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THE

COUNT OF MONTE CRISTO.

VOL. III.

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THE
COUNT OF MONTE CRISTO.

BY
ALEXANDRE DUMAS.

VOL. III.

BOSTON:
LITTLE, BROWN, AND COMPANY.
1889.

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THE
COUNT OF MONTE CRISTO.

CHAPTER I.

“ROBERT LE DIABLE.”

THE pretext of an opera engagement was the more plausible since there chanced to be on that very night a more than ordinary attraction at the Académie Royale. Levasseur, who had been suffering under severe illness, made his reappearance in the character of Bertram ; and as usual, the announcement of the most admired production of the favorite composer of the day had attracted an audience consisting of the very *élite* of Parisian fashion. Morcerf, like most other young men of rank and fortune, had his orchestral stall, with the certainty of always finding a seat in at least a dozen of the principal boxes occupied by persons of his acquaintance ; he had, moreover, his right of entry into the box of the “lions.” Château-Renaud rented a stall near his own, while Beauchamp, in his editorial capacity, had unlimited range all over the theatre. It happened that on that particular night the minister’s box was placed at the disposal of Lucien Debray, who offered it to the Comte de Morcerf, who upon Mercédès’s refusal of it, sent it to Danglars, with an intimation that he should probably do himself the honor of joining the baroness and her daughter during the evening, in the event of their accepting the box in question. The ladies received the offer with too much pleasure to dream of a refusal. To no one else is a free opera-box so acceptable as to a millionnaire.

Danglars had however declared that his political principles and his position as a member of the opposition would not permit him to use the minister's box ; the baroness had therefore despatched a note to Lucien Debray, bidding him call for them, since she could not go to the opera with Eugénie alone. And in fact, if the two women had gone thither without an escort the world would have put a bad construction on it ; but should Mademoiselle Danglars go to the opera with her mother and her mother's lover, the world would have no fault to find. We must take the world as we find it.

The curtain rose as usual to an almost empty house, it being one of the absurdities of Parisian fashion never to appear at the opera until after the performance has begun, so that the first act is generally played without the slightest attention being paid to it, that part of the audience already assembled being occupied in observing the new arrivals ; while the noise of opening and shutting doors, with the mingled buzz of many conversations, makes it impossible to hear anything else.

" See," said Albert, as the door of a box on the first circle opened, " there is the Comtesse G ——."

" And who may she be, pray ?" inquired Château-Renaud.

" Oh, Baron ! an unpardonable question ! You ask who is the Comtesse G —— ?"

" Ah, to be sure !" replied Château-Renaud ; " I remember now, — your lovely Venetian, is it not ?"

" Herself."

At this moment the countess perceived Albert and returned his salutation with a smile.

" You are acquainted with her, it seems ?" said Château-Renaud.

" Yes. Franz presented me to her at Rome," replied Albert.

"Well, then, will you do for me in Paris what he did for you in Rome ?"

"With much pleasure."

"Silence!" exclaimed the audience.

This manifestation on the part of the spectators of their wish to be allowed to enjoy the rich music then issuing from the stage and orchestra, produced no effect on the two young men, who continued talking as though they had not even heard it.

"The countess was present at the races in the Champ de Mars," said Château-Renaud.

"To-day?"

"Yes."

"Bless me! I quite forgot the races. Did you bet?"

"Oh, a trifle, — fifty louis."

"And who was the winner?"

"Nautilus. I betted on him."

"But there were three races, were there not?"

"Yes; there was the prize given by the Jockey Club, — a gold cup, you know; and a very singular circumstance occurred in that race."

"What was it?"

"Silence!" again vociferated the music-loving part of the audience.

"Why, that it was gained by a horse and rider utterly unknown on the course."

"Is it possible?"

"True as day. Nobody had observed a horse entered by the name of Vampa, or a jockey styled Job, when a splendid roan and a jockey about as big as your fist presented themselves at the starting-post. They were obliged to stuff at least twenty pounds' weight of shot in the small rider's pockets to make him heavy enough; but with all

that he outstripped Ariel and Barbare, against whom he ran, by at least three whole lengths."

"And was it not found out at last to whom the horse and jockey belonged?"

"No."

"You say that the horse was entered under the name of —"

"Vampa."

"Then," answered Albert, "I am better informed than you are; I know who is the owner of that horse!"

"Silence there!" came from the audience. And this time the tone and manner in which the command was given betokened such growing hostility that the two young men perceived for the first time that the mandate was addressed to them. Turning round, they searched the crowd for some one person who would take upon himself the responsibility of what they deemed an impertinence; but as no one responded to the challenge, the friends turned again towards the stage. At this moment the door of the minister's box opened, and Madame Danglars, her daughter, and Lucien Debray, took their places.

"Ha, ha!" said Château-Renaud, "here come some friends of yours, Viscount! What are you looking at there? Don't you see they are trying to catch your eye?" Albert turned round just in time to receive a gracious wave of the fan from Madame the Baroness; as for Mademoiselle Eugénie, she scarcely vouchsafed to waste the glances of her large black eyes even upon the business of the stage.

"I tell you what, my dear fellow," said Château-Renaud, "I cannot imagine what objection you can possibly have to Mademoiselle Danglars—that is, setting aside her want of ancestry and somewhat inferior rank, which,

by the way, I don't think you care very much about. She seems to me a very fine-looking girl."

"Handsome, certainly," replied Albert, "but not to my taste, which, I confess, inclines to a softer, gentler, and more feminine style than hers."

"Bless my heart!" exclaimed Château-Renaud, who, as a man thirty years old, assumed a paternal air towards Morcerf, "you young people are never satisfied. Why, what would you have more? Your parents have chosen you a bride who might serve as the living model of the 'Hunting Diana,' and yet you are not content."

"No, for that very resemblance affrights me. I should have liked something more in the manner of the Venus of Milo or Capua; but this chase-loving Diana continually surrounded by her nymphs gives me a sort of alarm, lest she should some day entail on me the fate of Actæon."

