leave Saint Lazare.

The grief of this woman was caused less by the fear of a renewal of her torments, than by the sorrow at parting from the sole being who had ever evinced any interest for her. Still seated at the foot of the bench, she took bold of the two tufts of tangled hair which escaped from under her old black cap, as if to tear them out; then, this violent affliction giving way to dejection, she let her head fall, and remained dumb and immovable, with her face buried in her hands.

Notwithstanding her joy at leaving the prison, Fleur-de-Marie could not prevent a shudder at the remembrance of La Chouette and the Maître d'Ecole; recollecting that these two monsters had made her swear not to inform her benefactors of her sad fate.

But these sad thoughts were soon dispelled at the hope of seeing Bouqueval, Madame George, and Rudolph again; to the latter she wished to recommend La Louve and Martial; it even seemed to her that the sentiment which she reproached herself for having felt towards her benefactor, being no longer nourished by sorrow and by solitude, would be calmed and modified as soon as she should resume the rustic occupations which she loved so much to partake with the good and honest inhabitants of the farm.

Astonished at the silence of her companion, of which she did not suspect the cause, she touched her slightly on the shoulder, and said,

"Mont Saint Jean, since I am now free, can I be of any service to you?"

On feeling the hand of La Goualeuse, the prisoner shuddered, let her arms fall, and turned toward the young girl, her face streaming with tears.

"Listen to me, Mont Saint Jean," said Fleur-de Marie, touched at the affection of this poor creature. "I can promise you nothing for yourself, although I know some very charitable people; but for your child it is different; it is innocent of every evil; he, and the persons of whom I speak, would, perhaps, take the charge of it when you can part with it."

"Part from it—never, oh, never!" cried Mont Saint Jean, with warmth.
"What would become of me then, now that I have counted on him?"

"But how will you support it? son or daughter, it must be honest, and for that——"

"It must eat honest bread, is it not so, La Goualeuse? I think so; it is my ambition. I say it to myself every day, thus: on leaving here I shall not let the grass grow under my feet. I will become a rag-picker, a crossing-sweeper, but I'll be correct; one owes that, if not to one's self, at least to one's children, when one has the honor of having any," said she with a kind of pride. "And who will take care of your child while you work?" answered La Goualeuse; "would it not be better, if that is possible, as I hope it is, to place it in the country with some good people, who would make it a good farmer's girl or a plowboy? You can come from time to time to see it, and some day, perhaps, you would find the means to remain altogether—in the country it costs so little to live."

"But to part with it, to part with it! All my joy is in it. I, who have no one to love me!" "You must think more for it than for yourself, my poor Mont Saint Jean; in two or three days I will write to Madame Armand, and if the demand I mean to make in favor of your child succeeds, you will never have occasion to say again, what you said just now, 'Alas! what will become of it?'"

The inspectress, Madame Armand, interrupted this conversation; she came to seek Fleur-de-Marie.

After having again burst into sobs, and bathed with tears of despair the hands of the girl, Mont Saint Jean fell back on the bench quite overcome with sorrow, not even thinking of the promise just made to her by Fleur-de-Marie.

"Poor creature!" said Madame Armand, leaving the yard, followed by La Goualeuse; "poor creature, her gratitude toward you gives me a better opinion of her."

On learning that Fleur-de-Marie was pardoned, the other prisoners, instead of being jealous, expressed their joy; some of them surrounded her, and bade her farewell in a cordial manner, congratulating her frankly on her quick deliverance from prison.

"All the same," said one of them, "she has made us do some good; it was when we collected for Mont Saint Jean. This will be remembered in Saint Lazare."

When Fleur-de-Marie had left the prison buildings under the conduct of the inspectress, the latter said to her, "Now, my child, go to the wardrobe, where you will leave your prison garments, and resume the peasant's costume, which, from its rustic simplicity, becomes you so well; adieu. You go to be happy, for you go under the protection of worthy people, and you leave this house never to return. But—hold—I am not unreasonable," said Madame Armand, whose eyes were bathed in tears, "it is impossible for me to conceal from you how much I am already attached to you, poor child!" Then, seeing Fleur-de-Marie much affected, she added, "You do not wish me thus to sadden your departure?"

"Ah! madame, is it not to your recommendation that this young lady, to whom I owe my liberty, interested herself in my fate?"

"Yes, and I am happy at what I have done; my presentiments have not deceived me." At this moment a bell rang. "Ah! this is the signal for them to resume their work; I must go in. Adieu! once more adieu, my dear child!"

And Madame Armand, quite as much affected as Fleur-de-Marie, embraced her tenderly; she then said to one of the attendants, "Conduct her to the wardrobe."

A quarter of an hour afterward, Fleur-de-Marie, clothed as a peasant, entered the office where Mrs. Seraphin awaited her. This woman, housekeeper of Jacques Ferrand, came to take the unfortunate child to Ravageur's Island.

CHAPTER XXXII.

REMEMBRANCES.

Jacque Ferrand had easily and promptly obtained the liberty of Fleur-de-Marie.

Instructed by La Chouette of the sojourn of La Goualeuse in Saint Lazare, he had immediately addressed himself to one of his clients, an influential man, telling him that a girl, led astray but sincerely repentant, and recently confined in Saint Lazare, ran the risk, from contact with the other prisoners, of having her good resolutions weakened. This girl had been strongly recommended to him by some respectable people, who would take charge of her as soon as she left the prison. Jacques Ferrand had added, he begged his all-powerful client, in the name of morality, of religion, and of the future rehabilitation of this unfortunate, to solicit her discharge. Finally, the notary, so as to completely conceal his part in the transaction, particularly requested his client not to name him in the accomplishment of this good work; this wish, attributed to the philanthropic modesty of Jacques Ferrand, was scrupulously observed; the release of Fleur-de-Marie was demanded and obtained solely in the name of the client, who, as soon as it was received, sent it to Jacques Ferrand that he might address it to the protectors of the girl.

Mrs. Seraphin, on giving this order to the directors of the prison, added that she was charged to conduct La Goualeuse to her friends. From the excellent account given by the inspectress to Madame d'Harville, no one doubted that she owed her freedom to the intervention of the marchioness. Thus the notary's housekeeper could in no way excite the suspicions of her victim.

Mrs. Seraphin had, as occasion required, the air of a good soul; it required very close observation to remark something insidious, false and cruel in her crafty look, her hypocritical smile.

In spite of her profound wickedness, which had made her the accomplice or confidante of her master's crimes, Mrs. Seraphin could not help being struck with the touching beauty of this girl, delivered by herself when quite a child to La Chouette, whom she was then about to conduct to certain death.

"Well, my dear," said she, in honeyed tones, "you must be delighted to get out of prison."

"Oh! yes, ma'am; and, doubtless, I owe my deliverance to the protection of Madame d'Harville, who has been so kind to me?"

"You are not mistaken. But come, we are rather late, and we have got a long road to travel."

"We are going to Bouqueval Farm, to Madame George, ma'am?" cried La Goualeuse.

"Yes, certainly, we are going to the country—to Madame George," said the housekeeper, to drive away every suspicion from the mind of Fleur-de-Marie; then she added, with malicious good nature, "But this is not all; before you see Madame George, a little surprise awaits you. Come, come, our hack is below. What delight you must feel at leaving this place, dear. Come, let us go. Your servant, sirs." And Mrs. Seraphin, after having exchanged salutations with the warders, descended with La Goualeuse, followed by an officer to open the doors. The last one was closed on the two females, and they found themselves under the large porch which faces the Rue du Faubourg Saint Denis, when they met a girl who was coming, doubtless, to visit a prisoner. It was Rigolette, ever neat and coquettish. A little plain cap, very clean, and trimmed with cherry-colored ribbons, which harmonized wonderfully with her jet-black hair, surrounded her pretty face; a very white collar was turned over her long brown tartan. She carried on her arm a straw basket, and, thanks to her neat and graceful manner of walking, her thick-soled boots were of marvelous cleanliness, although she came, alas, very far.

"Rigolette!" cried Fleur-de-Marie, at once recognizing her.

"La Goualeuse!" exclaimed the grisette in her turn. And the girls threw themselves into each other's arms. Nothing could be more enchanting than the contrast between these young creatures of sixteen, tenderly embracing, both so charming, and yet so different in expression and beauty. The one fair, with large, blue, melancholy eyes, and a profile of angelic pureness; the other a lively brunette, with round and rosy cheeks, pretty black eyes, a charming picture of youth and gayety, a rare and touching example of happiness in indigence, of virtue in destitution, and of joy in industry.

When Fleur-de-Marie, dragged up, rather than brought up, had run away from a hag known as Old One-eye, she had been arrested and committed to prison for eight years. Taught sewing there, she had saved up some three hundred francs. Ignorant, childishly fond of flowers and the open air of the country, she had made Rigolette's acquaintance, with hardly a deeper object than to have a companion in her jaunts. Her money spent, Fleur-de-Marie had fallen in with the Ogress, the keeper of the Lapin Blanc Tavern, who had kept her for the sinful purposes which had blemished all her life.

After an exchange of their mutual caresses, the girls looked at each other. Rigolette was joyful at the encounter, Fleur-de-Marie confused.

The sight of her friend recalled to her mind the few days of calm enjoyment which had preceded her first degradation. "It is you—what happiness!" said the grisette.

"Goodness me! what a delightful surprise, it is so long since we have seen one another," answered La Goualeuse.

"Oh! now I am no longer astonished at not having met you for six months," remarked Rigolette, observing the rustic clothes of La Goualeuse; "you live in the country?"

"Yes, since some time," said Fleur-de-Marie, casting down her eyes.

"And you come, like me, to see some one in prison?"

"Yes—I came—I came to see some one," answered Fleur-de-Marie, stammering and blushing with

shame.

"And you are returning home, far from Paris, without doubt. Dear little Goualeuse, always good, I recognize you there. Do you remember the poor woman to whom you gave your mattress, linen, and the small amount of money you had, which we were about to spend in the country? for then you were crazy after the country, you little village girl!"

"And you did not like it much, Rigolette. How kind you were, for it was on my account you went."

"And for mine also; for you, who were always a little serious, became so contented, gay, and lively, once in the midst of the fields or woods; if it were only to see you there, it was pleasure to me. But let me look at you again! How this little round cap becomes you! how pretty you look. Decidedly, it was your vocation to wear a peasant's cap, as it was mine to wear the grisette's. Now you are according to your wishes, you must be happy, it does not surprise me. When I did not see you any more, I said to myself, 'Good little Goualeuse is not made for Paris; she is a real flower of the forest, as the song says, and these flowers cannot live in the capital; the air is not good enough for them. La Goualeuse has got a place with some good people in the country.' This is what you have done, is it not?"

"Yes," said Fleur-de-Marie, blushing.

"Only I have a reproach to make you."

"To me?"

"You should have advised me; one does not leave in this way, at least, without sending some word."

"I—I left Paris so quick," said Fleur-de-Marie, more and more confused, "that I could not."

"Oh! I did not wish it; I am too happy to see you again. In truth, you did right to leave Paris, it is so difficult to live here quietly, without reckoning that a poor girl, isolated as we are, might turn to evil without wishing it. When one has nobody to advise with, one has so few means of defense; the men make such fine promises; and then, sometimes poverty is so hard. Do you remember little Julie, who was so pretty? and Rosine, the blonde with black eyes?"

"Yes, I recollect them."

"Well! my poor Goualeuse, they have both been deceived, then abandoned, and, finally, from misfortune, to misfortune, they have fallen to be such wretched women as are shut up here."

"Oh!" cried Fleur-de-Marie, who held down her head and became purple with shame.

Rigolette, deceived in the sense of the exclamation of her friend, resumed: "Don't be as sad as me, don't cry."

"You have sorrows?"

"I? Oh, you know me, a regular Roger Bontemps. I am not changed, but, unfortunately, everybody is not like me; and as others have their troubles, that causes me to have some."

"Always kind!"

"Now just imagine, I came here for a poor girl—a neighbor—a very lamb, who is accused wrongfully, and much to be pitied; she is Louise Morel, daughter of an honest workman who has become crazy from his misfortunes." At the name of Louise Morel, one of the victims of the notary, Mrs. Seraphin shuddered and looked at Rigolette attentively. The face of the grisette was absolutely unknown to her; nevertheless, from that moment she paid great attention to the conversation.

"Poor thing," replied the songstress, "how happy she must be at your not forgetting her in her trouble."

"This is not all—it is a fatality, just as you met me, I came a great distance—and from another prison —a prison for men."

"You?"

"Oh! yes, I have there another very sad friend. You see my basket" (and she showed it) "is divided in two; each one has a side; to-day I bring Louise a little linen, and just now I carried something to poor Germain; my prisoner is called Germain. I cannot think of what has just passed between us without having a desire to weep; it is foolish—I know it is of no use, but indeed, it is my nature."

"And why do you feel like weeping?"

"Only think, Germain is so unfortunate as to be associated with all the prison rogues; it quite overcomes him; he has a taste for nothing, eats nothing, and is growing thinner every day. I saw that, and I said to myself, 'He is not hungry; I will make him a nice little dainty bit, which he liked so much when he was my neighbor; that will give him an appetite.' When I say a dainty bit, just understand me, it was just some nice potatoes, mashed up with a little milk and sugar; I filled a pretty cup with it, and just now I took it to him in prison, telling him that I had prepared this myself, just as I used to do in our happy days—you understand; I thought, perhaps, I could thus induce him to eat, but it caused him to weep; when he saw the cup in which I had so often taken my milk before him, he burst into tears; and, more than the bargain, I finished by doing as he did, although I tried all I could to prevent it; you see my luck. I thought I was doing good—consoling him, and I made him more sad than before."

"Yes, but those tears must have been so sweet to him?"

"All the same, I should have preferred to console him differently; but I speak of him without telling you who he is; he was an old neighbor of mine, the most honest lad in the world, as gentle and timid as a young girl, and whom I loved as a companion, as a brother."

"Oh! then I can imagine how his sorrows are yours."

"But you will see what a good heart he has. When I left him, I asked him, as I always do, for his commissions, saying to him with a laugh, just to raise his spirits a little, that I was his little housekeeper, and that I should be very exact, very active, to keep his custom. Then he, trying to smile, asked me to bring him one of the romances of Walter Scott, which he used to read to me in the evenings when I worked. This romance is called 'Ivan—Ivanhoe:' yes, that is the name. I liked this book so much, that he read it to me twice. He begged me to go to the same library, not to hire, but to buy the volumes we used to read together—yes, to buy them—and you may judge it is a sacrifice for him, for he is as poor as we are."

"Excellent heart!" said Goualeuse, quite affected.

"There! you are as much moved as I was, when he gave me this commission, my good little Goualeuse; but you comprehend, the more I felt a desire to weep, the more I tried to laugh; for to weep twice in a visit made expressly to enliven him was too much. So to drive this gloom away, I recalled to his mind the comic story of a Jew, one of the characters of this romance, which formerly had so much amused us. But the more I talked, the more he looked at me with the big, big tears in his eyes. It touched my heart. I had restrained my tears for a quarter of an hour; I ended by doing as he did. When I left him he was sobbing; and I said to myself, furious at my stupidity, 'If this is the way I cheer and console him, it is hardly worth while to go and see him; I, who promised myself to make him laugh! It is astonishing how I have succeeded!'"

At the name of Francois Germain, Mrs. Seraphin redoubled her attention.

"And what has this young man done to be in prison?" asked
Fleur-de-Marie.

"He!" cried Rigolette, whose compassion gave place to indignation; "he is persecuted by an old monster of a notary, who is also the denouncer of Louise."

"Of Louise, whom you came here to see?"

"The same. She was the servant of the notary, and Germain was his cashier. It would be too long a story to tell you of what they unjustly accuse this poor boy. But what is quite sure is, that this bad man is very angry with these two unfortunates, who have never injured him. But patience—patience; every dog has his day."

Rigolette pronounced these last words with an expression which made Mrs. Seraphin uneasy. Engaging in the conversation, instead of remaining quiet, she said to Fleur-de-Marie in a wheedling manner, "My dear child, it is late; we must go; we are waited for. I can well comprehend that what your friend says interests you, for I, who do not know this young girl and this young man, am much affected. Is it possible people can be so wicked! And what is the name of this bad notary of whom you speak, please?"

Rigolette had no reason to be suspicious of Mrs. Seraphin; nevertheless, remembering the recommendations of Rudolph, who had enjoined on her the greatest reserve on the subject of the secret protection which he extended to Germain and Louise, she regretted she had suffered herself to say, "Patience—every dog has his day."

"This bad man is one M. Ferrand, madame," answered Rigolette; adding very adroitly, to repair her slight indiscretion, "and it is so much the more wicked in him to persecute Louise and Germain thus, as they have no one to interest themselves in their behalf except me, who can be of no use to them."

"What a pity!" said Mrs. Seraphin. "I had hoped the contrary when you said 'But patience.' I thought that you reckoned on some protector to sustain these two unfortunates against this wicked notary."

"Alas! no, madame," answered Rigolette, in order to completely lull the suspicions of Mrs. Seraphin. "Who would be generous enough to take the part of these two poor young folks against a rich and powerful man like M. Ferrand?"

"Oh, there are hearts generous enough for that!" cried Fleur-de-Marie, after a moment's reflection, and with constrained warmth.

"I know some one who makes it a duty to protect those who suffer, and defend them, for he of whom I speak is as charitable to honest people, as he is formidable to the wicked."

Rigolette looked at Goualeuse with astonishment, and was on the point of saying (thinking of Rudolph) that she also knew some one who courageously took the part of the weak against the strong; but, still faithful to the requests of her neighbor, she answered Fleur-de-Marie, "Really! you do know some one generous enough to come to the aid of the poor?"

"Yes. And although I have already implored his pity, his benevolence for other persons, I am sure if he knew the unmerited misfortunes of Louise and M. Germain, he would save them and punish their persecutor; for his justice and goodness are almost as inexhaustible as God's."

Mrs. Seraphin looked at her victim with surprise.

"This little girl would be still more dangerous than we thought," said she to herself. "If I had taken pity on her, what she has just said would render the accident inevitable which will rid us of her."

"My good little Goualeuse, since you have such a good acquaintance, I beg you will recommend my Louise and my Germain to him, for they do not deserve their fate," said Rigolette, thinking that her friends might gain by having two defenders instead of one.

"Be tranquil; I promise you to do what I can for your *proteges* with M. Rudolph," said Fleur-de-Marie.

"M. Rudolph!" cried Rigolette, strangely surprised.

"Certainly," said La Goauleuse.

"M. Rudolph, a traveling clerk?"

"I do not know what he is. But why this astonishment?"

"Because I know a M. Rudolph also."

"Perhaps it is not the same."

"Let us see; what does he look like?"

"Young?"

"Exactly!"

"A face full of nobleness and goodness?"

"That's it; just like mine!" said Rigolette, more and more surprised; and she added, "Is he dark? Has he small mustaches?"

"Yes."

"Is he tall and slender, fine figure, and an air too stylish for a traveling clerk? Does yours look just so?"

"Without a doubt it is he," answered Fleur-de-Marie; "only, what is strange is, that you think him a traveling clerk."

"As to that, I am sure of it; he told me so."

"You know him?"

"I know him. He is my neighbor!"

"M. Rudolph?"

"He has a chamber on the fourth floor, alongside of mine."

"He! he!"

"What is so astonishing in all this? It is very simple: he only earns fifteen or eighteen hundred francs a year; he can only hire a modest room, although he has very little regularity about him, for he does not know what his clothes cost him, my dear."

"No, no; it is not the same," said Fleur-de-Marie, reflecting.

"Yours, then, is a phoenix for order?"

"He of whom I speak, Rigolette," said Fleur-de-Marie, with enthusiasm, "is all-powerful; his name is only pronounced with love and veneration, his appearance is imposing, and one is almost tempted to kneel before his grandeur and his goodness."

"Then I am at fault, my poor Goualeuse; I say as you do, it is not the same; for mine is neither all-powerful nor imposing. He is a very good sort, very lively, and no one kneels before him—just the contrary; for he has promised to help me wax my floor, and take me a walk on Sunday. You see he is no great lord. But what am I thinking about? I have truly the heart for a walk! And Louise and my poor Germain, as long as they are in prison, there can be no pleasure for me."

For some moments, Fleur-de-Marie reflected profoundly; she recalled to her mind that when she first saw Rudolph he had the appearance and language of the guests of the Ogress, her keeper. Might he not play the part of a traveling clerk with Rigolette? What could be the object of this new transformation? The grisette, seeing the pensive air of Fleur-de-Marie, said:

"There is no use of cracking your head on this account, my good Goualeuse, we shall soon find out if we know the same M. Rudolph; when you see yours, speak to him of me; when I see mine, I will speak to him of you. In this way we can satisfy ourselves at once."

"And where do you live, Rigolette?"

"Rue du Temple, No. 17."

"Now this is strange, and worth remembering," said Madame Seraphin to herself, having attentively listened to this conversation. "This M. Rudolph, a mysterious and all-powerful personage, who doubtless makes himself pass for a clerk, occupies a room adjoining that of this little sewing-girl, who knows more than she chooses to say. Good, good; if the grisette and the pretended clerk meddle with what does not concern them, we know where to find them."

"When I have spoken to M. Rudolph I will write you,'" said La Goualeuse; "and I will give you my address, so that you can answer: but repeat your address, for fear I should forget it."

