

bert, he was talked about for a week; then the coronation of the queen of England took place, followed by the theft of Mademoiselle Marss diamonds; and so people talked of something else. My good fellow, said Châteaufort-Renaud, the count is your friend and you treat him accordingly. Do not believe what Albert is telling you, countess; so far from the sensation excited in the Parisian circles by the appearance of the Count of Monte Cristo having abated, I take upon myself to declare that it is as strong as ever. His first astounding act upon coming amongst us was to present a pair of horses, worth 32,000 francs, to Madame Danglars; his second, the almost miraculous preservation of Madame de Villeforts life; now it seems that he has carried off the prize awarded by the Jockey Club. I therefore maintain, in spite of Morcerf, that not only is the count the object of interest at this present moment, but also that he will continue to be so for a month longer if he pleases to exhibit an eccentricity of conduct which, after all, may be his ordinary mode of existence.

Perhaps you are right, said Morcerf; meanwhile, who is in the Russian ambassadors box?

Which box do you mean? asked the countess.

The one between the pillars on the first tier—it seems to have been fitted up entirely afresh.

Did you observe anyone during the first act? asked Châteaufort-Renaud. Where?

In that box.

No, replied the countess, it was certainly empty during the first act; then, resuming the subject of their previous conversation, she said, And so you really believe it was your mysterious Count of Monte Cristo that gained the prize?

I am sure of it.

And who afterwards sent the cup to me?

Undoubtedly.

But I dont know him, said the countess; I have a great mind to return it.

Do no such thing, I beg of you; he would only send you another, formed of a magnificent sapphire, or hollowed out of a gigantic ruby. It is his way, and you must take him as you find him.

At this moment the bell rang to announce the drawing up of the curtain for the second act. Albert rose to return to his place.

Shall I see you again? asked the countess.

At the end of the next act, with your permission, I will come and inquire whether there is anything I can do for you in Paris?

Pray take notice, said the countess, that my present residence is 22 Rue de Rivoli, and that I am at home to my friends every Saturday evening. So now, you are both forewarned.

The young men bowed, and quitted the box. Upon reaching their stalls, they found the whole of the audience in the parterre standing up and directing their gaze towards the box formerly possessed by the Russian ambassador. A man of from thirty-five to forty years of age, dressed in deep black, had just entered, accompanied by a young woman dressed after the Eastern style. The lady was surpassingly beautiful, while the rich magnificence of her attire drew all eyes upon her.

Hullo, said Albert; it is Monte Cristo and his Greek!

The strangers were, indeed, no other than the count and Haydée. In a few moments the young girl had attracted the attention of the whole house, and even the occupants of the boxes leaned forward to scrutinize her magnificent diamonds.

The second act passed away during one continued buzz of voices—one deep whisper—intimating that some great and universally interesting event had occurred; all eyes, all thoughts, were occupied with the young and beautiful woman, whose gorgeous apparel and splendid jewels made a most extraordinary spectacle.

Upon this occasion an unmistakable sign from Madame Danglars intimated her desire to see Albert in her box directly the curtain fell on the

second act, and neither the politeness nor good taste of Morcerf would permit his neglecting an invitation so unequivocally given. At the close of the act he therefore went to the baroness.

Having bowed to the two ladies, he extended his hand to Debray. By the baroness he was most graciously welcomed, while Eug nie received him with her accustomed coldness.

My dear fellow, said Debray, you have come in the nick of time.

There is madame overwhelming me with questions respecting the count; she insists upon it that I can tell her his birth, education, and parentage, where he came from, and whither he is going. Being no disciple of Cagliostro, I was wholly unable to do this; so, by way of getting out of the scrape, I said, ~Ask Morcerf; he has got the whole history of his beloved Monte Cristo at his fingers ends; whereupon the baroness signified her desire to see you.

Is it not almost incredible, said Madame Danglars, that a person having at least half a million of secret-service money at his command, should possess so little information?

Let me assure you, madame, said Lucien, that had I really the sum you mention at my disposal, I would employ it more profitably than in troubling myself to obtain particulars respecting the Count of Monte Cristo, whose only merit in my eyes consists in his being twice as rich as a nabob. However, I have turned the business over to Morcerf, so pray settle it with him as may be most agreeable to you; for my own part, I care nothing about the count or his mysterious doings.

30093m

I am very sure no nabob would have sent me a pair of horses worth 32,000 francs, wearing on their heads four diamonds valued at 5,000 francs each.

He seems to have a mania for diamonds, said Morcerf, smiling, and I verily believe that, like Potemkin, he keeps his pockets filled, for the sake of strewing them along the road, as Tom Thumb did his flint stones.

Perhaps he has discovered some mine, said Madame Danglars. I suppose you know he has an order for unlimited credit on the barons banking establishment?

I was not aware of it, replied Albert, but I can readily believe it.

And, further, that he stated to M. Danglars his intention of only staying a year in Paris, during which time he proposed to spend six millions.

He must be the Shah of Persia, travelling _incog_.

Have you noticed the remarkable beauty of the young woman, M. Lucien? inquired Eug nie.

I really never met with one woman so ready to do justice to the charms of another as yourself, responded Lucien, raising his lorgnette to his eye. A most lovely creature, upon my soul! was his verdict.