And indeed it required but one glance at Mademoiselle Danglars to discover the significance of Morcerf's remark. She was handsome, but, as Albert had said, with a beauty somewhat too pronounced. Her hair was raven black, but amid its natural waves might be discerned a certain resistance to the hand that sought to control it; her eyes, of the same color as her hair, were richly fringed and surmounted by well-arched brows, whose great defect, however, consisted in an almost habitual frown, while her whole physiognomy wore an expression of firmness and decision little in accordance with the gentler attributes of her sex; her nose was precisely what a sculptor would have given to a chiselled Juno; her mouth, which might have been found fault with as too large, displayed teeth of pearly whiteness, rendered still more conspicuous by the over-redness of her lips, beside which her naturally pale complexion seemed even more colorless. But that which completed the almost masculine look Morcerf found so

little to his taste was a dark mole of much larger dimensions than these freaks of nature generally are, placed just at the corner of her mouth ; and the effect tended to increase the expression of unbending resolution and self-dependence that formed the characteristics of her countenance. The rest of Mademoiselle Eugénie's person was in perfect keeping with the head just described ; she indeed reminded you of the "Hunting Diana," as Château-Renaud observed, but with something still more resolute and masculine in her beauty. As regarded her attainments, the only fault to be found with them was the same that a fastidious connoisseur might have found with her beauty,—that they were such as belonged to the other sex. She spoke two or three languages, was a good artist, wrote poetry, and composed music. To the latter art she professed to be entirely devoted, studying it with one of her school-friends, who, without fortune, had every disposition to become—as she was assured she might—an excellent singer. A celebrated composer was said to take an almost paternal interest in this young woman last mentioned, whom he stimulated to work diligently in the hope that she might find a fortune in her voice. The possibility that Mademoiselle Louise d'Armilly might sometime go upon the stage prevented Mademoiselle Danglars from appearing with her in public, although still receiving her at home. But though Louise had not in the house of the banker the independent position of a friend, her position was superior to that of the ordinary governess.

The curtain fell almost immediately after the entrance of Madame Danglars into her box ; the band quitted the orchestra for the accustomed interval allowed between the acts ; and the audience were left at liberty to promenade the salon or lobbies, or to pay and receive visits in their respective boxes. Morcerf and Château-Renaud were

among the first to avail themselves of this opportunity. For an instant the idea struck Madame Danglars that this eagerness on the part of the young viscount arose from his impatience to join her party ; and she whispered to her daughter that Albert was hurrying to pay his respects to them. The latter, however, shook her head, smiling. At the same moment, as if to show that her incredulity was well founded, Morcerf was seen in a box in the first circle ; it was the box of Comtesse G——.

“ Ah ! you have arrived, Monsieur,” cried the countess, extending her hand to him with all the warmth and cordiality of an old acquaintance ; “ it was really very good of you to recognize me so quickly, and still more so to bestow your first visit on me.”

“ Be assured,” replied Albert, “ that if I had been aware of your arrival in Paris, and had known your address, I should have paid my respects to you long ere this. Allow me to introduce my friend, Baron de Château-Renaud, one of the few gentlemen now to be found in France. I have just learned from him that you were at the races in the Champ de Mars yesterday.”

Château-Renaud bowed to the countess.

“ Ah ! you were at the races, Monsieur ? ” inquired the countess, eagerly.

“ I was, Madame.”

“ Well, then,” pursued Madame G——, with considerable animation, “ you can probably tell me to whom belonged the winner of the Jockey-Club stakes ? ”

“ I am sorry to say I cannot,” replied the baron ; “ I was just asking the same question of Albert.”

“ Are you very anxious to know, Madame the Countess ? ” asked Albert.

“ To know what ? ”

“ The owner of the winning horse ? ”

"Exceedingly; only imagine—but do you know, Monsieur the Viscount, who he is?"

"Madame, you were about to relate some story. You said 'only imagine.' "

"Well, then, listen! You must know I felt so interested for the splendid roan horse, with his elegant little rider so tastefully dressed in a pink satin jacket and cap, that I could not help praying for their success with as much earnestness as though the half of my fortune were at stake; and when I saw them outstrip all the others and come to the winning-post in such gallant style, I actually clapped my hands with joy. Imagine my surprise, when upon returning home I met on the staircase the jockey in the pink jacket! I concluded that by some singular chance the owner of the winning horse must live in the same hotel as myself; but, lo! as I entered my salon I beheld the gold cup awarded as a prize to the unknown horse and rider. Inside the cup was a small piece of paper, on which were written these words, 'From Lord Ruthven to Comtesse G——.'"

"Precisely; I was sure of it," said Morcerf.

"Sure of what?"

"That the owner of the horse was Lord Ruthven himself."

"What Lord Ruthven do you mean?"

"Why, our Lord Ruthven,—the Vampire of the Theatre Argentina!"

"Truly?" exclaimed the countess; "is he here, then?"

"To be sure; why not?"

"And you visit him?—meet him at your own house and elsewhere?"

"I assure you that he is my most intimate friend, and M. de Château-Renaud has also the honor of his acquaintance."

“But what makes you think it is he who took the prize?”

“Was not the winning horse entered by the name of ‘Vampa’?”

“What of that?”

“Why, do you not recollect the name of the celebrated bandit by whom I was made prisoner?”

“Ah! that is true.”

“And from whose hands the count extricated me in so wonderful a manner?”

“To be sure.”

“His name was Vampa. You see, then, that it is he.”

“But what could have been his motive for sending the cup to me?”

“In the first place, because I had spoken much of you to him, as you may believe; and in the second, because he delighted to see a countrywoman, and to see her take so lively an interest in his success.”

“I hope you never repeated to him all the foolish remarks we used to make about him?”

“I should not like to affirm upon oath that I have not. Besides, his presenting you the cup under the name of Lord Ruthven proves his knowledge of the comparison instituted between himself and that individual.”

“Oh, but that is dreadful! Why, the man must mortally hate me.”

“His action is hardly that of an enemy.”

“No; certainly not.”

“Well, then — ”

“And so he is in Paris?”

“He is.”

“And what effect does he produce?”

“Why,” said Albert, “he was talked of for a week. Then the coronation of the Queen of England took place,

and the theft of Mademoiselle Mars's diamonds ; and two such interesting events turned public attention into other channels."

