

ouse? What new victim

is going to accuse you of weakness before God?

A mournful sob burst from Villeforts heart; he approached the doctor, and seizing his arm, "Valentine, said he, it is Valentines turn!

40284m

Your daughter! cried dAvrigny with grief and surprise.

You see you were deceived, murmured the magistrate; come and see her, and on her bed of agony entreat her pardon for having suspected her.

Each time you have applied to me, said the doctor, it has been too late; still I will go. But let us make haste, sir; with the enemies you have to do with there is no time to be lost.

Oh, this time, doctor, you shall not have to reproach me with weakness. This time I will know the assassin, and will pursue him.

Let us try first to save the victim before we think of revenging her, said dAvrigny. Come.

The same cabriolet which had brought Villefort took them back at full speed, and at this moment Morrel rapped at Monte Cristos door.

The count was in his study and was reading with an angry look something which Bertuccio had brought in haste. Hearing the name of Morrel, who had left him only two hours before, the count raised his head, arose, and sprang to meet him.

What is the matter, Maximilian? asked he; you are pale, and the perspiration rolls from your forehead. Morrel fell into a chair.

Yes, said he, I came quickly; I wanted to speak to you.

Are all your family well? asked the count, with an affectionate benevolence, whose sincerity no one could for a moment doubt.

Thank you, count "thank you, said the young man, evidently embarrassed how to begin the conversation; yes, everyone in my family is well.

So much the better; yet you have something to tell me? replied the count with increased anxiety.

Yes, said Morrel, it is true; I have but now left a house where death has just entered, to run to you.

Are you then come from M. de Morcerfs? asked Monte Cristo.

No, said Morrel; is someone dead in his house?

The general has just blown his brains out, replied Monte Cristo with great coolness.

Oh, what a dreadful event! cried Maximilian.

Not for the countess, or for Albert, said Monte Cristo; a dead father or husband is better than a dishonored one, "blood washes out shame.

Poor countess, said Maximilian, I pity her very much; she is so noble a woman!

Pity Albert also, Maximilian; for believe me he is the worthy son of the countess. But let us return to yourself. You have hastened to me "can I have the happiness of being useful to you?

40286m

Yes, I need your help: that is I thought like a madman that you could lend me your assistance in a case where God alone can succor me.

Tell me what it is, replied Monte Cristo.

Oh, said Morrel, I know not, indeed, if I may reveal this secret to mortal ears, but fatality impels me, necessity constrains me, count " " Morrel hesitated.

Do you think I love you? said Monte Cristo, taking the young mans hand affectionately in his.

Oh, you encourage me, and something tells me there, placing his hand on his heart, that I ought to have no secret from you.

You are right, Morrel; God is speaking to your heart, and your heart speaks to you. Tell me what it says.

Count, will you allow me to send Baptistin to inquire after someone you know?

I am at your service, and still more my servants.

Oh, I cannot live if she is not better.

Shall I ring for Baptistin?

No, I will go and speak to him myself. Morrel went out, called Baptistin, and whispered a few words to him. The valet ran directly. Well, have you sent? asked Monte Cristo, seeing Morrel return.

Yes, and now I shall be more calm.

You know I am waiting, said Monte Cristo, smiling.

Yes, and I will tell you. One evening I was in a garden; a clump of trees concealed me; no one suspected I was there. Two persons passed near me"allow me to conceal their names for the present; they were speaking in an undertone, and yet I was so interested in what they said that I did not lose a single word.

This is a gloomy introduction, if I may judge from your pallor and shuddering, Morrel.

Oh, yes, very gloomy, my friend. Someone had just died in the house to which that garden belonged. One of the persons whose conversation I overheard was the master of the house; the other, the physician. The former was confiding to the latter his grief and fear, for it was the second time within a month that death had suddenly and unexpectedly entered that house which was apparently destined to destruction by some exterminating angel, as an object of Gods anger.

Ah, indeed? said Monte Cristo, looking earnestly at the young man, and by an imperceptible movement turning his chair, so that he remained in the shade while the light fell full on Maximilians face.

Yes, continued Morrel, death had entered that house twice within one month.

And what did the doctor answer? asked Monte Cristo.

He replied"he replied, that the death was not a natural one, and must be attributed"

To what?

To poison.

Indeed! said Monte Cristo with a slight cough which in moments of extreme emotion helped him to disguise a blush, or his pallor, or the intense interest with which he listened; indeed, Maximilian, did you hear that?

Yes, my dear count, I heard it; and the doctor added that if another death occurred in a similar way he must appeal to justice.

Monte Cristo listened, or appeared to do so, with the greatest calmness.

Well, said Maximilian, death came a third time, and neither the master of the house nor the doctor said a word. Death is now, perhaps, striking a fourth blow. Count, what am I bound to do, being in possession of this secret?

My dear friend, said Monte Cristo, you appear to be relating an adventure which we all know by heart. I know the house where you heard it, or one very similar to it; a house with a garden, a master, a physician, and where there have been three unexpected and sudden deaths. Well, I have not intercepted your confidence, and yet I know all that as well as you, and I have no conscientious scruples. No, it does not concern me. You say an exterminating angel appears to have devoted that house to Gods anger"well, who says your supposition is not reality? Do not notice things which those whose interest it is to see them pass over. If it is Gods justice, instead of his anger, which is walking through that house, Maximilian, turn away your face and let his justice accomplish its purpose.