Who is this young person, M. de Morcerf? inquired Eug nie; does anybody know?

Mademoiselle, said Albert, replying to this direct appeal, I can give you very exact information on that subject, as well as on most points relative to the mysterious person of whom we are now conversing"the young woman is a Greek.

So I should suppose by her dress; if you know no more than that, everyone here is as well-informed as yourself.

I am extremely sorry you find me so ignorant a _cicerone_, replied Morcerf, but I am reluctantly obliged to confess, I have nothing further to communicate"yes, stay, I do know one thing more, namely, that she is a musician, for one day when I chanced to be breakfasting with the count, I heard the sound of a guzla"it is impossible that it could have been touched by any other finger than her own.

Then your count entertains visitors, does he? asked Madame Danglars.

Indeed he does, and in a most lavish manner, I can assure you.

I must try and persuade M. Danglars to invite him to a ball or dinner,

or something of the sort, that he may be compelled to ask us in return.

What, said Debray, laughing; do you really mean you would go to his house?

Why not? my husband could accompany me.

But do you know this mysterious count is a bachelor?

You have ample proof to the contrary, if you look opposite, said the baroness, as she laughingly pointed to the beautiful Greek.

No, no! exclaimed Debray; that girl is not his wife: he told us himself she was his slave. Do you not recollect, Morcerf, his telling us so at your breakfast?

Well, then, said the baroness, if slave she be, she has all the air and manner of a princess.

Of the ~Arabian Nights.

If you like; but tell me, my dear Lucien, what it is that constitutes a princess. Why, diamonds"and she is covered with them.

To me she seems overloaded, observed Eug  nie; she would look far better if she wore fewer, and we should then be able to see her finely formed throat and wrists.

See how the artist peeps out! exclaimed Madame Danglars. My poor Eug  nie, you must conceal your passion for the fine arts.

I admire all that is beautiful, returned the young lady.

What do you think of the count? inquired Debray; he is not much amiss, according to my ideas of good looks.

The count, repeated Eug  nie, as though it had not occurred to her to observe him sooner; the count?"oh, he is so dreadfully pale.

I quite agree with you, said Morcerf; and the secret of that very pallor is what we want to find out. The Countess G"" insists upon it that he is a vampire.

Then the Countess G"" has returned to Paris, has she? inquired the baroness.

Is that she, mamma? asked Eug  nie; almost opposite to us, with that profusion of beautiful light hair?

Yes, said Madame Danglars, that is she. Shall I tell you what you ought to do, Morcerf?

Command me, madame.

Well, then, you should go and bring your Count of Monte Cristo to us.

What for? asked Eug  nie.

What for? Why, to converse with him, of course. Have you really no desire to meet him?

None whatever, replied Eug  nie.

Strange child, murmured the baroness.

He will very probably come of his own accord, said Morcerf. There; do you see, madame, he recognizes you, and bows.

The baroness returned the salute in the most smiling and graceful manner.

Well, said Morcerf, I may as well be magnanimous, and tear myself away to forward your wishes. Adieu; I will go and try if there are any means of speaking to him.

Go straight to his box; that will be the simplest plan.

But I have never been presented.

Presented to whom?

To the beautiful Greek.

You say she is only a slave?

While you assert that she is a queen, or at least a princess. No; I hope that when he sees me leave you, he will come out.

That is possible"go.

I am going, said Albert, as he made his parting bow.

Just as he was passing the counts box, the door opened, and Monte Cristo came forth. After giving some directions to Ali, who stood in the lobby, the count took Alberts arm. Carefully closing the box door, Ali placed himself before it, while a crowd of spectators assembled round the Nubian.

Upon my word, said Monte Cristo, Paris is a strange city, and the Parisians a very singular people. See that cluster of persons collected around poor Ali, who is as much astonished as themselves; really one might suppose he was the only Nubian they had ever beheld. Now I can promise you, that a Frenchman might show himself in public, either in Tunis, Constantinople, Bagdad, or Cairo, without being treated in that way.

That shows that the Eastern nations have too much good sense to waste their time and attention on objects undeserving of either. However, as far as Ali is concerned, I can assure you, the interest he excites is merely from the circumstance of his being your attendant—you, who are at this moment the most celebrated and fashionable person in Paris.

Really? and what has procured me so flattering a distinction?

What? why, yourself, to be sure! You give away horses worth a thousand louis; you save the lives of ladies of high rank and beauty; under the name of Major Black you run thoroughbreds ridden by tiny urchins not larger than marmots; then, when you have carried off the golden trophy of victory, instead of setting any value on it, you give it to the first handsome woman you think of!

And who has filled your head with all this nonsense?

Why, in the first place, I heard it from Madame Danglars, who, by the by, is dying to see you in her box, or to have you seen there by others; secondly, I learned it from Beauchamps journal; and thirdly, from my own imagination. Why, if you sought concealment, did you call your horse Vampa?

That was an oversight, certainly, replied the count; but tell me, does the Count of Morcerf never visit the Opera? I have been looking for him, but without success.

He will be here tonight.

In what part of the house?

In the baroness's box, I believe.

That charming young woman with her is her daughter?

Yes.

I congratulate you.

Morcerf smiled.

We will discuss that subject at length some future time, said he.

But what do you think of the music?

What music?

Why, the music you have been listening to.