" My dear fellow," said Château-Renaud, " it is clear that the count is your friend, and you speak of him accordingly. Do not believe what Albert is telling you, Madame the 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 among us was to present a pair of horses, worth thirty thousand livres, to Madame Danglars ; his second, the almost miraculous preservation of Madame de Villefort's life ; now it seems that he has carried off the prize awarded by the Jockey Club ! I therefore maintain, in spite of whatever Morcerf may advance, not only that the count is the object of universal interest at this present moment, but that he will be still more so a month hence if he continues to display those eccentricities which seem to be his ordinary characteristics."

" Perhaps you are right," said Morcerf ; " meanwhile, who has taken the Russian ambassador's box ? "

" Which box do you mean ? " asked the countess.

" The one between the pillars on the first tier ; it seems to have been entirely made over."

" So it does," said Château-Renaud. " Was any one there during the first act ? "

" Where ? "

" In that box."

" No," replied the countess ; " it was certainly empty during the first act." Then, returning to the subject of their previous conversation, she said, " And so you really believe it was your Count of Monte Cristo who gained the prize ? "

“I am sure of it.”

“And who afterwards sent the golden cup to me?”

“Undoubtedly.”

“But I do not know him,” said the countess; “I have a strong inclination to return it.”

“Do no such thing, I beg of you; he would only send you a second goblet, formed of a magnificent sapphire, or hollowed out of a gigantic ruby. It is his manner of acting, 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.

“If you will permit me to make a second visit in the next pause in the opera, I will do myself the honor of coming to inquire whether there is anything in which I can be useful to 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 gentlemen cannot plead ignorance.”

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 ambassador of Russia. A man of from thirty-five to forty years of age, dressed in deep black, had just entered, accompanied by a woman dressed after the Eastern style; the woman was young and surpassingly beautiful, while the rich magnificence of her attire drew all eyes upon her.

“By heavens!” said Albert, “it is Monte Cristo himself, with his Greek!”

The strangers were indeed no other than the count and Haydée. The sensation excited by the beauty and dazzling

appearance of the latter soon communicated itself to every part of the theatre ; the ladies leaned forward from the boxes to see the glitter of that cascade of diamonds. During the second act there was the continual buzzing sound which in a crowded assembly marks the occurrence of some striking event. No one thought of calling for silence. That woman, so young, so beautiful, so dazzling, was the most interesting spectacle that was presented. Upon this occasion an unmistakable sign from Madame Danglars intimated her desire to see Albert in her box as soon as the curtain should fall 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 proceeded to the baroness's box. Having bowed to the two ladies, he extended his hand to Debray. By the baroness he was most graciously welcomed, while Eugénie received him with her accustomed coldness.

" My dear fellow ! " said Debray, " you have come in the very nick of time to help a fellow-creature regularly beaten and at a standstill. 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 Cagliostro, by way of getting out of the scrape, I said ' Ask Morcerf ; he has the whole history of Monte Cristo at his fingers' ends ; ' whereupon the baroness made you a sign to come hither."

" 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 em-

ploy 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,—it does not concern me any longer.”

“I am very sure no nabob would have sent me a pair of horses worth thirty thousand livres, wearing on their heads four diamonds valued at five thousand livres each.”

“He seems to have a mania for diamonds,” said Morcerf, smiling; “and I verily believe that like Potemkin he keeps his pockets filled to strew them along the road as little 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 baron’s banking establishment?”

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

“And he has stated to M. Danglars his intention of staying only a year in Paris, during which time he proposes to spend six millions. He must be the Shah of Persia, travelling *incognito*.”

“Have you remarked the extreme beauty of that young woman by whom he is accompanied, M. Lucien?” inquired Eugénie.

“I really never met with a woman so ready to do justice to the charms of another as yourself.” Lucien raised his lorgnette to his eye. “Charming!” said he.

“Who is this young person, M. de Morcerf?” inquired Eugénie; “does anybody know?”

“Mademoiselle,” said Albert, replying to this direct appeal, “I know a little on that subject, as well as on most points relative to the singular person of whom we are now conversing. That young woman is a Greek.”

"So I should presume by her dress ; if therefore you know no more than that one self-evident fact, all the spectators in the theatre are as well-informed as yourself."

"I am extremely sorry you find me so ignorant a *cicerone*," replied Morcerf ; "but I am obliged to confess that I have nothing further to communicate, — yes, 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 sounds of a *guzla*, — sounds which certainly could have been made only by her."

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

"Indeed he does, and in a most noble 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 female 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 is it that constitutes a princess ? Diamonds, and she is covered with them."

"To me she seems overloaded," observed Eugénie.

“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 Eugénie, you must conceal your passion for the fine arts.”

“I admire all that is beautiful in art or nature,” returned the young lady.

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

“The count ?” repeated Eugénie, 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 in that very paleness lies the secret we want to find out. The Comtesse G —— insists upon it he is a vampire.”

“Then the Comtesse G —— has returned to Paris, has she ?” inquired the baroness.

“There she is, Mamma,” said Eugénie ; “almost opposite to us, with that profusion of beautiful light hair.”

“Yes, yes, there she is !” cried Madame Danglars ; “shall I tell you what you ought to do, Morcerf ?”

“Command me, Madame ; I am all attention.”

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

“What for ?” asked Eugénie.

“What for ? Why, to converse with him, of course ; if you have no curiosity to hear whether he expresses himself like other people, I can assure you I have. Have you really no desire to see him ?”

“None whatever,” replied Eugénie.

“Strange girl !” 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 sacrifice myself. Adieu ; I will go and see if there is any chance 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 princess. No, no, I cannot venture to enter his box ; but I hope that when he sees me leave you, he will come out of his box."

"It is possible ; go."

Morcerf bowed and went out. Just as he was passing the count's box, the door opened, and Monte Cristo came forth. After giving some directions to Ali, who stood in the lobby, the count observed Albert, and taking his arm walked onwards with him. Carefully closing the box-door, Ali placed himself before it, while a crowd of wondering spectators assembled round the Nubian.

"Upon my word," said Monte Cristo, "Paris is a strange city, and the Parisians a very singular people. One might suppose he was the only Nubian they had ever beheld. See them crowd around poor Ali, who does n't know what it means. I assure you that a Frenchman might show himself in public, either in Tunis, Constantinople, Bagdad, or Cairo, without drawing a circle of gazers around him."