"Here, I have one of my cards that I leave at my customers';" and she gave Fleur-de-Marie a little card, on which was written, in magnificent italics, "Mademoiselle Rigolette, Dressmaker, 17, Rue du Temple."

"It is just as if it were printed, is it not?" added the grisette.

"It was poor Germain who wrote them for me—he was so kind, so thoughtful. Now, look you, it seems as if it were done purposely; one would say I never found out his good qualities until he was unfortunate, and now I am always reproaching myself for having put off so long loving him."

"You love him, then?"

"Oh, dear, yes. I must have a pretext to go and see him in prison. Confess that I am a strange girl!" said Rigolette, stifling a sigh, and laughing through her tears, as the poets say.

"You are as good and generous as ever," said Fleur-de-Marie, pressing tenderly the hands of her friend.

Old Seraphin had doubtless heard enough of the conversation of the young girl, for she said, almost roughly, to Fleur-de-Marie, "Come, come, my dear, let us go; it is late; here is a quarter of an hour lost."

"What a surly look this old woman has! I don't like her face," whispered Rigolette to Fleur-de-Marie.

Then she added, aloud, "When you come to Paris, my good Goualeuse, do not forget me; your visit will give me so much pleasure. I shall be so happy to pass a day with you, to show you my housekeeping, my room, my birds! I have birds—it is my luxury."

"I will try to come and see you, but I will certainly write. Good-bye, Rigolette, good-bye. If you knew how happy I am to have met you!"

"And I too! But this shall not be the last time, I hope; and then I am so impatient to know if your M. Rudolph is the same as mine. Write me soon on this subject, I entreat you!"

"Yes, yes. Adieu, Rigolette."

"Adieu, my good little Goualeuse;" and the two girls embraced each other tenderly, concealing their emotion. Rigolette entered the prison to see Louise, and Fleur-de-Marie got into a hackney-coach with old Seraphin, who ordered the coachman to go to Batignolles, and to stop at the city gate.

A cross-road led from this place almost in a straight line to the banks of the Seine, not far from the Ravageurs' Island. Fleur-de-Marie, being unacquainted with Paris, did not perceive that the carriage was driven on a different road from that to Saint Denis. It was only when the vehicle stopped at Batignolles that she said to Mrs. Seraphin, who invited her to get out—

"But it seems to me, madame, that this is not the road to Bouqueval; and then, how can we go from hence to the farm on foot?"

'"All I can say to you, my dear," answered the housekeeper, "is, that I execute the orders of your benefactors, and that you would cause them much trouble if you hesitate to follow me."

"Oh! madame, do not think it," cried Fleur-de-Marie; "you are sent by them—I have no question to ask —I follow you blindly; only tell me if Madame George is well!"

"She is perfectly so."

"And—M. Rudolph?"

"Perfectly well also."

"You know him, then, ma'am? Yet just now, when I spoke of him with Rigolette, you said nothing."

"Because I must say nothing—I have my orders."

"Did he give them to you?"

"Isn't she curious, the dear; isn't she curious?" said the housekeeper, laughing.

"You are right; pardon my questions, ma'am. Since we go on foot to the place to which you conduct me," added Fleur-de-Marie, sweetly, "I shall know what I so much desire to know."

"In fact, my dear, before a quarter of an hour we shall have arrived."

The housekeeper, having left behind her the last houses of Batignolles followed, with Fleur-de-Marie, a grassy footpath. The day was calm and beautiful, the sky toward the west half concealed by red and purple clouds; the sun, beginning to decline, cast his oblique rays on the heights of Colombe, on the other side of the Seine. As Fleur-de-Marie drew near the banks of the river, her pale cheeks became slightly colored; she inhaled with delight the sharp, pure air of the country, and cried, in a burst of artless joy, "Oh! there in the middle of the river, do you see that pretty little island covered with willows and poplars, with the white house on the shore? How charming this habitation must be in summer, when all the trees are covered with leaves! What repose, what refreshing air must be found there."

"Verily!" said Mrs. Seraphin with a strange smile, "I am delighted that you find the island pretty."

"Why, madame?"

"Because we are going there."

"To that island?"

"Yes; does it surprise you?"

"A little, ma'am."

"And if you should find your friends there?"

"What do you say?"

"Your friends collected there, to celebrate your deliverance from prison! would you not be more agreeably surprised?"

"Can it be possible: M. Rudolph? Ah! is it true I go to see Madame George? I cannot believe it."

"Yet a little patience—in fifteen minutes you will see her, and then you will believe."

"What I cannot comprehend," added Fleur-de-Marie, thoughtfully, "is that Madame George awaits me there, instead of at the farm."

"Always so curious, the dear—always so curious!"

"How indiscreet I am, ma'am!" said Fleur-de-Marie, smiling.

"To punish you, I have a mind to tell you of a surprise that your friends intend for you."

"A surprise? for me, madame?"

"Hold, leave me alone, little spy—you will make me speak in spite of myself."

We will leave Mrs. Seraphin and her victim on the road which led to the river. We will precede them both for some moments to the island.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

ON THE BOAT.

At night, the appearance of the island inhabited by the Martial family was gloomy, but in the brilliant sunlight nothing could be more charming and cheerful than the cursed dwelling-place.

Bordered by willows and poplars and almost entirely covered with thick grass, intersected with winding paths of yellow gravel, the island contained a small vegetable garden and a number of fruit trees. In this orchard was situated the thatched roof dwelling where Martial had wished to retire, with Francois and Amandine. From this place the island terminated at its point by a breakwater, formed of large piles, to prevent the washing away of the earth.

Before the house was an arbor of green trellis work, reaching quite to the landing-place, destined to support during the summer the hop-vine and honeysuckle under whose shade were arranged the seats and tables of the guests.

At one of the extremities of the main building, painted white and covered with tiles, a woodhouse, surmounted by a granary, formed a wing, much lower than the principal edifice. Immediately over this wing was a window with shutters covered with plates of iron, and fastened exteriorly by two bars of the same material.

Three boats were lying at the landing-place, and at the bottom of one of them Nicholas was trying how the trap worked which he had arranged.

Mounted on a bench outside of the arbor, Calabash, with her eyes shaded with her hand, was looking in the direction where she expected Seraphin and Fleur-de-Marie to appear.

"No one yet, neither old nor young," said Calabash, descending from her bench, and addressing Nicholas; "it will be as yesterday! Like poor fellows waiting for their ship to come in! If these women don't come before a half hour, we must go: the affair of Bras-Rouge is better worth our while; he is waiting for us. The broker is to be at his house in the Champs Elysees at five-o'clock—we must be there before him. This very morning La Chouette repeated it to us."

"You are right," answered Nicholas, leaving his boat. "May the thunder crush this old woman, who physics us for no purpose! The trap works like a charm—of the two jobs perhaps we shall have neither."

"Besides, Bras-Rouge and Barbillon have need of us—of themselves they can do nothing."

"It is true; for while one does the business, Red-Arm must remain outside his tavern to watch, and Barbillon is not strong enough to drag the broker into the cellar alone; this old woman will kick."

"Did not La Chouette tell us, laughingly, that she kept the Maitre d'Ecole as a boarder in this cellar?"

"Not in this one; in another which is much deeper, and inundated when the river is high."

"Mustn't he vegetate there, in that cellar! To be there all alone and blind as he is, after the accident to him!"

"He will see clear there, if he sees nowhere else: the cellar is as dark as a furnace."

"All the same; when he has sung all the songs he knows to amuse himself, the time must appear devilishly long to him."

"La Chouette says that he amuses himself in hunting rats, and that this cellar is very full of game."

"I say, Nicholas, speaking of individuals who must be rather wearied, fatigued," said Calabash with a ferocious smile, pointing with her finger to the window just described, "there is one there who must be sucking his own blood."

"Bah! he is asleep. Since this morning he has made no noise; and his dog is silent."

"Perhaps he has strangled it for food; these two days past they must have been almost mad with hunger up there."

"It is their business. Martial may endure all this as long as he pleases, if it amuses him; when he has finished, we will say that he died from a severe illness; there will be no difficulty."

"You think so?"

"Most surely. On going this morning to Asnieres, mother met Ferot, the fisherman; as he expressed his surprise at not having seen his friend Martial for two days, she told him that Martial did not leave his bed, he was so ill, and his life was despaired of. He swallowed all that just like honey; he will tell it to others—and when the affair happens it will seem all natural."

"Yes, but he will not die at once; it takes a long time in this way."

"There is no other way to manage it. This madman, Martial, when he has a mind, is as wicked as the devil, and as strong as a bull in the bargain; had he suspected us, we could not have approached him without danger; while with his door once well nailed up on the outside, what can he do? His window was already ironed."

"He could loosen the bars by breaking away the plaster with his knife, which he would have done, if, mounted on a ladder, I had not mangled his hands with the hatchet every time he commenced his work!"

"What a duty!" said the other, chuckling; "how much you must have been amused!"

"I had to give you time to arrive with the iron plate and bars which you went to Micou's for."

"How he must have foamed. Dear brother!"

"He ground his teeth like a madman; two or three times he tried to push me off with blows from his club, but then, having but one hand free, he could not work at the grating."

"Fortunately, there is no fireplace in the room!"

"Yes, and the door is strong and his hands wounded! but for this he would be capable of making a hole through the plank."

"No, no, there is no danger that he can escape. His bier is more solid than if it were made of oak and lead."

"I say—when La Louve gets out of prison, and comes here to seek her man, as she calls him?"

"Well! we will tell her to look for him."

"Apropos, do you know that if mother had not shut up these scamps of children, they would have been

capable of gnawing the door like rats, to deliver Martial! That little scoundrel, Francois, is a real devil since he suspects that we have shut up our big brother."

"But are you going to leave them in the room upstairs while we are away from the island? Their window is not grated—they have only to descend from the outside."

At this moment cries and sobs in the house attracted the attention of Nicholas and Calabash. They saw the opened door of the ground-floor shut violently: a moment after the pale and sinister face of the widow appeared at the kitchen-window. With her long, bony arm she beckoned her children to come to the house.

"Come, there is a squabble! I bet it is Francois who kicks," said Nicholas.

"Scoundrel of a Martial! except for him the boy would have been all alone. Watch well, and if you see the two females coming, call me."

While Calabash, mounted on the bench, awaited their approach, Nicholas entered the house. Little Amandine, kneeling in the middle of the kitchen, wept, and asked pardon for her brother Francois. He, irritated and threatening, stood in one of the corners of the room, brandishing a hatchet. He seemed this time to make a desperate resistance to the wishes of his mother.

As usual, quiet and calm, she pointed to the half-open door leading to the cellar, and made a sign to her son that she wished Francois shut up there.

"I will not go there!" cried the determined child, whose eyes sparkled like those of a wild cat; "you wish to let us die with hunger, like brother Martial."

"Mamma, for the love of God, leave us upstairs in our own room, as you did yesterday," asked the little girl in a supplicating tone, clasping her hands; "in the dark cellar we shall be so much afraid!"

The widow looked at Nicholas in an impatient manner, as if to reproach him for not having executed her orders, and she again pointed to Francois.

Seeing his brother approach, the young boy brandished his hatchet in a desperate manner, and cried, "If you want to shut me up there, whether it is brother, mother, or Calabash—I strike, and the hatchet cuts!"

Both Nicholas and the widow felt the necessity of preventing the two children from going to the assistance of Martial during their absence, and also to conceal from them what was about to take place on the river. But Nicholas, as cowardly as he was ferocious, and not caring to receive a blow from the dangerous hatchet with which his brother was armed, hesitated to approach him.

The widow, vexed at the hesitation of her eldest son, pushed him roughly by the shoulder toward Francois.

But Nicholas, again drawing back, cried, "If he wounds me, what shall I do, mother? You know well enough I am about to need the use of both my arms, and I still feel the blow that Martial has given me."

The widow shrugged her shoulders with contempt, and made a step toward Francois.

"Do not come near me, mother!" cried the enraged boy, "or you shall be paid for all the blows you have given me and Amandine."

"Brother, rather let yourself be locked up. Oh! do not strike our mother!" cried Amandine, terrified.

At this moment Nicholas saw on a chair a large woolen coverlet, which was used for the ironing-table; he seized it, and adroitly threw it over the head of Francois, who, in spite of all his efforts, finding himself entangled in its thick folds, could make no use of his arms. Then Nicholas threw himself upon him, and, with the aid of his mother, carried him into the cellar. Amandine had remained kneeling in the middle of the kitchen. As soon as she saw the fate of her brother, she arose quickly, and, notwithstanding her alarm, went of her own accord to join him in his gloomy prison. The door was double-locked on the brother and sister.

"It is the fault of Martial, if these children are like unchained devils against us," cried Nicholas.

"Nothing has been heard in his chamber since this morning," said the widow, in a thoughtful manner, and she shuddered; "nothing."

"That proves, mother, that you did well to say to Ferot, the fisherman of Asnieres, that Martial was sick in bed, and like to die. In this way, when all is over, no one will be astonished." After a moment's pause, as if she wished to escape a horrible thought, the widow said, roughly, "Did La Chouette come here while I was at Asnieres?"

"Yes, mother."

"Why did she not remain and go with us to Bras-Rouge? I am suspicious of her."

"Bah! you suspect everybody, mother: to-day it is La Chouette; yesterday it was Bras-Rouge."

"Bras-Rouge is at liberty; my son is at Toulon; they both committed the same robbery."

"You always repeat that old story. Bras-Rouge escaped because he is as cunning as a steel trap, that's all. La Chouette did not remain here, because she had an appointment at two o'clock, near the Observatory, with the tall man in black, on whose account she carried off this girl from the country, with the assistance of the Maitre d'Ecole and Tortillard; and it was even Barbillon who drove the hack which this tall man in black hired for the occasion. Come, now, mother, why should La Chouette inform against us, since she tells us what jobs she has in hand, and we do not tell her ours? for she knows nothing of our proposed drowning scrape. Be tranquil, mother—dog don't eat dog. The day's work will be a good one. When I think that the broker has often twenty or thirty thousand francs' worth of diamonds in her bag, and that in two hours' time we shall have her in Red Arm's cellar. Thirty thousand francs in diamonds! only think of it."

"And while we hold the broker, Bras-Rouge remains outside?" said the widow, with an air of suspicion.

"And where should he be? If any one should come in, must he not answer, and prevent them approaching the place where we are doing our job?"

"Nicholas, Nicholas!" cried Calabash, from without, "here are the two women."

"Quick, quick, mother! your shawl! I will row you over—it will be so much done," said Nicholas.

The widow had replaced her morning-cap with one of black tulle. She wrapped herself in a large shawl of white and gray tartan, locked the kitchen door, placed the key behind one of the shutters, and followed her son to the landing-place.

Almost in spite of herself, before she left the island, she cast a long, lingering look at Martial's window, knit her brows, bit her lips, then, after a sudden fit of shivering, she murmured to herself, "It is his fault—his own fault."

"Nicholas! do you see them? there, just by that rising ground," cried Calabash, pointing to the other side of the river, where Mrs. Seraphin and Fleur-de-Marie appeared, descending a small path leading to the shore, near a small elevation, on which was placed a plaster-kiln.

"Let us wait for the signal, and have no bungling," said Nicholas.

"Are you blind? Don't you recognize the fat woman who came here the day before yesterday? Look at her orange shawl, and see what a hurry the little peasant girl is in! poor little puss—it is plain to see she don't know what is coming."

"Yes, I see the fat woman now. Come, it looks like work."

"The old woman is making a sign with her handkerchief," said Calabash: "there they are on the shore."

"Come, come, step on board, mother," cried Nicholas, unfastening the boat: "come in the boat with the hole, so that the women will not suspect anything. And you, Calabash, jump into the other one, my girl— row strong. Oh! hold, take my hook, put it alongside of you—it is pointed like a lance—it may be of use—now, push ahead!" said the bandit, placing in the boat a long boathook, one end of which terminated with a sharp spike of iron.

In a few moments the two boats touched the shore, where Mrs. Seraphin and Fleur-de-Marie had been waiting impatiently.

While Nicholas was tying his boat to a post, Mrs. Seraphin approached him, and whispered, hurriedly, "Say that Madame George awaits us;" then she said in a loud tone, "We are a little behindhand, my lad."

"Yes, my good lady; Madame George has asked for you several times."

"You see, my dear, Madame George is waiting for us," said Mrs. Seraphin, turning toward Fleur-de-Marie, who, notwithstanding her confidence, had felt her heart beat at the appearance of the sinister faces of the widow, Calabash and Nicholas.

But the name of Madame George reassured her, and she answered, "I am also very impatient to see her; happily, the passage is short."

"Won't the dear lady be happy!" said Mrs. Seraphin. Then, turning toward Nicholas, she added: "Come, bring your boat a little nearer, that we can embark;" and, in a low tone, she whispered, "The little one must be drowned; if she comes up, put her under again."

"It is settled; don't you be afraid; when I make a sign, give me your hand. She will sink all alone—all is prepared—you have nothing to fear," answered Nicholas, in a low tone. Then, with savage imperturbability, without being touched either with the beauty or youth of Fleur-de-Marie, he offered her his arm.

The girl leaned lightly on him, and entered the boat. "Now your turn, my good lady," said Nicholas to Mrs. Seraphin. And he offered to assist her.

Whether it was a presentiment, suspicion, or only a fear that she could not jump quick enough from the boat where La Goualeuse and Nicholas were seated when it should sink, the housekeeper of Jacques Ferrand said to Nicholas, drawing back, "On second thoughts, I will go in the boat of mademoiselle." And she took a seat alongside of Calabash.

"Very good," said Nicholas, exchanging a glance with his sister; and, with the end of his oar, he shoved off his boat, his sister doing the same as soon as Mrs. Seraphin had taken her seat. Standing on the shore, erect, immovable, indifferent to this scene, the widow, pensive and absorbed, kept her eyes fixed on Martial's window, which could be distinguished, through the poplar trees, from the shore.

During this time the two boats moved slowly off toward the opposite side.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

DOES NOT A MEETING LIKE THIS MAKE AMENDS?

Before we acquaint the reader with the continuation of the drama which passed on the boats, we will go back a little. A few moments after Fleur-de-Marie had left Saint Lazare with Mrs. Seraphin, La Louve had also quitted the prison.

Thanks to the recommendation of Madame Armand and of the director, who wished to recompense her for her good action toward Mont Saint Jean, she had been also pardoned and dismissed. A complete change had taken place in this creature, heretofore so headstrong, vile, and corrupted.

Keeping constantly in mind the description made by Fleur-de-Marie of a peaceful and solitary life, La Louve held in disgust her past crimes.

Confiding in the aid which Fleur-de-Marie had promised her in the name of her unknown benefactor, La Louve determined to make this laudable proposition to her lover, not without the bitter fear of a refusal, for the Goualeuse, in leading her to blush for the past, had also given her a consciousness of her position toward Martial.

Once free, La Louve only thought of seeing him. She had received no news from him for many days. In the hope of meeting him on Ravageurs' Island, she decided to wait there if she did not find him; she got into a cab, and was rapidly driven to the Bridge of Asnieres, which she crossed about fifteen minutes before Mrs. Seraphin and Fleur-de-Marie, coming on foot, had arrived on the shore near the plaster-kiln.

As Martial did not come to take La Louve in his boat to the island, she applied to the old fisherman named Ferot, who lived near the bridge.

At four o'clock in the afternoon, a cab stopped at the entrance of a little street of Asnieres village. La

Louve gave five francs to the coachman. Jumped to the ground, and ran hastily to the abode of Ferot.

Having thrown off her prison dress, she wore a robe of dark green merino, a red shawl, imitation cashmere, and a lace cap trimmed with ribbons: her thick crispy hair was scarcely smoothed. In her impatience to see Martial, she had dressed herself with more haste than care. On reaching the house of the fisherman, she found him seated at the door mending his nets.

As soon as she saw him, she cried out, "Your boat, Ferot—quick, quick."

"Ah! is it you? Good-day, good-day. You have not been here for a long time."

"Yes, but your boat—quick—to the island."

"Ah, well! fate will have it so; my good girl, it is impossible to-day."

"How?"

"My boy has taken my boat to go with the others to a rowing match at Saint Ouen. There is not a single boat left on the whole shore from this to the docks."

"Zounds!" cried La Louve, stamping and clinching her fists; "it happens so expressly for me!"

"It's true, on my word. I am very sorry I cannot convey you to the island, for, without doubt, he must be worse."

"Worse! Who?"

"Martial."

"Martial?" cried La Louve, seizing Ferot by the collar; "is Martial sick?"

"Did you not know it?"

"Martial?"

"Yes, certainly; but you will tear my blouse; do be quiet."

"He is sick. Since when?"

"Two or three days ago."

"It is false; he would have written to me."

"Ah, well, yes! he is too sick to write."

"Too sick to write! And he is on the island; you are sure of that?"

"Don't get me into a scrape; this is the story: this morning I said to the widow, 'For two days past I have not seen Martial, his boat is there. Is he in the city?' Thereupon the widow looked at me with her wicked eyes: 'He is sick on the island; and so sick that he will never come off again.' I said to myself, 'How can that be? Three days ago—' Well," said Ferot, interrupting himself, "where are you going to—where the devil is she running to now?"

