

cular apartment for the reception of guests; it is a long rectangle, divided by two upright gratings placed at a distance of three feet from one another to prevent a visitor from shaking hands with or passing anything to the prisoners. It is a wretched, damp, nay, even horrible spot, more especially when we consider the agonizing conferences which have taken place between those iron bars. And yet, frightful though this spot may be, it is looked upon as a kind of paradise by the men whose days are numbered; it is so rare for them to leave the Lions Den for any other place than the barrier Saint-Jacques, the galleys! or solitary confinement. In the court which we have attempted to describe, and from which a damp vapor was rising, a young man with his hands in his pockets, who had excited much curiosity among the inhabitants of the Den, might be seen walking. The cut of his clothes would have made him pass for an elegant man, if those clothes had not been torn to shreds; still they did not show signs of wear, and the fine cloth, beneath the careful hands of the prisoner, soon recovered its gloss in the parts which were still perfect, for the wearer tried his best to make it assume the appearance of a new coat. He bestowed the same attention upon the cambric front of a shirt, which had considerably changed in color since his entrance into the prison, and he polished his varnished boots with the corner of a handkerchief embroidered with initials surmounted by a coronet.

Some of the inmates of the Lions Den were watching the operations of the prisoners toilet with considerable interest.

See, the prince is pluming himself, said one of the thieves.

Hes a fine looking fellow, said another; if he had only a comb and hair-grease, hed take the shine off the gentlemen in white kids.

His coat looks almost new, and his boots shine like a niggers face.

Its pleasant to have such well-dressed comrades; but didnt those gendarmes behave shameful?"must a been jealous, to tear such clothes!

He looks like a big-bug, said another; dresses in fine style. And, then, to be here so young! Oh, what larks!

Meanwhile the object of this hideous admiration approached the wicket, against which one of the keepers was leaning.

Come, sir, he said, lend me twenty francs; you will soon be paid; you run no risks with me. Remember, I have relations who possess more millions than you have deniers. Come, I beseech you, lend me twenty francs, so that I may buy a dressing-gown; it is intolerable always to be in a coat and boots! And what a coat, sir, for a prince of the Cavalcanti!

The keeper turned his back, and shrugged his shoulders; he did not even laugh at what would have caused anyone else to do so; he had heard so many utter the same things,"indeed, he heard nothing else.

Come, said Andrea, you are a man void of compassion; Ill have you turned out.

This made the keeper turn around, and he burst into a loud laugh. The prisoners then approached and formed a circle.

I tell you that with that wretched sum, continued Andrea, I could obtain a coat, and a room in which to receive the illustrious visitor I am daily expecting.

Of course"of course, said the prisoners;"anyone can see hes a gentleman!

Well, then, lend him the twenty francs, said the keeper, leaning on the other shoulder; surely you will not refuse a comrade!

50151m

I am no comrade of these people, said the young man, proudly, you have no right to insult me thus.

The thieves looked at one another with low murmurs, and a storm gathered over the head of the aristocratic prisoner, raised less by his own words than by the manner of the keeper. The latter, sure of quelling the tempest when the waves became too violent, allowed them to rise to a certain pitch that he might be revenged on the importunate

Andrea, and besides it would afford him some recreation during the long day.

The thieves had already approached Andrea, some screaming, *"La savate! La savate!"* a cruel operation, which consists in cuffing a comrade who may have fallen into disgrace, not with an old shoe, but with an iron-heeled one. Others proposed the *"anguille"*, another kind of recreation, in which a handkerchief is filled with sand, pebbles, and two-sous pieces, when they have them, which the wretches beat like a flail over the head and shoulders of the unhappy sufferer.

Let us horsewhip the fine gentleman! said others.

But Andrea, turning towards them, winked his eyes, rolled his tongue around his cheeks, and smacked his lips in a manner equivalent to a hundred words among the bandits when forced to be silent. It was a Masonic sign Caderousse had taught him. He was immediately recognized as one of them; the handkerchief was thrown down, and the iron-heeled shoe replaced on the foot of the wretch to whom it belonged.

Some voices were heard to say that the gentleman was right; that he intended to be civil, in his way, and that they would set the example of liberty of conscience, and the mob retired. The keeper was so stupefied at this scene that he took Andrea by the hands and began examining his person, attributing the sudden submission of the inmates of the Lions Den to something more substantial than mere fascination. Andrea made no resistance, although he protested against it. Suddenly a voice was heard at the wicket.

Benedetto! exclaimed an inspector. The keeper relaxed his hold.

I am called, said Andrea.

To the visitors room! said the same voice.

You see someone pays me a visit. Ah, my dear sir, you will see whether a Cavalcanti is to be treated like a common person!

And Andrea, gliding through the court like a black shadow, rushed out through the wicket, leaving his comrades, and even the keeper, lost in wonder. Certainly a call to the visitors room had scarcely astonished Andrea less than themselves, for the wily youth, instead of making use of his privilege of waiting to be claimed on his entry into La Force, had maintained a rigid silence.