"That shows that the people of the East 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 that the interest he excites arises from

the fact that he belongs to you, who are at this moment the most celebrated 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; you send to the race-course, under the name of Major Brack, horses of pure blood and jockeys 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 bye, is dying to see you in her box, or to have you seen there by others; secondly, I learned it from Beauchamp’s 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 Comte de Morcerf never visit the opera? I have been looking for him, but without success.”

“He will be here to-night.”

“In what part of the house?”

“In the baroness’s box, I believe.”

“That charming young woman with her is her daughter?”

“Yes.”

“Indeed! then I congratulate you.”

Morcerf smiled. “We will discuss that subject at some future time,” said he. “But what think you of the music?”

“What music?”

“That which you have just heard.”

“Oh, it is admirable, as the production of a human

composer, sung by a party of bipeds without feathers, as Diogenes styled mankind."

"Why, my dear count, it would seem that you can hear at pleasure the seven choirs of paradise."

"You are partly right; when I wish to listen to sounds so exquisitely attuned to melody as mortal ear never yet listened to, I go to sleep."

"Very well; you are wonderfully well situated for that. Sleep, my dear count, sleep; the opera was invented for no other end."

"No; in fact your orchestra is too noisy. To sleep after the manner I have mentioned, calm and silence are necessary; a certain preparation must also be called in aid."

"Ah! the famous hashish?"

"Precisely. Viscount, when you want to hear music come and take supper 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 Haydée's *guzla*; the poor exile frequently beguiles a weary hour in playing over 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 Comtesse G —— on the part of the vampire."

"And what message shall I convey to the baroness?"

"That, with her permission, I propose doing myself

the honor of paying my respects in the course of the evening.”

The third act had now commenced ; and during its progress the Comte de Morcerf, according to promise, made his appearance in the box of Madame Danglars. The Comte de Morcerf was not one of those persons whose aspect would create 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 smile passed over his lips. Haydée was entirely absorbed in the business of the stage ; like all unsophisticated natures, she delighted in whatever addressed itself to the eye or ear.

The third act passed off as usual. Mademoiselles Noblet, Julie, and Leroux, executed the customary pirouettes ; Robert duly challenged the Prince of Grenada ; and the royal parent 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 proceeded at once to that of Madame Danglars, who could scarcely restrain a cry of mingled pleasure and surprise. “Welcome, Monsieur the Count !” exclaimed she, as he entered. “I have been most anxious to see you, that I might repeat verbally those 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 the Count,

that the next day you saved the life of my dear friend, Madame de Villefort, which was put in peril by those very horses."

"This time, at least, I cannot accept your flattering acknowledgments. Ali, my Nubian slave, had the good fortune to render to Madame de Villefort that eminent service."

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

"No, Monsieur the Count," replied Monte Cristo, pressing with friendly warmth 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, I have already received them; and in fact I am embarrassed by your continued gratitude. Do me the honor, Madame the Baroness, to present me to Mademoiselle your daughter."

"Oh, you are no stranger,—at least not by name," replied Madame Danglars; "and the last two or three days we have talked of nothing else but yourself. Eugénie," continued the baroness, turning towards her daughter, "M. le Comte de Monte Cristo."

The count bowed, while Mademoiselle Danglars returned a slight inclination of the head. "You have a charming young person with you to-night, Monsieur the Count," said Eugénie. "Is she your daughter?"

"No, indeed," said Monte Cristo, astonished at the coolness and freedom of the question. "She is an unfortunate Greek, of whom I am the guardian."

"And what is her name?"

"Haydée," replied Monte Cristo.

"A Greek?" murmured Comte de Morcerf.

"Yes, indeed, Count," said Madame Danglars; "and tell me, did you ever see at the court of Ali Tebelin,

whom you so gloriously served, a more admirable costume than we have there before our eyes ? ”

“ Did I hear rightly, Monsieur the Count,” said Monte Cristo, “ that you served at Janina ? ”

“ I was inspector-general of the pacha’s troops,” replied Morcerf ; “ and I seek not to conceal that I owe my fortune, such as it is, to the liberality of the illustrious Albanian chief.”

“ But look ! pray look ! ” exclaimed Madame Danglars.

“ Where ? ” stammered Morcerf.

“ There, there ! ” said Monte Cristo, as, folding his arms around the count, he leaned with him over the front of the box, just as Haydée, whose eyes were occupied in examining the theatre in search of the count, perceived his pale features close to the countenance of Morcerf, whom he was holding in his arms. This sight produced on the astonished girl an effect similar to that of the fabulous head of Medusa. She bent forwards as though to assure herself of the reality of what she beheld, then uttering a faint cry, threw herself back in her seat. The sound that burst from the agitated Greek quickly reached the ear of the watchful Ali, who instantly opened the box-door to ascertain the cause.

“ Bless me ! ” exclaimed Eugénie, “ what has happened to your ward, Monsieur the Count ? She seems taken suddenly ill ! ”

“ Very probably ! ” answered the count. “ But do not be alarmed on her account ! Haydée’s nervous system is delicately organized, and she is peculiarly susceptible to the odors even of flowers ; 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 for such attacks.” So saying, he bowed to the baroness and her daughter,

exchanged a parting shake of the hand with Debray and the count, and quitted the box. Upon his return to Haydée, he found her extremely pale and much agitated. As soon as she saw him she seized his hand. Monte Cristo noticed that the hands of the young girl were moist and cold.

"With whom was my Lord conversing a few minutes since?" asked she, in a trembling voice.

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

"Ah, the scoundrel!" exclaimed Haydée; "it is he who sold my father to the Turks, and the fortune he boasts of was the price of his treachery! Did you not 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 hence, I beseech you! I feel as though it would kill me to remain longer near that dreadful man." So saying, Haydée arose, and wrapping herself in her burnoose 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 Comtesse 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 leaves when the fourth begins."

CHAPTER II.

THE RISE AND FALL OF THE STOCKS.

SOME days after this meeting, Albert de Morcerf visited the Count of Monte Cristo at his house in the Champs Élysées, which had already assumed that palace-like appearance which the count's 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, née Hermine de Servieux." Albert was accompanied by Lucien Debray, who, joining in his friend's conversation, added some passing compliments, the source of which the count's talent for finesse easily enabled him to guess. He was convinced that Lucien's visit to him was to be attributed 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 thirty thousand livres, 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 individual. But the count did not appear to suspect there could be the slightest connection between Lucien's visit and the baroness's curiosity.