Believing the life of Martial menaced by the inhabitants of the island, La Louve, overcome with alarm, and transported with rage, listened no longer to the fisherman, but ran along the Seine.

Some topographical details are indispensable to understand the following scene.

The island approached nearer the left side of the river than the right shore, from whence Fleur-de-Marie and Mrs. Seraphin had embarked. La Louve was on the left side. Without being very steep, the hills on the island concealed, all its length, the view of one shore from the other. Thus, La Louve had not seen the embarkation of La Goualeusea, and the Martial family, of course, could not see her as she ran along the shore on the opposite side.

We recall to the reader that the country-house belonging to Doctor Griffon, where the Count de Saint Remy temporarily dwelt, was built on the hillside, near the shore where La Louve was wandering, half-distracted.

She passed, without seeing them, near two persons, who, struck with her haggard look, turned to follow her at a distance. These two persons were the Count de Saint Remy and Doctor Griffon.

The first impulse of La Louve, on learning the peril of her lover, had been to run impetuously toward

the place where she knew he was in danger. But as she approached the island, she thought of the difficulty of getting there. As the old fisherman had told her, she could not count on any strange boat, and no one from the Martial family would come for her.

Breathless, her face flushed, her eyes sparkling, she stopped opposite a point of the island which, forming a curve at this place, was nearest to the mainland. Through the leafless branches of the willows and poplars, La Louve could see the roof of the house, where, perhaps, Martial was dying. At this sight, uttering a fearful groan, she tore off her shawl and cap, and slipping down her robe, keeping on her petticoat, she threw herself into the river, and waded until she lost her footing, when she began to swim vigorously toward the island.

It was the climax of savage energy.

At each stroke, the thick and long hair of La Louve, untied by the violence of her movements, shook about her head like a shaggy mane of copper color.

Suddenly, from the other side of the island, resounded a cry of distress, of terrible, desperate agony. La Louve shuddered, and stopped short. Then, treading water, with one hand she pushed back her thick hair, and listened. A new cry was heard, but more feeble, more supplicating, convulsive, expiring and all relapsed into a profound silence. "My Martial!" cried La Louve, swimming again with all her strength. She thought she had recognized the voice of Martial.

The count and doctor had not been able to follow La Louve quick enough to prevent what she accomplished. They arrived opposite to the island at the moment that the two fearful screams were heard, and stopped, as much alarmed as La Louve. Seeing her struggle intrepidly against the current, they cried, "The poor thing will be drowned!" These fears were vain; she swam like an otter; still a few more strokes, and she reached the land. She was getting out of the water by the assistance of the poles, which, as we have said, formed a breakwater at the end of the island, when she perceived the body of a young girl, dressed as a peasant, sustained by her clothes, floating down the current.

To grasp with one hand the poles, and with the other to seize hold of the girl by her dress, such was the movement of La Louve, as rapid as thought. Then she drew her so violently toward her and within the stakes, that, for a moment, she disappeared under the water, which was of no great depth at this place.

Endued with no common strength and address, La Louve raised up La Goualeuse (for it was she), whom she had not yet recognized, took her up in her robust arms, as one would have taken a child, made some steps in the water, and, finally, laid her on the green bank of the island.

"Courage, courage!" cried M. de Saint Remy to her, as a witness, as well as Dr. Griffon, of this bold act. "We are going to cross the bridge, and will come to your aid in a boat." La Louve did not hear these words. Let us repeat, that from the right shore of the Seine, where Nicholas, Calabash, and their mother remained after the consummation of their horrible crime, nothing could be seen of the other side, owing to the height of the island. Fleur-de-Marie, suddenly drawn within the row of piles by La Louve, having plunged for a moment, and not reappearing to the sight of her murderers, they believed their victim drowned and ingulfed.

Some few moments afterward, the current brought down another body, in an eddy, which La Louve did not perceive. It was the corpse of the notary's housekeeper. Dead—quite dead—this one.

Nicholas and Calabash had as much interest as Jacques Ferrand to get rid of this witness, the accomplice of their new crime; so when the boat with the hole sunk with Fleur-de-Marie, Nicholas, springing into the boat of his sister, nearly upset it, and seizing a favorable moment, threw the housekeeper into the river, and dispatched her with the boat-hook.

Out of breath and exhausted, La Louve, kneeling on the ground alongside of Fleur-de-Marie, recruited her strength, and examined the features of her whom she had rescued from death. Let her surprise be imagined when she recognized her companion of the prison, who had exercised upon her destiny an influence so rapid, so ameliorating. In her surprise, for a moment she forgot Martial.

"La Goualeuse!" cried she.

With bended body, leaning on her hands and knees, her hair disheveled, her clothes dripping with water, she contemplated the unhappy child, extended, almost expiring on the ground. Pale, inanimate, her eyes half open and without expression, her beautiful flaxen hair falling flat over her forehead, her blue lips, her small hands, already stiff and icy—one would have thought her dead. "La Goualeuse!" repeated La Louve, "what chance! I who came to tell my Martial the good and evil she had done me with her words and promises; the resolution that I had taken. Poor little thing! I find her here dead.

But, no, no," cried La Louve, approaching still nearer to Fleur-de-Marie, and feeling an almost imperceptible breath escape from her mouth; "No! she breathes still! I have saved her from death! that has never happened to me before, to save any one. Ah! that does me good; it makes me warm. Yes, but my Martial I must save also. Perhaps, at this moment, he is expiring; his mother and brother are capable of killing him. Yet I cannot leave this poor little thing here. I will carry her to the widow's; she must take care of her, and show me Martial, or I will break everything—I will kill everybody! Oh! neither mother, brother, nor sister do I care for, when I know my Martial is there!"

And immediately getting up, La Louve carried Fleur-de-Marie in her arms. With this light burden she ran toward the house, not doubting but that the widow and her daughter, notwithstanding their wickedness, would lend their assistance to Fleur-de-Marie.

When she reached the highest part of the island, whence could be seen both shores of the Seine, Nicholas, his mother, and Calabash, were far off, going in all haste to Bras-Rouge's tavern.

At this moment also, a man, who, concealed in the plaster-kiln, had invisibly assisted at this horrible tragedy, disappeared, believing, with the murderers, that the crime was executed. This man was Jacques Ferrand. One of Nicholas's boats was tied to a pile near the place where La Goualeuse and old Seraphin had embarked. Hardly had Jacques Ferrand left the plaster-kiln to return to Paris, than M. de Saint Remy and Dr. Griffon hastily crossed the Bridge of Asnieres, running toward the island, thinking to reach it by Nicholas's boat, which they had seen from afar.

To her great surprise, on arriving at the house of the Ravageurs, La Louve found the door closed. Placing the still inanimate body of Fleur-de-Marie under the arbor, she drew near the house. She knew the window of Martial's chamber. What was her surprise, to see the shutters covered with iron plates, and fastened with bars of the same material!

Suspecting partly the truth, La Louve uttered a hoarse, resounding cry and began to call with all her strength, "Martial! my love!"

No one answered. Alarmed at this silence, La Louve began to walk around the building like a savage beast who scents his mate, and seeks, with roaring, the entrance of the den where he is confined.

From time to time she cried, "My man—are you there, my man?" In her rage she shook the bars of the kitchen window—she knocked against the wall—she kicked against the door.

All at once a hollow sound answered from the interior of the house. La Louve shuddered—listened. The noise ceased.

"My man has heard me! I must enter, even if I have to gnaw the door with my teeth!" And again she uttered her savage cries.

Several blows, feebly struck on the inside of the window shutters of Martial's room, answered to her shouts.

"He is there!" cried she, stopping suddenly under her lover's window, "he is there! If needs must, I will tear off the iron shutters with my nails, but I will open them."

So saying, she saw a large ladder placed behind one of the blinds of the lower rooms; in drawing this blind violently toward her, La Louve caused the key to fall which the widow had concealed on the window bench. "If it unlocks," said La Louve, trying the key in the lock, "I can go up to his chamber. It opens," cried she, with joy; "my friend is saved!"

Once in the kitchen, she was struck by the cries of the children, who shut up in the cellar and hearing an extraordinary noise, called for help.

The widow, believing no one would come to the island or house during her absence, had contented herself with locking Francois and Amandine in the cellar, leaving the key in the lock.

Set at liberty by La Louve, the brother and sister rushed precipitately from the cellar, crying, "Oh, La Louve, save brother Martial! they wish to kill him; two days he has been walled up in his room."

"They have not wounded him?"

"No, no; we believe not."

"I arrive in time!" cried La Louve, rushing to the staircase: then suddenly stopping, she said, "And La Goualeuse! whom I forgot. Amandine, some fire at once; you and your brother, bring here, near the chimney-place, a poor girl who was drowning. I saved her. She is under the arbor. Francois, a pair of

pincers, a hatchet, an iron bar, so that I can break down the door of my Martial!"

"Here is an ax to split wood, but it is too heavy for you," said the young boy.

"Too heavy!" sneered La Louve, and she lifted with ease the iron mace, which, under any other circumstances, she could hardly have raised from the ground. Then, mounting the stairs four at a time, she repeated to the children, "Run and bring in the girl, and place her near the fire." In two bounds, La Louve was at the bottom of the corridor, at Martial's door. "Courage, my friend—here is your Louve!" cried she, and raising the ax with both hands, with a furious blow she shook the door.

"It is nailed on the outside. Draw out the nails," cried Martial, in a feeble voice.

Throwing herself on her knees in the corridor, with the aid of the pincers and of her nails, which she tore, and her fingers, which she cut, La Louve succeeded in drawing out the spikes which fastened the door. At length the door was opened. Martial, pale, his hands covered with blood, fell almost lifeless into the arms of his darling.

"At length I see you! I hold you! I have you!" cried La Louve, receiving Martial in her arms with joy and savage energy; then sustaining him, almost carrying him, she led him to a seat placed in the corridor.

During some moments Martial remained weak and feeble, endeavoring to recover from this violent shock, which had exhausted his failing strength. La Louve saved her lover at the moment when, in a state of despair, he felt himself about to die, less from the want of food than from the deprivation of air, impossible to be renewed in a small room without a chimney, without any aperture, and hermetically closed through the atrocious foresight of Calabash, who had stopped up with old linen even the smallest fissures of the door and window.

Palpitating with happiness and anguish, her eyes wet with tears, La Louve, on her knees, watched the smallest movements of Martial. By degrees he seemed to recover, as he breathed the pure and salubrious air. After a slight shudder, he raised his weary head, uttered a long sigh, and opened his eyes.

"Martial, it is I! your Louve; how do you feel?"

"Better," answered he, in a feeble voice.

"What will you have? water, vinegar?"

"No, no," cried Martial, less and less oppressed. "Air! oh, some air! nothing but air!"

La Louve, at the risk of cutting her hand, broke the glass of a window which she could not open without moving a heavy table.

"Now I breathe! I breathe! my head is relieved," said Martial, coming quite to himself. Then, as if for the first time recalling to mind the services she had rendered him, he cried, in a tone of ineffable gratitude, "Without you, I should have died, my good Louve!"

"Well, well; how are you now?"

"Better and better."

"Are you hungry?"

"No, I am too weak. I suffered most from want of air; finally, I suffocated! it was frightful!"

"And now?"

"I live again! I come out from the tomb; and I come out—thanks to you."

"But your hands, your poor hands! these wounds? Who did this?—curse them!"

"Nicholas and Calabash, not daring to attack me openly a second time, shut me in my chamber, and left me to die with hunger. I tried to prevent them from nailing up my window—my sister cut my hands with the hatchet!"

"The monsters! they wished to have it believed that you were dead from some sickness; your mother had already spread the report that you were in a dying state. Your mother, my man, your mother!"

"Hold! do not speak to me of her," said Martial, bitterly; then, for the first time, remarking the wet clothes and strange attire of La Louve, he cried, "What has happened to you?—your hair is streaming

with water. You are without your dress."

"What matters it? You are saved—saved!"

"But explain to me why you are wet."

"I knew you were in danger—I could find no boat."

"And you swam here?"

"Yes. But your hands; let me kiss them. You suffer—the monsters! And I was not here!"

"Oh! my brave Louve," cried Martial, with enthusiasm; "brave among all brave creatures."

"Did you not write here 'death to dastards'?"

And La Louve showed her arm, where these words were written in indelible characters.

"Intrepid! But you feel the cold, you tremble."

"It is not the cold."

"Never mind. Go in there; take Calabash's cloak to wrap yourself in."

"But—"

"I wish it."

In a second, La Louve was enveloped in a plaid cloak, and returned.

"For me, to run the risk of drowning!" repeated Martial, looking at her with pride.

"No risk! A poor girl was almost drowned. I saved her. On reaching the island—"

"You saved her also—where is she?"

"Below with the children; they are taking care of her."

"And who is this young girl?"

"If you knew what a chance—what happy chance! She was one of my chums in Saint Lazare—a very extraordinary girl, you be sure!"

"How is that?"

"Imagine that I loved her and hated her because—she at the same time planted both death and happiness in my heart."

"She?"

"Yes; concerning you."

"Me?"

"Listen, Martial." Then, interrupting herself, she added, "No, no. I shall never dare."

"What is it then?"

"I wished to ask something of you. I came to see you on this account; for when I left Paris I did not know that you were in danger."

"Well, speak."

"I dare not."

"You dare not—after what you have just done for me!"

"Exactly; it would seem as if I asked a recompense."

"Asked a recompense! And do I not owe you one? Did you not take care of me, night and day, during my sickness last year?"

"Are you not my Martial?"

"Then you should speak to me frankly, because I am your Martial, and will be always."

"Always, Martial?"

"Always! true as I am called Martial. For me, there shall be no other woman in the world but you, La Louve No matter what you have been— that's my lookout. I love you—you love me; and I owe my life to you. But since you have been in prison, I am no longer the same; much has happened; I have reflected; and you shall no more be what you have been."

"What do you mean to say?"

"I never wish to leave you again. Neither do I wish to leave Francois and Amandine."

"Your little brother and sister?"

"Yes; from this day I must be to them a father—you comprehend. This gives me duties to perform, and tames me. I am obliged to take charge of them. They wished to make finished thieves of them; to save them, I shall take them away."

"Where?"

"I don't know; but certainly far from Paris."

"And me?"

"You? I will take you also."

"Take me also?" cried La Louve, in a joyous delirium. She could not believe in so much happiness. "I shall not leave you?"

"No, my brave Louve, never. You shall aid me to bring up these children. I know you. On saying to you, I wish that my poor little Amandine should be a virtuous girl, I know what you will be for her; a good mother."

"Oh! thank you, Martial, thank you!"

"We will live as honest work-folks; be easy, we will find work; we will toil like negroes. At least, these children shall not be gallows' birds, like their father and mother. I shall not hear myself called any more the son and brother of a *guillotine*; in fine, I shall no more pass through the streets where I am known. But what is the matter?"

"Martial, I am afraid I shall become crazy."

"Crazy?"

"Crazy with joy!"

"Why?"

"Because this is too much."

"What?"

"What you ask me. Oh! it is too much. Saving the Goualeuse, this has brought me this happiness; it must be so."

"But once more, what is the matter?"

"What you have just said. Oh, Martial, Martial!"

"Well?"

"I came to ask you!"

"To leave Paris?"

"Yes," answered she, quickly; "to go with you in the woods, where we would have a nice little house, children whom I should love; oh! how I should love them! how your Louve would love the children of her Martial; or, rather, if you wished it," said La Louve, trembling, "I would call you my husband; for we shall not have the place unless you consent to this," she hastened to add, quickly.

Martial, in his turn, looked at La Louve with astonishment, not in the least understanding her words.

"Of what place do you speak?"

"A gamekeeper's."

"That I shall have?—and who will give it to me?"

"The protectors of the girl whom I have saved."

"Who is she, then?"

I don't know; I can't understand anything; but in my life I have never seen, never heard anything like her; she is like a fairy to read what one has in the heart. When I told her how much I loved you, instantly, on that account, she became interested, not by using hard words (you know how I would have stood that), but by speaking to me of a very laborious, hard life, tranquilly passed with you according to your taste, in the midst of the forest; only, according to her idea, instead of being a poacher you were a gamekeeper, and I your wife; and then our children were to run to meet you when you returned at night from your rounds, with dogs, your gun on your shoulder; and then we should sup at the door of the cabin, in the cool of the evening, under the large trees; and then we would retire to rest so happy, so peaceful. What shall I say? in spite of myself I listened; it was like a charm. If you knew—she spoke so well, so well—that—all that she said, I thought I could see; I dreamed wide awake!"

"Oh! yes; it would be a happy life," said Martial, sighing in his turn; "without being altogether black at heart, poor Francois has associated too much with Calabash and Nicholas; so that the good air of the woods will be much better for him than the air of the city. Amandine could help you in the house; I would be a good keeper, as I was a famous poacher. I should have you for a manager, my brave Louve; and then, as you say, with children, what should we need? When once one is accustomed to the forest, one is quite at home; a hundred years would pass as one day; but, see now, I am a fool. Hold! you should not have spoken to me of this life; it only causes regrets, that's all."

"I let you go on, because you say exactly what I did to La Goualeuse."

"How?"

"Yes, in listening to these fairy tales, I said to her, 'What a pity that these castles in the air, La Goualeuse, are not the truth!' Do you know what she answered, Martial?" said La Louve, her eyes sparkling with joy.

"No."

"'Let Martial marry you; promise both of you to live an honest life, and this place, which causes you so much envy, I am almost sure to obtain for you on leaving the prison,' was her answer."

"A gamekeeper's place for me?"

"Yes, for you."

"But you are right-it is a dream. If it only were needful that I should marry you to obtain this place, my brave Louve, it should be done to-morrow, if I had the means; for, from to-day you are my wife— my true wife."

"Martial, I your real wife?"

"My real, my sole wife, and I wish you to call me your husband—it is just the same as if the mayor had joined us."

"Oh! La Goualeuse was right; it makes one so proud to say, 'My husband!' Martial—you shall see your Louve keeping house, at work! you shall see."

"But this place—do you believe?"

"Poor little Goualeuse, if she is deceived it is others' faults; for she appeared to believe what she told me. Besides, just now, on leaving the prison, the inspectress told me that the protectors of La Goualeuse, people of high rank, had taken her from the prison this very day: that proves that she has benefactors, and that she can do what she has promised."

"Oh!" cried Martial, suddenly, rising from his seat, "I do not know what we are thinking about."

"What is it?"

"This girl is below, dying, perhaps; and instead of helping her, we are here."

"Be satisfied; Francois and Amandine are with her; they would have called us if there had been any danger. But you are right; let us go to her; you must see her, she to whom, perhaps, we shall owe our happiness." And Martial, leaning on the arm of La Louve, descended the stairs.

Before they enter the kitchen, we will relate what passed since Fleur-de-Marie had been confided to the care of the children.

CHAPTER XXXV.

DR. GRIFFON.

Francois and Amandine had just carried Fleur-de-Marie into the kitchen near the fire, when Saint Remy and Dr. Griffon, who had crossed over in Nicholas's boat, entered the house. While the children stirred up the fire and threw on some dry fagots, which, soon kindling, gave out a cheerful blaze, Dr. Griffon exercised all his skill to restore the girl.

"The poor child is hardly seventeen," cried the count, profoundly affected; then, turning toward the doctor, he said, "Well, what do you think, my friend?"

"I can hardly feel the pulse; but, what is very singular, the skin of the face is not colored blue in this subject, as is ordinarily the case in asphyxia from submersion," answered the doctor with imperturbable coolness, looking at Fleur-de-Marie with an air profoundly meditative.

Dr. Griffon was a tall, thin man, very pale, and completely bald, except two very scanty tufts of black hair, most carefully gathered from behind, and laid flat on his forehead; his face, wrinkled and furrowed by hard study, expressed intelligence reflection, and coldness.

Of immense knowledge, of consummate experience, a skillful and renowned practitioner, principal physician of a large hospital, Dr. Griffon had but one defect—that of making, if we may express it, a complete oversight of the patient, and only attending to the disease: young or old, male or female, rich or poor, no matter; he thought only of the medical fact, more or less curious or interesting in a scientific point of view, which the *subject* offered.

For him there only existed *subjects*.

"What a charming face! How handsome she is, notwithstanding this frightful pallor!" said Saint Remy, contemplating Fleur-de-Marie with sadness. "Have you ever seen, my dear doctor, features more regular or more lovely? And so young—so young!"

"The age is nothing," said the physician, roughly; "no more than the presence of water in the lungs, which formerly was thought to be mortal. They were most grossly deceived: the admirable experiments of Goodwin, of the famous Goodwin, have proved it."

"But, doctor—"

"But it is a fact," answered M. Griffon, absorbed by the love of his art. "To ascertain the presence of a foreign liquid in the lungs, Goodwin plunged some cats and dogs into a tub of ink for some seconds, drew them out living, and dissected my gentlemen some time afterward. Well, he convinced himself that the ink had penetrated into the lungs, and that the presence of liquid in the organs of respiration does not cause death."

The count knew the physician to be an excellent man at heart, but that his frenzied passion for the sciences often made him appear hard-hearted and almost cruel.

"Have you, at least, any hope?" asked he, with impatience.

"The extremities of the subject are very cold," said the doctor; "there is but little hope."

"Oh, to die at her age, poor child—it is frightful!"