Morrel shuddered. There was something mournful, solemn, and terrible in the counts manner.

Besides, continued he, in so changed a tone that no one would have supposed it was the same person speaking"besides, who says that it will begin again?

It has returned, count, exclaimed Morrel; that is why I hastened to you.

Well, what do you wish me to do? Do you wish me, for instance, to give information to the procureur? Monte Cristo uttered the last words with

so much meaning that Morrel, starting up, cried out:
You know of whom I speak, count, do you not?
Perfectly well, my good friend; and I will prove it to you by putting the dots to the _i_, or rather by naming the persons. You were walking one evening in M. de Villeforts garden; from what you relate, I suppose it to have been the evening of Madame de Saint-MÃ©ran's death. You heard M. de Villefort talking to M. d'Avrigny about the death of M. de Saint-MÃ©ran, and that no less surprising, of the countess. M. d'Avrigny said he believed they both proceeded from poison; and you, honest man, have ever since been asking your heart and sounding your conscience to know if you ought to expose or conceal this secret. We are no longer in the Middle Ages; there is no longer a Vehmgericht, or Free Tribunals; what do you want to ask these people? ~Conscience, what hast thou to do with me? as Sterne said. My dear fellow, let them sleep on, if they are asleep; let them grow pale in their drowsiness, if they are disposed to do so, and pray do you remain in peace, who have no remorse to disturb you.

Deep grief was depicted on Morrels features; he seized Monte Cristos hand. But it is beginning again, I say!

Well, said the Count, astonished at his perseverance, which he could not understand, and looking still more earnestly at Maximilian, let it begin again,"it is like the house of the Atreidae;19 God has condemned them, and they must submit to their punishment. They will all disappear, like the fabrics children build with cards, and which fall, one by one, under the breath of their builder, even if there are two hundred of them. Three months since it was M. de Saint-MÃ©ran; Madame de Saint-MÃ©ran two months since; the other day it was Barrois; today, the old Noirtier, or young Valentine.

You knew it? cried Morrel, in such a paroxysm of terror that Monte Cristo started,"he whom the falling heavens would have found unmoved; you knew it, and said nothing?

And what is it to me? replied Monte Cristo, shrugging his shoulders; do I know those people? and must I lose the one to save the other? Faith, no, for between the culprit and the victim I have no choice. But I, cried Morrel, groaning with sorrow, I love her!

You love?"whom? cried Monte Cristo, starting to his feet, and seizing the two hands which Morrel was raising towards heaven.

I love most fondly"I love madly"I love as a man who would give his life-blood to spare her a tear"I love Valentine de Villefort, who is being murdered at this moment! Do you understand me? I love her; and I ask God and you how I can save her?

Monte Cristo uttered a cry which those only can conceive who have heard the roar of a wounded lion. Unhappy man, cried he, wringing his hands in his turn; you love Valentine,"that daughter of an accursed race! Never had Morrel witnessed such an expression"never had so terrible an eye flashed before his face"never had the genius of terror he had so often seen, either on the battle-field or in the murderous nights of Algeria, shaken around him more dreadful fire. He drew back terrified. As for Monte Cristo, after this ebullition he closed his eyes as if dazzled by internal light. In a moment he restrained himself so powerfully that the tempestuous heaving of his breast subsided, as turbulent and foaming waves yield to the suns genial influence when the cloud has passed. This silence, self-control, and struggle lasted about twenty seconds, then the count raised his pallid face.

See, said he, my dear friend, how God punishes the most thoughtless and unfeeling men for their indifference, by presenting dreadful scenes to their view. I, who was looking on, an eager and curious spectator,"I, who was watching the working of this mournful tragedy,"I, who like a wicked angel was laughing at the evil men committed protected by secrecy (a secret is easily kept by the rich and powerful), I am in my turn bitten by the serpent whose tortuous course I was watching, and bitten to the heart!

Morrel groaned.

Come, come, continued the count, complaints are unavailing, be a man, be strong, be full of hope, for I am here and will watch over you.

Morrel shook his head sorrowfully.

I tell you to hope. Do you understand me? cried Monte Cristo.

Remember that I never uttered a falsehood and am never deceived. It is twelve oclock, Maximilian; thank heaven that you came at noon rather than in the evening, or tomorrow morning. Listen, Morrel"it is noon; if Valentine is not now dead, she will not die.

How so? cried Morrel, when I left her dying?

Monte Cristo pressed his hands to his forehead. What was passing in that brain, so loaded with dreadful secrets? What does the angel of light or the angel of darkness say to that mind, at once implacable and generous? God only knows.

Monte Cristo raised his head once more, and this time he was calm as a child awaking from its sleep.

Maximilian, said he, return home. I command you not to stir"attempt nothing, not to let your countenance betray a thought, and I will send you tidings. Go.

Oh, count, you overwhelm me with that coolness. Have you, then, power against death? Are you superhuman? Are you an angel? And the young man, who had never shrunk from danger, shrank before Monte Cristo with indescribable terror. But Monte Cristo looked at him with so melancholy and sweet a smile, that Maximilian felt the tears filling his eyes. I can do much for you, my friend, replied the count. Go; I must be alone.