Oh, it is well enough as the production of a human composer, sung by featherless bipeds, to quote the late Diogenes.

From which it would seem, my dear count, that you can at pleasure enjoy the seraphic strains that proceed from the seven choirs of paradise?

30097m

You are right, in some degree; when I wish to listen to sounds more exquisitely attuned to melody than mortal ear ever yet listened to, I go to sleep.

Then sleep here, my dear count. The conditions are favorable; what else was opera invented for?

No, thank you. Your orchestra is too noisy. To sleep after the manner I speak of, absolute calm and silence are necessary, and then a certain preparation"

I know—the famous hashish!

Precisely. So, my dear viscount, whenever you wish to be regaled with music come and sup with me.

I have already enjoyed that treat when breakfasting with you, said Morcerf.

Do you mean at Rome?

I do.

Ah, then, I suppose you heard HaydÃ©s guzla; the poor exile frequently beguiles a weary hour in playing over to me the airs of her native land.

Morcerf did not pursue the subject, and Monte Cristo himself fell into a silent reverie.

The bell rang at this moment for the rising of the curtain.

You will excuse my leaving you, said the count, turning in the direction of his box.

What? Are you going?

Pray, say everything that is kind to Countess G"" on the part of her friend the vampire.

And what message shall I convey to the baroness!

That, with her permission, I shall do myself the honor of paying my respects in the course of the evening.

The third act had begun; and during its progress the Count of Morcerf, according to his promise, made his appearance in the box of Madame Danglars. The Count of Morcerf was not a person to excite either interest or curiosity in a place of public amusement; his presence, therefore, was wholly unnoticed, save by the occupants of the box in which he had just seated himself.

The quick eye of Monte Cristo however, marked his coming; and a slight though meaning smile passed over his lips. HaydÃ©e, whose soul seemed centred in the business of the stage, like all unsophisticated natures, delighted in whatever addressed itself to the eye or ear.

30099m

The third act passed off as usual. Mesdemoiselles Noblet, Julia, and Leroux executed the customary pirouettes; Robert duly challenged the Prince of Granada; and the royal father of the princess Isabella, taking his daughter by the hand, swept round the stage with majestic strides, the better to display the rich folds of his velvet robe and mantle. After which the curtain again fell, and the spectators poured forth from the theatre into the lobbies and salon.

The count left his box, and a moment later was saluting the Baronne Danglars, who could not restrain a cry of mingled pleasure and surprise.

You are welcome, count! she exclaimed, as he entered. I have been most anxious to see you, that I might repeat orally the thanks writing can so ill express.

Surely so trifling a circumstance cannot deserve a place in your remembrance. Believe me, madame, I had entirely forgotten it.

But it is not so easy to forget, monsieur, that the very next day after your princely gift you saved the life of my dear friend, Madame de Villefort, which was endangered by the very animals your generosity restored to me.

30101m

This time, at least, I do not deserve your thanks. It was Ali, my Nubian slave, who rendered this service to Madame de Villefort.

Was it Ali, asked the Count of Morcerf, who rescued my son from the hands of bandits?

No, count, replied Monte Cristo taking the hand held out to him by the general; in this instance I may fairly and freely accept your thanks; but you have already tendered them, and fully discharged your debt "if indeed there existed one" and I feel almost mortified to find you still reverting to the subject. May I beg of you, baroness, to honor me with an introduction to your daughter?

Oh, you are no stranger "at least not by name, replied Madame Danglars, and the last two or three days we have really talked of nothing but you. EugÃ©nie, continued the baroness, turning towards her daughter, this is the Count of Monte Cristo.

The count bowed, while Mademoiselle Danglars bent her head slightly.

You have a charming young person with you tonight, count, said EugÃ©nie. Is she your daughter?

No, mademoiselle, said Monte Cristo, astonished at the coolness and freedom of the question. She is a poor unfortunate Greek left under my care.

And what is her name?

Hayd e, replied Monte Cristo.

A Greek? murmured the Count of Morcerf.

Yes, indeed, count, said Madame Danglars; and tell me, did you ever see at the court of Ali Tepelini, whom you so gloriously and valiantly served, a more exquisite beauty or richer costume?

Did I hear rightly, monsieur, said Monte Cristo that you served at Yanina?

I was inspector-general of the pashas troops, replied Morcerf; and it is no secret that I owe my fortune, such as it is, to the liberality of the illustrious Albanese chief.

But look! exclaimed Madame Danglars.

Where? stammered Morcerf.

There, said Monte Cristo placing his arms around the count, and leaning with him over the front of the box, just as Hayd e, whose eyes were occupied in examining the theatre in search of her guardian, perceived his pale features close to Morcerfs face. It was as if the young girl beheld the head of Medusa. She bent forwards as though to assure herself of the reality of what she saw, then, uttering a faint cry, threw herself back in her seat. The sound was heard by the people about Ali, who instantly opened the box-door.

Why, count, exclaimed Eug nie, what has happened to your ward? she seems to have been taken suddenly ill.

Very probably, answered the count. But do not be alarmed on her account. Hayd es nervous system is delicately organized, and she is peculiarly susceptible to the odors even of flowers"nay, there are some which cause her to faint if brought into her presence. However, continued Monte Cristo, drawing a small phial from his pocket, I have an infallible remedy.