50153m

Everything, he said, proves me to be under the protection of some powerful person, "this sudden fortune, the facility with which I have overcome all obstacles, an unexpected family and an illustrious name awarded to me, gold showered down upon me, and the most splendid alliances about to be entered into. An unhappy lapse of fortune and the absence of my protector have cast me down, certainly, but not forever. The hand which has retreated for a while will be again stretched forth to save me at the very moment when I shall think myself sinking into the abyss. Why should I risk an imprudent step? It might alienate my protector. He has two means of extricating me from this dilemma, "the one by a mysterious escape, managed through bribery; the other by buying off my judges with gold. I will say and do nothing until I am convinced that he has quite abandoned me, and then""

Andrea had formed a plan which was tolerably clever. The unfortunate youth was intrepid in the attack, and rude in the defence. He had borne with the public prison, and with privations of all sorts; still, by degrees nature, or rather custom, had prevailed, and he suffered from being naked, dirty, and hungry. It was at this moment of discomfort that the inspectors voice called him to the visiting-room. Andrea felt his heart leap with joy. It was too soon for a visit from the examining magistrate, and too late for one from the director of the prison, or the doctor; it must, then, be the visitor he hoped for. Behind the grating of the room into which Andrea had been led, he saw, while his eyes dilated with surprise, the dark and intelligent face of M. Bertuccio, who was also gazing with sad astonishment upon the iron bars, the bolted doors, and the shadow which moved behind the other grating.

Ah, said Andrea, deeply affected.

Good morning, Benedetto, said Bertuccio, with his deep, hollow voice.

You—you? said the young man, looking fearfully around him.

Do you not recognize me, unhappy child?

Silence,"be silent! said Andrea, who knew the delicate sense of hearing possessed by the walls; for Heavens sake, do not speak so loud!

You wish to speak with me alone, do you not? said Bertuccio.

Oh, yes.

That is well.

And Bertuccio, feeling in his pocket, signed to a keeper whom he saw through the window of the wicket.

Read? he said.

What is that? asked Andrea.

An order to conduct you to a room, and to leave you there to talk to me.

Oh, cried Andrea, leaping with joy. Then he mentally added,"Still my unknown protector! I am not forgotten. They wish for secrecy, since we are to converse in a private room. I understand, Bertuccio has been sent by my protector.

The keeper spoke for a moment with an official, then opened the iron gates and conducted Andrea to a room on the first floor. The room was whitewashed, as is the custom in prisons, but it looked quite brilliant to a prisoner, though a stove, a bed, a chair, and a table formed the whole of its sumptuous furniture. Bertuccio sat down upon the chair, Andrea threw himself upon the bed; the keeper retired.

Now, said the steward, what have you to tell me?

And you? said Andrea.

You speak first.

Oh, no. You must have much to tell me, since you have come to seek me.

50155m

Well, be it so. You have continued your course of villany; you have robbed—you have assassinated.

Well, I should say! If you had me taken to a private room only to tell me this, you might have saved yourself the trouble. I know all these things. But there are some with which, on the contrary, I am not acquainted. Let us talk of those, if you please. Who sent you?

Come, come, you are going on quickly, M. Benedetto!

Yes, and to the point. Let us dispense with useless words. Who sends you?

No one.

How did you know I was in prison?

I recognized you, some time since, as the insolent dandy who so gracefully mounted his horse in the Champs-Élysées.

Oh, the Champs-Élysées? Ah, yes; we burn, as they say at the game of pincette. The Champs-Élysées? Come, let us talk a little about my father.

Who, then, am I?

You, sir?"you are my adopted father. But it was not you, I presume, who placed at my disposal 100,000 francs, which I spent in four or five months; it was not you who manufactured an Italian gentleman for my father; it was not you who introduced me into the world, and had me invited to a certain dinner at Auteuil, which I fancy I am eating at this moment, in company with the most distinguished people in Paris"amongst the rest with a certain procureur, whose acquaintance I did very wrong not to cultivate, for he would have been very useful to me just now;"it was not you, in fact, who bailed me for one or two millions, when the fatal discovery of my little secret took place.

Come, speak, my worthy Corsican, speak!

What do you wish me to say?

I will help you. You were speaking of the Champs-Élysées just now, worthy foster-father.

Well?

Well, in the Champs-Élysées there resides a very rich gentleman.

At whose house you robbed and murdered, did you not?

I believe I did.

The Count of Monte Cristo?

Tis you who have named him, as M. Racine says. Well, am I to rush into his arms, and strain him to my heart, crying, "My father, my father! like Monsieur Pixérécourt."

Do not let us jest, gravely replied Bertuccio, and dare not to utter that name again as you have pronounced it.

Bah, said Andrea, a little overcome, by the solemnity of Bertuccio's manner, why not?

Because the person who bears it is too highly favored by Heaven to be the father of such a wretch as you.

Oh, these are fine words.

And there will be fine doings, if you do not take care.

Menaces "I do not fear them. I will say!"

Do you think you are engaged with a pygmy like yourself? said Bertuccio, in so calm a tone, and with so steadfast a look, that Andrea was moved to the very soul. Do you think you have to do with galley-slaves, or novices in the world? Benedetto, you are fallen into terrible hands; they are ready to open for you "make use of them. Do not play with the thunderbolt they have laid aside for a moment, but which they can take up again instantly, if you attempt to intercept their movements.

50157m

My father "I will know who my father is, said the obstinate youth; I will perish if I must, but I will know it. What does scandal signify to me? What possessions, what reputation, what "pull, as Beauchamp says, "have I? You great people always lose something by scandal, notwithstanding your millions. Come, who is my father?