Morrel, subdued by the extraordinary ascendancy Monte Cristo exercised over everything around him, did not endeavor to resist it. He pressed the counts hand and left. He stopped one moment at the door for Baptistin, whom he saw in the Rue Matignon, and who was running.

Meanwhile, Villefort and dAvrigny had made all possible haste, Valentine had not revived from her fainting fit on their arrival, and the doctor examined the invalid with all the care the circumstances demanded, and with an interest which the knowledge of the secret intensified twofold. Villefort, closely watching his countenance and his lips, awaited the result of the examination. Noirtier, paler than even the young girl, more eager than Villefort for the decision, was watching also intently and affectionately.

At last dAvrigny slowly uttered these words: She is still alive!

Still? cried Villefort; oh, doctor, what a dreadful word is that.

Yes, said the physician, I repeat it; she is still alive, and I am astonished at it.

But is she safe? asked the father.

Yes, since she lives.

At that moment dAvrignys glance met Noirtiers eye. It glistened with such extraordinary joy, so rich and full of thought, that the physician was struck. He placed the young girl again on the chair,"her lips were scarcely discernible, they were so pale and white, as well as her whole face,"and remained motionless, looking at Noirtier, who appeared to anticipate and commend all he did.

Sir, said dAvrigny to Villefort, call Mademoiselle Valentines maid, if you please.

Villefort went himself to find her; and dAvrigny approached Noirtier.

Have you something to tell me? asked he. The old man winked his eyes expressively, which we may remember was his only way of expressing his approval.

Privately?

Yes.

Well, I will remain with you. At this moment Villefort returned, followed by the ladys maid; and after her came Madame de Villefort.

What is the matter, then, with this dear child? she has just left me, and she complained of being indisposed, but I did not think seriously of it.

The young woman with tears in her eyes and every mark of affection of a true mother, approached Valentine and took her hand. DAvrigny continued to look at Noirtier; he saw the eyes of the old man dilate and become round, his cheeks turn pale and tremble; the perspiration stood in drops upon his forehead.

Ah, said he, involuntarily following Noirtiers eyes, which were fixed on Madame de Villefort, who repeated:

This poor child would be better in bed. Come, Fanny, we will put her to bed.

M. dAvrigny, who saw that would be a means of his remaining alone with Noirtier, expressed his opinion that it was the best thing that could be done; but he forbade that anything should be given to her except what he ordered.

They carried Valentine away; she had revived, but could scarcely move or speak, so shaken was her frame by the attack. She had, however, just power to give one parting look to her grandfather, who in losing her seemed to be resigning his very soul. DAvrigny followed the invalid, wrote a prescription, ordered Villefort to take a cabriolet, go in person to a chemists to get the prescribed medicine, bring it himself, and wait for him in his daughters room. Then, having renewed his injunction not to give Valentine anything, he went down again to Noirtier, shut the doors carefully, and after convincing himself that no one was listening:

Do you, said he, know anything of this young ladys illness?

Yes, said the old man.

We have no time to lose; I will question, and do you answer me.

Noirtier made a sign that he was ready to answer. Did you anticipate the accident which has happened to your granddaughter?

Yes. DAvrigny reflected a moment; then approaching Noirtier:

Pardon what I am going to say, added he, but no indication should be neglected in this terrible situation. Did you see poor Barrois die?

Noirtier raised his eyes to heaven.

Do you know of what he died! asked dAvrigny, placing his hand on Noirtiers shoulder.

Yes, replied the old man.

Do you think he died a natural death? A sort of smile was discernible on the motionless lips of Noirtier.

Then you have thought that Barrois was poisoned?

Yes.

Do you think the poison he fell a victim to was intended for him?

No.

Do you think the same hand which unintentionally struck Barrois has now attacked Valentine?

Yes.

Then will she die too? asked dAvrigny, fixing his penetrating gaze on Noirtier. He watched the effect of this question on the old man.

No, replied he with an air of triumph which would have puzzled the most clever diviner.

Then you hope? said dAvrigny, with surprise.

Yes.

What do you hope? The old man made him understand with his eyes that he could not answer.

Ah, yes, it is true, murmured dAvrigny. Then, turning to Noirtier, "Do you hope the assassin will be tried?

No.

Then you hope the poison will take no effect on Valentine?

Yes.

It is no news to you, added dAvrigny, to tell you that an attempt has been made to poison her? The old man made a sign that he entertained no doubt upon the subject. Then how do you hope Valentine will escape?

Noirtier kept his eyes steadfastly fixed on the same spot. DAvrigny followed the direction and saw that they were fixed on a bottle

containing the mixture which he took every morning. Ah, indeed? said d'Avrigny, struck with a sudden thought, has it occurred to you? Noirtier did not let him finish.

Yes, said he.

To prepare her system to resist poison?

Yes.

By accustoming her by degrees?"

Yes, yes, yes, said Noirtier, delighted to be understood.

Of course. I had told you that there was brucine in the mixture I give you.

Yes.

And by accustoming her to that poison, you have endeavored to neutralize the effect of a similar poison? Noirtiers joy continued.

And you have succeeded, exclaimed d'Avrigny. Without that precaution Valentine would have died before assistance could have been procured. The dose has been excessive, but she has only been shaken by it; and this time, at any rate, Valentine will not die.