"The pupil fixed, dilated," answered the immovable doctor, raising with his finger the moveless eyelid of Fleur-de-Marie.

"Strange man," cried the count, almost with indignation; "one would think you without feeling; and

yet I have seen you watch by my bedside night after night. If I had been your brother, you could not have been more devoted."

The doctor, quite occupied in administering to Fleur-de-Marie, answered the count, without looking at him, and with settled calmness, "Do you believe that one meets every day with such a malignant fever, so marvelously complicated, so curious to study, as the one you had? It was admirable, my good friend, admirable! Stupor, delirium, twitchings of the sinews, syncopes—your deadly fever united the most varied symptoms. Your constitution was also a rare thing, very rare, and eminently interesting; you were also affected, in a partial and momentary manner, with paralysis. If it were only for this fact, your disease had a right to all my attention; you presented to me a magnificent study; for, frankly, my dear friend, all I desire in this world is to come across just such another fine case—but one has no such luck twice."

[Illustration: FEELING FOR THE BEATING OF THE PULSE]

The count shrugged his shoulders impatiently. It was at this moment that Martial descended, leaning on the arm of La Louve, who had, as the reader knows, thrown over her wet clothes a plaid cloak belonging to Calabash.

Struck with the pale looks of the lover of La Louve, and remarking his hands covered with coagulated blood, the count cried, "Who is this man?"

"*My husband!*" answered La Louve, looking at Martial with an expression of happiness and noble pride impossible to describe.

"You have a good intrepid wife, sir," said the count to him. "I saw her save this unfortunate child with rare courage."

"Oh, yes, sir; good and intrepid is *my wife!*" answered Martial, dwelling on the last words, and looking at La Louve in his turn with an air at once tender and affectionate. "Yes, intrepid; for she also saved my life!"

"Yours!" said the astonished count.

"See his hands, his poor hands!" said La Louve, wiping the tears which softened the indignant sparkling of her eyes.

"Oh, this is horrible!" cried the count. "This poor fellow has had his hands literally chopped up. Look, doctor!"

Turning his head slightly, and looking over his shoulder at the numerous wounds which Calabash had made, the doctor said, "Open and shut your hand."

Martial executed this movement with much pain.

The doctor shrugged his shoulders, continued to occupy himself with Fleur-de-Marie, and said disdainfully, and as if with regret, "Those wounds are absolutely nothing serious. None of the tendons are injured; in a week the subject can use his hands."

"Then, sir, my husband will not be a cripple?" cried La Louve with gratitude.

The doctor shook his head.

"And La Goualeuse will live, will she not?" asked La Louve. "Oh, she must live, my husband and I owe her so much!" Then turning toward Martial, "Poor little thing! There is she of whom I spoke—she who perhaps will be the cause of our happiness—she who gave me the idea of telling you all I have said. See what chance has done, that I should save her—and here too!"

"She is our Providence!" said Martial, struck with the beauty of La Goualeuse. "What an angelic face! Oh, she will live! will she not, doctor?"

"I don't know," answered the physician; "but, in the first place, she ought to remain here. Can she have the necessary attentions?"

"Here!" cried La Louve. "Why, they murder here!"

"Hush, hush!" said Martial.

The count and doctor looked at La Louve with surprise.

"This house has a bad reputation; it surprises me the less," whispered the physician to Saint Remy.

"You have, then, been the victim of violence?" asked the count. "Who wounded you in this manner?" "It is nothing, sir. I had a dispute here, a fight ensued, and I have been wounded. But this girl cannot remain in the house," added he, in a gloomy manner. "I shall not remain myself, neither my wife nor my brother, nor my sister. We leave the island never to return."

"Oh, what joy!" cried both the children.

"Then what must we do?" said the doctor, regarding Fleur-de-Marie. "It is impossible to think of transporting this subject in this state of prostration. Yet, happily, my house is close at hand, and my gardener's wife and daughter will make excellent nurses. Since this asphyxia from submersion interests you, you can overlook her attendants, my dear Saint Remy, and I will come and see her every day."

"And you play the part of a hard-hearted, unmerciful man," cried the count, "when you have a most generous heart, as this proposition proves."

"If the subject sinks, as is possible, there will be a most interesting autopsy, which will allow me to confirm once more the assertions of Goodwin."

"What you say is frightful!" said the count.

"For him who knows how to read it, the human body is a book where one learns to save the life of the sick," said Dr. Griffon, stoically.

"However, you do good," said Saint Remy, bitterly; "that is the important thing. What matters the cause, as long as the benefit exists! Poor child, the more I look at her, the more she interests me."

"And she deserves it, sir," cried La Louve, passionately, drawing near.

"You know her?" said the count.

"Know her, sir? To her I owe the happiness of my life; in saving her I have not done as much for her as she has done for me."

"And who is she?" asked the count.

"An angel, sir; all that is good in the world. Yes, although she is dressed as a peasant girl there is not a grand lady who can talk as well as she can, with her soft little voice, just like music. She is a noble girl, and courageous and good."

"How did she fall in the water?"

"I do not know, sir."

"She is not a peasant girl, then?" asked the count.

"A peasant girl! Look at her small white hands, sir!"

"It is true," said Saint Remy. "What a singular mystery! But her name, her family?"

"Come," said the doctor, interrupting the conversation, "the subject must be carried to the boat."

Half an hour afterward, Fleur-de-Marie, who had not yet recovered her senses, was taken to the physician's house, placed in a warm bed, and maternally watched by the gardener's wife, assisted by La Louve. The doctor promised Saint Remy, who was more and more interested in La Goualeuse, to return the same evening to visit her.

Martial went to Paris with Francois, and Amandine, La Louve not being willing to leave Fleur-de-Marie until she was out of danger.

The island remained deserted. We shall soon meet with its wretched occupants at Bras-Rouge's, where they had agreed to meet La Chouette, to murder the diamond dealer.

In the meanwhile we would conduct the reader to the appointment that Tom, the brother of the Countess Macgregor, had made with the horrible old woman, the Schoolmaster's accomplice.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

THE LIKENESS.

Thomas Seyton walked impatiently up and down on one of the boulevards, near the Observatory, till he saw La Chouette appear.

The old wretch had on a white cap, and was wrapped up in a large red plaid shawl; the point of a very sharp dagger stuck through the bottom of the straw basket which she carried on her arm; but Tom did not perceive it.

"Three o'clock is striking from the Luxembourg," said the old woman.
"I am punctual, I think?"

"Come," answered Seyton; and walking before her, he crossed some waste ground, entered a deserted street situated near the Rue Cassini, stopped about the middle of the passage, where it was obstructed by a turnstile, opened a small gate, made a sign for La Chouette to follow him, and, after having taken a few steps in an alley shaded with large trees, said, "Wait here," and disappeared.

"I hope he won't make me lose too much time," said La Chouette; "I must be at Bras-Rouge's at five, to settle the broker. Ah! speaking of that, my scoundrelly needle has his nose out of the window," added the old woman, seeing the point of the dagger sticking through the basket. "So much for not having put on his cap." And taking it from the basket, she placed it in such a manner that it was completely concealed.

"It is a tool of my man's," said she. "Did he not ask me for it to kill the rats, which come and laugh at him in his cellar? Poor beasts!—not for him. They have only the old blind man to divert them, and keep them company! The least they can do is to nibble him a little. Hence I don't wish him to do any harm to the small deer, and I keep the tickler. Besides, I shall soon want it for the broker, perhaps. Thirty thousand francs' worth of diamonds—a treasure for each of us! A good day's work; not like the other day. That fool of a notary whom I wanted to pluck—I did threaten him, if he would not give me money, to inform that it was his housekeeper who gave me La Goualeuse, through Tournemine, when she was quite small; but nothing frightens him. He called me an old liar, and turned me out of doors. Good, good—I will have a letter written to those people at the farm, where Pegriotte was sent, and inform them it was the notary who abandoned her. They know, perhaps, her family, and when she leaves Saint Lazare, it will be hot work for this hound of a Ferrand. But some one comes—a little pale lady whom I have seen before," added La Chouette, seeing Sarah appear at the other end of the alley. "Some more business to be done; it must be on account of this little lady that we carried La Goualeuse away from the farm. If she pays well for anything new, I'm on it, safe!"

On approaching La Chouette, whom she saw for the first time since a previous meeting, the countenance of Sarah expressed that disdain which people of a certain class feel when they are obliged to come in contact with wretches whom they use as instruments or accomplices.

Seyton, who until now had actively assisted the criminal machinations of his sister, considering them useless, had refused to continue this miserable game, consenting, nevertheless, to grant his sister, for the last time, an interview with La Chouette, without wishing to take part in any new schemes.

Having been unable to bring Rudolph back to her by breaking the ties which she thought dear to him, the countess hoped, as we have said, to render him the dupe of an infamous trick, the success of which might realize the dream of this opinionated, ambitious, and cruel woman. It was in contemplation to persuade Rudolph that the daughter, whom he had supposed dead, was alive, and to substitute some orphan in the place of his daughter.

The reader knows that Jacques Ferrand, having formally refused to enter into this plot, in spite of Sarah's threats, had resolved to make away with Fleur-de-Marie, as much from dread of the revelations of La Chouette, as from fear of the countess. But she had not renounced her designs, for she was almost certain of corrupting or intimidating the notary, when she had secured a girl capable of playing the part designed for her.

After a moment's silence, Sarah said to La Chouette, "Are you adroit, discreet, and resolute?"

"Adroit as a monkey, resolute as a dog, dumb as a fish; there's La Chouette, just as the devil has made her, ready to serve you if she is capable—and she is rather," answered the hag in a lively manner. "I hope we have famously decoyed the young country girl, who is safely fastened up in Saint Lazare for two good months."

"The question is no longer of her, but of other things."

"As you wish, my little lady. As long as there is money at the end of what you are about to propose, we shall be like two fingers of a hand."

Sarah could not suppress a movement of disgust. "You must know," said she, "some common people—some unfortunate family."

"There are more of them than millionaires; plenty to pick from; there is a rich misery in Paris."

"You must find for me a young orphan girl, one who lost her parents very early. She must be of an agreeable face, of a sweet temper, and not more than seventeen."

La Chouette looked at Sarah with astonishment.

"Such an orphan cannot be difficult to find," resumed the countess; "there are so many foundlings."

"My little lady, have you not forgotten La Goualeuse? Just what you want."

"Whom do you mean by La Goualeuse?"

"The young person whom we carried off from Bouqueval."

"I tell you, we have nothing to do with her!"

"But listen to me, then; and above all, reward me with good advice; you wish an orphan, as gentle as a lamb, beautiful as day, and not seventeen."

"Without doubt."

"Well, then, take La Goualeuse when she comes out of Saint Lazare; just what you want—as if made to order; for she was only six years old when Jacques Ferrand (about ten years ago) gave her to me, with a thousand francs, to get rid of her. It was a man named Tournemine, now in the galleys at Rochefort, who brought her to me, saying, that she was doubtless a child they wanted to get rid of, or pass for dead."

"Jacques Ferrand, say you!" cried Sarah, in a voice so changed that La Chouette stepped back with alarm. "The notary, Jacques Ferrand," repeated she, "gave you this child, and"—she could not finish. Her emotion was too violent; with her hands stretched toward La Chouette, trembling violently, surprise and joy were expressed on her countenance.

"But I did not know you were going to fire up in this manner, my little lady," said the old woman. "Yet it is very plain. Ten years ago, an old acquaintance, Toarnemine, said to me, 'Do you wish to take charge of a little girl that some one wants to get rid of? If she lives or dies, all the same there is a thousand francs to gain; you may do with the child what you please.'"

"Ten years ago?" cried Sarah.

"Ten years."

"Fair?"

"Fair."

"With blue eyes?"

"With blue eyes, blue as bluebells."

"And it is she who, at the farm—"

"We packed up for Saint Lazare. I must say that I did not expect to find her there."

"Oh! heaven!" cried Sarah, falling on her knees, and raising her hands and eyes toward heaven; "your ways are impenetrable. I bow before mysterious Providence. Oh! if such happiness were possible—but no, I cannot believe it; it would be too much—no!" Then, suddenly rising, she said to La Chouette, who looked at her with amazement, "Come."

She walked before the hag with hurried steps. At the end of the alley, she ascended some steps leading to the glass door of a cabinet, sumptuously furnished.

At the moment when La Chouette was about to enter, Sarah made her a sign to remain without. Then

she rung the bell violently. A servant appeared.

"I am not at home to any one—let no one in, do you understand? absolutely no one."

The domestic retired, and to be more secure the lady locked the door.

La Chouette heard the orders given to the servant, and saw Sarah lock the door. The countess, turning to her, said, "Come in quickly, and shut the door."

La Chouette obeyed. Hastily opening a secretary, Sarah took from it an ebony casket, which she placed on a desk in the middle of the room, and made a sign for La Chouette to come near her. The casket contained many jewel-boxes placed one on the other, inclosing magnificent ornaments.

Sarah was so impatient to reach the bottom of the casket, that she threw out on the table the boxes, splendidly furnished with necklaces, bracelets, and diadems, where rubies, emeralds, and diamonds sparkled with a thousand fires. La Chouette was astonished. She was armed, she was shut up alone with the countess, her flight was easy, secure. An infernal idea crossed the mind of this monster. But to execute this new misdeed, she had to get her poniard from the basket, and draw near to Sarah, without exciting her suspicions. With the cunning of a tiger-cat, who crawls treacherously on its prey, the old woman profited by the pre-occupation of the countess to steal round the bureau which separated her from her victim. She had already commenced this treacherous evolution, when she was obliged to stop suddenly. Sarah drew a medallion from the bottom of the box, leaned on the table, handed it to La Chouette with a trembling hand, and said, "Look at this portrait."

"It is La Pegriotte!" cried La Chouette, struck with the great likeness; "the little girl who was given to me; I see her as she was when Tournemine brought her to me. There is her thick curly hair which I cut off at once, and sold well, ma foi!"

"You recognize her? Oh! I conjure you do not deceive me!"

"I tell you, my little lady, that it is La Pegriotte; it is as if I could see her before me," said La Chouette, trying to approach Sarah without being remarked; "even now she looks like this portrait. If you saw her, you would be struck with it."

Sarah had experienced no sorrow, no fright on learning that her child had, during ten years, lived miserable and abandoned. No remorse on thinking that she herself had torn her from the peaceful retreat where Rudolph had placed her. This unnatural mother did not at once interrogate La Chouette with terrible anxiety as to the past life of her child. No; ambition with Sarah had for a long time stifled maternal tenderness.

It was not joy at finding her daughter which transported her, it was the certain hope of seeing realized the proud dream of all her life. Rudolph was interested for this unfortunate creature, had protected without knowing her, what would be his joy when he discovered her to be his child! He was single, the countess a widow—Sarah already saw glisten before her eyes a sovereign's crown. La Chouette, still advancing with cautious steps, had already reached one end of the table, and placed her dagger perpendicularly in her basket, the handle close to the opening, quite ready. She was only a few steps from the countess, when the latter suddenly said, "Do you know how to write?" And pushing back with her hand the boxes and jewels, she opened a blotter placed before an inkstand.

"No, madame, I cannot write," answered La Chouette at all hazard.

"I am going to write then, from your dictation. Tell me all the circumstances attending the abandonment of this little girl." And Sarah, seating herself in an armchair before the desk, took a pen and made a motion for the old woman to draw near to her.

The eyes of La Chouette twinkled. At length she was standing erect alongside of Sarah's seat. She, bending over the table, prepared to write.

"I will read aloud slowly," said the countess, "you will correct my mistakes."

"Yes, madame," answered La Chouette, watching every movement.

Then she slipped her right hand into her basket, so as to take hold of the dagger without being seen. The lady began to write, "I declare that—"

But interrupting herself, and turning toward La Chouette, who already had hold of the handle of her dagger, Sarah added, "At what time was this child delivered to you?"

"In the month of February, 1827."

"By whom?" asked Sarah, with her face still turned toward La Chouette.

"By Pierre Tournemine, now in the galleys at Rochefort. Mrs. Seraphin, housekeeper of the notary, gave the little girl to him."

The countess turned to write and read in a loud voice: "I declare that in the month of February, 1827, a man named—"

La Chouette had drawn out her dagger. Already she raised it to strike her victim between the shoulders. Sarah again turned.

La Chouette, not to be discovered, placed her right arm on the back of the chair, and leaned toward her to answer her new question.

"I have forgotten the name of the man who confided the child to you."

"Pierre Tournemine," answered La Chouette.

"Pierre Tournemine," repeated Sarah, continuing to write—"now in the galleys at Rochefort, placed in my hands a child who had been confided to him by the housekeeper of—"

The countess could not finish. La Chouette, after having softly disencumbered herself of the basket by dropping it on the ground, had thrown herself on the countess with as much rapidity as fury; with her left hand she caught her by the throat, and holding her face down to the table, she had, with her right hand, planted the dagger between the shoulders.

This horrible deed was executed so quickly that the countess did not utter a single cry or groan. Still seated, she remained with her face on the table. The pen had fallen from her hand.

"The same blow as Fourline gave the little old man in the Rue du Roule," said the monster. "Another one who will talk no more—her account is made."

And gathering in haste the jewels, which she threw into her basket, she did not perceive that her victim still breathed.

The murder and robbery accomplished, the horrible old woman opened the glass-door, disappeared rapidly in the green alley, went out by the small door, and reached the waste ground. Near the Observatory, she took a cab, which conveyed her to Bras-Rouge's. Widow Martial, Nicholas, Calabash, and Barbillon had, as the reader knows, made an appointment to meet La Chouette in this den, to rob and kill the diamond broker.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

THE DETECTIVE.

The "Bleeding Heart Tavern" was situated on the Champs Elysees, near the Cours la Reine, in one of the vast moats which bounded this promenade some years since. The inhabitants of the island had not yet appeared. Since the departure of Bradamanti, who had accompanied the step-mother of Madame d'Harville to Normandy, Tortillard had returned to his father's house.

Placed as lookout on the top of the staircase leading down to the inn, the little cripple was to notify the arrival of the Martials by a concerted signal, Bras-Rouge being then in secret conference with Narcisse Borel, a police-officer.

This man, about forty years, strong and thickset, had his skin stained, a sharp and piercing eye, and face completely shaved, so as to be able to assume the different disguises necessary to his dangerous expeditions; for it was often necessary for him to unite the sudden transformations of a comedian with the energy and courage of the soldier, to surprise certain bandits whom he was obliged to match in courage and determination. Narcisse Borel was, in a word, one of the most useful, the most active instruments of the providence, on a small scale, modestly and vulgarly called the police.

Let us return to the interview between Borel and Bras-Rouge. Their conversation seemed very animated.

"Yes," said the plain-clothes constable, "you are accused of profiting by your position in a double manner, by taking part with impunity in the robberies of a band of very dangerous malefactors, and of giving false information concerning them to the police. Take care, Bras-Rouge; if this should be proved, they would have no mercy on you."

"Alas! I know I am accused of this; and it is afflicting, my good M. Narcisse," replied Bras-Rouge, giving to his weasel face an expression of hypocritical sorrow. "But I hope that to-day they will render me justice, and that my good faith will be certainly acknowledged."

"We shall see."

"How can I be suspected? Have I not given proofs? Was it not I—yes or no—who, in time past secured you Ambrose Martial, one of the most dangerous malefactors in Paris? For, as it is said, that runs in his race, and the Martials come from below, where they will soon return."

"All this is very fine; but Ambrose was informed that he was about to be arrested; if I had not advanced the hour indicated by you, he would have escaped."

"Do you believe me capable, M. Narcisse, of having secretly given him information of your intentions?"

"All I know is, that I received a pistol shot from the rascal, which, very fortunately, only went through my arm."

"Marry! M. Narcisse, it is very certain that in your calling one is exposed to such mistakes."

"Oh! you call that a mistake?"

"Certainly; for doubtless the scoundrel wanted to plant the ball in your body."

"In the arms, body, or head, no matter; it is not of that I complain; every trade has its offsets."

"And its pleasures also, M. Narcisse; and its pleasures! For instance, when a man as cunning, as adroit, as courageous as you are, is for a long time on the tracks of a nest of robbers; follows them from place to place—from house to house, with a good bloodhound like your servant Bras-Rouge, and he succeeds in getting them into a trap from which not one can escape, acknowledge, M. Narcisse, that there is great pleasure in it—a huntsman's joy—without counting the service rendered to justice," added the landlord of the "Bleeding Heart."

"I should be of your opinion, if the bloodhound was faithful, but I am afraid he is not."

"Oh! M. Narcisse, can you think—"

"I think that instead of putting us on the scent, you amuse yourself by deceiving us, and you abuse the confidence placed in you. Every day you promise to aid us to place our hands on the band; that day never comes."

"What if this day comes to-day, M. Narcisse, as I am sure it will; and if I let you pick up Barbillon, Nicholas Martial, the widow, her daughter, and La Chouette, will it be a good haul or not? Will you still suspect me?"

"No; and you will have rendered real service; for we have against this band strong presumptions, almost certain suspicions, but, unfortunately, no proofs."

"Hold a moment—caught in the very act, allowing you to nab them so, will aid furiously to display their cards, M. Narcisse?"

"Doubtless; and you assure me you are not in the plan they have on hand?"