I came to tell you.

Ah, cried Benedetto, his eyes sparkling with joy. Just then the door opened, and the jailer, addressing himself to Bertuccio, said:

Excuse me, sir, but the examining magistrate is waiting for the prisoner.

And so closes our interview, said Andrea to the worthy steward; I wish the troublesome fellow were at the devil!

I will return tomorrow, said Bertuccio.

Good! Gendarmes, I am at your service. Ah, sir, do leave a few crowns for me at the gate that I may have some things I am in need of!

It shall be done, replied Bertuccio.

Andrea extended his hand; Bertuccio kept his own in his pocket, and merely jingled a few pieces of money.

That's what I mean, said Andrea, endeavoring to smile, quite overcome by the strange tranquillity of Bertuccio.

Can I be deceived? he murmured, as he stepped into the oblong and grated vehicle which they call the salad basket.

Never mind, we shall see! Tomorrow, then! he added, turning towards Bertuccio.

Tomorrow! replied the steward.

Chapter 108. The Judge

We remember that the Abbé Busoni remained alone with Noirtier in the chamber of death, and that the old man and the priest were the sole guardians of the young girl's body. Perhaps it was the Christian exhortations of the abbé, perhaps his kind charity, perhaps his persuasive words, which had restored the courage of Noirtier, for ever since he had conversed with the priest his violent despair had yielded to a calm resignation which surprised all who knew his excessive affection for Valentine.

M. de Villefort had not seen his father since the morning of the death. The whole establishment had been changed; another valet was engaged for himself, a new servant for Noirtier, two women had entered Madame de

Villeforts service,"in fact, everywhere, to the concierge and coachmen, new faces were presented to the different masters of the house, thus widening the division which had always existed between the members of the same family. The assizes, also, were about to begin, and Villefort, shut up in his room, exerted himself with feverish anxiety in drawing up the case against the murderer of Caderousse. This affair, like all those in which the Count of Monte Cristo had interfered, caused a great sensation in Paris. The proofs were certainly not convincing, since they rested upon a few words written by an escaped galley-slave on his death-bed, and who might have been actuated by hatred or revenge in accusing his companion. But the mind of the procureur was made up; he felt assured that Benedetto was guilty, and he hoped by his skill in conducting this aggravated case to flatter his self-love, which was about the only vulnerable point left in his frozen heart.

The case was therefore prepared owing to the incessant labor of Villefort, who wished it to be the first on the list in the coming assizes. He had been obliged to seclude himself more than ever, to evade the enormous number of applications presented to him for the purpose of obtaining tickets of admission to the court on the day of trial. And then so short a time had elapsed since the death of poor Valentine, and the gloom which overshadowed the house was so recent, that no one wondered to see the father so absorbed in his professional duties, which were the only means he had of dissipating his grief. Once only had Villefort seen his father; it was the day after that upon which Bertuccio had paid his second visit to Benedetto, when the latter was to learn his fathers name. The magistrate, harassed and fatigued, had descended to the garden of his house, and in a gloomy mood, similar to that in which Tarquin lopped off the tallest poppies, he began knocking off with his cane the long and dying branches of the rose-trees, which, placed along the avenue, seemed like the spectres of the brilliant flowers which had bloomed in the past season.

More than once he had reached that part of the garden where the famous boarded gate stood overlooking the deserted enclosure, always returning by the same path, to begin his walk again, at the same pace and with the same gesture, when he accidentally turned his eyes towards the house, whence he heard the noisy play of his son, who had returned from school to spend the Sunday and Monday with his mother.

While doing so, he observed M. Noirtier at one of the open windows, where the old man had been placed that he might enjoy the last rays of the sun which yet yielded some heat, and was now shining upon the dying flowers and red leaves of the creeper which twined around the balcony. The eye of the old man was riveted upon a spot which Villefort could scarcely distinguish. His glance was so full of hate, of ferocity, and savage impatience, that Villefort turned out of the path he had been pursuing, to see upon what person this dark look was directed.

Then he saw beneath a thick clump of linden-trees, which were nearly divested of foliage, Madame de Villefort sitting with a book in her hand, the perusal of which she frequently interrupted to smile upon her son, or to throw back his elastic ball, which he obstinately threw from the drawing-room into the garden.

Villefort became pale; he understood the old mans meaning.

Noirtier continued to look at the same object, but suddenly his glance was transferred from the wife to the husband, and Villefort himself had to submit to the searching investigation of eyes, which, while changing their direction and even their language, had lost none of their menacing expression. Madame de Villefort, unconscious of the passions that exhausted their fire over her head, at that moment held her sons ball, and was making signs to him to reclaim it with a kiss. Edward begged for a long while, the maternal kiss probably not offering sufficient recompense for the trouble he must take to obtain it; however at length he decided, leaped out of the window into a cluster of heliotropes and daisies, and ran to his mother, his forehead

streaming with perspiration. Madame de Villefort wiped his forehead, pressed her lips upon it, and sent him back with the ball in one hand and some bonbons in the other.