A superhuman joy expanded the old mans eyes, which were raised towards heaven with an expression of infinite gratitude. At this moment Villefort returned.

Here, doctor, said he, is what you sent me for.

Was this prepared in your presence?

Yes, replied the procureur.

Have you not let it go out of your hands?

No.

d'Avrigny took the bottle, poured some drops of the mixture it contained in the hollow of his hand, and swallowed them.

Well, said he, let us go to Valentine; I will give instructions to everyone, and you, M. de Villefort, will yourself see that no one deviates from them.

40294m

At the moment when d'Avrigny was returning to Valentines room, accompanied by Villefort, an Italian priest, of serious demeanor and calm and firm tone, hired for his use the house adjoining the hotel of M. de Villefort. No one knew how the three former tenants of that house left it. About two hours afterwards its foundation was reported to be unsafe; but the report did not prevent the new occupant establishing himself there with his modest furniture the same day at five oclock. The lease was drawn up for three, six, or nine years by the new tenant, who, according to the rule of the proprietor, paid six months in advance.

This new tenant, who, as we have said, was an Italian, was called Il Signor Giacomo Busoni. Workmen were immediately called in, and that same night the passengers at the end of the faubourg saw with surprise that carpenters and masons were occupied in repairing the lower part of the tottering house.

Chapter 95. Father and Daughter

We saw in a preceding chapter how Madame Danglars went formally to announce to Madame de Villefort the approaching marriage of Eugénie Danglars and M. Andrea Cavalcanti. This formal announcement, which implied or appeared to imply, the approval of all the persons concerned in this momentous affair, had been preceded by a scene to which our readers must be admitted. We beg them to take one step backward, and to transport themselves, the morning of that day of great catastrophes, into the showy, gilded salon we have before shown them, and which was the pride of its owner, Baron Danglars.

In this room, at about ten oclock in the morning, the banker himself had been walking to and fro for some minutes thoughtfully and in evident uneasiness, watching both doors, and listening to every sound. When his patience was exhausted, he called his valet.

Antoine, said he, see why Mademoiselle Eugénie has asked me to meet her in the drawing-room, and why she makes me wait so long.

Having given this vent to his ill-humor, the baron became more calm;

Mademoiselle Danglars had that morning requested an interview with her father, and had fixed on the gilded drawing-room as the spot. The singularity of this step, and above all its formality, had not a little surprised the banker, who had immediately obeyed his daughter by repairing first to the drawing-room. Estienne soon returned from his errand.

Mademoiselle's lady's maid says, sir, that mademoiselle is finishing her toilette, and will be here shortly.

Danglars nodded, to signify that he was satisfied. To the world and to his servants Danglars assumed the character of the good-natured man and the indulgent father. This was one of his parts in the popular comedy he was performing, "a make-up he had adopted and which suited him about as well as the masks worn on the classic stage by paternal actors, who seen from one side, were the image of geniality, and from the other showed lips drawn down in chronic ill-temper. Let us hasten to say that in private the genial side descended to the level of the other, so that generally the indulgent man disappeared to give place to the brutal husband and domineering father.

Why the devil does that foolish girl, who pretends to wish to speak to me, not come into my study? and why on earth does she want to speak to me at all?

He was turning this thought over in his brain for the twentieth time, when the door opened and Eugénie appeared, attired in a figured black satin dress, her hair dressed and gloves on, as if she were going to the Italian Opera.

Well, Eugénie, what is it you want with me? and why in this solemn drawing-room when the study is so comfortable?

I quite understand why you ask, sir, said Eugénie, making a sign that her father might be seated, and in fact your two questions suggest fully the theme of our conversation. I will answer them both, and contrary to the usual method, the last first, because it is the least difficult. I have chosen the drawing-room, sir, as our place of meeting, in order to avoid the disagreeable impressions and influences of a banker's study. Those gilded cashbooks, drawers locked like gates of fortresses, heaps of bank-bills, come from I know not where, and the quantities of letters from England, Holland, Spain, India, China, and Peru, have generally a strange influence on a father's mind, and make him forget that there is in the world an interest greater and more sacred than the good opinion of his correspondents. I have, therefore, chosen this drawing-room, where you see, smiling and happy in their magnificent frames, your portrait, mine, my mother's, and all sorts of rural landscapes and touching pastorals. I rely much on external impressions; perhaps, with regard to you, they are immaterial, but I should be no artist if I had not some fancies.

Very well, replied M. Danglars, who had listened to all this preamble with imperturbable coolness, but without understanding a word, since like every man burdened with thoughts of the past, he was occupied with seeking the thread of his own ideas in those of the speaker.

There is, then, the second point cleared up, or nearly so, said Eugénie, without the least confusion, and with that masculine pointedness which distinguished her gesture and her language; and you appear satisfied with the explanation. Now, let us return to the first. You ask me why I have requested this interview; I will tell you in two words, sir; I will not marry Count Andrea Cavalcanti.

Danglars leaped from his chair and raised his eyes and arms towards heaven.