"No, on my honor. It is La Chouette who came and proposed to me to entice the broker here, when she learned through my son, that Morel, the lapidary, who lived in the Rue du Temple, cut real instead of false stones, and that Mother Mathieu had often about her jewels of value. I accepted the affair, proposing for La Chouette to add Barbillon and the Martials, so as to have the whole gang in hand."

"And what of the Schoolmaster, this man so dangerous, so strong, and so ferocious, who was always with La Chouette? one of the old hands of the Lapin Blanc?"

"The Schoolmaster?" said Bras-Rouge, feigning astonishment.

"Yes, a galley-slave escaped from Rochefort, named Anselme Duresnel, condemned for life. He has

disfigured himself so as not to be recognized. Have you no information of him?"

"None," answered Bras-Rouge, intrepidly, who had his reasons for this falsehood, for the Schoolmaster was then shut up in one of the cellars of the tavern.

"There is every reason to believe that the Schoolmaster is the author of some late murders. It would be an important capture. For six weeks past, no one knows what has become of him."

"Thus we are reproached for having lost sight of him. Always reproaches, M. Narcisse! always."

"Not without reason. How's your smuggling?"

"Must I not know all sorts of folks, smugglers as well as anybody else, to put you on the scent? I informed you of the pipe which, beginning outside of the Barriere du Trone, ended in a house in the street, to introduce untaxed liquor."

"I know all that," said Narcisse, interrupting Bras-Rouge; but for one you denounce, you let, perhaps, ten escape, and you continue your trade with impunity. I am sure you feed out of two mangers, as the saying is."

"Oh! M. Narcisse, I am incapable of such dishonest hunger."

"And this is not all. In the Rue du Temple, No. 17, lives one Burette, pawnbroker, who is accused of being your private receiver."

"What would you have me do, M. Borel? one says so many things, the world is so wicked. Once more I say, I must mix with the greatest number of scoundrels possible. I must even do as they do, worse than they, to avoid suspicions; but it cuts me to the heart to imitate them—to the heart—I must be well devoted to the service to follow such a trade."

"Poor dear man! I pity you with all my heart."

"You laugh, M. Borel. But if all these stories are believed, why do they not pay Mother Burette and myself a visit?"

"You know well why—not to startle these bandits whom you have for so long a time promised to deliver to us."

"And I am going to deliver them to you, M. Narcisse; in one hour's time you shall have them bound, and without much trouble, for there are three women. Barbillon and Nicholas Martial are as ferocious as tigers, but cowardly as chickens."

"Tigers or chickens," said Borel, opening his long riding coat and showing the butt-ends of two pistols, which stuck out of his trousers pockets, "I have something here to serve them."

"You will do well to take two of your men with you, M. Borel; when they find themselves cornered, the greatest cowards become sometimes tigers."

"I will place two of my men in the little lower room, alongside of the one where you will put the broker. At the first cry, I will appear at one door, my two men at the other."

"You must make haste, for the band may arrive any moment, M. Borel."

"So be it; I go to place my men. I hope it will not be for nothing this time."

The conversation was interrupted by the concerted signal. Bras-Rouge looked out of a window to see whom Tortillard announced.

"Look! here is La Chouette, already! Well! do you believe me now, M. Narcisse?"

"This is something, but not all; we shall see. I go to place my men."

The detective disappeared through a side door.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

Her rapidity of step, the ferocious ardor of a desire for rapine and murder which she still possessed, had flushed her hideous visage; her one green eye sparkled with savage joy.

Tortillard followed her, jumping and limping. Just as she was descending the last steps of the stairs, the son of Bras-Rouge, through a wicked frolic, placed his foot on the trailing folds of La Chouette's dress. This caused the old woman to stumble; not being able to catch hold of the balusters, she fell on her knees, her hands both stretched out, abandoning her precious basket, from whence escaped a golden bracelet set with diamonds and fine pearls. La Chouette, having, in her fall, excoriated her fingers a little, picked up the bracelet, which had not escaped the quick eyesight of Tortillard, rose and threw herself furiously on the little cripple, who approached her with a hypocritical air, saying, "Oh! bless us! your foot slipped!"

Without answering, La Chouette seized him by the hair, and, stooping down, bit him in the cheek; the blood spurted from the wound. Strange as it may appear, Tortillard, notwithstanding his wickedness, and the great pain he endured, uttered not a complaint nor cry. He wiped his bleeding face, and said, with a forced laugh:

"I would rather you would not kiss me so hard another time, La Chouette."

"Wicked little devil, why did you step on my gown to make me fall?"

"I? Oh, now! I swear to you that I did not do it on purpose, my good Chouette; as if your little Tortillard would wish to hurt you; he loves you too well for that. You did well to beat him, affront him, bite him; he is attached to you like a poor little dog to his master," said the child in a caressing and coaxing voice.

Deceived by the hypocrisy, La Chouette answered, "Very well! if I have bitten you wrongfully, it shall be punishment for some other time, when you have deserved it. Come, to-day I bear no malice. Where is your cheat of a father?"

"In the house; shall I call him?"

"No; have the Martials come yet?"

"Not yet."

"Then I have time to go and see my man; I want to speak to old No-eyes."

"Are you going to the cellar?" asked Tortillard, hardly concealing his diabolical joy.

"What is that to you?"

"To me?"

"Yes; you asked me that in such a droll way."

"Because I thought of something funny."

"What?"

"That you must have brought a pack of cards along to amuse him," answered Tortillard, in a cunning manner; "it will be a little change for him; he only plays at biting with the rats; in that game he always wins, and in the end it tires him."

La Chouette laughed violently at this witticism, and said to the little cripple, "Mamma's little monkey. I do not know a blackguard that is more wicked than you are. You little rogue, go, get me a candle; you shall light me down, help me to open his door; you know that I can't move it alone."

"Oh, no, it is too dark in the cellar," said Tortillard, shaking his head.

"How? you, as wicked as the devil, a coward; I would like to see that! Come, go quick, and say to your father, I will soon return; that I am with my pet; that we are talking about the publication of our bans of marriage," added the monster, chuckling. "Come, make haste, you shall be groomsman, and if you are a good boy, you shall have my garter."

Tortillard went to get a light, and La Chouette, elated with the success of her robbery, amused

herself while he was gone in handling the precious jewels in her basket. It was to conceal temporarily this treasure that she wished to visit the Schoolmaster in his cellar, and not to torment, as was her usual custom, her victim. We will mention presently why, with the consent of Bras-Rouge, La Chouette had confined the Schoolmaster in the subterranean hole.

Tortillard, holding a light, reappeared at the cellar door. La Chouette followed him to the lower room, into which opened the large trap-door already described.

The son of Bras-Rouge, protecting his light with the hollow of his hand, and preceding the old woman, descended slowly a flight of steep stone steps, leading to the entrance of the cellar.

Arrived at the foot, Tortillard appeared to hesitate about following
La Chouette.

"Well! lazybones, go on," said she, turning round.

"It is so dark, and besides, you go so fast, La Chouette; I'd rather go back, and leave you the candle."

"And the door, imbecile? Can I open it alone! Will you go on?"

"No, I am too much afraid."

"If I come to you, take care."

"Oh, now you threaten me, I'll go back."

And he retreated a few steps.

"Well! listen; be a good boy," answered La Chouette, restraining her anger, "I will give you something."

"Very well," said the boy, drawing near, "speak so to me, and you will make me do all you can wish, Mother Chouette."

"Look alive, I am in a hurry."

"Yes, but promise that you will let me torment the Schoolmaster."

"Some other day; now I have no time."

"Only a little; just to make him foam."

"Some other time, I say; I must return at once."

"Why, then, do you open the door of his prison?"

"None of your business. Come, now, will you finish? The Martials, perhaps, are already above; I want to speak to them. Be a good boy, and you sha'n't be sorry; go on."

"I must love you well, La Chouette, for you can make me do just as you please," said Tortillard, advancing slowly. The trembling, sickly light of the candle, only made darkness visible in this gloomy passage, reflecting the black shadow of the hideous boy on the green and crumbling walls streaming with humidity.

At the end of the passage, through the obscurity, could be perceived the low, broken arch of the entrance to the cellar, its heavy door secured with bands of iron, and contrasting strongly in the shade with the plaid shawl and white bonnet of La Chouette.

With their united efforts, the door opened, creaking, on its rusty hinges. A puff of humid vapor escaped from this hole, which was as dark as night.

The candle, placed on the ground, cast a ray of light on the first steps of the stone staircase, while the lower part was lost in total obscurity.

A cry, or rather a savage howl, came up from the depths of the cellar.

"Oh, there is my darling, who says 'good-day' to his mamma," said La Chouette, ironically; and she descended a few steps to conceal her prize in some corner.

"I am hungry!" cried the Schoolmaster, in a voice trembling with rage; "do you mean I am to die here like a mad beast?"

"You are hungry, poor puss!" said La Chouette, shouting with laughter. "Well, suck your thumb!"

The noise of a chain shaken violently was heard; then a sigh of restrained rage.

"Take care! take care! you will hurt your leg, poor dear papa!" said Tortillard.

"The child is right; keep quiet, old pal," said the old woman; "the chain and rings are strong, old No-eyes; they come from old Micou, who only sells first rate articles. It is your own fault; for why did you allow yourself to be tied when you were asleep? Afterward there was nothing to be done, but to slip on the chain, and bring you down here, in this nice cool place, to preserve you, my sweet!"

"It's a shame—he'll grow mouldy," said Tortillard.

The chains were heard rattling anew.

"Oh, oh! he jumps like a ladybird, tied by the paw," cried the old woman. "I think I can see him."

"Ladybird, ladybird, fly away home! your house is on fire, and the Schoolmaster is burning!" chanted Tortillard.

This variation augmented the hilarity of La Chouette. Having placed her basket in a hole under one of the steps, she said, "Look here, my man."

"He does not see," answered Tortillard.

"The boy is right. Ah, well! Do you hear? You should not have hindered me, when we returned from the farm, from washing Pegriotte's face with vitriol. You should not have played the good dog, simpleton. And then, to talk of your conscience, which was becoming prudish. I saw that your cake was all dough; that some day or other you might peach, Mister Eyeless, and then—"

"Old No-eyes will nip you, Screech-Owl, for he is hungry," cried Tortillard, suddenly, pushing, with all his strength, the old woman by the back.

La Chouette fell forward, uttering a dreadful imprecation, and rolled to the foot of the steps.

"Lick 'em, Towser! La Chouette is yours! Jump on her, old man," added Tortillard.

Then, seizing hold of the basket, which he had seen the old woman hide, he ran up the stairs precipitately, crying with savage joy, "There is a push worth double what I gave you a while ago, La Chouette! This time you can't bite me. Oh! you thought I didn't care; thank you, I bleed still."

"I have her, oh, I have her!" cried the Schoolmaster from the depths of the cellar.

"If you have her, old man, fair play," said the boy, chuckling, as he stopped on the top step of the staircase.

"Help!" cried La Chouette, in a strangled voice.

"Thank you, Tortillard," answered the Schoolmaster; "thank you," and he uttered an aspiration of fearful joy.

"Oh! I pardon you the harm you have done me, and to reward you, you shall hear La Chouette sing! Listen to the bird of death—'

"Bravo, bravo! here am I in the dress circle, private box," said Tortillard, seating himself at the top of the stairs. He raised the light to endeavor to see what was going on in the cellar, but the darkness was too great; so faint a light could not dissipate it. Bras-Rouge's hopeful could distinguish nothing. The struggle between the Schoolmaster and La Chouette was silent and furious, without a word, without a cry. Only, from time to time, could be heard a hard breathing or suffocating respiration, which always accompanies violent and continued struggles.

Tortillard, seated on the stone step, began to stamp his feet in the manner peculiar to spectators anxious for the commencement of a play; then he uttered the familiar cry of the "gods" in the penny-gaffs. "Hoist that rag! trot 'em out! Begin, begin! Music, music!"

"Oh, I have you as I wish," murmured the Schoolmaster from the bottom of the cellar, "and you shall —"

A desperate movement of La Chouette interrupted him. She struggled with that energy which is caused by the fear of death.

"Speak up, we can't hear," cried Tortillard.

"You have a fine chance in my hand. I have you as I wish to have you," continued the Schoolmaster. Then, having doubtless succeeded in holding La Chouette, he added, "That's it. Now listen—"

"Tortillard, call your father!" cried La Chouette, in a breathless, exhausted tone. "Help, help!"

"Turn out that old woman! turn her out! We can't hear," said the little cripple, screaming with laughter. "Silence! out with her!"

The cries of La Chouette could not reach the upper apartments. The wretch, seeing she had no aid to expect from the son of Bras-Rouge, tried a last effort.

"Tortillard, go for help; and I will give you my basket, it is full of jewels. It is there under a stone."

"How generous you are! Thank you, ma'am! Don't you know that I have your swag? Hold, don't you hear it jingle?" said Tortillard shaking it. "But give me two sous to buy some hot cake and I'll go seek papa."

"Have pity on me, and I—" La Chouette could not proceed. Again there was a pause.

The little cripple recommenced the stamping of his feet, and cried,
"Why don't you begin? Up with the curtain! Go ahead, will you, now?
Music, music!"

"La Chouette, you can no longer deafen me with your cries," said the Schoolmaster, after some minutes, during which he had succeeded in gagging the old woman. "You know well," resumed he, in a slow and hollow tone, "that I do not wish to finish you at once. Torture for torture. You have made me suffer enough. I must talk to you a long time before I kill you—yes, a long time. It will be frightful for you! What agony!"

"Come, none of your nonsense, old man," cried Tortillard, half rising. "Correct her; but do not hurt her. You speak of killing her; it's only a joke, is it not! I like my Chouette. I have lent her to you, but you must return her to me. Don't damage her. I will not have any one harm my Chouette, or I will go and call papa."

"Be not alarmed; she shall only have what she deserves—a profitable lesson," said the robber, to reassure Tortillard, fearing that the cripple would go for help.

"Very good! bravo! Now the play begins," said the boy, who did not believe that the Schoolmaster seriously meditated to destroy La Chouette.

"Let us talk a little," resumed the Schoolmaster, in a calm voice, to the old woman. "In the first place, since a dream I had at the farm of Bouqueval, which brought before my eyes all our crimes, which almost made me mad, which will make me mad—for in the solitude and profound state of isolation in which I live, all my thoughts, in spite of myself, tend toward this dream—a strange change has taken place within me. Yes, I have thought with horror of my past wickedness. In the first place, I did not allow you to disfigure the Goualeuse. That was nothing. By chaining me here in this cave, by making me suffer cold and hunger, but by delivering me from your provocation, you have left me alone to all the horrors of my thoughts. Oh! you do not know what it is to be alone, always alone, with a black veil over the eyes, as the implacable man said who punished me." (This was Rudolph who had had him blinded.) "It is fearful! See now! In this cellar I wished to kill him, but this cellar is the place of my punishment. It will be perhaps my grave!

"I repeat to you, this is frightful. All that man predicted is realized. He told me: 'You have abused your strength: you shall be the plaything of the weakest.' This has been. He told me: 'Henceforth, separated from the exterior world, face to face with the eternal remembrance of your crimes, one day you will repent them.' That day has arrived; solitude has confirmed it. I could not have thought it possible. Another proof that I am, perhaps, less wicked than formerly, is, that I experience an indescribable joy in holding you there, monster, not to avenge myself, but to avenge our victims. Yes, I shall have accomplished a duty, when, with my own hand, I shall have punished my accomplice. A voice tells me, that if you had fallen sooner into my power, much blood might have been spared. I feel now a horror of my past murders, and yet, strange! it is without fear, it is with security that I intend to execute on you a frightful murder, with horrible refinement of cruelty. Speak, speak! can you realize this?"

"Bravo, bravo! well played, first old man. You warm up," cried Tortillard, applauding. "This is only a joke, though?"

"Only a joke?" answered the Schoolmaster, in a hollow voice. "Be still, La Chouette; I must finish explaining to you how, little by little, I came to repent. This revelation will be odious to you, heart of iron, and it will also prove to you how merciless I ought to be in the vengeance I wish to exercise on you in the name of our victims. I must hurry on. The joy of having you thus makes my blood run wild, my head throb with violence, as when I think of my dream. My mind wanders; perhaps one of my attacks is coming on; but I shall have time to render the approaches of death more frightful, in forcing you to hear me."

"Bold, La Chouette!" cried Tortillard; "be bold with your answer. Don't you know your part? Come, tell the devil to prompt you, my old dear."

"Oh! you do well to struggle and bite," said the Schoolmaster, after a pause; "you shall not escape; you have cut my ringers to the bone, but I will tear your tongue out if you stir. Let us continue to converse.

"On finding myself alone—constantly alone in obscurity and silence—I began to have fits of furious rage; powerless, for the first time I lost my senses, my head wandered. Yes, although awake, I have dreamed the dream you know: the dream of the old man in the Rue de Roule—the woman drowned—the drover—all murdered! and you, soaring above all these phantoms! I tell you, it is frightful. I am blind; yet my thoughts assume a form, a body, and represent continually to me in a visible manner, almost palpable, the features of my victims.

"I should not have this fearful dream, but that my mind, continually absorbed by the recollection of my past crimes, is troubled with the same visions.

"Doubtless, when one is deprived of sight, besetting ideas trace themselves almost materially on the brain. Yet, sometimes, by force of contemplating them with resigned alarm, it seems to me that these menacing specters have pity on me; they grow dim, fade away, and disappear. Then I think I awake from a vivid dream; but I feel myself weak, exhausted, broken, and will you believe it—oh! how you will laugh, La Chouette—I weep—do you hear? I weep. You do not laugh? But laugh! I say, laugh!" La Chouette uttered a stifled groan.

"Louder," cried Tortillard; "we can't hear."

"Yes," continued the Schoolmaster, "I wept, for I suffered, and rage is fruitless. I say to myself, to-morrow, and to-morrow, forever I shall be a prey to the same delirium, the same mournful desolation. What a life! oh, what a life! Better I had chosen death, than to be interred alive in this abyss, which incessantly racks my thoughts! Blind, solitary, and a prisoner! what can distract my thoughts? Nothing —nothing.

"When the phantoms cease for a moment to pass and repass on the black veil which I have before my eyes, there are other tortures—there are overwhelming comparisons. I say to myself, 'if I had remained an honest man, at this moment I should be free, tranquil, happy, loved, and honored by mine own, instead of being blind and chained in this dungeon, at the mercy of my accomplices.'

"Alas! the regret of happiness, lost by crime, is the first step toward repentance. And when to this repentance is added an expiation of frightful severity—an expiation which changes life into a long sleep filled with avenging hallucinations of desperate reflections, perhaps then the pardon of man will follow remorse and expiation."

"Take care, old man!" cried Tortillard; "you are cutting into the parson's part! Found out, found out!"

The Schoolmaster paid no attention. "Does it astonish you to hear me talk thus, La Chouette? If I had continued to harden myself, either by other bloody misdeeds, or by the savage drunkenness of a galley-slave's life, this salutary change in me had never taken place, I know well. But alone—blind—and tortured with a visible remorse, what could I think of? New crimes—how commit them? An escape—how escape? And if I escaped, where should I go—what should I do with my liberty? No; I must henceforth live in eternal night, between the anguish of repentance, and the alarm of horrifying apparitions by which I am pursued. Yet sometimes a feeble ray of hope shines in the midst of the gloom —a moment of calm succeeds to my torments: yes, for sometimes I succeed in conjuring the specters which besiege me, by opposing to them the recollections of a past life, honest and peaceful—by carrying back my thoughts to the days of my childhood.

"Happily, you see the blackest villains have had, at least, some years of peace and innocence to offer in opposition to their long years of crime and blood. We are not born wicked.

"The most perverse have had the amiable simplicity of childhood—have known the sweet joys of that charming age. So, I repeat, sometimes I feel a bitter consolation in saying, 'Though I am at this moment the object of universal execration, there was a time when I was beloved and cherished, because I was inoffensive and good.'

"Alas! I must take refuge in the past, when I can; there alone can I find any repose."

On pronouncing these last words, the voice of the Schoolmaster had lost its roughness; the formidable man seemed profoundly affected; he went on: "Now, you see, the salutary influence of these thoughts is such that my rage is appeased; courage, strength, the will, all fail me to punish you; no, it is not for me to shed your blood."

"Bravo, old one! Now you see, La Chouette, that it was only a joke," cried Tortillard, applauding.

"No, it is not for me to shed your blood," resumed the Schoolmaster; "it would be a murder—excusable, perhaps, but still a murder; and I have enough with three specters! And then, who knows, you, even you! will repent some day."

Speaking thus, he mechanically relaxed his grasp.

La Chouette profited by it to seize hold of the dagger, which she had placed in her bosom, after the murder of the countess, and to strike a violent blow with it in order to disembarrass herself of him altogether.

He uttered a cry of great anguish. The savage frenzy of his rage, vengeance, and hatred, his sanguinary instincts suddenly aroused, and exasperated at this attack, made an unexpected and terrible explosion, under which his reason sunk, already much shattered by so many trials.

"Ah! viper, I felt your tooth!" cried he, in a voice trembling with rage, and tightly grasping La Chouette, who had thought to escape. "You crawl in the cellar," added he, more and more wandering, "but I am going to crush you, Screech-Owl. You waited, doubtless, the coming of the phantoms; my ears tingle, my head turns, as when they are about to come. Yes, I am not deceived. Oh! there they are; out of the darkness they approach—they approach! How pale they are, yet their blood, how it flows, red and smoking. They frighten you—you struggle. Oh, well! be tranquil, you shall not see them; I have pity on you; I shall make you blind. You shall be like me, without eyes!" Here he paused.