So saying, he bowed to the baroness and her daughter, exchanged a parting shake of the hand with Debray and the count, and left Madame Danglars box. Upon his return to Hayd e he found her still very pale. As soon as she saw him she seized his hand; her own hands were moist and icy cold.

Who was it you were talking with over there? she asked.

With the Count of Morcerf, answered Monte Cristo. He tells me he served your illustrious father, and that he owes his fortune to him.

Wretch! exclaimed Hayd e, her eyes flashing with rage; he sold my father to the Turks, and the fortune he boasts of was the price of his treachery! Did not you know that, my dear lord?

Something of this I heard in Epirus, said Monte Cristo; but the particulars are still unknown to me. You shall relate them to me, my child. They are, no doubt, both curious and interesting.

Yes, yes; but let us go. I feel as though it would kill me to remain long near that dreadful man.

So saying, Hayd e arose, and wrapping herself in her burnouse of white cashmere embroidered with pearls and coral, she hastily quitted the box at the moment when the curtain was rising upon the fourth act.

Do you observe, said the Countess G   to Albert, who had returned to her side, that man does nothing like other people; he listens most devoutly to the third act of *Robert le Diable*, and when the fourth begins, takes his departure.

Chapter 54. A Flurry in Stocks

Some days after this meeting, Albert de Morcerf visited the Count of Monte Cristo at his house in the Champs- lys es, which had already assumed that palace-like appearance which the counts princely fortune enabled him to give even to his most temporary residences. He came to renew the thanks of Madame Danglars which had been already conveyed to the count through the medium of a letter, signed Baronne Danglars, _n e_ Hermine de Servieux.

Albert was accompanied by Lucien Debray, who, joining in his friends conversation, added some passing compliments, the source of which the counts talent for finesse easily enabled him to guess. He was convinced that Luciens visit was due to a double feeling of curiosity,

the larger half of which sentiment emanated from the Rue de la Chaussée d'Antin. In short, Madame Danglars, not being able personally to examine in detail the domestic economy and household arrangements of a man who gave away horses worth 30,000 francs and who went to the opera with a Greek slave wearing diamonds to the amount of a million of money, had deputed those eyes, by which she was accustomed to see, to give her a faithful account of the mode of life of this incomprehensible person. But the count did not appear to suspect that there could be the slightest connection between Lucien's visit and the curiosity of the baroness.

You are in constant communication with the Baron Danglars? the count inquired of Albert de Morcerf.

Yes, count, you know what I told you?

All remains the same, then, in that quarter?

It is more than ever a settled thing, said Lucien, "and, considering that this remark was all that he was at that time called upon to make, he adjusted the glass to his eye, and biting the top of his gold-headed cane, began to make the tour of the apartment, examining the arms and the pictures.

Ah, said Monte Cristo I did not expect that the affair would be so promptly concluded.

Oh, things take their course without our assistance. While we are forgetting them, they are falling into their appointed order; and when, again, our attention is directed to them, we are surprised at the progress they have made towards the proposed end. My father and M. Danglars served together in Spain, my father in the army and M. Danglars in the commissariat department. It was there that my father, ruined by the revolution, and M. Danglars, who never had possessed any patrimony, both laid the foundations of their different fortunes.

Yes, said Monte Cristo I think M. Danglars mentioned that in a visit which I paid him; and, continued he, casting a side-glance at Lucien, who was turning over the leaves of an album, Mademoiselle Eugénie is pretty "I think I remember that to be her name.

Very pretty, or rather, very beautiful, replied Albert, but of that style of beauty which I do not appreciate; I am an ungrateful fellow. You speak as if you were already her husband.

Ah, returned Albert, in his turn looking around to see what Lucien was doing.

Really, said Monte Cristo, lowering his voice, you do not appear to me to be very enthusiastic on the subject of this marriage.

Mademoiselle Danglars is too rich for me, replied Morcerf, and that frightens me.

Bah, exclaimed Monte Cristo, that's a fine reason to give. Are you not rich yourself?

My father's income is about 50,000 francs per annum; and he will give me, perhaps, ten or twelve thousand when I marry.

That, perhaps, might not be considered a large sum, in Paris especially, said the count; but everything does not depend on wealth, and it is a fine thing to have a good name, and to occupy a high station in society. Your name is celebrated, your position magnificent; and then the Comte de Morcerf is a soldier, and it is pleasing to see the integrity of a Bayard united to the poverty of a Duguesclin; disinterestedness is the brightest ray in which a noble sword can shine. As for me, I consider the union with Mademoiselle Danglars a most suitable one; she will enrich you, and you will ennoble her. Albert shook his head, and looked thoughtful.

There is still something else, said he.

I confess, observed Monte Cristo, that I have some difficulty in comprehending your objection to a young lady who is both rich and beautiful.

Oh, said Morcerf, this repugnance, if repugnance it may be called, is not all on my side.

Whence can it arise, then? for you told me your father desired the

marriage.

It is my mother who dissents; she has a clear and penetrating judgment, and does not smile on the proposed union. I cannot account for it, but she seems to entertain some prejudice against the Danglars.

30107m

Ah, said the count, in a somewhat forced tone, that may be easily explained; the Comtesse de Morcerf, who is aristocracy and refinement itself, does not relish the idea of being allied by your marriage with one of ignoble birth; that is natural enough.