40298m

Yes, indeed, sir, continued Eugénie, still quite calm; you are astonished, I see; for since this little affair began, I have not manifested the slightest opposition, and yet I am always sure, when the opportunity arrives, to oppose a determined and absolute will to people who have not consulted me, and things which displease me. However, this time, my tranquillity, or passiveness as philosophers say, proceeded

from another source; it proceeded from a wish, like a submissive and devoted daughter (a slight smile was observable on the purple lips of the young girl), to practice obedience.

Well? asked Danglars.

Well, sir, replied Eugénie, I have tried to the very last and now that the moment has come, I feel in spite of all my efforts that it is impossible.

But, said Danglars, whose weak mind was at first quite overwhelmed with the weight of this pitiless logic, marking evident premeditation and force of will, what is your reason for this refusal, Eugénie? what reason do you assign?

My reason? replied the young girl. Well, it is not that the man is more ugly, more foolish, or more disagreeable than any other; no, M. Andrea Cavalcanti may appear to those who look at men's faces and figures as a very good specimen of his kind. It is not, either, that my heart is less touched by him than any other; that would be a schoolgirls reason, which I consider quite beneath me. I actually love no one, sir; you know it, do you not? I do not then see why, without real necessity, I should encumber my life with a perpetual companion. Has not some sage said, "Nothing too much?" and another, "I carry all my effects with me?" I have been taught these two aphorisms in Latin and in Greek; one is, I believe, from Phylarchus, and the other from Bias. Well, my dear father, in the shipwreck of life "for life is an eternal shipwreck of our hopes" I cast into the sea my useless encumbrance, that is all, and I remain with my own will, disposed to live perfectly alone, and consequently perfectly free.

Unhappy girl, unhappy girl! murmured Danglars, turning pale, for he knew from long experience the solidity of the obstacle he had so suddenly encountered.

Unhappy girl, replied Eugénie, unhappy girl, do you say, sir? No, indeed; the exclamation appears quite theatrical and affected. Happy, on the contrary, for what am I in want of? The world calls me beautiful. It is something to be well received. I like a favorable reception; it expands the countenance, and those around me do not then appear so ugly. I possess a share of wit, and a certain relative sensibility, which enables me to draw from life in general, for the support of mine, all I meet with that is good, like the monkey who cracks the nut to get at its contents. I am rich, for you have one of the first fortunes in France. I am your only daughter, and you are not so exacting as the fathers of the Porte Saint-Martin and Gaîté, who disinherit their daughters for not giving them grandchildren. Besides, the provident law has deprived you of the power to disinherit me, at least entirely, as it has also of the power to compel me to marry Monsieur This or Monsieur That. And so "being, beautiful, witty, somewhat talented, as the comic operas say, and rich" and that is happiness, sir "why do you call me unhappy?

Danglars, seeing his daughter smiling, and proud even to insolence, could not entirely repress his brutal feelings, but they betrayed themselves only by an exclamation. Under the fixed and inquiring gaze levelled at him from under those beautiful black eyebrows, he prudently turned away, and calmed himself immediately, daunted by the power of a resolute mind.

Truly, my daughter, replied he with a smile, you are all you boast of being, excepting one thing; I will not too hastily tell you which, but would rather leave you to guess it.

Eugénie looked at Danglars, much surprised that one flower of her crown of pride, with which she had so superbly decked herself, should be disputed.

My daughter, continued the banker, you have perfectly explained to me the sentiments which influence a girl like you, who is determined she will not marry; now it remains for me to tell you the motives of a father like me, who has decided that his daughter shall marry.

Eugénie bowed, not as a submissive daughter, but as an adversary

prepared for a discussion.

My daughter, continued Danglars, when a father asks his daughter to choose a husband, he has always some reason for wishing her to marry. Some are affected with the mania of which you spoke just now, that of living again in their grandchildren. This is not my weakness, I tell you at once; family joys have no charm for me. I may acknowledge this to a daughter whom I know to be philosophical enough to understand my indifference, and not to impute it to me as a crime.

This is not to the purpose, said Eug nie; let us speak candidly, sir; I admire candor.

Oh, said Danglars, I can, when circumstances render it desirable, adopt your system, although it may not be my general practice. I will therefore proceed. I have proposed to you to marry, not for your sake, for indeed I did not think of you in the least at the moment (you admire candor, and will now be satisfied, I hope); but because it suited me to marry you as soon as possible, on account of certain commercial speculations I am desirous of entering into. Eug nie became uneasy.

40302m

It is just as I tell you, I assure you, and you must not be angry with me, for you have sought this disclosure. I do not willingly enter into arithmetical explanations with an artist like you, who fears to enter my study lest she should imbibe disagreeable or anti-poetic impressions and sensations. But in that same bankers study, where you very willingly presented yourself yesterday to ask for the thousand francs I give you monthly for pocket-money, you must know, my dear young lady, that many things may be learned, useful even to a girl who will not marry. There one may learn, for instance, what, out of regard to your nervous susceptibility, I will inform you of in the drawing-room, namely, that the credit of a banker is his physical and moral life; that credit sustains him as breath animates the body; and M. de Monte Cristo once gave me a lecture on that subject, which I have never forgotten. There we may learn that as credit sinks, the body becomes a corpse, and this is what must happen very soon to the banker who is proud to own so good a logician as you for his daughter.

But Eug nie, instead of stooping, drew herself up under the blow. Ruined? said she.