Villefort, drawn by an irresistible attraction, like that of the bird to the serpent, walked towards the house. As he approached it, Noirtiers gaze followed him, and his eyes appeared of such a fiery brightness that Villefort felt them pierce to the depths of his heart. In that earnest look might be read a deep reproach, as well as a terrible menace. Then Noirtier raised his eyes to heaven, as though to remind his son of a forgotten oath.

It is well, sir, replied Villefort from below, "it is well; have patience but one day longer; what I have said I will do.

Noirtier seemed to be calmed by these words, and turned his eyes with indifference to the other side. Villefort violently unbuttoned his greatcoat, which seemed to strangle him, and passing his livid hand across his forehead, entered his study.

The night was cold and still; the family had all retired to rest but Villefort, who alone remained up, and worked till five o'clock in the morning, reviewing the last interrogatories made the night before by the examining magistrates, compiling the depositions of the witnesses, and putting the finishing stroke to the deed of accusation, which was one of the most energetic and best conceived of any he had yet delivered.

The next day, Monday, was the first sitting of the assizes. The morning dawned dull and gloomy, and Villefort saw the dim gray light shine upon the lines he had traced in red ink. The magistrate had slept for a short time while the lamp sent forth its final struggles; its flickerings awoke him, and he found his fingers as damp and purple as though they had been dipped in blood.

He opened the window; a bright yellow streak crossed the sky, and seemed to divide in half the poplars, which stood out in black relief on the horizon. In the clover-fields beyond the chestnut-trees, a lark was mounting up to heaven, while pouring out her clear morning song. The damps of the dew bathed the head of Villefort, and refreshed his memory.

Today, he said with an effort, "today the man who holds the blade of justice must strike wherever there is guilt.

Involuntarily his eyes wandered towards the window of Noirtiers room, where he had seen him the preceding night. The curtain was drawn, and yet the image of his father was so vivid to his mind that he addressed the closed window as though it had been open, and as if through the opening he had beheld the menacing old man.

Yes, he murmured, "yes, be satisfied.

His head dropped upon his chest, and in this position he paced his study; then he threw himself, dressed as he was, upon a sofa, less to sleep than to rest his limbs, cramped with cold and study. By degrees everyone awoke. Villefort, from his study, heard the successive noises which accompany the life of a house, "the opening and shutting of doors, the ringing of Madame de Villeforts bell, to summon the waiting-maid, mingled with the first shouts of the child, who rose full of the enjoyment of his age. Villefort also rang; his new valet brought him the papers, and with them a cup of chocolate.

What are you bringing me? said he.

A cup of chocolate.

I did not ask for it. Who has paid me this attention?

My mistress, sir. She said you would have to speak a great deal in the murder case, and that you should take something to keep up your strength; and the valet placed the cup on the table nearest to the sofa, which was, like all the rest, covered with papers.

The valet then left the room. Villefort looked for an instant with a gloomy expression, then, suddenly, taking it up with a nervous motion, he swallowed its contents at one draught. It might have been thought that he hoped the beverage would be mortal, and that he sought for

death to deliver him from a duty which he would rather die than fulfil. He then rose, and paced his room with a smile it would have been terrible to witness. The chocolate was inoffensive, for M. de Villefort felt no effects.

The breakfast-hour arrived, but M. de Villefort was not at table. The valet re-entered.

Madame de Villefort wishes to remind you, sir, he said, that eleven o'clock has just struck, and that the trial commences at twelve.

Well, said Villefort, what then?

Madame de Villefort is dressed; she is quite ready, and wishes to know if she is to accompany you, sir?

Where to?

To the Palais.

What to do?

My mistress wishes much to be present at the trial.

Ah, said Villefort, with a startling accent; does she wish that?

The servant drew back and said, If you wish to go alone, sir, I will go and tell my mistress.

Villefort remained silent for a moment, and dented his pale cheeks with his nails.

Tell your mistress, he at length answered, that I wish to speak to her, and I beg she will wait for me in her own room.

Yes, sir.

Then come to dress and shave me.

Directly, sir.

The valet re-appeared almost instantly, and, having shaved his master, assisted him to dress entirely in black. When he had finished, he said: My mistress said she should expect you, sir, as soon as you had finished dressing.

I am going to her.

And Villefort, with his papers under his arm and hat in hand, directed his steps toward the apartment of his wife.

At the door he paused for a moment to wipe his damp, pale brow. He then entered the room. Madame de Villefort was sitting on an ottoman and impatiently turning over the leaves of some newspapers and pamphlets which young Edward, by way of amusing himself, was tearing to pieces before his mother could finish reading them. She was dressed to go out, her bonnet was placed beside her on a chair, and her gloves were on her hands.

Ah, here you are, monsieur, she said in her naturally calm voice; but how pale you are! Have you been working all night? Why did you not come down to breakfast? Well, will you take me, or shall I take Edward?

Madame de Villefort had multiplied her questions in order to gain one answer, but to all her inquiries M. de Villefort remained mute and cold as a statue.

Edward, said Villefort, fixing an imperious glance on the child, go and play in the drawing-room, my dear; I wish to speak to your mamma. Madame de Villefort shuddered at the sight of that cold countenance, that resolute tone, and the awfully strange preliminaries. Edward raised his head, looked at his mother, and then, finding that she did not confirm the order, began cutting off the heads of his leaden soldiers.