[Illustration: THE COUNTESS SARAH HAS JUST BEEN ASSASSINATED]

La Chouette uttered a yell so horrible that Tortillard, alarmed, jumped from his seat, and stood erect.

The frightful screams of La Chouette seemed to increase the insanity of the Schoolmaster.

"Sing," said he, in a low voice, "sing, La Chouette, sing your song of death. You are happy; you will never more see the phantoms of our victims; the old man of the Rue de la Roule, the drowned woman, the drover. But I see them, they come; they touch me. Oh! how cold they are, oh!"

The last spark of intelligence in this poor wretch was extinguished in this cry of horror. Then he reasoned no more, spoke not; he behaved and roared like a wild beast: he only obeyed the savage instinct of destruction for destruction's sake. Horrible, frightful events took place in the gloom of the cellar.

A quick, rapid tramping was heard, interrupted at frequent intervals by a dull sound, like that of a bag of bones which rebounded on a stone against which one wished to break it. Acute moans, and bursts of infernal laughter, accompanied each of these blows. Then there was a death-rattle of agony. Then nothing could be heard but the furious trampling; nothing but the heavy and rebounding blows, which still continued.

Soon a distant noise of footsteps and voices reached even to the depths of the cellar. Numerous lights appeared at the extremity of the subterranean passage. Tortillard, frozen with terror by the frightful tragedy which he had heard, but not seen, perceived several persons rapidly descend the staircase. In a moment, the cellar was invaded by several police officers, at the head of whom was Narcisse Borel; municipal guards closed the march. Tortillard was seized on the upper steps of the cellar, holding still in his hand La Chouette's basket.

Narcisse Borel, followed by some of his men, descended into the cellar. All stopped, struck with such a horrible spectacle. Chained by the leg to an enormous stone placed in the middle of the dungeon, the Schoolmaster, horrible, monstrous, his hair knotted, his beard long, his mouth foaming, clothed with bloody rags, turned like a wild beast around his dungeon, dragging after him, by the feet, the corpse of La Chouette, whose head was horribly mutilated, broken, and crushed. It needed a violent struggle to

take from him the bleeding remains of his accomplice, and to secure him.

After a vigorous resistance, they succeeded in transporting him to the lower room of the tavern, a dull, gloomy apartment, lighted by a single window. There were found, handcuffed and guarded, Barbillon, Nicholas Martial, his mother and sister. They had been arrested just at the moment they were dragging off the diamond broker to murder her. She was recovering in another room. Stretched on the ground, and held, with great difficulty, by two officers, the Schoolmaster, slightly wounded in the arm by La Chouette, but completely insensible, roared and bellowed like a baited bull. At times he almost raised himself from the earth by his convulsive movements.

Barbillon, with lowered head, livid face, discolored lips, fixed and savage eye, his long black hair falling on the collar of his blouse, torn in the struggle, was seated on a bench; his arms, confined by handcuffs, rested on his knees. The juvenile appearance of this scoundrel (he was hardly eighteen), and the regularity of his features, rendered still more deplorable the hideous stamp with which debauchery and crime had marked his countenance. Unmoved, he said not a word. This apparent insensibility was due to stupidity or to a frigid energy; his breathing was rapid, and from time to time, with his shackled hands, he wiped the sweat from his pale forehead.

Alongside of him was placed Calabash; her cap had been torn, her yellowish hair, tied behind with a string, hung down her back in many tangled and disordered tresses. More enraged than dispirited, her thin and jaundiced cheeks somewhat colored, she regarded with disdain the affliction of her brother Nicholas, placed on a chair opposite.

Foreseeing the fate which awaited him, this bandit, sinking within himself, his head hanging, his knees trembling, was almost dead with affright; his teeth chattered convulsively, and he uttered low and mournful groans. Alone, among all, the widow, standing with her back to the wail, had lost nothing of her audacity. With her head erect, she cast a firm look around her. Her mask of bronze betrayed not the slightest emotion. Yet, at the sight of Bras-Rouge, who was brought into the lower room, after having assisted in the minute search which the commissary had just made throughout the whole house —yet, at the sight of Bras-Rouge, we repeat, the features of the widow contracted in spite of herself; her small eyes, ordinarily dull, sparkled with rage; her compressed lips became bloodless: she stiffened her manacled hands. Then, as if she had regretted this mute manifestation of rage and impotent hatred, she conquered her emotion, and became of icy calmness.

While the commissary drew up his report, Narcisse Borel, rubbing his hands, cast a complacent look on the important capture he had just made, which delivered Paris from a band of dangerous criminals; but feeling of what utility Bras-Rouge had been in this expedition, he could not help expressing to him by a glance his gratitude.

The father of Tortillard was obliged to partake, until after their judgment, the prison and fate of those whom he had denounced; like them, he wore handcuffs; still more than them, he had a trembling, alarmed air, uttering sorrowful groans, and giving to his weasel face every expression of terror. He embraced Tortillard, as if he sought some consolation in these paternal caresses.

The little cripple showed but little sensibility at these proofs of tenderness; he had just learned that, until further orders, he was to be sent to the prison for young offenders.

"What a misfortune to part with my darling son!" cried Bras-Rouge, feigning to weep; "it is we who are the most unfortunate, Ma'am Martial, for they separate us from our children."

The widow could no longer contain herself; not doubting the treason of Bras-Rouge, which she had prophesied, she cried, "I was sure that you sold my son who is at Toulon. There, Judas!" and she spat in his face. "You sell our heads; so be it; they will see handsome corpses-corpses of the real Martials!"

"Yes; we will not budge before the scaffold," added Calabash, with savage pride.

The widow, pointing to Nicholas with a withering glance of contempt, said to her daughter, "This coward will dishonor us on the scaffold!"

Some moments afterward, the widow and Calabash, accompanied by two police, were placed in a cab and sent to Saint Lazare. The three men were conducted to La Force. The Schoolmaster was transported to the depot of the Conciergerie, where there are cells destined to receive temporarily the insane.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

THE INTRODUCTION.

Some days after the murder of Mrs. Seraphin, the death of La Chouette, and the arrest of the band of malefactors surprised at Bras-Rouge's, Rudolph repaired to the house in the Rue du Temple.

We have said that—intending to overcome cunning by cunning, and to expose the concealed crimes of Jacques Ferrand to the punishment they merited, notwithstanding the address and hypocrisy with which he disguised them—Rudolph had caused to be brought from her prison in Germany a girl named Cecily.

She was a very beautiful quadroon, whose story ran briefly thus: Owned by a Louisiana planter, he had refused permission for her to marry another of his slaves, known as David, because he had, sultan-like, set his own choice upon her. David, by intelligence, and a long stay in France, had attained the position of surgeon on the plantation, and resisted his master with all the strength of his love for the girl. He was flogged, and Cecily locked up. At this juncture, Rudolph's yacht was off the plantation. He heard the story, and, landing in the night with a boat's crew, carried off David and Cecily in the planter's teeth, leaving him a large sum in indemnification. The slaves were wedded in France, but David won no happiness. He became Rudolph's physician-in-chief, worthily filling the post; but Cecily's three-part-white blood revolted at her union with a negro, and she flung herself into the first arms open to her. Her life was a series of scandals, so that David would have killed her; but Rudolph induced him to prefer her life imprisonment in Germany. Thence she is now brought.

Having arrived the evening previous, this creature, as handsome as she was perverted, as enchanting as she was dangerous, had received detailed instructions from Baron de Graun.

It will be remembered that after the last interview between Rudolph and Mrs. Pipelet, the latter having adroitly proposed Cecily to Mrs. Seraphin to replace Louise Morel as servant to the notary, the housekeeper had willingly received her overtures, and promised to speak on the subject to Jacques Ferrand, which she had done in terms the most favorable to Cecily, the very same morning of the day on which she (Mrs. Seraphin) had been drowned at Ravageurs' Island.

Rudolph went to learn the result of Cecily's offer. To his great astonishment, on entering the lodge, he found, although it was eleven o'clock in the morning, Pipelet in bed, and Anastasia standing beside him, offering him drink.

Alfred, whose forehead and eyes disappeared under a formidable cotton cap, not answering Anastasia, she concluded he was asleep, and closed the curtains of his bed. On turning she saw Rudolph. Immediately she carried, according to custom, the back of her open left hand against her wig.

"Your servant, my prince of lodgers. You find me overturned, amazed, grown thin! There are famous doings in the house, without counting that Alfred has been in bed since yesterday."

"And what is the matter?"

"Why ask?"

"Why not?"

"Always the same. The monster yearns more and more after Alfred; he alarms me so that I do not know what more to do."

"Cabrion again?"

"Again."

"He is the devil, then!"

"I shall begin to think so, M. Rudolph; for the blackguard always guesses when I am out. Hardly do I turn on my heels than he is here on the back of my darling, who does not know how to defend himself any more than a child. Yesterday again, while I was gone to M. Ferrand's, the notary's—there is the place to hear news—"

"And Cecily?" said Rudolph hastily. "I came to know—"

"Stop, my prince of lodgers; do not fluster me. I have so many things to tell you that I shall lose

myself if you break my thread."

"Well, I listen."

"In the first place, as concerns this house; just imagine that yesterday they came and arrested Mother Burette."

"The pawnbroker on the second floor?"

"Yes. It appears that she had many droll trades besides that of a pawnbroker! She was a fencess, melter-downess, shoplifteress, smasheress, forgeress, coineress, everything that rhymes with dishonestness. The worst of all is, that her old beau, Bras-Rouge, is also arrested. I told you there was a real earthquake in the house."

"What! Bras-Rouge also arrested?"

"Yes; in his tavern on the Champs-Elysees. All are boxed, even to his son Tortillard, the wicked little cripple. They say there has been a whole heap of murderers there; that they were a band of assassins; that La Chouette, one of the friends of old Burette, has been strangled; and that if help had not arrived in time, Mathieu the diamond broker would have been murdered. Ain't this news?"

"Bras-Rouge arrested! La Chouette dead!" said Rudolph to himself, with astonishment. "Poor Fleur-de-Marie is avenged."

"So much for this. Without excepting the new infamy of Cabrion, I am going at once to finish with that brigand. You will see what impudence! When old Burette was arrested, and we knew that Bras-Rouge, our landlord, was trapped, I said to my old darling, 'You must trot right off to the proprietor, and tell him that Bras-Rouge is locked up.' Alfred set out. At the end of two hours he came back to me, in such a state—white as a sheet, and blowing like an ox!"

"What was the matter?"

"You shall see, M. Rudolph. Only fancy, that six steps from here is a large white wall; my darling, on leaving the house, looked by chance on this wall; what does he see written there with charcoal, in large letters? 'Pipelet & Cabrion!'—the two names joined by a short *and*. This mark of union with this scoundrel sticks in his stomach the most. That began to upset him; ten steps further, what does he see on the great door of the Temple? 'Pipelet & Cabrion!' always with the sign of union. On he goes; at each step, M. Rudolph, he saw written these cursed names on the walls of the houses, on the doors, everywhere, 'Pipelet & Cabrion.' He began to see stars; he thought every one was looking at him; he pulled his hat down to his nose, he was so much ashamed. He went on the boulevard, thinking that Cabrion had confined his indecencies to the Rue du Temple. All along the boulevard, on each place where there was room to write, always 'Pipelet & Cabrion,' to the death! Finally, the poor dear man arrived at the proprietor's so bewildered, that, after having stuttered and stammered for a quarter of an hour, he could not understand one word of all that Alfred said; so he sent him back, calling him an old imbecile, and told him to send me to explain the thing. Alfred retired, coming back by another route, in order to avoid the names he had seen written on the walls. But—"

"Pipelet and Cabrion that road too?"

"As you say, my prince of lodgers. In this way the poor dear man arrived, stupefied, amazed, wishing to exile himself. He told me his story; I calmed him as well as I could. I left him, and went with Cecily to the notary's. You think this is all? Oh, no! Hardly was my back turned than Cabrion, who had watched my departure, had the impudence to send here two great hussies who attacked Alfred. My hair stands on an end. I will tell you all this directly. Let us finish with the notary. I set out, then, in a coach with Cecily, as you are advised. She wore her pretty German peasant's costume, 'as she had just arrived, and had not time to change it,' as I was to tell M. Ferrand. You will believe me, if you please, my prince of lodgers, I have seen many pretty girls; I have seen myself in my springtime; but never have I seen (myself included) a young person who could hold a candle to Cecily. She has, above all, in the look of her large, wicked, black eyes, something—I don't know what; but, for sure, there is something striking. What eyes!

"Alfred is not tender, but the first time that she looked at him be became as red as a carrot; for nothing in the world would he have looked a second time—he wriggled on his chair for an hour afterward as if he had been seated on a thorn; he told me afterward that the look had recalled to his mind all the histories of that impudent Bradamanti about the savagesses, which made him blush so much, my old prude of an Alfred."

"But the notary? the notary?"

"Yes, M. Rudolph. It was about seven in the evening when we reached M. Ferrand's; I told the porter to tell his master that Mrs. Pipelet was there with the servant whom old Seraphin had spoken about, and told me to bring. Hereupon the porter uttered a sigh, and asked me if I knew what had happened to Mrs. Seraphin. I said no. Oh, M. Rudolph, here is another earthquake!"

"What now?"

"Old Seraphin was drowned in an excursion to the country which she had made with one of her relations."

"Drowned! A party to the country in winter?" said Rudolph, surprised.

"Yes, M. Rudolph, drowned. It astonishes me more than it grieves me; for since the misfortune of poor Louise, whom she denounced, I hated Seraphin. I said to myself, 'She is drowned, is she; after all, it won't kill me.' That's my character."

"And M. Ferrand?"

"The porter at first said he thought I could not see his master, and begged me to wait in the lodge, but at the end of a moment he returned for me; we crossed the court, and entered a chamber. There was only a single candle burning. The notary was seated at the chimney-corner, where smoked the remains of a firebrand. What a hovel! I have never seen M. Ferrand. Isn't he horrid? Here is another one who might in vain have offered me the throne of Araby to prove false to Alfred."

"And did he appear struck with the beauty of Cecily?"

"Can any one know, with his green spectacles? such an old sacristan ought to be no judge of women. Yet when we both entered, he made a kind of start from his chair; it was, doubtless, astonishment at seeing the Alsatian costume of Cecily; for she had (only ten million times better) the air of one of those little broom girls, with her short petticoats, and her pretty legs in blue stockings with red clocks! my eye, what calves! and such slender ankles! and the little foot! the notary was bewildered at seeing her."

"It was doubtless the strange costume which astonished him."

"Must think so; but the funny moment drew near. Happily I remembered the maxim you taught me, M. Rudolph; it was my salvation."

"What maxim?"

"You know: 'Hide your desire if you want it granted.' Then I said to myself, I must rid my prince of lodgers of his German, by placing her with the master of Louise; and I said to the notary, without giving him time to draw breath: 'Pardon me, sir, if my niece comes dressed in the costume of her country; but she has just arrived: she has no other clothes than these, and I have no means of getting her others, as it would hardly be worth while; for we came only to thank you for having said to Mrs. Seraphin that you would consent to see Cecily, from the good recommendations I had given her: yet I do not think she can suit, sir.'"

"Very well, Mrs. Pipelet."

"'Why will your niece not suit me?' said the notary, who, seated in the chimney-corner, seemed to look at us from under his spectacles. 'Because Cecily begins to be home-sick, sir. She has only been here three days, yet she wishes to return, even if she has to beg her way back, and sell brooms like her countrywomen.' 'But you, her relation, will not suffer this?' 'I am her relation, it is true; but she is an orphan; she is twenty years old, and she is mistress of her own actions.' 'Bah! bah! mistress of her own actions; at her age she should obey her relation,' answered he, roughly.

"Hereupon Cecily began to cry and tremble, pressing against me; the notary made her afraid, very likely."

"And Ferrand?"

"He grumbled and muttered: 'To abandon a girl at her age is to ruin her. To return to Germany as a beggar, it is fine! Do you, her aunt, allow such conduct?' 'Well, well,' said I to myself, 'you're right. I'll place Cecily with you, or I'll lose my name.' 'I am her aunt, it is true,' answered I, 'but it is a very unfortunate relationship for me; I have enough on my hands; I would be just as well pleased to have my niece go away as to have her on my hands. May Old Nick run away with such relations who send you such great girls as this without paying the postage.' To crown all, there was Cecily, who seemed to be up to trap, bursting into tears. Thereupon the notary assumed a sniveling tone, like a preacher, and said to me: 'You will have to account above for the trust that Providence has placed in your hands; it

would be a crime to expose this young girl to perdition. I consent to aid you in your charitable work, if your niece promises me to be industrious, honest, and pious; and above all, never to go out. I will have pity on her, and take her in my service.' 'No, no, I would rather go back to my country,' said Cecily, still weeping."

"Her dangerous duplicity did not fail her," thought Rudolph; "the diabolical creature has, I see, perfectly comprised the orders of Baron de Graun."

Then the prince said aloud, "Did Ferrand appear vexed at the perverseness of Cecily?"

"Yes, M. Rudolph; he muttered between his teeth, and said to her hastily, 'It is not a question, mademoiselle, of what you prefer, but of what is suitable and decent Heaven will not abandon you, if you lead an honest life and fulfill your religious duties. You will be here in a house as strict as holy; if your aunt really loves you, she will profit by my offer; at first you will have but small wages, but if by your conduct and zeal you deserve more, perhaps I will increase them."

"Good! thought I to myself; the notary is caught! here is Cecily fixed at your house, you heartless old miser. Seraphin was in your service for many years, and you have not even the appearance of remembering that she was drowned the day before yesterday. And I said aloud: 'Doubtless, sir, the place is advantageous, but if the young woman is homesick?' 'That will pass away,' answered the notary; 'come, do you decide—yes or no? If you consent, bring your niece to-morrow night at this hour, and she can enter at once into my service—my porter will instruct her. As to wages, I commence by giving her twenty francs a month and board and lodging.' 'Oh, sir, you'll add five francs more?' 'No, by and by—if I am content—we shall see. But I must inform you, that your niece must never go out, and must have no one to come and see her.' 'Oh, sir, who would come to see her? She knows no one but me in Paris, and I have my own door to take care of; it has incommoded me enough to come with her to-day-you will never see me again-she will be as much of a stranger as if she had never come out of her own country. As to her not going out, there is a very simple way—let her wear her own costume; she would never dare go out in the street dressed in that outdacious manner.' 'You are right,' said the notary; 'it is, besides, respectable to dress in the costume of one's country. She may, then, remain in her Alsatian dress. 'Come,' said I to Cecily, who, with her head down, wept continually; 'you must decide, my child; a good place, in an honest house, is not to be found every day; besides, if you refuse, you must make your own arrangements; I'll have no more to do with them.' Then Cecily answered sighing, 'that she consented to remain; but on condition that if in a fortnight her homesickness troubled her too much, she might go away.' 'I do not wish to keep you by force,' said the notary; 'and I am not embarrassed to find servants. Here is your handsel; your aunt will only have to bring you to-morrow night.' Cecily had not ceased to weep. I accepted for her the advance of forty sous from the old screw, and we returned here."

"Very well, Mrs. Pipelet; I do not forget my promise. Here is what I promised if you should succeed in getting a situation for this girl, who embarrassed me."

"Wait until to-morrow, my prince of lodgers," said Mrs. Pipelet, refusing the money; "for, perhaps, he will change his mind when I take Cecily to him this evening."

"I do not think he will change his mind; but where is she?"

"In the cabinet belonging to M. Robert's apartments; in obedience to your orders she does not stir from them; she seems as resigned as a lamb, although she has eyes—oh! what eyes! But, apropos of M. Robert, isn't he an intriguer? When he came himself to superintend the packing of his furniture, did he not tell me that if there came any letters here addressed to Madame Vincent, they were for him, and to send them to No. 5 Rue Mondovi. He to be addressed under the name of a woman, the beautiful bird! how cunning it is! But this is not all; did he not have the impudence to ask me what had become of his wood? 'Your wood! why not your forest at once?' I answered. Now it is true, for two mean cart-loads of nothing at all—one of drift and the other new wood, for he did not buy all new wood—the save-penny made a fuss! His wood? 'I burned all your wood,' said I, 'to save your furniture from the damp; otherwise mushrooms would have sprung up on your embroidered cap, and on your glowworm robe de chambre that you wore so often while you were waiting for the little lady who quizzed you."

A heavy plaintive groan from Alfred interrupted. "There is my beauty dreaming, he is going to wake up; you will allow me, my prince of lodgers?"

"Certainly; I have, besides, some more questions to ask."

"Well! my sweet, how do you feel?" said Mrs. Pipelet to her husband, opening the curtains; "here is M. Rudolph! he knows the new infamy of Cabrion: he pities you with all his heart."

"Oh, sir!" said Alfred, turning his head in a languishing manner toward Rudolph; "this time I shall not

get over it; the monster has stabbed me to the heart. I am the subject of the placards of the capital; my name can be read on all the walls side by side with this scoundrel's. 'Pipelet & Cabrion,' with an enormous *and*! I! united to this infernal blackguard in the eyes of the capital of Europe!"