Exactly, my daughter; that is precisely what I mean, said Danglars, almost digging his nails into his breast, while he preserved on his harsh features the smile of the heartless though clever man; ruined"yes, that is it.

Ah! said Eug nie.

Yes, ruined! Now it is revealed, this secret so full of horror, as the tragic poet says. Now, my daughter, learn from my lips how you may alleviate this misfortune, so far as it will affect you.

Oh, cried Eug nie, you are a bad physiognomist, if you imagine I deplore on my own account the catastrophe of which you warn me. I ruined? and what will that signify to me? Have I not my talent left? Can I not, like Pasta, Malibran, Grisi, acquire for myself what you would never have given me, whatever might have been your fortune, a hundred or a hundred and fifty thousand livres per annum, for which I shall be indebted to no one but myself; and which, instead of being given as you gave me those poor twelve thousand francs, with sour looks and reproaches for my prodigality, will be accompanied with acclamations, with bravos, and with flowers? And if I do not possess that talent, which your smiles prove to me you doubt, should I not still have that ardent love of independence, which will be a substitute for wealth, and which in my mind supersedes even the instinct of self-preservation? No, I grieve not on my own account, I shall always find a resource; my books, my pencils, my piano, all the things which cost but little, and which I shall be able to procure, will remain my own.

Do you think that I sorrow for Madame Danglars? Undeceive yourself

again; either I am greatly mistaken, or she has provided against the catastrophe which threatens you, and, which will pass over without affecting her. She has taken care for herself,"at least I hope so,"for her attention has not been diverted from her projects by watching over me. She has fostered my independence by professedly indulging my love for liberty. Oh, no, sir; from my childhood I have seen too much, and understood too much, of what has passed around me, for misfortune to have an undue power over me. From my earliest recollections, I have been beloved by no one"so much the worse; that has naturally led me to love no one"so much the better"now you have my profession of faith. Then, said Danglars, pale with anger, which was not at all due to offended paternal love,"then, mademoiselle, you persist in your determination to accelerate my ruin?

Your ruin? I accelerate your ruin? What do you mean? I do not understand you.

So much the better, I have a ray of hope left; listen.

I am all attention, said Eug nie, looking so earnestly at her father that it was an effort for the latter to endure her unrelenting gaze.

M. Cavalcanti, continued Danglars, is about to marry you, and will place in my hands his fortune, amounting to three million livres.

That is admirable! said Eug nie with sovereign contempt, smoothing her gloves out one upon the other.

You think I shall deprive you of those three millions, said Danglars; but do not fear it. They are destined to produce at least ten. I and a brother banker have obtained a grant of a railway, the only industrial enterprise which in these days promises to make good the fabulous prospects that Law once held out to the eternally deluded Parisians, in the fantastic Mississippi scheme. As I look at it, a millionth part of a railway is worth fully as much as an acre of waste land on the banks of the Ohio. We make in our case a deposit, on a mortgage, which is an advance, as you see, since we gain at least ten, fifteen, twenty, or a hundred livres worth of iron in exchange for our money. Well, within a week I am to deposit four millions for my share; the four millions, I promise you, will produce ten or twelve.

But during my visit to you the day before yesterday, sir, which you appear to recollect so well, replied Eug nie, I saw you arranging a deposit"is not that the term?"of five millions and a half; you even pointed it out to me in two drafts on the treasury, and you were astonished that so valuable a paper did not dazzle my eyes like lightning.

Yes, but those five millions and a half are not mine, and are only a proof of the great confidence placed in me; my title of popular banker has gained me the confidence of charitable institutions, and the five millions and a half belong to them; at any other time I should not have hesitated to make use of them, but the great losses I have recently sustained are well known, and, as I told you, my credit is rather shaken. That deposit may be at any moment withdrawn, and if I had employed it for another purpose, I should bring on me a disgraceful bankruptcy. I do not despise bankruptcies, believe me, but they must be those which enrich, not those which ruin. Now, if you marry M.

Cavalcanti, and I get the three millions, or even if it is thought I am going to get them, my credit will be restored, and my fortune, which for the last month or two has been swallowed up in gulfs which have been opened in my path by an inconceivable fatality, will revive. Do you understand me?

Perfectly; you pledge me for three millions, do you not?

The greater the amount, the more flattering it is to you; it gives you an idea of your value.

Thank you. One word more, sir; do you promise me to make what use you can of the report of the fortune M. Cavalcanti will bring without touching the money? This is no act of selfishness, but of delicacy. I am willing to help rebuild your fortune, but I will not be an accomplice in the ruin of others.

But since I tell you, cried Danglars, that with these three million"

Do you expect to recover your position, sir, without touching those three million?

I hope so, if the marriage should take place and confirm my credit. Shall you be able to pay M. Cavalcanti the five hundred thousand francs you promise for my dowry?

He shall receive them on returning from the mayors²⁰.

Very well!

What next? what more do you want?

I wish to know if, in demanding my signature, you leave me entirely free in my person?

Absolutely.

Then, as I said before, sir, "very well; I am ready to marry M. Cavalcanti.

But what are you up to?

Ah, that is my affair. What advantage should I have over you, if knowing your secret I were to tell you mine?