Edward, cried M. de Villefort, so harshly that the child started up from the floor, do you hear me?"Go!

The child, unaccustomed to such treatment, arose, pale and trembling; it would be difficult to say whether his emotion were caused by fear or passion. His father went up to him, took him in his arms, and kissed his forehead.

Go, he said: go, my child. Edward ran out.

M. de Villefort went to the door, which he closed behind the child, and bolted.

Dear me! said the young woman, endeavoring to read her husbands

inmost thoughts, while a smile passed over her countenance which froze the impassibility of Villefort; what is the matter?

Madame, where do you keep the poison you generally use? said the magistrate, without any introduction, placing himself between his wife and the door.

Madame de Villefort must have experienced something of the sensation of a bird which, looking up, sees the murderous trap closing over its head.

A hoarse, broken tone, which was neither a cry nor a sigh, escaped from her, while she became deadly pale.

Monsieur, she said, I do not understand you.

And, in her first paroxysm of terror, she had raised herself from the sofa, in the next, stronger very likely than the other, she fell down again on the cushions.

I asked you, continued Villefort, in a perfectly calm tone, where you conceal the poison by the aid of which you have killed my father-in-law, M. de Saint-MÃ©ran, my mother-in-law, Madame de Saint-MÃ©ran, Barrois, and my daughter Valentine.

Ah, sir, exclaimed Madame de Villefort, clasping her hands, what do you say?

It is not for you to interrogate, but to answer.

Is it to the judge or to the husband? stammered Madame de Villefort.

To the judge"to the judge, madame! It was terrible to behold the frightful pallor of that woman, the anguish of her look, the trembling of her whole frame.

Ah, sir, she muttered, ah, sir, and this was all.

You do not answer, madame! exclaimed the terrible interrogator. Then he added, with a smile yet more terrible than his anger, It is true, then; you do not deny it! She moved forward. And you cannot deny it! added Villefort, extending his hand toward her, as though to seize her in the name of justice. You have accomplished these different crimes with impudent address, but which could only deceive those whose affections for you blinded them. Since the death of Madame de Saint-MÃ©ran, I have known that a poisoner lived in my house. M. d'Avrigny warned me of it. After the death of Barrois my suspicions were directed towards an angel,"those suspicions which, even when there is no crime, are always alive in my heart; but after the death of Valentine, there has been no doubt in my mind, madame, and not only in mine, but in those of others; thus your crime, known by two persons, suspected by many, will soon become public, and, as I told you just now, you no longer speak to the husband, but to the judge.

50165m

The young woman hid her face in her hands.

Oh, sir, she stammered, I beseech you, do not believe appearances.

Are you, then, a coward? cried Villefort, in a contemptuous voice.

But I have always observed that poisoners were cowards. Can you be a coward, you, who have had the courage to witness the death of two old men and a young girl murdered by you?

Sir! sir!

Can you be a coward? continued Villefort, with increasing excitement, you, who could count, one by one, the minutes of four death agonies?

You, who have arranged your infernal plans, and removed the beverages with a talent and precision almost miraculous? Have you, then, who have calculated everything with such nicety, have you forgotten to calculate one thing?"I mean where the revelation of your crimes will lead you to?

Oh, it is impossible"you must have saved some surer, more subtle and deadly poison than any other, that you might escape the punishment that you deserve. You have done this"I hope so, at least.

Madame de Villefort stretched out her hands, and fell on her knees.

I understand, he said, you confess; but a confession made to the judges, a confession made at the last moment, extorted when the crime cannot be denied, diminishes not the punishment inflicted on the guilty!

The punishment? exclaimed Madame de Villefort, the punishment, monsieur? Twice you have pronounced that word!

Certainly. Did you hope to escape it because you were four times guilty? Did you think the punishment would be withheld because you are the wife of him who pronounces it?"No, madame, no; the scaffold awaits the poisoner, whoever she may be, unless, as I just said, the poisoner has taken the precaution of keeping for herself a few drops of her deadliest poison.

Madame de Villefort uttered a wild cry, and a hideous and uncontrollable terror spread over her distorted features.

Oh, do not fear the scaffold, madame, said the magistrate; I will not dishonor you, since that would be dishonor to myself; no, if you have heard me distinctly, you will understand that you are not to die on the scaffold.

No, I do not understand; what do you mean? stammered the unhappy woman, completely overwhelmed.

I mean that the wife of the first magistrate in the capital shall not, by her infamy, soil an unblemished name; that she shall not, with one blow, dishonor her husband and her child.

No, no"oh, no!

Well, madame, it will be a laudable action on your part, and I will thank you for it!

You will thank me"for what?

For what you have just said.

What did I say? Oh, my brain whirls; I no longer understand anything.

Oh, my God, my God!

And she rose, with her hair dishevelled, and her lips foaming.

Have you answered the question I put to you on entering the room?"where do you keep the poison you generally use, madame?

Madame de Villefort raised her arms to heaven, and convulsively struck one hand against the other.

No, no, she vociferated, no, you cannot wish that!

50169m

What I do not wish, madame, is that you should perish on the scaffold. Do you understand? asked Villefort.

Oh, mercy, mercy, monsieur!