I do not know if that is her reason, said Albert, but one thing I do know, that if this marriage be consummated, it will render her quite miserable. There was to have been a meeting six weeks ago in order to talk over and settle the affair; but I had such a sudden attack of indisposition"

Real? interrupted the count, smiling.

Oh, real enough, from anxiety doubtless,"at any rate they postponed the matter for two months. There is no hurry, you know. I am not yet twenty-one, and Eugénie is only seventeen; but the two months expire next week. It must be done. My dear count, you cannot imagine how my mind is harassed. How happy you are in being exempt from all this! Well, and why should not you be free, too? What prevents you from being so?

Oh, it will be too great a disappointment to my father if I do not marry Mademoiselle Danglars.

Marry her then, said the count, with a significant shrug of the shoulders.

Yes, replied Morcerf, but that will plunge my mother into positive grief.

Then do not marry her, said the count.

Well, I shall see. I will try and think over what is the best thing to be done; you will give me your advice, will you not, and if possible extricate me from my unpleasant position? I think, rather than give pain to my dear mother, I would run the risk of offending the count. Monte Cristo turned away; he seemed moved by this last remark.

Ah, said he to Debray, who had thrown himself into an easy-chair at the farthest extremity of the salon, and who held a pencil in his right hand and an account book in his left, what are you doing there? Are you making a sketch after Poussin?

Oh, no, was the tranquil response; I am too fond of art to attempt anything of that sort. I am doing a little sum in arithmetic.

In arithmetic?

Yes; I am calculating"by the way, Morcerf, that indirectly concerns you"I am calculating what the house of Danglars must have gained by the last rise in Haiti bonds; from 206 they have risen to 409 in three days, and the prudent banker had purchased at 206; therefore he must have made 300,000 livres.

That is not his biggest scoop, said Morcerf; did he not make a million in Spaniards this last year?

My dear fellow, said Lucien, here is the Count of Monte Cristo, who will say to you, as the Italians do,"

~Denaro e santitÃ ,

MetÃ della metÃ .9

When they tell me such things, I only shrug my shoulders and say nothing.

But you were speaking of Haitians? said Monte Cristo.

Ah, Haitians,"that is quite another thing! Haitians are the _Ã©cartÃ©_ of French stock-jobbing. We may like bouillotte, delight in whist, be enraptured with boston, and yet grow tired of them all; but we always come back to _Ã©cartÃ©_"it is not only a game, it is a _hors-d'uvre"! M. Danglars sold yesterday at 405, and pockets 300,000 francs. Had he but waited till today, the price would have fallen to 205, and instead of gaining 300,000 francs, he would have lost 20 or 25,000.

And what has caused the sudden fall from 409 to 206? asked Monte Cristo. I am profoundly ignorant of all these stock-jobbing intrigues.

Because, said Albert, laughing, one piece of news follows another, and there is often great dissimilarity between them.

Ah, said the count, I see that M. Danglars is accustomed to play at gaining or losing 300,000 francs in a day; he must be enormously rich. It is not he who plays! exclaimed Lucien; it is Madame Danglars; she is indeed daring.

But you who are a reasonable being, Lucien, and who knows how little dependence is to be placed on the news, since you are at the fountain-head, surely you ought to prevent it, said Morcerf, with a smile.

How can I, if her husband fails in controlling her? asked Lucien; you know the character of the baroness"no one has any influence with her, and she does precisely what she pleases.

Ah, if I were in your place"" said Albert.

Well?

I would reform her; it would be rendering a service to her future son-in-law.

How would you set about it?

Ah, that would be easy enough"I would give her a lesson.

A lesson?

Yes. Your position as secretary to the minister renders your authority great on the subject of political news; you never open your mouth but the stockbrokers immediately stenograph your words. Cause her to lose a hundred thousand francs, and that would teach her prudence.

I do not understand, stammered Lucien.

It is very clear, notwithstanding, replied the young man, with an artlessness wholly free from affectation; tell her some fine morning an unheard-of piece of intelligence"some telegraphic despatch, of which you alone are in possession; for instance, that Henri IV. was seen yesterday at Gabrielles. That would boom the market; she will buy heavily, and she will certainly lose when Beauchamp announces the following day, in his gazette, "The report circulated by some usually well-informed persons that the king was seen yesterday at Gabrielles house, is totally without foundation. We can positively assert that his majesty did not quit the Pont-Neuf.

Lucien half smiled. Monte Cristo, although apparently indifferent, had not lost one word of this conversation, and his penetrating eye had even read a hidden secret in the embarrassed manner of the secretary. This embarrassment had completely escaped Albert, but it caused Lucien to shorten his visit; he was evidently ill at ease. The count, in taking leave of him, said something in a low voice, to which he answered, Willingly, count; I accept. The count returned to young Morcerf.

Do you not think, on reflection, said he to him, that you have done wrong in thus speaking of your mother-in-law in the presence of M. Debray?

My dear count, said Morcerf, I beg of you not to apply that title so prematurely.

Now, speaking without any exaggeration, is your mother really so very much averse to this marriage?

So much so that the baroness very rarely comes to the house, and my mother, has not, I think, visited Madame Danglars twice in her whole life.