Danglars bit his lips. Then, said he, you are ready to pay the official visits, which are absolutely indispensable?

Yes, replied Eugénie.

And to sign the contract in three days?

Yes.

Then, in my turn, I also say, very well!

Danglars pressed his daughters hand in his. But, extraordinary to relate, the father did not say, Thank you, my child, nor did the daughter smile at her father.

Is the conference ended? asked Eugénie, rising.

Danglars motioned that he had nothing more to say. Five minutes afterwards the piano resounded to the touch of Mademoiselle d'Armillys fingers, and Mademoiselle Danglars was singing Brabantios malediction on Desdemona. At the end of the piece Étienne entered, and announced to Eugénie that the horses were to the carriage, and that the baroness was waiting for her to pay her visits. We have seen them at Villeforts; they proceeded then on their course.

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Chapter 96. The Contract

Three days after the scene we have just described, namely towards five oclock in the afternoon of the day fixed for the signature of the contract between Mademoiselle Eugénie Danglars and Andrea Cavalcanti, whom the banker persisted in calling prince, a fresh breeze was stirring the leaves in the little garden in front of the Count of Monte Cristos house, and the count was preparing to go out. While his horses were impatiently pawing the ground, held in by the coachman, who had been seated a quarter of an hour on his box, the elegant phaeton with which we are familiar rapidly turned the angle of the entrance-gate, and cast out on the doorsteps M. Andrea Cavalcanti, as decked up and gay as if he were going to marry a princess.

He inquired after the count with his usual familiarity, and ascending lightly to the first story met him at the top of the stairs.

The count stopped on seeing the young man. As for Andrea, he was launched, and when he was once launched nothing stopped him.

Ah, good morning, my dear count, said he.

Ah, M. Andrea, said the latter, with his half-jesting tone; how do you do?

Charmingly, as you see. I am come to talk to you about a thousand things; but, first tell me, were you going out or just returned?

I was going out, sir.

Then, in order not to hinder you, I will get up with you if you please

in your carriage, and Tom shall follow with my phaeton in tow. No, said the count, with an imperceptible smile of contempt, for he had no wish to be seen in the young mans society,"no; I prefer listening to you here, my dear M. Andrea; we can chat better in-doors, and there is no coachman to overhear our conversation.

The count returned to a small drawing-room on the first floor, sat down, and crossing his legs motioned to the young man to take a seat also. Andrea assumed his gayest manner.

You know, my dear count, said he, the ceremony is to take place this evening. At nine oclock the contract is to be signed at my father-in-laws.

Ah, indeed? said Monte Cristo.

What; is it news to you? Has not M. Danglars informed you of the ceremony?

Oh, yes, said the count; I received a letter from him yesterday, but I do not think the hour was mentioned.

Possibly my father-in-law trusted to its general notoriety.

Well, said Monte Cristo, you are fortunate, M. Cavalcanti; it is a most suitable alliance you are contracting, and Mademoiselle Danglars is a handsome girl.

Yes, indeed she is, replied Cavalcanti, in a very modest tone.

Above all, she is very rich,"at least, I believe so, said Monte Cristo.

Very rich, do you think? replied the young man.

Doubtless; it is said M. Danglars conceals at least half of his fortune.

And he acknowledges fifteen or twenty millions, said Andrea with a look sparkling with joy.

Without reckoning, added Monte Cristo, that he is on the eve of entering into a sort of speculation already in vogue in the United States and in England, but quite novel in France.

Yes, yes, I know what you mean,"the railway, of which he has obtained the grant, is it not?

Precisely; it is generally believed he will gain ten millions by that affair.

Ten millions! Do you think so? It is magnificent! said Cavalcanti, who was quite confounded at the metallic sound of these golden words.

Without reckoning, replied Monte Cristo, that all his fortune will come to you, and justly too, since Mademoiselle Danglars is an only daughter. Besides, your own fortune, as your father assured me, is almost equal to that of your betrothed. But enough of money matters. Do you know, M. Andrea, I think you have managed this affair rather skilfully?

Not badly, by any means, said the young man; I was born for a diplomatist.

Well, you must become a diplomatist; diplomacy, you know, is something that is not to be acquired; it is instinctive. Have you lost your heart?

Indeed, I fear it, replied Andrea, in the tone in which he had heard Dorante or ValÃre reply to Alceste²¹ at the ThÃÃtre FranÃsais.

Is your love returned?

I suppose so, said Andrea with a triumphant smile, since I am accepted. But I must not forget one grand point.

Which?

That I have been singularly assisted.

Nonsense.

I have, indeed.

By circumstances?

No; by you.

By me? Not at all, prince, said Monte Cristo laying a marked stress on the title, what have I done for you? Are not your name, your social position, and your merit sufficient?

No, said Andrea,"no; it is useless for you to say so, count. I

maintain that the position of a man like you has done more than my name, my social position, and my merit.

You are completely mistaken, sir, said Monte Cristo coldly, who felt the perfidious manœuvre of the young man, and understood the bearing of his words; you only acquired my protection after the influence and fortune of your father had been ascertained; for, after all, who procured for me, who had never seen either you or your illustrious father, the pleasure of your acquaintance?"two of my good friends, Lord Wilmore and the Abbé Busoni. What encouraged me not to become your surety, but to patronize you?"your fathers name, so well known in Italy and so highly honored. Personally, I do not know you.