What I require is, that justice be done. I am on the earth to punish, madame, he added, with a flaming glance; any other woman, were it the queen herself, I would send to the executioner; but to you I shall be merciful. To you I will say, ~Have you not, madame, put aside some of the surest, deadliest, most speedy poison?

50170m

Oh, pardon me, sir; let me live!

She is cowardly, said Villefort.

Reflect that I am your wife!

You are a poisoner.

In the name of Heaven!

No!

In the name of the love you once bore me!

No, no!

In the name of our child! Ah, for the sake of our child, let me live!

50167m

No, no, no, I tell you; one day, if I allow you to live, you will perhaps kill him, as you have the others!

I?"I kill my boy? cried the distracted mother, rushing toward Villefort; I kill my son? Ha, ha, ha! and a frightful, demoniac laugh finished the sentence, which was lost in a hoarse rattle.

Madame de Villefort fell at her husbands feet. He approached her.

Think of it, madame, he said; if, on my return, justice has not been satisfied, I will denounce you with my own mouth, and arrest you with my own hands!

She listened, panting, overwhelmed, crushed; her eye alone lived, and glared horribly.

Do you understand me? he said. I am going down there to pronounce the sentence of death against a murderer. If I find you alive on my return, you shall sleep tonight in the conciergerie.

Madame de Villefort sighed; her nerves gave way, and she sunk on the carpet. The king's attorney seemed to experience a sensation of pity; he looked upon her less severely, and, bowing to her, said slowly: Farewell, madame, farewell!

That farewell struck Madame de Villefort like the executioner's knife. She fainted. The procureur went out, after having double-locked the door.

Chapter 109. The Assizes

The Benedetto affair, as it was called at the Palais, and by people in general, had produced a tremendous sensation. Frequenting the Café de Paris, the Boulevard de Gand, and the Bois de Boulogne, during his brief career of splendor, the false Cavalcanti had formed a host of acquaintances. The papers had related his various adventures, both as the man of fashion and the galley-slave; and as everyone who had been personally acquainted with Prince Andrea Cavalcanti experienced a lively curiosity in his fate, they all determined to spare no trouble in endeavoring to witness the trial of M. Benedetto for the murder of his comrade in chains.

In the eyes of many, Benedetto appeared, if not a victim to, at least an instance of, the fallibility of the law. M. Cavalcanti, his father, had been seen in Paris, and it was expected that he would re-appear to claim the illustrious outcast. Many, also, who were not aware of the circumstances attending his withdrawal from Paris, were struck with the worthy appearance, the gentlemanly bearing, and the knowledge of the world displayed by the old patrician, who certainly played the nobleman very well, so long as he said nothing, and made no arithmetical calculations.

As for the accused himself, many remembered him as being so amiable, so handsome, and so liberal, that they chose to think him the victim of some conspiracy, since in this world large fortunes frequently excite the malevolence and jealousy of some unknown enemy.

Everyone, therefore, ran to the court; some to witness the sight, others to comment upon it. From seven o'clock in the morning a crowd was stationed at the iron gates, and an hour before the trial commenced the hall was full of the privileged. Before the entrance of the magistrates, and indeed frequently afterwards, a court of justice, on days when some especial trial is to take place, resembles a drawing-room where many persons recognize each other and converse if they can do so without losing their seats; or, if they are separated by too great a number of lawyers, communicate by signs.

It was one of the magnificent autumn days which make amends for a short summer; the clouds which M. de Villefort had perceived at sunrise had all disappeared as if by magic, and one of the softest and most brilliant days of September shone forth in all its splendor.

Beauchamp, one of the kings of the press, and therefore claiming the right of a throne everywhere, was eying everybody through his monocle. He perceived Châteaufort-Renaud and Debray, who had just gained the good graces of a sergeant-at-arms, and who had persuaded the latter to let them stand before, instead of behind him, as they ought to have done. The worthy sergeant had recognized the minister's secretary and the millionaire, and, by way of paying extra attention to his noble neighbors, promised to keep their places while they paid a visit to Beauchamp.

Well, said Beauchamp, we shall see our friend!

Yes, indeed! replied Debray. That worthy prince. Deuce take those Italian princes!

A man, too, who could boast of Dante for a genealogist, and could reckon back to the *Divina Comedia*.

A nobility of the rope! said Châteaufort-Renaud phlegmatically.

He will be condemned, will he not? asked Debray of Beauchamp.

My dear fellow, I think we should ask you that question; you know such news much better than we do. Did you see the president at the ministers last night?

Yes.

What did he say?

Something which will surprise you.

Oh, make haste and tell me, then; it is a long time since that has happened.

Well, he told me that Benedetto, who is considered a serpent of subtlety and a giant of cunning, is really but a very commonplace, silly rascal, and altogether unworthy of the experiments that will be made on his phrenological organs after his death.

Bah, said Beauchamp, he played the prince very well.

Yes, for you who detest those unhappy princes, Beauchamp, and are always delighted to find fault with them; but not for me, who discover a gentleman by instinct, and who scent out an aristocratic family like a very bloodhound of heraldry.

Then you never believed in the principality?

Yes."in the principality, but not in the prince.

Not so bad, said Beauchamp; still, I assure you, he passed very well with many people; I saw him at the ministers houses.

Ah, yes, said Châteaurenault. The idea of thinking ministers understand anything about princes!

There is something in what you have just said, said Beauchamp, laughing.