"M. Rudolph knows it; but what he does not know is your adventure of last night with those two strapping women."

"Oh! sir, he kept his most monstrous infamy for the last; this passed all bounds," said Alfred, in a mournful tone.

"Come, my dear M. Pipelet, relate to me this new misfortune."

"All he had done previously was nothing to this, sir. He succeeded in his object—thanks to proceedings the most shameful. I do not know if I have the strength to relate it! confusion and shame will impede me at each step."

Pipelet being painfully raised in the bed, modestly buttoned up his flannel waistcoat, and commenced in these terms: "My wide had just gone out; absorbed in the bitterness caused by the prostitution of my name written on all the walls of the capital, I sought to distract myself by endeavoring to sole a boot, twenty times taken up and twenty times abandoned, thanks to the obstinate persecutions of my tormentor. I was seated before a table when I saw the door of my lodge open, and a woman enter. This woman was wrapped in a cloak, with a hood; I arose politely from my seat, and touched my hat. At this moment, a second woman, also enveloped in a cloak with a hood, entered my lodge, and locked the door inside.

"Although astonished at the familiarity of this procedure, and the silence which the two women preserved, I again rose from my chair, and again carried my hand to my hat. Then, sir; no, no, I never can—my modesty revolts."

"Come, Old Modesty, you are among men; go on then!"

"Then," resumed Alfred, becoming crimson, "the mantles fell, and what did I see? Two species of sirens or nymphs, with no other clothing than a tunic of leaves, the head also crowned with foliage; I was petrified. Then they both advanced toward me, extending their arms, if to invite me to precipitate myself into them."

"The hussies!" said Anastasia.

"The advances of these barefaced individuals revolted me," resumed Alfred, animated by chaste indignation; "and, following habit, which never abandons me in the most critical circumstances of my life, I remained completely immovable on my chair; when, profiting by my stupor, the two sirens approached me by a kind of slow whirl, spinning round on their legs, and moving their arms. I became more and more immovable. They reached me, they twisted their arms around me."

"Twisted their arms around an aged married man! Oh, if I had been there with my broomstick," cried Anastasia, "I'd have given a cadence, and spinning of legs to some purpose."

"When I felt myself embraced," continued Alfred, "my blood made one rush—I was half dead. Then one of the sirens—the boldest, a large, tall blonde—leaned on my shoulder, raised my hat, and uncovered my head, all to music, spinning on her legs and moving her arms; then her accomplice drew a pair of scissors from among the leaves, collected together an enormous lock of all the hair that remained behind my head, and cut it off. All, sir, all; always with the spinning around on her legs; then she said to me, singing, 'It is for Cabrion!' and the other impudence repeated in chorus, 'It is for Cabrion! It is for Cabrion!'"

After a pause, accompanied by a grievous sigh, Alfred went on with his story:

"During this scandalous spoliation, I raised my eyes, and saw looking through the window of the lodge the infernal face of Cabrion, with his beard and pointed hat. He laughed, he was hideous! To escape this odious vision, I shut my eyes. When I opened them again, all had disappeared. I found myself on my chair, my head uncovered, and completely devastated! You see, sir, Cabrion has gained his end by force of cunning, audacity, and obstinacy; and by what means! He wished to make me pass for his friend; he began by putting up a notice here that we would carry on a friendly trade together. Not content with that, at this very moment my name is connected with his on all the walls of the capital. There is not, at this moment, an inhabitant of Paris who can have any doubt of my intimacy with this wretch; he wished some of my hair, he has it; all thanks to the impudent exactions of these brazen sirens. Now, sir, you must see, there only remains for me a flight from France—ma belle France! where I thought to live and die."

Alfred threw himself backward on his bed, and clasped his hands.

"But just the contrary, old darling; now that he has your hair, he will leave you quiet."

"Leave me quiet!" cried Pipelet, with a convulsive start; "but you do not know him; he is insatiable. Now who knows what he will next want from me?"

Rigolette, appearing at the entrance of the lodge, put an end to the lamentations.

"Do not enter, mademoiselle!" cried Pipelet, faithful to his habits of chaste susceptibility. "I am in bed." So saying, he drew one of the sheets to his chin. Rigolette stopped discreetly at the threshold.

"I was just going to see you, neighbor," said Rudolph to her. "Will you wait one moment?" Then, addressing Anastasia, "Do not forget to conduct Cecily to-night to M. Ferrand's."

"Be tranquil, my prince of lodgers; at seven o'clock she shall be installed there. Now that Madame Morel can walk, I will ask her to stay in the lodge, for Alfred would not, for an empire, remain alone."

The rosy cheeks of Rigolette had become paler and paler; her charming face, until now so fresh, so round, had lengthened a little; her piquant countenance, ordinarily so animated and lively, was become serious and still more sad since the last interview between the grisette and Fleur-de-Marie at the gate of the prison of Saint Lazare.

"How happy I am to see you, neighbor," said she to Rudolph, when he came out of the lodge. "I have many things to tell you."

"In the first place, how do you do? Let me look at your pretty face. Is it still gay and rosy? Alas! no; I find you pale. I am sure you work too much."

"Oh! no, M. Rudolph; I assure you I am now used to this little increase of work. What changes me is grief. Every time I see poor Germain I become still more sad."

"He is then very much depressed?"

"More than ever, M. Rudolph; and what is annoying is, that everything that I do to console him increases his despondency; it is like a spell." A tear obscured her large black eyes.

"Explain this to me."

"For instance, yesterday I went to see him to take a book he wished to have, because it was a romance that we used to read together in our happy days. At the sight of this book, he burst into tears, which did not surprise me, it was very natural. Dear memento of our evenings, so quiet, so pleasant, seated by my stove, in my snug little room, to compare with this frightful life in prison. Poor Germain! it is very cruel!"

"Be comforted," said Rudolph to the young girl. "When Germain gets out of prison, and his innocence is acknowledged, be will find his mother and friends, and he will soon forget, in their society and yours, the terrible moments of trial."

"Yes, but until then, M. Rudolph, he is going to be still more tormented. And besides, this is not all."

"What is there besides?"

"As he is the only honest man among all these bandits, they are prejudiced against him, because he cannot agree with them. A turnkey, a very good man, told me to advise Germain, for his own sake, to be less proud, to try to be a little more familiar with the men; but he cannot. They are stronger than he is, and I fear that some day they will injure him." Then, suddenly, interrupting herself, she said, drying her tears, "But see now, I only think of myself, and forget to speak to you about La Goualeuse."

"La Goualeuse?" said Rudolph, with surprise.

"The day before yesterday, on going to see Louise at Saint Lazare, I met her."

"The Goualeuse?"

"Yes, M. Rudolph."

"In Saint Lazare?"

"She came out with an old lady."

"It is impossible!" cried Rudolph, astonished.

"I assure you it was she, neighbor."

"You must be mistaken."

"No, no; although she was dressed as a peasant girl, I knew her at once. She is still very handsome, although pale; and she has the same soft, melancholy manner as formerly."

"Come to Paris without my knowledge! I cannot believe it. What was she doing at Saint Lazare?"

"The same as I was; visiting a prisoner, doubtless. I had no time to ask more questions; the old woman who accompanied her had such a cross look, and was in such a hurry. So you know La Goualeuse also, M. Rudolph?"

"Certainly."

"Then, there is no more doubt that it is you of whom she spoke."

"Of me?"

"Yes. I related to her the misfortunes of Louise and Germain, both so good, so virtuous, and so persecuted by that villain Jacques Ferrand, taking care not to tell what you forbid, that you interested yourself in them; then La Goualeuse told me that if a generous person whom she knew was informed of the unhappy and undeserved fate of my poor prisoners, he would certainly come to their assistance. I asked the name of this person, and she named you, M. Rudolph."

"It is she, it is she!"

"You may suppose that we were both much astonished at this discovery, or resemblance of names. We promised to write if our Rudolph was the same person. And it appears that you are the same, M. Rudolph."

"Yes. I have also interested myself for this poor child. But what you have told me of her presence in Paris surprises me so much that if you had not given me so many details of your interview with her, I should have persisted in believing that you were mistaken. But, adieu, neighbor; what you have just told me about La Goualeuse obliges me to leave you. Remain still reserved toward Louise and Germain as regards the protection of unknown friends. This secrecy is more necessary than ever. Apropos, how are the Morel family?"

"Better and better, M. Rudolph. The mother is on her feet again; the children improve daily. All owe their life to you—their happiness. You are so generous to them!"

"And how is poor Morel?"

"Better. I had news from him yesterday. He seems occasionally to have some lucid moments; there is great hope of restoring him to reason."

"Come, courage: I shall soon see you again. Have you need of anything?
Do you still earn enough to support yourself?"

"Oh, yes, M. Rudolph; I take a little from my hours of rest, and it is not much damage for I hardly sleep now."

"Alas! my poor little neighbor, I much fear that Papa Cretu and
Ramonette will not sing much more if they wait for you to begin."

"You are not mistaken, M. Rudolph; my birds and I sing no more, for— now you are going to laugh! well, it seems to me that they comprehend that I am sad; yes, instead of warbling gayly when I arrive, they utter such low, plaintive notes, that they appear to wish to console me. I am foolish to believe this, am I not, M. Rudolph?"

"Not at all: I am sure that your good friends, the birds, love you too much not to perceive your sorrow."

"Really, the poor little things are so intelligent!" said Rigolette, naively, much satisfied at being assured of the sagacity of the companions of her solitude.

"Without doubt, nothing is more intelligent than gratitude. Come, once more, adieu. Soon, neighbor, I hope your pretty eyes will become sparkling, your cheeks very rosy, and your songs so gay—so gay—

that Papa Cretu and Ramonette will hardly be able to follow you."

"May what you have said be true, M. Rudolph," answered Rigolette, with a heavy sigh. "Good-bye!"

"Good-bye, for the present!"

Rudolph could not comprehend how Madame George had, without advising him, sent or brought Fleur-de-Marie to Paris; he returned home, to send an express to the farm at Bouqueval. The moment he entered the Rue de Plumet, he saw a postchaise stop before the door of the hotel; it was Murphy, who had just returned from Normandy. The squire had gone there, as we have stated, to unmask the sinister projects of the step-mother of Madame d'Harville, and Bradamanti, her accomplice.

CHAPTER XL.

MURPHY AND POLIDORI.

Radiant with joy was the face of Sir Walter Murphy. On descending from the carriage, he handed to one of the servants a pair of pistols, took off his long riding, coat, and, without losing time to change his dress, he followed Rudolph, who, very impatient, had preceded him to his apartment.

"Good news, your highness, good news!" cried the squire, when he found himself alone with Rudolph. "The wretches are unmasked! Lord d'Orbigny is saved! You sent me off in time; one hour later, a new crime would have been committed."

"And Madame d'Harville?"

"She is overjoyed at regaining her father's affection, and at having arrived in time, thanks in your advice, to save him from certain death."

"Polidori?"

"Was once more the worthy accomplice of the stepmother of Madame d'Harville. But what a monster is this step-mother! what audacity! And Polidori! Oh, my lord, you have often been pleased to thank me for what you call the proofs of my devotedness."

"I have always had proofs of your friendship, my good Sir Walter."

"Well, never, your highness, never—no, never has this friendship been put to a severer test than in this affair," said the squire, in a half joking manner.

"How is that?"

"Disguises as coalheavers, and so on, were nothing, absolutely nothing, compared to the journey I have just made with this infernal Polidori."

"What do you say? Polidori—"

"I have brought him with me."

"With you?"

"With me. Judge what a companion! during twelve hours, side by side with the man I despise and hate the most in the world! I would as soon travel with a serpent; my antipathy—"

"And where is Polidori now?"

"In the house of the Allee des Veuves, under good, sure guard."

"Did he make no resistance to following you?"

"None. I left him the choice of being arrested on the spot by the French authorities, or being my prisoner in the Allee des Veuves. He did not hesitate."

"You were right; it is better to have him thus in our own hands. You are a man of gold, my friend; but relate to me your journey; I am impatient to know how this unworthy woman and her depraved

accomplice have been unmasked."

"Nothing could be plainer. I had only to follow your instructions to the letter to terrify and crush these wretches. In this case, your highness has saved, as usual, people of worth, and punished the wicked; noble Providence that you are!"

"Sir Walter, Sir Walter, do you remember the flatteries of Baron de Graun?" said Rudolph, smiling.

"Well, let it pass. I will commence then; or, rather, you will first please to read this letter, from Madame d'Harville, which will inform you of all that occurred previous to my arrival."

"A letter? give it to me quickly."

Murphy, handing Rudolph the letter, added, "As it was agreed upon, instead of accompanying the lady to her father's I alighted at an inn, a short distance from the chateau, where I was to stay until her ladyship sent for me."

Rudolph read what follows, with tender and impatient solicitude:

"YOUR HIGHNESS,—To all I owe you already, I add the life of my father!

"I shall let facts speak for themselves; they will tell you better than I can, what new treasures of gratitude toward you I have collected in my heart.

"Comprehending all the importance of the counsels which you gave me through Sir Walter Murphy, who rejoined me on the road to Normandy, just as I left Paris, I arrived in all haste at the Chateau des Aubiers.

"I do not know why, but the features of the servants who received me appeared sinister; I did not see among them any of the old servitors of our house; no one knew me; I was obliged to announce myself. I learned that, some days before, my father was quite ill, and my stepmother had just returned from Paris with a physician. No more doubt—it was Dr. Polidori!

"Wishing to be conducted at once to my father, I asked where an old valet was, to whom he was much attached. This man had left the chateau some time before; this information was given me by a butler, who had conducted me to my apartments, saying 'that he would go and inform my step-mother of my arrival.'

"Was it an illusion or prejudice? it seemed to me that my arrival was disagreeable even to the servants. Everything in the chateau seemed mournful and sad. In the disposition of mind in which I found myself, one seeks to draw conclusions from the merest trifles. I remarked everywhere traces of disorder, of negligence, as if it had been thought useless to take care of a dwelling so soon to be abandoned.

"My anxiety increased each moment. After having settled my daughter and her governess in my apartment, I was about to go to my father when my step-mother entered. Notwithstanding her duplicity and the command which she ordinarily has over herself, she appeared uneasy at my arrival.

"M. d'Orbigny did not expect your visit, madame," said she to me. "He is so ill, that such a surprise might be fatal. I think it, then, suitable to leave him in ignorance of your presence; he cannot, in any way—" I did not allow her to finish.

"A great misfortune has happened, madame," said I; 'M. d'Harville is dead! victim of a fatal imprudence! After such a deplorable event, I cannot remain in Paris, and I have come to pass at my father's my mourning."

"You are a widow! Oh! what overpowering good fortune!' cried my step-mother, in a rage. From what you know of the unhappy marriage, which this woman schemed for me, your highness will comprehend the atrocity of her exclamation.

"It is because I feared that you would be also as overpoweringly fortunate as I am, madame, that I came here," said I, perhaps imprudently; "I wish to see my father."

"Your unexpected appearance may do your father much harm," cried she, placing herself before me, to bar the passage. 'I will not allow you to enter his chamber until I have informed him of your return, with all the precautions his situation requires.'

"I was in a state of cruel perplexity. A sudden surprise might, indeed, prove dangerous to my father; but this woman, ordinarily so cold, so much the mistress of herself, seemed so alarmed at my presence;

I had so many reasons to doubt the sincerity of her solicitude for the health of him whom she had married from cupidity; finally, the presence of Dr. Polidori, my mother's murderer, caused a terror so great that, believing the life of my father to be threatened, I did not hesitate between the hope of saving him and the fear of causing him any serious emotions.

"'I will see my father at once,' said I to my stepmother.

"And although she caught me by the arms, I passed out.

"Losing her self-possession completely, this woman again endeavored to stop me. This incredible resistance redoubled my alarm. I disengaged myself from her hands. Knowing the apartment of my father, I ran thither rapidly; I entered. Oh, your highness! on my life, I shall never forget the scene presented to my view. My father, almost unrecognizable, pale, thin, suffering painted on every feature, with his head leaning on a pillow, was stretched out in a large arm-chair.

"At the chimney-corner, standing near him, was Dr. Polidori, prepared to pour in a cup, which a nurse presented to him, some drops of a liquid contained in a little glass bottle which he held in his hand.

"His long red beard gave a still more sinister expression to his face. I entered so precipitately, that he made a gesture of surprise, exchanged a look of intelligence with my step-mother, who followed in haste, and instead of giving my father the potion which he had prepared for him, he quickly placed it on the chimney-piece.

"Guided by an instinct which I cannot yet account for, my first movement was to seize the vial.

"Remarking the surprise and alarm of my step-mother and Polidori, I felicitated myself on my action. My father, stupefied, seemed irritated, at seeing me, as I expected. Polidori cast a ferocious glance at me; notwithstanding the presence of my father and that of the nurse, I feared that this wretch, seeing his crime almost discovered, would carry matters to extremities.

"I felt the need of help at this decisive moment; I rang the bell; one of the servants appeared; I begged him to say to my valet (who had his instructions) to go and bring some things I had left at the inn; Sir Walter Murphy knew that, not to arouse the suspicions of my stepmother, I would employ this subterfuge to bring him to me.

"The surprise of my father and my step-mother was such that the servant retired before they could say a word; I was reassured; in a few moments Sir Walter would be near me.

"'What does this mean?' said my father, at length, in a feeble but imperious and angry tone, 'You here, Clemence, without being sent for? And then, hardly arrived, you take possession of the vial which contains the potion that the doctor was about to give me; will you explain this folly?'

"'Leave the room,' said my step-mother to the nurse. 'Calm yourself, dear,' said she, addressing my father; 'you know the least emotion may injure you. Since your daughter comes here in spite of you, and her presence is disagreeable, give me your arm, I will conduct you to the little saloon; and leave our good doctor to make Madame d'Harville understand the imprudence (not to say anything worse) of her conduct.'

"And she cast a significant look at her accomplice. I comprehended the design of my step-mother. She wished to lead my father away, and leave me alone with Polidori, who, in this extreme case, would have doubtless employed violence to force from me the vial, which might furnish evident proof of his designs. 'You are right,' said my father; 'since she comes and persecutes me even in my own room, without any respect for my wishes, I will leave the place free to her importunacy.' And rising with an effort, he accepted the offered arm, and made some steps toward the small saloon. At this moment, Polidori advancing toward me, I drew nearer my father and said, 'I will explain to you the cause of my unexpected arrival, and what is strange in my conduct. I am a widow. I know your days are threatened, father.'

"He walked painfully, with his body bent. At these words, he stopped, stood erect, and looking at me with profound astonishment, cried, 'You are a widow? my days threatened? What does all this mean?'

"'And who dares to threaten the days of M. d'Orbigny, madame?' audaciously asked my step-mother. 'Who threatens them?' added Polidori.

"'You, sir; you, madame,' I answered. 'What an insult!' cried my step-mother, advancing toward me. 'What I say, I will prove, madame.' 'Such an accusation is frightful!' said my father.

"'I shall leave this house at once, since in it I am exposed to such atrocious calumnies!' said Dr. Polidori, with the assumed indignation of a man whose honor was outraged. Beginning to feel the

danger of his position, he doubtless wished to fly. As he opened the door, he found himself face to face with Sir Walter Murphy."

Rudolph, stopping a moment, extended his hand to the squire, and said: "Very timely, my old friend; your presence must have been like a thunderbolt to this Wretch." "That is the word, your highness; he became livid, and retreated two steps, looking at me in a kind of stupor; he seemed astounded. To meet me in Normandy at such a moment! he thought it was a dream. But continue, my lord; you will see that this infernal Countess d'Orbigny had also her turn of a thunderbolt, thanks to what you told me of her visit to the quack Bradamanti Polidori in the house of the Rue du Temple; for, after all, it is you who act; or, rather, I was only the instrument of your thought."

Rudolph smiled, and went on with the perusal of the letter of Madame d'Harville.

"At the sight of Sir Walter, Polidori was petrified; my step-mother fell from one surprise into another; my father, alarmed at this scene, and weakened by sickness, was obliged to seat himself in a chair. Sir Walter double-locked the door by which he entered; and, placing himself before the one which opened into another apartment, so that the doctor could not escape, he said to my father, with the most profound respect:

"'I ask a thousand pardons, my lord, for the liberty I take; but imperious necessity, dictated solely by you? interest (as you will soon acknowledge) obliges me to act thus. My name is Sir Walter Murphy, as this wretch can testify, who, at my sight, trembles with fear; I am the confidential adviser of his Royal Highness, the Grand-Duke of Gerolstein.'

"'It is true,' said Dr. Polidori, confusedly, quite beside himself with alarm. 'But, sir, what do you come here for? What do you want?'

"'Sir Walter Murphy,' said I, addressing my father, 'comes to aid me in unmasking these wretches, to whose machinations you were near falling a victim.' Then, handing to Sir Walter the vial, I added, 'I have had the good fortune to become possessed of this at the moment Dr. Polidori was about administering to my father its contents.'

"'A chemist from the neighboring town shall analyze before you the contents of this bottle, which I am going to place in your lordship's hands, and if it be proved that it contains a slow poison,' said Sir Walter to my father, 'there can remain no more doubt of the danger you have run, which the affection of your daughter has happily prevented.'