Then, said the count, I am emboldened to speak openly to you. M. Danglars is my banker; M. de Villefort has overwhelmed me with politeness in return for a service which a casual piece of good fortune enabled me to render him. I predict from all this an avalanche of dinners and routs. Now, in order not to presume on this, and also to be beforehand with them, I have, if agreeable to you, thought of inviting M. and Madame Danglars, and M. and Madame de Villefort, to my

country-house at Auteuil. If I were to invite you and the Count and Countess of Morcerf to this dinner, I should give it the appearance of being a matrimonial meeting, or at least Madame de Morcerf would look upon the affair in that light, especially if Baron Danglars did me the honor to bring his daughter. In that case your mother would hold me in aversion, and I do not at all wish that; on the contrary, I desire to stand high in her esteem.

Indeed, count, said Morcerf, I thank you sincerely for having used so much candor towards me, and I gratefully accept the exclusion which you propose. You say you desire my mother's good opinion; I assure you it is already yours to a very unusual extent.

30111m

Do you think so? said Monte Cristo, with interest.

Oh, I am sure of it; we talked of you an hour after you left us the other day. But to return to what we were saying. If my mother could know of this attention on your part—and I will venture to tell her—I am sure that she will be most grateful to you; it is true that my father will be equally angry. The count laughed.

Well, said he to Morcerf, but I think your father will not be the only angry one; M. and Madame Danglars will think me a very ill-mannered person. They know that I am intimate with you—that you are, in fact; one of the oldest of my Parisian acquaintances—and they will not find you at my house; they will certainly ask me why I did not invite you. Be sure to provide yourself with some previous engagement which shall have a semblance of probability, and communicate the fact to me by a line in writing. You know that with bankers nothing but a written document will be valid.

I will do better than that, said Albert; my mother is wishing to go to the sea-side—what day is fixed for your dinner?

Saturday.

This is Tuesday—well, tomorrow evening we leave, and the day after we shall be at Tréport. Really, count, you have a delightful way of setting people at their ease.

Indeed, you give me more credit than I deserve; I only wish to do what will be agreeable to you, that is all.

When shall you send your invitations?

This very day.

Well, I will immediately call on M. Danglars, and tell him that my mother and myself must leave Paris tomorrow. I have not seen you, consequently I know nothing of your dinner.

How foolish you are! Have you forgotten that M. Debray has just seen you at my house?

Ah, true.

Fix it this way. I have seen you, and invited you without any ceremony, when you instantly answered that it would be impossible for you to accept, as you were going to Tréport.

Well, then, that is settled; but you will come and call on my mother before tomorrow?

Before tomorrow?—that will be a difficult matter to arrange, besides, I shall just be in the way of all the preparations for departure.

Well, you can do better. You were only a charming man before, but, if you accede to my proposal, you will be adorable.

What must I do to attain such sublimity?

You are today free as air—come and dine with me; we shall be a small party—only yourself, my mother, and I. You have scarcely seen my mother; you shall have an opportunity of observing her more closely. She is a remarkable woman, and I only regret that there does not exist another like her, about twenty years younger; in that case, I assure you, there would very soon be a Countess and Viscountess of Morcerf. As to my father, you will not see him; he is officially engaged, and dines with the chief referendary. We will talk over our travels; and you, who have seen the whole world, will relate your adventures—you shall tell us the history of the beautiful Greek who was with you the other night

at the Opera, and whom you call your slave, and yet treat like a princess. We will talk Italian and Spanish. Come, accept my invitation, and my mother will thank you.

A thousand thanks, said the count, your invitation is most gracious, and I regret exceedingly that it is not in my power to accept it. I am not so much at liberty as you suppose; on the contrary, I have a most important engagement.

Ah, take care, you were teaching me just now how, in case of an invitation to dinner, one might creditably make an excuse. I require the proof of a pre-engagement. I am not a banker, like M. Danglars, but I am quite as incredulous as he is.

I am going to give you a proof, replied the count, and he rang the bell.

Humph, said Morcerf, this is the second time you have refused to dine with my mother; it is evident that you wish to avoid her.

Monte Cristo started. Oh, you do not mean that, said he; besides, here comes the confirmation of my assertion.

Baptistin entered, and remained standing at the door.

I had no previous knowledge of your visit, had I?

Indeed, you are such an extraordinary person, that I would not answer for it.

At all events, I could not guess that you would invite me to dinner. Probably not.

Well, listen, Baptistin, what did I tell you this morning when I called you into my laboratory?

To close the door against visitors as soon as the clock struck five, replied the valet.

What then?

Ah, my dear count, said Albert.

No, no, I wish to do away with that mysterious reputation that you have given me, my dear viscount; it is tiresome to be always acting Manfred. I wish my life to be free and open. Go on, Baptistin.

Then to admit no one except Major Bartolomeo Cavalcanti and his son. You hear "Major Bartolomeo Cavalcanti" a man who ranks amongst the most ancient nobility of Italy, whose name Dante has celebrated in the tenth canto of *The Inferno*, you remember it, do you not? Then there is his son, Andrea, a charming young man, about your own age, viscount, bearing the same title as yourself, and who is making his entry into the Parisian world, aided by his fathers millions. The major will bring his son with him this evening, the *contino*, as we say in Italy; he confides him to my care. If he proves himself worthy of it, I will do what I can to advance his interests. You will assist me in the work, will you not?