But, said Debray to Beauchamp, if I spoke to the president, _you_ must have been with the procureur.

It was an impossibility; for the last week M. de Villefort has secluded himself. It is natural enough; this strange chain of domestic afflictions, followed by the no less strange death of his daughter""

Strange? What do you mean, Beauchamp?

Oh, yes; do you pretend that all this has been unobserved at the ministers? said Beauchamp, placing his eye-glass in his eye, where he tried to make it remain.

My dear sir, said Châteaurenault, allow me to tell you that you do not understand that man's"uvre with the eye-glass half so well as Debray. Give him a lesson, Debray.

Stay, said Beauchamp, surely I am not deceived.

What is it?

It is she!

Whom do you mean?

They said she had left.

Mademoiselle Eugénie? said Châteaurenault; has she returned?

No, but her mother.

Madame Danglars? Nonsense! Impossible! said Châteaurenault; only ten days after the flight of her daughter, and three days from the bankruptcy of her husband?

Debray colored slightly, and followed with his eyes the direction of Beauchamp's glance.

Come, he said, it is only a veiled lady, some foreign princess, perhaps the mother of Cavalcanti. But you were just speaking on a very interesting topic, Beauchamp.

I?

Yes; you were telling us about the extraordinary death of Valentine.

Ah, yes, so I was. But how is it that Madame de Villefort is not here?

Poor, dear woman, said Debray, she is no doubt occupied in distilling balm for the hospitals, or in making cosmetics for herself or friends. Do you know she spends two or three thousand crowns a year in this amusement? But I wonder she is not here. I should have been pleased to see her, for I like her very much.

And I hate her, said Châteaurenault.

Why?

I do not know. Why do we love? Why do we hate? I detest her, from antipathy.

Or, rather, by instinct.

Perhaps so. But to return to what you were saying, Beauchamp.

Well, do you know why they die so multitudinously at M. de Villeforts?

"Multitudinously is good," said Châteaufort-Renaud.

My good fellow, you'll find the word in Saint-Simon.

But the thing itself is at M. de Villeforts; but let's get back to the subject.

Talking of that, said Debray, Madame was making inquiries about that house, which for the last three months has been hung with black.

Who is Madame? asked Châteaufort-Renaud.

The minister's wife, _pardieu!_

Oh, your pardon! I never visit ministers; I leave that to the princes.

Really, you were only before sparkling, but now you are brilliant; take compassion on us, or, like Jupiter, you will wither us up.

I will not speak again, said Châteaufort-Renaud; pray have compassion upon me, and do not take up every word I say.

Come, let us endeavor to get to the end of our story, Beauchamp; I told you that yesterday Madame made inquiries of me upon the subject; enlighten me, and I will then communicate my information to her.

Well, gentlemen, the reason people die so multitudinously (I like the word) at M. de Villeforts is that there is an assassin in the house!

The two young men shuddered, for the same idea had more than once occurred to them.

And who is the assassin; they asked together.

Young Edward! A burst of laughter from the auditors did not in the least disconcert the speaker, who continued, "Yes, gentlemen; Edward, the infant phenomenon, who is quite an adept in the art of killing. You are jesting.

Not at all. I yesterday engaged a servant, who had just left M. de Villefort "I intend sending him away tomorrow, for he eats so enormously, to make up for the fast imposed upon him by his terror in that house. Well, now listen.

We are listening.

It appears the dear child has obtained possession of a bottle containing some drug, which he every now and then uses against those who have displeased him. First, M. and Madame de Saint-Méran incurred his displeasure, so he poured out three drops of his elixir "three drops were sufficient; then followed Barrois, the old servant of M. Noirtier, who sometimes rebuffed this little wretch "he therefore received the same quantity of the elixir; the same happened to Valentine, of whom he was jealous; he gave her the same dose as the others, and all was over for her as well as the rest.

Why, what nonsense are you telling us? said Châteaufort-Renaud.

Yes, it is an extraordinary story, said Beauchamp; is it not?

It is absurd, said Debray.

Ah, said Beauchamp, you doubt me? Well, you can ask my servant, or rather him who will no longer be my servant tomorrow, it was the talk of the house.

And this elixir, where is it? what is it?

The child conceals it.

But where did he find it?

In his mother's laboratory.

Does his mother then, keep poisons in her laboratory?

How can I tell? You are questioning me like a king's attorney. I only repeat what I have been told, and like my informant I can do no more.

The poor devil would eat nothing, from fear.

It is incredible!

No, my dear fellow, it is not at all incredible. You saw the child pass through the Rue Richelieu last year, who amused himself with

killing his brothers and sisters by sticking pins in their ears while they slept. The generation who follow us are very precocious. Come, Beauchamp, said Châteaurenault-Renaud, I will bet anything you do not believe a word of all you have been telling us. But I do not see the Count of Monte Cristo here.

He is worn out, said Debray; besides, he could not well appear in public, since he has been the dupe of the Cavalcanti, who, it appears, presented themselves to him with false letters of credit, and cheated him out of 100,000 francs upon the hypothesis of this principality.

By the way, M. de Châteaurenault-Renaud, asked Beauchamp, how is Morrel?

Ma foi, I have called three times without once seeing him. Still, his sister did not seem uneasy, and told me that though she had not seen him for two or three days, she was sure he was well.