"You are in constant communication, then, with the Baron Danglars?" inquired the count 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 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 room, examining the arms and the pictures.

"Ah!" said Monte Cristo, "I did not expect, after hearing what you said, 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, "is Mademoiselle Eugénie pretty, — for 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 round 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 fifty thousand livres 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."

"My mother's is the dissenting voice; she has a clear and penetrating judgment, and does not smile on the pro-

posed union. I cannot account for it, but she seems to entertain some prejudice against the Danglars."

"Ah!" said the count, in a somewhat forced tone, "that may be easily explained; Madame la 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, — that they postponed the rendezvous for two months. There is no hurry, you know. I am not yet twenty-one, and Eugénie is only seventeen years of age; but the two months expire next week. It must be done. My dear count, you cannot imagine how my mind is harassed. Ah! how happy you are in being free!"

"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

excellent 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 Dantes, 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 ?"

"No, no ! I am doing something of a very opposite nature to painting. I am engaged with arithmetic."

"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 Hayti stock ; from 206 they have risen to 409 in three days, and the prudent banker had purchased largely at 206. He must have made three hundred thousand livres."

"That is not his best stroke," said Morcerf ; "did he not gain a million in Spanish securities this last year ?"

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

'Danáro e santità,
Metà della metà.'

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

"But you were speaking of Hayti ?" said Monte Cristo.

"Ah, Hayti ! — that is quite another thing ! Hayti is the *écarté* of French stock-jobbing. They may like *la bouillotte*, delight in whist, be enraptured with *le boston*, and yet grow tired of all ; but they always come back to *écarté*, — that is the game *par excellence*. M. Danglars sold yesterday at 406, and pockets three hundred thousand livres. Had he but waited till to-day the stocks would

have fallen to 205, and instead of gaining three hundred thousand livres he would have lost twenty or twenty-five thousand."

"And why is this sudden fall from 409 to 205?" asked Monte Cristo. "I beg pardon, but 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 three hundred thousand livres 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 know 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 stock-brokers immediately stenograph your words. Cause her to lose one hun-

dred thousand livres suddenly, and that will teach her prudence."

"I do not understand," stammered Lucien.

"It is very clear, notwithstanding," replied the young man, with a *naïveté* totally free from all affectation; "announce to her some fine morning an unheard-of piece of intelligence,—some telegraphic despatch, of which you alone are in possession; for instance, that Henry IV. was seen yesterday at the house of Gabrielle. That will cause the funds to rise; she will lay her plans accordingly, and she will certainly lose when Beauchamp announces the following day in his journal, 'The report which has been circulated, stating the king to have been seen yesterday at Gabrielle's 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, Monsieur the Count; I accept your proposal." 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?"

"Monsieur the 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 to appear not to expect such a proceeding, and also to be beforehand with them, if you like it, I have thought of inviting Monsieur and Madame Danglars, and Monsieur and Madame de Villefort, to my country-house at Auteuil. If I were to invite you and the Comte and Comtesse de Morcerf to this dinner, it would give it the air of a matrimonial rendezvous, or at least Madame de Morcerf would look upon the affair in that light, especially if M. le 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, — and tell it to her as often as there is opportunity, — I desire to occupy a prominent place 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 to me. You say you desire my mother's good opinion ; I assure you it is already yours to a very unusual degree."

" Do you think so ?" inquired 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 consideration 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; Monsieur 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 seaside,—what day is fixed for your dinner?"

"Saturday."

"This is Tuesday,—well, to-morrow evening we leave, and the day after we shall be at Tréport. Really, Monsieur the Count, you are a charming person to set 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 leave Paris to-morrow. 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!"

"On the contrary, I have seen you, and invited you without any ceremony, when you instantly answered that it would be impossible for you to be among the number of my guests, as you were going to Tréport."

"Well, then, that is settled ; but you will come and call on my mother before to-morrow ?"

"Before to-morrow ? That will be a difficult matter to arrange ; besides, I should be in the way of all the preparations for departure."

"Very well ! do something better than that. 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 a height ?"

"You are to-day 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 will have an opportunity of observing her more closely. She is a remarkable woman, and I only regret that there does not exist another who resembles her, about twenty years younger ; in that case, I assure you, there would very soon be a Comtesse and Vicomtesse de Morcerf. As to my father, you will not see him ; he is officially engaged, and dines with Monsieur the Grand 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 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, Monsieur the 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 M. le Major Bartolomeo Cavalcanti and his son."

"You hear: Major Bartolomeo Cavalcanti,—a man who ranks among 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, a charming young man about your own age, Vis-

count, bearing the same title as yourself, and who is making his *entrée* into the Parisian world, aided by his father's 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 prove himself worthy of it, I will do what I can to advance his interests; you will assist me, will you not?"

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

"By no means. He is a worthy 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 this place. 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 has come to take a second view of Paris, which he has seen only 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 precious mentor," said Albert. "Good-by, then; 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 when I learned that he was in search of a supper, and prevailed upon him to accept a portion of mine. He is, I think, the son of General d'Épinay ?"

"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 !"

"Just as 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 of women as they talk of men ; it is unpardonable !" Albert rose.

"Are you going ?"

"Really, that is very good in you ! 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,—M. Baptiste 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. So if you part with M. Baptiste, give me the refusal of him."

"Agreed, Viscount."

"That is not all. Give my compliments to your illustrious visitor, 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 mother's side at least, and a baroness in right of her father, in that I will help you."

"Oh, oh! 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.

"M. 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, Monsieur the Count, 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, Monsieur the Count. I should be glad, however, to receive your Excellency's 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 know. Lucullus dines with Lucullus ; that is quite sufficient." Bertuccio bowed and left the room.

CHAPTER III.

MAJOR CAVALCANTI.

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 the invitation which he had received from Albert. Seven o'clock had just struck ; and M. Bertuccio, according to the command which had been given him, had two hours before left for Auteuil, when a *fiacre* stopped at the door of the hotel, and after depositing its occupant at the gate, immediately hurried away as if ashamed of its employment. The individual who alighted from the vehicle was about fifty-two years of age, dressed in one of those 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, buck-skin 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. Such was the picturesque costume of the person who rang at the gate and demanded if it was not No. 30 in the Avenue de Champs-Élysées that M. le Comte de Monte Cristo inhabited, and who, being answered by the porter in the affirmative, entered, closed the gate after him, and began to ascend the steps of the house.