This calm tone and perfect ease made Andrea feel that he was, for the moment, restrained by a more muscular hand than his own, and that the restraint could not be easily broken through.

Oh, then my father has really a very large fortune, count?

It appears so, sir, replied Monte Cristo.

Do you know if the marriage settlement he promised me has come?

I have been advised of it.

But the three millions?

The three millions are probably on the road.

Then I shall really have them?

Oh, well, said the count, I do not think you have yet known the want of money.

Andrea was so surprised that he pondered the matter for a moment. Then, arousing from his reverie:

Now, sir, I have one request to make to you, which you will understand, even if it should be disagreeable to you.

Proceed, said Monte Cristo.

I have formed an acquaintance, thanks to my good fortune, with many noted persons, and have, at least for the moment, a crowd of friends. But marrying, as I am about to do, before all Paris, I ought to be supported by an illustrious name, and in the absence of the paternal hand some powerful one ought to lead me to the altar; now, my father is not coming to Paris, is he?

He is old, covered with wounds, and suffers dreadfully, he says, in travelling.

I understand; well, I am come to ask a favor of you.

Of me?

Yes, of you.

And pray what may it be?

Well, to take his part.

Ah, my dear sir! What?"after the varied relations I have had the happiness to sustain towards you, can it be that you know me so little as to ask such a thing? Ask me to lend you half a million and, although such a loan is somewhat rare, on my honor, you would annoy me less!

Know, then, what I thought I had already told you, that in participation in this worlds affairs, more especially in their moral aspects, the Count of Monte Cristo has never ceased to entertain the scruples and even the superstitions of the East. I, who have a seraglio at Cairo, one at Smyrna, and one at Constantinople, preside at a wedding?"never!

Then you refuse me?

Decidedly; and were you my son or my brother I would refuse you in the same way.

But what must be done? said Andrea, disappointed.

You said just now that you had a hundred friends.

Very true, but you introduced me at M. Danglars.

Not at all! Let us recall the exact facts. You met him at a dinner party at my house, and you introduced yourself at his house; that is a totally different affair.

Yes, but, by my marriage, you have forwarded that.

I?"not in the least, I beg you to believe. Recollect what I told you when you asked me to propose you. ~Oh, I never make matches, my dear

prince, it is my settled principle. Andrea bit his lips.

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But, at least, you will be there?

Will all Paris be there?

Oh, certainly.

Well, like all Paris, I shall be there too, said the count.

And will you sign the contract?

I see no objection to that; my scruples do not go thus far.

Well, since you will grant me no more, I must be content with what you give me. But one word more, count.

What is it?

Advice.

Be careful; advice is worse than a service.

Oh, you can give me this without compromising yourself.

Tell me what it is.

Is my wife's fortune five hundred thousand livres?

That is the sum M. Danglars himself announced.

Must I receive it, or leave it in the hands of the notary?

This is the way such affairs are generally arranged when it is wished to do them stylishly: Your two solicitors appoint a meeting, when the contract is signed, for the next or the following day; then they exchange the two portions, for which they each give a receipt; then, when the marriage is celebrated, they place the amount at your disposal as the chief member of the alliance.

Because, said Andrea, with a certain ill-concealed uneasiness, I thought I heard my father-in-law say that he intended embarking our property in that famous railway affair of which you spoke just now.

Well, replied Monte Cristo, it will be the way, everybody says, of trebling your fortune in twelve months. Baron Danglars is a good father, and knows how to calculate.

In that case, said Andrea, everything is all right, excepting your refusal, which quite grieves me.

You must attribute it only to natural scruples under similar circumstances.

Well, said Andrea, let it be as you wish. This evening, then, at nine o'clock.

Adieu till then.

Notwithstanding a slight resistance on the part of Monte Cristo, whose lips turned pale, but who preserved his ceremonious smile, Andrea seized the count's hand, pressed it, jumped into his phaeton, and disappeared.

The four or five remaining hours before nine o'clock arrived, Andrea employed in riding, paying visits, "designed to induce those of whom he had spoken to appear at the bankers in their gayest equipages," dazzling them by promises of shares in schemes which have since turned every brain, and in which Danglars was just taking the initiative.

In fact, at half-past eight in the evening the grand salon, the gallery adjoining, and the three other drawing-rooms on the same floor, were filled with a perfumed crowd, who sympathized but little in the event, but who all participated in that love of being present wherever there is anything fresh to be seen. An Academician would say that the entertainments of the fashionable world are collections of flowers which attract inconstant butterflies, famished bees, and buzzing drones.

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No one could deny that the rooms were splendidly illuminated; the light streamed forth on the gilt mouldings and the silk hangings; and all the bad taste of decorations, which had only their richness to boast of, shone in its splendor. Mademoiselle Eugénie was dressed with elegant simplicity in a figured white silk dress, and a white rose half concealed in her jet black hair was her only ornament, unaccompanied by a single jewel. Her eyes, however, betrayed that perfect confidence

which contradicted the girlish simplicity of this modest attire. Madame Danglars was chatting at a short distance with Debray, Beauchamp, and Châteaufort-Renaud. Debray was admitted to the house for this grand ceremony, but on the same plane with everyone else, and