Ah, now I think of it, the Count of Monte Cristo cannot appear in the hall, said Beauchamp.

Why not?

Because he is an actor in the drama.

Has he assassinated anyone, then?

No, on the contrary, they wished to assassinate him. You know that it was in leaving his house that M. de Caderousse was murdered by his friend Benedetto. You know that the famous waistcoat was found in his house, containing the letter which stopped the signature of the marriage-contract. Do you see the waistcoat? There it is, all blood-stained, on the desk, as a testimony of the crime.

Ah, very good.

Hush, gentlemen, here is the court; let us go back to our places.

A noise was heard in the hall; the sergeant called his two patrons with an energetic hem! and the door-keeper appearing, called out with that shrill voice peculiar to his order, ever since the days of

Beaumarchais:

The court, gentlemen!

Chapter 110. The Indictment

The judges took their places in the midst of the most profound silence; the jury took their seats; M. de Villefort, the object of unusual attention, and we had almost said of general admiration, sat in the armchair and cast a tranquil glance around him. Everyone looked with astonishment on that grave and severe face, whose calm expression personal griefs had been unable to disturb, and the aspect of a man who was a stranger to all human emotions excited something very like terror.

Gendarmes, said the president, lead in the accused.

At these words the public attention became more intense, and all eyes were turned towards the door through which Benedetto was to enter. The door soon opened and the accused appeared.

The same impression was experienced by all present, and no one was deceived by the expression of his countenance. His features bore no sign of that deep emotion which stops the beating of the heart and blanches the cheek. His hands, gracefully placed, one upon his hat, the other in the opening of his white waistcoat, were not at all tremulous; his eye was calm and even brilliant. Scarcely had he entered the hall when he glanced at the whole body of magistrates and assistants; his eye rested longer on the president, and still more so on the king's attorney.

By the side of Andrea was stationed the lawyer who was to conduct his defence, and who had been appointed by the court, for Andrea disdained to pay any attention to those details, to which he appeared to attach no importance. The lawyer was a young man with light hair whose face expressed a hundred times more emotion than that which characterized the prisoner.

50181m

The president called for the indictment, revised as we know, by the clever and implacable pen of Villefort. During the reading of this, which was long, the public attention was continually drawn towards

Andrea, who bore the inspection with Spartan unconcern. Villefort had never been so concise and eloquent. The crime was depicted in the most vivid colors; the former life of the prisoner, his transformation, a review of his life from the earliest period, were set forth with all the talent that a knowledge of human life could furnish to a mind like that of the procureur. Benedetto was thus forever condemned in public opinion before the sentence of the law could be pronounced.

Andrea paid no attention to the successive charges which were brought against him. M. de Villefort, who examined him attentively, and who no doubt practiced upon him all the psychological studies he was accustomed to use, in vain endeavored to make him lower his eyes, notwithstanding the depth and profundity of his gaze. At length the reading of the indictment was ended.

Accused, said the president, your name and surname?

Andrea arose.

Excuse me, Mr. President, he said, in a clear voice, but I see you are going to adopt a course of questions through which I cannot follow you. I have an idea, which I will explain by and by, of making an exception to the usual form of accusation. Allow me, then, if you please, to answer in different order, or I will not do so at all. The astonished president looked at the jury, who in turn looked at Villefort. The whole assembly manifested great surprise, but Andrea appeared quite unmoved.

Your age? said the president; will you answer that question?

I will answer that question, as well as the rest, Mr. President, but in its turn.

Your age? repeated the president.

I am twenty-one years old, or rather I shall be in a few days, as I was born the night of the 27th of September, 1817.

M. de Villefort, who was busy taking down some notes, raised his head at the mention of this date.

Where were you born? continued the president.

At Auteuil, near Paris.

M. de Villefort a second time raised his head, looked at Benedetto as if he had been gazing at the head of Medusa, and became livid. As for Benedetto, he gracefully wiped his lips with a fine cambric pocket-handkerchief.

Your profession?

First I was a forger, answered Andrea, as calmly as possible; then I became a thief, and lately have become an assassin.

A murmur, or rather storm, of indignation burst from all parts of the assembly. The judges themselves appeared to be stupefied, and the jury manifested tokens of disgust for a cynicism so unexpected in a man of fashion. M. de Villefort pressed his hand upon his brow, which, at first pale, had become red and burning; then he suddenly arose and looked around as though he had lost his senses—he wanted air.

50183m

Are you looking for anything, Mr. Procureur? asked Benedetto, with his most ingratiating smile.

M. de Villefort answered nothing, but sat, or rather threw himself down again upon his chair.

And now, prisoner, will you consent to tell your name? said the president. The brutal affectation with which you have enumerated and classified your crimes calls for a severe reprimand on the part of the court, both in the name of morality, and for the respect due to humanity. You appear to consider this a point of honor, and it may be for this reason, that you have delayed acknowledging your name. You wished it to be preceded by all these titles.

It is quite wonderful, Mr. President, how entirely you have read my thoughts, said Benedetto, in his softest voice and most polite manner. This is, indeed, the reason why I begged you to alter the order of the questions.

The public astonishment had reached its height. There was no longer any

deceit or bravado in the manner of the accused. The audience felt that