The small and angular head of the individual in question, his white hair and thick gray mustache, caused him to be easily recognized by Baptiste, 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, "your Excellency expected me ?"

"Yes ; I had been notified that I should see you to-day at seven o'clock."

"Then you have received full information concerning my arrival ?"

"Decidedly."

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

"What precaution ?"

"That of informing you beforehand of my coming."

"Oh, no, it has not."

"But you are sure you are not mistaken ?"

"I am sure of it."

"It really was I whom your Excellency expected at seven o'clock 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 M. le 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 to-day 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 Abbé Busoni?"

"Exactly so," said the delighted major.

"And you have a letter?"

"Yes, there it is."

"Give it 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 abbé 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 gentleman 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 eyes 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. " Ah, ah ! " said he, " the letter was true then to the end ? "

" Did you doubt it, M. Bartolomeo ? "

" No, indeed ; certainly not. A good man, a man holding a religious office, as does the Abbé 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 two thousand livres to defray his travelling expenses, and credit on you for the further sum of forty-eight thousand, 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— Monsieur—" 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 Abbé Busoni and myself have a small account open between us. I do not remember if it is exactly forty-eight thousand livres 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 M. Cavalcanti?"

"I must explain to you," said the major, "that fully confiding in the signature of the Abbé 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 M. Cavalcanti."

"So that you will remit to me these forty-eight thousand livres?"

"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 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.

"Now," said the count, "will you take something,—a glass of port, sherry, or wine of Alicante?"

"Wine of Alicante, if you please; it is my favorite wine."

"I have some which is excellent. You will take a biscuit with it, will you not?"

"Yes, I will take a biscuit, as you are so obliging."

Monte Cristo rang; Baptistin appeared. The count advanced to meet him. "Well?" said he, in a low voice.

"The young man is here," said the *valet de chambre*, in the same tone.

"Into what room did you take him?"

"Into the blue drawing-room, according to your Excellency's orders."

"That's right; now bring the wine of Alicante and some biscuits."

Baptistin left the room.

"Really," said the major, "I am quite ashamed of the trouble I am giving you."

"Pray don't mention such a thing," said the count.

Baptistin re-entered with glasses, wine, and biscuits. The count filled one glass, but in the other he only poured a few drops of the ruby-colored liquid. The bottle was covered with spider's webs, and all the other signs which indicate the age of wine more truly than do wrinkles on the face of a man. The major made a wise choice; he took the full glass and a biscuit. The count told Baptistin to leave the plate within reach of his guest, who began by sipping the Alicante with an expression of great satisfaction, and then delicately steeped his biscuit in the wine.

"So, sir, you inhabited Lucca, did you? You were

rich, noble, held in great esteem,— had all that could render a man happy?"

"All," said the major, hastily swallowing his biscuit, "positively all."

"And yet there was one thing wanting in order to complete your happiness?"

"Only one thing," said the Italian.

"And that one thing your lost child!"

"Ah," said the major, taking a second biscuit, "that consummation of my happiness was indeed wanting." The worthy major raised his eyes to heaven and sighed.

"Let me hear, then," said the count, "who this deeply-regretted son was,— for I always understood you were a bachelor."

"That was the general opinion, sir," said the major; "and I—"

"Yes," replied the count, "and you confirmed the report. A youthful indiscretion, I suppose, which you were anxious to conceal from the world at large?"

The major recovered himself, and resumed his usual calm manner, at the same time casting his eyes down, either to give himself time to compose his countenance, or to assist his imagination, all the while giving an under-look at the count, the protracted smile on whose lips still announced the same polite curiosity.

"Yes," said the major; "I did wish this fault to be hidden from every eye."

"Not on your own account, surely," replied Monte Cristo; "for a man is above all these things!"

"Oh, no, certainly not on my own account," said the major, with a smile, and a shake of the head.

"But for the sake of the mother?" said the count.

"Yes, for the mother's sake,— his poor mother!" cried the major, taking a third biscuit.

"Take some more wine, my dear Cavalcanti," said the count, pouring out for him a second glass of Alicante ; "your emotion has quite overcome you."

"His poor mother!" murmured the major, trying to ascertain whether the will was powerful enough to act on the lachrymal gland, so as to moisten the corner of his eye with a false tear.

"She belonged to one of the first families in Italy, I think, did she not?"

"She was of a noble family of Fiesole, Monsieur the Count."

"And her name was — "

"Do you desire to know her name?"

"Oh," said Monte Cristo, "it would be quite superfluous for you to tell me, for I already know it."

"Monsieur the Count knows everything," said the Italian, bowing.

"Oliva Corsinari, was it not?"

"Oliva Corsinari!"

"A marchioness?"

"A marchioness!"

"And you married her at last, notwithstanding the opposition of her family?"

"Yes, I did so."

"And you have doubtless brought all your papers with you?" said Monte Cristo.

"What papers?"

"The certificate of your marriage with Oliva Corsinari, and the register of your child's birth."

"The register of my child's birth?"

"The register of the birth of Andrea Cavalcanti,— of your son; is not his name Andrea?"

"I believe so," said the major.

"What! you believe so?"

"I dare not positively assert it, as he has been lost for so long a time."

"That is true," said Monte Cristo. "Then you have all the documents with you?"

"Monsieur the Count, I regret to say that not knowing it was necessary to come provided with these papers, I neglected to bring them with me."

"That is unfortunate," returned Monte Cristo.

"Were they, then, so necessary?"

"They were indispensable."

The major passed his hand across his brow. "Ah, *per Bacco*, indispensable!"

"Certainly they were; if any one here should suggest some doubt as to the validity of your marriage or the legitimacy of your child!"

"True," said the major; "there might be doubts."

"In that case your son would be very unpleasantly situated."

"It would be fatal to his interests."

"It might cause him to fail in some desirable matrimonial speculation."

"*O peccato!*"

"You must know that in France they are very particular on these points; it is not sufficient, as in Italy, to go to the priest and say, 'We love each other, and want you to marry us.' Marriage is a civil affair in France, and in order to marry in an orthodox manner you must have papers which undeniably establish your identity."

"That is the misfortune! I have not these necessary papers."