"My poor father looked at his wife, Dr. Polidori, Sir Walter, and myself in a bewildered manner; his features expressed deep agony, I read upon his careworn face the violent struggle which tore his heart. Without doubt he was resisting with all his strength growing and terrible suspicions, fearing to be obliged to recognize the guilt of my step-mother; at length, concealing his face in his hands, he cried, 'Oh! all this is horrible—impossible! Is this, then, a dream?'

"'No, it is not a dream!' cried my step-mother, audaciously: 'nothing is more real than this atrocious calumny, previously concocted, to ruin an unhappy woman, whose sole crime has been consecrating her life to you. Come, come, my friend, let us not remain a second longer here!' added she, addressing herself to my father; 'perhaps your daughter will not have the insolence to detain you in spite of yourself.'

"'Yes, yes, let us go,' said my father, almost wild; 'this is not true—cannot be true; I wish to hear nothing further; my reason would give way; frightful suspicions would arise in my mind, empoison the few days remaining for me to live, and nothing could console me for such an abominable discovery!'

"My father seemed so suffering, so despairing, that at any sacrifice, I would have put a stop to a scene so cruel for him. Sir Walter divined my thoughts; but, wishing to do full and entire justice, he answered my father.

"'Yet a few words, my lord; you are about to experience the affliction, doubtless very painful, of discovering that a woman whom you believe attached to you by gratitude, has always been a monstrous hypocrite; but you will find certain consolation in the affection of your daughter, who has always been true."

"'This passes all bounds!' cried my step-mother, in a rage; 'by what right, sir, on what proofs, dare you utter such frightful calumnies? You say the vial contains poison. I deny it, sir; and I will deny it until you prove the contrary; and even if Dr. Polidori might have by accident mistaken one medicine for another, is that a reason to dare to accuse me of having wished, with him as an accomplice—oh! no, no, I cannot finish—an idea so horrible is already a crime. Once more, sir, I defy you to say on what proofs you and madame dare to sustain this frightful calumny,' said my step-mother, with incredible audacity.

'Yes, on what proofs?' cried my unfortunate father. 'The torture I suffer must be brought to a close.'

"'I have not come here without proofs, my lord,' said Sir Walter. 'And these proofs the answers of this wretch will furnish directly.' Then Sir Walter spoke to Dr. Polidori in German, who seemed to have recovered a little assurance, but lost it immediately."

* * * * * * *

"What did you say to him?" demanded Rudolph, laying aside the letter for a moment.

"Some significant words to this effect: 'You escaped by flight the sentence pronounced against you in the grand duchy; you live in the Rue du Temple, under the false name of Bradamanti; your present occupation is unknown; you poisoned the count's first wife; three days ago Madame d'Orbigny came to bring you here to poison her husband. His serene highness is in Paris, and has the proofs of all I advance. If you confess the truth, so as to convict this miserable woman, you may hope, not pardon, but some mitigation of the punishment you deserve; you must follow me to Paris, where I will place you in security, until his royal highness decides your fate. Otherwise two things; one, the prince will demand you from the government, or this moment I will send to the neighboring town for a magistrate; this vial containing poison, shall be placed in his hands; you will be arrested at once, your lodgings in the Rue du Temple searched; you know how much that will compromise you, and French justice shall follow its course. Choose then.' These revelations, accusations, and threats, that he knew well-founded, succeeding one another so rapidly, confounded this miscreant, who did not expect to find me so well informed. In the hope of lessening the punishment which awaited him, he did not hesitate to sacrifice his accomplice, and answered, 'Interrogate me—I will tell the truth concerning this woman.'"

"Well, well, my worthy friend, I expected no less from you."

"During my interview with Polidori, the features of Madame d'Orbigny changed their expression of assurance alarmingly, although she did not understand German. She saw, from the increasing dejection of her confederate, from his supplicating attitude, that I had him in my power. In great anxiety, she endeavored to catch the eye of Polidori, in order to give him courage or to implore his discretion, but he avoided her glances."

"And the count?"

"His emotion was indescribable; with his contracted fingers he clutched, convulsively, the arm of his chair, the perspiration standing on his forehead: he hardly breathed; his burning and glazed eyes were fixed on mine; his agony equaled that of his wife. The continuation of the letter of Madame d'Harville will instruct your highness as to the end of this painful scene."

Rudolph resumed the perusal of the letter. "After a conversation in German, which lasted for some moments, Sir Walter said to Polidori, 'Now answer, was it not madame,' and he pointed at my step-mother, 'who, at the time of the illness of my lord's first wife, introduced you in the house as a physician?' 'Yes, it was she,' answered Polidori.

"'In order to serve the fearful projects of madame, have you not been criminal enough to render mortal (by your homicidal prescriptions) the slight illness of the Countess d'Orbigny?' 'Yes,' said Polidori.

"My father uttered a heart-rending sigh, raised his two hands toward heaven, and let them fall, quite overwhelmed. 'Falsehoods and infamy!' cried my stepmother; 'all this is false; they conspire to ruin me!' 'Silence, madame!' said Sir Walter, in an imposing voice; then, continuing to question Polidori:

"'Is it true, that three days ago, madame went to seek you at No. 17 Rue du Temple, where you reside, concealed under the false name of Bradamanti?'

"'That is true.'

"'Did not madame propose to you to come here to murder the Count d'Orbigny, as you had murdered his wife?'

"'Alas! I cannot deny it,' said Polidori. "'At this overwhelming revelation, my father arose on his feet; he showed the door to my step-mother; then, extending his arms toward me, he cried, in a broken voice, 'In the name of your unfortunate mother, pardon me, pardon me! I have caused you much suffering; but I swear to you I was a stranger to the crime which has conducted her to the tomb.'

"And before I could prevent him, he fell at my feet.

"When Sir Walter and myself raised him, he had fainted. I rang for the servants. Sir Walter took the doctor by the arm, and went out with him, saying to my step-mother, 'Believe me, madame, you had better leave this house before an hour, or I will deliver you up to justice.'

"The wretched woman left the room in a state of alarm and rage which your highness will easily conceive.

"When my father recovered his senses, all that had taken place appeared like a horrid dream. I was under the sad necessity of relating to him my first suspicions concerning the premature death of my mother—suspicions which your highness's knowledge of the previous crimes of Dr. Polidori changed into certainty.

"I was obliged, also, to tell my father how my stepmother had carried her hatred even to my marriage, and what had been her object in causing me to marry M. d'Harville.

"As much as my father had shown himself weak and blind respecting this woman, just so much he wished to treat her without mercy; he accused himself, with despair, of having been the accomplice of this monster, in giving her his hand after the death of my mother. He wished to give her up to justice; I represented to him the odious notoriety of such proceedings. I engaged him to drive her away forever from his presence, allowing her just enough for her support, since she bore his name.

"I had great trouble in procuring my father's consent to this; he wished me to turn her out of the house. This mission would be doubly painful; I thought that Sir Walter, perhaps, would act for me. He consented."

"And I consented with joy," said Murphy to Rudolph; "nothing pleases me more than to give to the wicked this kind of extreme unction."

"And what did this woman say?"

"Madame d'Harville had carried her goodness so far as to ask from her father a pension of one hundred louis for this creature. This appeared to me not goodness, but weakness; it was bad enough to rob justice of such a dangerous woman. I went to find the count; he coincided entirely with me; it was agreed that we should give, in all, twenty-five louis to the infamous wretch, so that she might subsist until she found employment. 'And what kind of employment can the Countess d'Orbigny find?' demanded she, insolently. 'That's your business; you might be something like a nurse or housekeeper; but, believe me, seek the most humble and obscure calling; for if you have the audacity to tell your title, which you owe to a crime, people will be astonished to see the Countess d'Orbigny reduced to such a condition; they will inquire, and you can judge of the consequences, if you are fool enough to noise abroad the past. Conceal yourself in some distant place; cause yourself to be forgotten; become Madame Pier re or Madame Jacques, and repent—if you can.' 'And do you think, sir,' said she to me, 'that I shall not claim the advantages secured to me by my marriage contract?' 'Certainly, madame, nothing can be more just; it would be unworthy of M. d'Orbigny not to execute his promises, and not to recognize all that you have done for him, and all you would have done. Sue, sue; address yourself to justice; I have no doubt the decision will be against your husband. A quarter of an hour after our conversation, the creature was on the road to the neighboring town."

"You are right; it is painful to allow such a woman to escape with impunity; but the scandal of such a trial for this old man, already so much debilitated, is not to be thought of."

"I have easily persuaded my father to leave Les Aubiers to-day," resumed Rudolph, continuing to read the letter from Madame d'Harville: "too many sad recollections attend him here; although his health is delicate, the journey and change of air may be of service, as the physician says who has taken the place of Dr. Polidori. My father wished that he should analyze the contents of the vial, without informing him of what had passed; he answered that he could only do this at his own house, but that in two hours we should know the result. This was, that several doses of this liquid, prepared with infernal skill, would, in a given time, produce death, without leaving any traces.

"In a few hours I leave with my father and daughter for Fontainebleau; we will remain there for some time; then, according to the wish of my father, we return to Paris, but not to my own house; it will be impossible for me to live there after the deplorable accident which has taken place.

"Thus, as I have said, on commencing this letter, events show all that I owe to your highness's solicitude. Warned by you, aided by your advice, strong in the co-operation of your excellent and courageous Sir Walter, I have been able to snatch my father from certain death, and I am assured of the return of his tenderness.

"Adieu! it is impossible for me to say more, my heart is too full: too many emotions agitate it; I should

badly express all that I feel.

"D'ORBIGNY D'HARVILLE.

"I open this letter in haste, your highness, to repair a neglect of which I am ashamed. In seeking, by your noble advice, to do some good, I went to the prison of Saint Lazare to visit the poor prisoners. I found there an unfortunate child in whom you are interested; Her angelic sweetness and pious resignation are the admiration of the matron who overlooks the inmates. To inform you where the Goualeuse (such I believe is her name) can be found is to request you to obtain her liberty. This unfortunate girl will relate to you by what a concourse of sinister circumstances, carried away from the asylum where you had placed her, she has been thrown into this prison, where she is appreciated for the purity of her conduct. Permit me also to recall to your highness's mind my two future *protegees* the unhappy mother and daughter—despoiled by the notary Ferrand, Where are they? Have you had any information concerning them? Oh, I pray you endeavor to discover them, so that on my return to Paris I can pay them the debt which I have contracted toward all unfortunates!"

"Goualeuse has, then, left the farm of Bouqueval?" cried Murphy, as much astonished as Rudolph at this new revelation.

"I heard but just now that she was seen coming out of Saint Lazare," answered Rudolph. "I am lost in conjecture; the silence of Madame George confounds and distresses me. Poor little Fleur-de-Marie, what new misfortunes have happened to you? Let a man on horseback be sent off at once to the farm, and write to Madame George that I beg her to come at once to Paris. Say also to M. de Graun, I wish an order to enter Saint Lazare. From what Madame d'Harville writes, Fleur-de-Marie is confined there; but no," said Rudolph, reflecting, "she is no longer a prisoner, for Rigolette saw her come out in company with an aged woman. Can it be Madame George? Otherwise, who is the woman? Where is the Goualeuse gone to?"

"Patience, my lord; before to-night you shall know all about it. To-morrow you will have to interrogate this scoundrel Polidori; he has, he said, important communications to make to you, but to you alone."

"The interview will be hateful to me," said Rudolph, sadly; "for I have never seen this man since the fatal day—when—"

Rudolph could not finish; he concealed his face in his hands.

"Why consent to what Polidori demands? Threaten him with the French courts, or an extradition on the Government; he must resign himself to confess to me what he is only willing to confess to you."

"You are right, my good friend; for the sight of this wretch would render still more torturing these terrible recollections, to which are attached so many incurable griefs; from the death of my father to that of my poor little girl—I do not know but that the more I advance in life, the more I feel the loss of this child. How I should have adored her! how dear and precious to me had been this fruit of my first love, of my first and pure belief, or, rather, my young illusions!"

"Stay, my lord; I see with pain the increasing sway which these regrets, as fruitless as cruel, have upon your mind."

After a pause, Rudolph said to Murphy: "I can now make a confession to you, my old friend. I love—yes, I love passionately a woman worthy of the most noble and devoted affection. Ah! it is since my heart is opened anew to all the delights of love, since I am predisposed to tender emotions, that I feel more vividly the loss of my daughter."

"Nothing can be plainer, my lord; and, pardon the comparison, but, in the same manner as certain men are joyous and benevolent in their intoxication, you are good and generous in your love."

"Yet my hatred of the wicked is also become deep; my aversion to Sarah increases, doubtless with my grief for the death of my child. I imagine that this bad mother has neglected her; that her ambitious hopes once ruined by my marriage, the countess, in her selfish egotism, has abandoned our child to mercenary hands, and that my daughter perhaps died from want of care. It is also my fault; I did not then know the extent of the sacred duties of paternity. When the true character of Sarah was suddenly revealed to me, I should have at once taken my daughter from her, to watch over her with love and solicitude. I ought to have foreseen that the countess could never be more than an unnatural mother. It is my fault, my fault!"

"Grief causes your highness to err. Could you, after such a fatal event had happened, defer for one day the long journey imposed on you—as—"

"As an expiation! You are right, my friend," said Rudolph, sorrowfully.

"Have you heard anything from the countess since my departure, my lord?"

"No: since her infamous accusations, which twice came near proving the ruin of Madame d'Harville, I have no news of her. Her presence here annoys me; it seems that my evil spirit is near me, that some new misfortune threatens me."

"Patience, your highness, patience. Happily, Germany is interdicted for her, and Germany expects us."

"Yes; we will soon depart. At least, during my short stay at Paris I shall have accomplished a sacred duty: I shall have made some steps more in the worthy path which an august and merciful will pointed out to me for my redemption. As soon as the son of Madame George shall be restored to her arms, innocent and free; as soon as Jacques Ferrand shall be convicted and punished for his crimes; as soon as I shall be assured of the future comforts of all the honest and industrious creatures who, by their resignation, their courage, and their probity, have deserved my interest, we will return to Germany—my journey will not have been fruitless."

"Above all, if you succeed in unmasking that abominable Jacques
Ferrand, the corner-stone of so many crimes."

"Although the end justifies the means, and scruples should have no weight as regards this scoundrel, sometimes I regret having employed Cecily in this just and avenging reparation."

"She ought to arrive soon."

"She has arrived."

"Cecily?"

"Yes; I did not wish to see her. De Graun has given her very detailed instructions; she has promised to conform to them."

"Will she keep this promise?"

"Everything seems to promise it—the hope of a mitigation of her punishment, and the fear of being sent immediately back to Germany; for De Graun has her well watched; at the slightest misstep he will demand her of the government."

"It is just. She has arrived like an escaped convict: when they know what crimes caused her perpetual imprisonment, they would give her up at once."

"Besides, De Graun was almost alarmed at the sagacity with which Cecily comprehended, or rather, guessed the part, inflaming and yet platonic, she was to play at the notary's.

"But can she be introduced to him as early as you wish, through Mrs.
Pipelet? People of the species of Jacques Ferrand are so suspicious."

"I had, with reason, counted on the appearance of Cecily to combat and conquer this suspicion."

"Has he already seen her?"

"Yesterday. From the account given by Mrs. Pipelet, I do not doubt but that he was fascinated by the Creole; he took her at once into his service."

"Come, my lord, our game is won."

"I hope so; a ferocious cupidity and a savage thirst have led the executioner of Louise Morel to the most frightful misdeeds. It is in them that he will find the punishment of his crimes. A punishment which will not be barren for his victims; for you see the aim of all the efforts of the Creole."

"Cecily! Never did greater depravity, never a more dangerous corruption, never a blacker soul serve to the accomplishment of a project of higher morality, or of a more equitable end; and David, my lord?"

"He approves of all. With all the contempt and horror which he has for this creature, he only sees in her the instrument of a just vengeance. 'If this cursed woman can ever merit any compassion after all the injury she has done me,' said he to me, 'it will be in devoting herself to the punishment of this scoundrel, for whom she must be an exterminating demon.'" A servant having tapped at the door, Murphy went out, and returned, bringing in two letters, one of which seemed intended for Rudolph.

"It is a line from Madame George!" cried he, reading it rapidly.

"Well, Goualeuse?"

"No more doubt," cried Rudolph, after having read the letter; "another mysterious plot. The same evening on which the poor child disappeared, at the moment Madame George was about to inform me of the event, a man, whom she did not know, arrived express on horseback, came to her, as from me, to reassure her, saying I was informed of the sudden departure of Fleur-de-Marie, and that some day I would bring her back to the farm. Notwithstanding this notice, Madame George, uneasy at my silence respecting her *protegee* cannot, she writes me, resist her desire to have some news of her cherished daughter, as she calls the poor child."

"This is strange, my lord."

"For what end should she have been carried off?"

"My lord," said Murphy, suddenly, "the Countess M'Gregor is no stranger to this affair."

"Sarah? What makes you think so?"

"Compare this with her denunciations to Madame d'Harville."

"You are right," cried Rudolph, a new light bursting upon him; it's evident: I comprehend now; yes, always the same calculation. The countess persists in believing, that by succeeding in breaking every tie of affection, she will make me feel the want of her. This is as odious as useless. Yet such an unworthy prosecution must have an end. It is not only against me, but against all who merit respect, interest, and pity, that this woman directs her attacks. You will send M. de Graun at once, officially, to the countess; he will declare to her that I am advised of the part she has taken in the abduction of Fleur-de-Marie, and that if she does not give me the necessary information, so that I can recover this unhappy child, I shall act without pity, and then it is to justice M. de Graun must address himself."

"From the letter of Madame d'Harville, the Goualeuse must be confined at Saint Lazare."

"Yes, but Rigolette affirms that she saw her free, coming out of this prison. There is a mystery to be cleared up."

"I will go at once and give your highness's orders to Baron de Graun; but allow me to open this letter; it is from my correspondent at Marseilles, to whom I recommended the Chourineur, to facilitate the passage of the poor fellow to Algiers."

"Well! has he gone?"

"Here is something singular."

"What is it?"

"After having waited at Marseilles a long time for a vessel to depart for Algiers, the Chourineur, who seemed every day more sad and thoughtful, suddenly declared, the day being fixed for his departure, that he preferred to return to Paris."

"How singular!"

"Although my correspondent had, as was agreed upon, placed a considerable sum of money at the disposal of the Chourineur, he only took what was absolutely necessary for him to return to Paris, where he will soon arrive, as they write me."

"Then he will explain to us himself why he has changed his mind, but send De Graun at once to the Countess M'Gregor, and go yourself to Saint Lazare to gain some information concerning Fleur-de-Marie." In an hour's time the Baron de Graun returned from the countess's.

Notwithstanding his habitual and official *sang froid*, the diplomatist seemed troubled; hardly had the usher announced him, than Rudolph remarked his paleness. "Well! De Graun, what is the matter? have you seen her?"

"Oh! my lord."

"What is it?"

"Will your royal highness pardon me for informing you so suddenly of an event so fatal, so unlooked for, so—

"The countess is dead?"

"No, my lord, but her life is despaired of; she has been stabbed with a dagger."

"Oh! it is frightful!" cried Rudolph, touched with pity, notwithstanding his aversion to Sarah. "Who has committed this crime?"

"No one knows, my lord; the murder was accompanied by robbery; some one entered the apartment and carried off a large quantity of jewels."

"And how is she now?"

"Her life is almost despaired of, my lord; she has not yet recovered her consciousness. Her brother is in a state of distraction."

"You must go every day to inquire after her, my dear De Graun."

At this moment Murphy returned from Saint Lazare.

"Learn sad news!" said Rudolph to him; "the countess has been wounded! her life is in great danger."

"Oh! my lord; although she is very culpable, yet I cannot but pity her."

"Yes; such an end would be frightful! And the Goualeuse?"

"Set at liberty yesterday, my lord, supposed by the intervention of
Madame d'Harville."

"But it is impossible! Madame d'Harville begs me, on the contrary, to make the necessary arrangements to get her out of prison."

"Doubtless; and yet, an aged woman, of respectable, appearance, came to Saint Lazare, bringing the order to set Fleur-de-Marie at liberty. Both have left the prison."

"This is what Rigolette told me; but this aged woman, who is she? where have they gone to? what is this new mystery? The countess alone can enlighten us; and she is in a state to give us no information. May she not carry this secret with her to the grave?"

"But her brother, Thomas Seyton, could certainly throw some light upon the affair. He has always been her adviser."

"His sister is dying; some new plot is on foot; he will not speak; but," said Rudolph, reflecting, "we must find out the name of the person who applied for her release; thus we can learn something."

"Yes, my lord."

"Try, then, to know and see this person as soon as possible, my dear De Graun; if you do not succeed, put your M. Badinot on the trail; spare nothing to discover the poor child."

"Your highness may count on my zeal."

"My lord," said Murphy, "it is, perhaps, as well that the Chourineur returns; we may need his services for these researches."

"You are right; and now I am impatient to see arrive at Paris my brave deliverer, the gallant, 'Slasher,' for I shall never forget that to him I owe my life."

* * * * * * *

Forced to extend the unfoldings of the evil and good machinations of the Grand-Duke Rudolph and his enemies into another volume, we do so, promising that even more singular characters, even more striking actions and engaging scenes, will be found in "Part Third: Night."

THE END.

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