Most undoubtedly. This Major Cavalcanti is an old friend of yours, then?

By no means. He is a perfect nobleman, very polite, modest, and agreeable, such as may be found constantly in Italy, descendants of very ancient families. I have met him several times at Florence, Bologna and Lucca, and he has now communicated to me the fact of his arrival in Paris. The acquaintances one makes in travelling have a sort of claim on one; they everywhere expect to receive the same attention which you once paid them by chance, as though the civilities of a passing hour were likely to awaken any lasting interest in favor of the man in whose society you may happen to be thrown in the course of your journey. This good Major Cavalcanti is come to take a second view of Paris, which he only saw in passing through in the time of the Empire, when he was on his way to Moscow. I shall give him a good dinner, he will confide his son to my care, I will promise to watch over him, I shall let him follow in whatever path his folly may lead him, and then I shall have done my part.

Certainly; I see you are a model Mentor, said Albert Good-bye, we shall return on Sunday. By the way, I have received news of Franz. Have you? Is he still amusing himself in Italy?

I believe so; however, he regrets your absence extremely. He says you were the sun of Rome, and that without you all appears dark and cloudy; I do not know if he does not even go so far as to say that it rains. His opinion of me is altered for the better, then?

No, he still persists in looking upon you as the most incomprehensible and mysterious of beings.

He is a charming young man, said Monte Cristo and I felt a lively interest in him the very first evening of my introduction, when I met him in search of a supper, and prevailed upon him to accept a portion of mine. He is, I think, the son of General d'Ã&pinay?

He is.

The same who was so shamefully assassinated in 1815?

By the Bonapartists.

Yes. Really I like him extremely; is there not also a matrimonial engagement contemplated for him?

Yes, he is to marry Mademoiselle de Villefort.

Indeed?

30115m

And you know I am to marry Mademoiselle Danglars, said Albert, laughing.

You smile.

Yes.

Why do you do so?

I smile because there appears to me to be about as much inclination for the consummation of the engagement in question as there is for my own. But really, my dear count, we are talking as much of women as they do of us; it is unpardonable.

Albert rose.

Are you going?

Really, that is a good idea!"two hours have I been boring you to death with my company, and then you, with the greatest politeness, ask me if I am going. Indeed, count, you are the most polished man in the world. And your servants, too, how very well behaved they are; there is quite a style about them. Monsieur Baptistin especially; I could never get such a man as that. My servants seem to imitate those you sometimes see in a play, who, because they have only a word or two to say, acquit themselves in the most awkward manner possible. Therefore, if you part with M. Baptistin, give me the refusal of him.

By all means.

That is not all; give my compliments to your illustrious Luccanese, Cavalcante of the Cavalcanti; and if by any chance he should be wishing to establish his son, find him a wife very rich, very noble on her mothers side at least, and a baroness in right of her father, I will help you in the search.

Ah, ha; you will do as much as that, will you?

Yes.

Well, really, nothing is certain in this world.

Oh, count, what a service you might render me! I should like you a hundred times better if, by your intervention, I could manage to remain a bachelor, even were it only for ten years.

Nothing is impossible, gravely replied Monte Cristo; and taking leave of Albert, he returned into the house, and struck the gong three times. Bertuccio appeared.

Monsieur Bertuccio, you understand that I intend entertaining company on Saturday at Auteuil. Bertuccio slightly started. I shall require your services to see that all be properly arranged. It is a beautiful house, or at all events may be made so.

There must be a good deal done before it can deserve that title, your excellency, for the tapestried hangings are very old.

Let them all be taken away and changed, then, with the exception of the sleeping-chamber which is hung with red damask; you will leave that exactly as it is. Bertuccio bowed. You will not touch the garden either; as to the yard, you may do what you please with it; I should

prefer that being altered beyond all recognition.

I will do everything in my power to carry out your wishes, your excellency. I should be glad, however, to receive your excellencys commands concerning the dinner.

Really, my dear M. Bertuccio, said the count, since you have been in Paris, you have become quite nervous, and apparently out of your element; you no longer seem to understand me.

But surely your excellency will be so good as to inform me whom you are expecting to receive?

I do not yet know myself, neither is it necessary that you should do so. ~Lucullus dines with Lucullus, that is quite sufficient.

Bertuccio bowed, and left the room.

Chapter 55. Major Cavalcanti

Both the count and Baptistin had told the truth when they announced to Morcerf the proposed visit of the major, which had served Monte Cristo as a pretext for declining Alberts invitation. Seven oclock had just struck, and M. Bertuccio, according to the command which had been given him, had two hours before left for Auteuil, when a cab stopped at the door, and after depositing its occupant at the gate, immediately hurried away, as if ashamed of its employment. The visitor was about fifty-two years of age, dressed in one of the green surtouts, ornamented with black frogs, which have so long maintained their popularity all over Europe. He wore trousers of blue cloth, boots tolerably clean, but not of the brightest polish, and a little too thick in the soles, buckskin gloves, a hat somewhat resembling in shape those usually worn by the gendarmes, and a black cravat striped with white, which, if the proprietor had not worn it of his own free will, might have passed for a halter, so much did it resemble one. Such was the picturesque costume of the person who rang at the gate, and demanded if it was not at No. 30 in the Avenue des Champs-Ã&lyses that the Count of Monte Cristo lived, and who, being answered by the porter in the affirmative, entered, closed the gate after him, and began to ascend the steps.