"Fortunately, I have them," said Monte Cristo.

"You?"

"Yes."

"You have them?"

"I have them."

"Ah, indeed!" said the major, who seeing the object of his journey frustrated by the absence of the papers, feared also that his forgetfulness might give rise to some difficulty concerning the forty-eight thousand livres,— "ah, indeed, that is a fortunate circumstance; yes, that really is lucky, for it never occurred to me to bring them."

"I do not at all wonder at it. One cannot think of everything; but happily the Abbé Busoni thought for you."

"He is an excellent person!"

"He is extremely prudent and thoughtful."

"He is an admirable man," said the major; "and he sent them to you?"

"Here they are."

The major clasped his hands in token of admiration.

"You married Oliva Corsinari in the church of San Paolo del Monte Cattini; here is the priest's certificate."

"Yes, indeed; there it is," said the Italian, looking on with astonishment.

"And here is Andrea Cavalcanti's baptismal register, given by the curé of Saravezza."

"All quite correct."

"Take these documents, then; they do not concern me. You will give them to your son, who will of course take great care of them."

"I should think so, indeed! If he were to lose them—"

"Well, and if he were to lose them?" said Monte Cristo.

"In that case," replied the major, "it would be necessary to write for duplicates; and it would be some time before they could be obtained."

"It would be a difficult matter to arrange," said Monte Cristo.

"Almost an impossibility," replied the major.

"I am very glad to see that you understand the value of these papers."

"I regard them as invaluable."

"Now," said Monte Cristo, "as to the mother of the young man — "

"As to the mother of the young man — " repeated the Italian, with anxiety.

"As regards the Marquise Corsinari — "

"Really," said the major, before whom difficulties seemed to spring up, "will she be wanted in any way ?"

"No, sir," replied Monte Cristo ; "besides, has she not — "

"Yes, yes," said the major ; "she has — "

"Paid the last debt of nature ?"

"Alas ! yes," returned the Italian.

"I knew that," said Monte Cristo ; "she has been dead these ten years."

"And I am still mourning her loss !" exclaimed the major, drawing from his pocket a checked handkerchief, and alternately wiping first the right and then the left eye.

"What would you have ?" said Monte Cristo ; "we are all mortal. Now you understand, my dear M. Cavalcanti, that it is useless for you to tell people in France that you have been separated from your son for fifteen years. Stories of gypsies who steal children are not at all in vogue in this part of the world, and would not be believed. You sent him for his education to a college in one of the provinces, and now you wish him to complete his education in the Parisian world. That is the reason which has induced you to leave Via Reggio, where you have lived since the death of your wife. That will be sufficient."

" You think so ? "

" Certainly."

" Very well, then."

" If they should hear of the separation — "

" Ah, yes ; what could I say ? "

" That an unfaithful tutor, bought over by the enemies of your family — "

" By the Corsinari ? "

" Precisely. Had stolen away this child, in order that your name might become extinct."

" That will do well, since he is an only son."

" Well, now that all is arranged ; now that these newly-awakened remembrances cannot be easily forgotten, — you have doubtless already guessed that I was preparing a surprise for you ? "

" An agreeable one ? " asked the Italian.

" Ah, I see the eye of a father is no more to be deceived than his heart."

" Hum ! " said the major.

" Some one has told you the secret ; or perhaps you guessed that he was here."

" That who was here ? "

" Your child — your son — your Andrea ! "

" I did guess it," replied the major, with the greatest *sang-froid* possible. " Then he is here ? "

" He is," said Monte Cristo ; " when the *valet de chambre* came in just now he told me of his arrival."

" Ah ! very well ! very well ! " said the major, clutching the buttons of his coat at each exclamation which he made.

" My dear sir," said Monte Cristo, " I understand all your emotion ; you must have time to recover yourself. I will in the mean time go and prepare the young man for this much-desired interview, for I presume that he is not less impatient for it than yourself."

"I should imagine so," said Cavalcanti.

"Well, in a quarter of an hour he shall be with you."

"You will bring him, then? You carry your goodness so far as even to present him to me yourself?"

"No; I do not wish to come between a father and son. Your interview will be private. But do not be uneasy; even if the powerful voice of nature should be silent, you cannot well mistake him. He will enter by this door. He is a fine young man of fair complexion,—a little too fair, perhaps,—and pleasing manners; but you will see and judge for yourself."

"By the way," said the major, "you know I have only the two thousand livres which the Abbé Busoni sent me; this sum I have expended on travelling expenses, and—"

"And you want money; that is a matter of course, my dear M. Cavalcanti. Well, here are eight thousand livres on account."

The major's eyes sparkled brilliantly.

"It is forty thousand livres which I now owe you," said Monte Cristo.

"Does your Excellency wish for a receipt?" said the major, at the same time slipping the money into the inner pocket of his coat.

"For what?" said the count.

"I thought you might want it to show the Abbé Busoni."

"Well, when you receive the remaining forty thousand you shall give me a receipt in full. Between honest men such precautions are unnecessary."

"Ah! yes, that is so," said the major; "between honest men."

"One word more," said Monte Cristo.

"Say on."

" You will permit me to make a suggestion ? "

" Certainly ; I request it."

" Then I should advise you to leave off wearing that style of dress."

" Indeed ! " said the major, regarding himself with an air of satisfaction.

" Yes. It may be worn at *Via* Reggio ; but that costume, however elegant in itself, has long been out of fashion in Paris."

" That 's unfortunate."

" Oh, if you really are attached to your old mode of dress, you can easily resume it when you leave Paris."

" But what shall I wear ? "

" What you have in your trunks."

" In my trunks ? I have but one portmanteau."

" I dare say you have nothing else with you. What is the use of boring one's self with so many things ? Besides, an old soldier always likes to march with as little baggage as possible."

" That is just why — "

" But you are a man of foresight and prudence, therefore you sent your luggage on before you. It has arrived at the Hôtel des Princes, Rue Richelieu. It is there you are to take up your quarters."

" Then in these trunks — "

" I presume you have given orders to your *valet de chambre* to put in all you are likely to need, — your plain clothes and your uniform. On grand occasions you must wear your uniform ; that will look very well. Do not forget your crosses. They still laugh at them in France, and yet always wear them, for all that."

" Very well ! very well ! " said the major, who passed from rapture to rapture.