The small and angular head of this man, his white hair and thick gray moustaches, caused him to be easily recognized by Baptistin, who had received an exact description of the expected visitor, and who was awaiting him in the hall. Therefore, scarcely had the stranger time to pronounce his name before the count was apprised of his arrival. He was ushered into a simple and elegant drawing-room, and the count rose to meet him with a smiling air.

Ah, my dear sir, you are most welcome; I was expecting you.

Indeed, said the Italian, was your excellency then aware of my visit?

Yes; I had been told that I should see you today at seven oclock.

Then you have received full information concerning my arrival?

Of course.

Ah, so much the better, I feared this little precaution might have been forgotten.

30119m

What precaution?

That of informing you beforehand of my coming.

Oh, no, it has not.

But you are sure you are not mistaken.

Very sure.

It really was I whom your excellency expected at seven oclock this evening?

I will prove it to you beyond a doubt.

Oh, no, never mind that, said the Italian; it is not worth the trouble.

Yes, yes, said Monte Cristo. His visitor appeared slightly uneasy.

Let me see, said the count; are you not the Marquis Bartolomeo Cavalcanti?

Bartolomeo Cavalcanti, joyfully replied the Italian; yes, I am

really he.

Ex-major in the Austrian service?

Was I a major? timidly asked the old soldier.

Yes, said Monte Cristo you were a major; that is the title the French give to the post which you filled in Italy.

Very good, said the major, I do not demand more, you understand"

Your visit here today is not of your own suggestion, is it? said Monte Cristo.

No, certainly not.

You were sent by some other person?

Yes.

By the excellent Abb  Busoni?

Exactly so, said the delighted major.

And you have a letter?

Yes, there it is.

Give it to me, then. And Monte Cristo took the letter, which he opened and read. The major looked at the count with his large staring eyes, and then took a survey of the apartment, but his gaze almost immediately reverted to the proprietor of the room.

Yes, yes, I see. ~Major Cavalcanti, a worthy patrician of Lucca, a descendant of the Cavalcanti of Florence, continued Monte Cristo, reading aloud, ~possessing an income of half a million.

Monte Cristo raised his eyes from the paper, and bowed.

Half a million, said he, magnificent!

Half a million, is it? said the major.

Yes, in so many words; and it must be so, for the abb  knows correctly the amount of all the largest fortunes in Europe.

Be it half a million, then; but on my word of honor, I had no idea that it was so much.

Because you are robbed by your steward. You must make some reformation in that quarter.

You have opened my eyes, said the Italian gravely; I will show the gentlemen the door.

Monte Cristo resumed the perusal of the letter:

~And who only needs one thing more to make him happy.

Yes, indeed but one! said the major with a sigh.

~Which is to recover a lost and adored son.

A lost and adored son!

~Stolen away in his infancy, either by an enemy of his noble family or by the gypsies.

At the age of five years! said the major with a deep sigh, and raising his eye to heaven.

Unhappy father, said Monte Cristo. The count continued:

~I have given him renewed life and hope, in the assurance that you have the power of restoring the son whom he has vainly sought for fifteen years.

The major looked at the count with an indescribable expression of anxiety.

I have the power of so doing, said Monte Cristo. The major recovered his self-possession.

So, then, said he, the letter was true to the end?

Did you doubt it, my dear Monsieur Bartolomeo?

No, indeed; certainly not; a good man, a man holding religious office, as does the Abb  Busoni, could not condescend to deceive or play off a joke; but your excellency has not read all.

Ah, true, said Monte Cristo there is a postscript.

Yes, yes, repeated the major, yes"there" is "a" postscript.

~In order to save Major Cavalcanti the trouble of drawing on his banker, I send him a draft for 2,000 francs to defray his travelling expenses, and credit on you for the further sum of 48,000 francs, which you still owe me.

The major awaited the conclusion of the postscript, apparently with great anxiety.

Very good, said the count.

He said ~very good, muttered the major, then "sir" replied he.

Then what? asked Monte Cristo.

Then the postscript"

Well; what of the postscript?

Then the postscript is as favorably received by you as the rest of the letter?

Certainly; the Abb  Busoni and myself have a small account open between us. I do not remember if it is exactly 48,000 francs, which I am still owing him, but I dare say we shall not dispute the difference. You attached great importance, then, to this postscript, my dear Monsieur Cavalcanti?

I must explain to you, said the major, that, fully confiding in the signature of the Abb  Busoni, I had not provided myself with any other funds; so that if this resource had failed me, I should have found myself very unpleasantly situated in Paris.

Is it possible that a man of your standing should be embarrassed anywhere? said Monte Cristo.

Why, really I know no one, said the major.

But then you yourself are known to others?

Yes, I am known, so that"

Proceed, my dear Monsieur Cavalcanti.

So that you will remit to me these 48,000 francs?

Certainly, at your first request. The major's eyes dilated with pleasing astonishment. But sit down, said Monte Cristo; really I do not know what I have been thinking of "I have positively kept you standing for the last quarter of an hour.

Don't mention it. The major drew an armchair towards him, and proceeded to seat himself.