" Now," said Monte Cristo, " that you have fortified

yourself against all painful excitement, prepare yourself, my dear M. Cavalcanti, to meet your lost Andrea."

Saying which Monte Cristo bowed and disappeared behind the tapestry, leaving the major in an ecstasy of delight.

CHAPTER IV.

ANDREA CAVALCANTI.

THE Count of Monte Cristo entered the adjoining room, which Baptistin had designated as the blue drawing-room, and found there a young man of graceful demeanor and elegant appearance, who had arrived in a *fiacre* about half an hour previously. Baptistin had not found any difficulty in recognizing the individual who presented himself at the door for admittance. He was certainly the tall young man with light hair, red beard, black eyes, and brilliant complexion, whom his master had so particularly described to him. When the count entered the room, the young man was carelessly stretched on a sofa, tapping his boot with the gold-headed cane which he held in his hand. On perceiving the count he rose quickly. "The Count of Monte Cristo, I believe ?" said he.

" Yes, Monsieur ; and I think I have the honor of addressing M. le Vicomte Andrea Cavalcanti ?"

" Vicomte Andrea Cavalcanti," repeated the young man, accompanying his words with a bow.

" You are charged with a letter of introduction addressed to me, are you not ?" said the count.

" I did not mention that, because the signature seemed to me so strange."

" ' Sinbad the Sailor,' is it not ?"

" Exactly so. Now, as I have never known any Sinbad, with the exception of the one celebrated in the ' Thousand and One Nights ' — "

" Well ! it is one of his descendants, and a great friend

of mine. He is a very rich Englishman, eccentric almost to insanity ; and his real name is Lord Wilmore."

" Ah, indeed ! then that explains everything," said Andrea ; " that is extraordinary. He is, then, the same Englishman whom I met — at — yes, very well ! Monsieur the Count, I am at your service."

" If what you say be true," replied the count, smiling, " perhaps you will be kind enough to give me some account of yourself and your family ? "

" Certainly, I will do so," said the young man, with a readiness which proved the soundness of his memory. " I am, as you have said, the Vicomte Andrea Cavalcanti, son of Major Bartolomeo Cavalcanti, — a descendant of the Cavalcanti whose names are inscribed in the Golden Book at Florence. Our family, although still rich (for my father's income amounts to half a million), has experienced many misfortunes, and I myself was at the age of five years taken away by the treachery of my tutor, so that for fifteen years I have not seen the author of my existence. Since I have arrived at years of discretion and become my own master, I have been constantly seeking him, but all in vain. At length I received this letter from your friend, which states that my father is in Paris, and authorizes me to address myself to you for information respecting him."

" Really, all you have related to me is exceedingly interesting," said Monte Cristo, observing the young man with a gloomy satisfaction ; " and you have done well to conform in everything to the wishes of my friend Sinbad, for your father is indeed here and is seeking you."

The count, from the moment of his first entering the drawing-room, had not once lost sight of the expression of the young man's countenance. He had admired the assurance of his look and the firmness of his voice ; but at

these words, so natural in themselves, "Your father is indeed here and is seeking you," young Andrea started, and exclaimed, "My father! is my father here?"

"Most undoubtedly," replied Monte Cristo; "your father, the Major Bartolomeo Cavalcanti."

The expression of terror which for the moment had over-spread the features of the young man disappeared, almost immediately. "Ah, yes! that is the name, certainly," he said; "Major Bartolomeo Cavalcanti. And you really mean to say, Monsieur the Count, that my dear father is here?"

"Yes, Monsieur; and I can even add that I have only just left his company. The history which he related to me of his lost son touched me to the quick; indeed, his griefs, hopes, and fears on that subject might furnish material for a most touching and pathetic poem. At length he one day received a letter, stating that the parties who had deprived him of his son now offered to restore him, or at least to give notice where he might be found, on condition of receiving a large sum of money by way of ransom. Your father did not hesitate an instant, and the sum was sent to the frontier of Piedmont, with a passport signed for Italy. You were in the south of France, I think?"

"Yes," replied Andrea, with an embarrassed air, "I was in the south of France."

"A carriage was to await you at Nice?"

"Precisely so; and it conveyed me from Nice to Genoa, from Genoa to Turin, from Turin to Chambéry, from Chambéry to Pont de Beauvoisin, and from Pont de Beauvoisin to Paris."

"Indeed! then your father ought to have met with you on the road, for it is exactly the same route which he himself took; and that is how we have been able to trace your journey to this place."

"But," said Andrea, "if my father had met me, I doubt if he would have recognized me; I must be somewhat altered since he last saw me."

"Oh! the voice of nature," said Monte Cristo.

"True," said the young man, "I had not thought of the voice of nature."

"Now," replied Monte Cristo, "there is only one source of uneasiness left in your father's mind, which is this: he is anxious to know how you have been employed during your long absence from him; how you have been treated by your persecutors; and if they have conducted themselves towards you with all the deference due to your rank. Finally, he is anxious to see if you have been fortunate enough to escape the bad moral influence to which you have been exposed, and which is infinitely more to be dreaded than any physical suffering; he wishes to discover if the fine abilities with which nature had endowed you have been weakened by want of culture; and in short, whether you consider yourself capable of resuming and retaining in the world the high position to which your rank entitles you."

"Monsieur," stammered the young man, quite astounded, "I hope no false report—"

"As for myself, I first heard you spoken of by my friend Wilmore the philanthropist. I believe he found you in some unpleasant position, but do not know of what nature, for I did not ask; I am not inquisitive. Your misfortunes engaged his sympathies, so that you must have been interesting. He told me that he was anxious to restore you to the position which you had lost, and that he would seek your father until he found him. He did seek, and has found him apparently, since he is here now; and finally my friend apprised me of your coming, and gave me a few other instructions relative to your future for-

tune. I am quite aware that my friend Wilmore is an original, but he is sincere, and as rich as a gold mine ; consequently, he may indulge his eccentricities without any fear of their ruining him, and I have promised to adhere to his instructions. Now, sir, pray do not be offended at the question I am about to put to you, as it comes in the way of my duty as your patron. I would wish to know if the misfortunes which have happened to you — misfortunes entirely beyond your control, and which in no degree diminish my regard for you — I would wish to know if they have not in some measure contributed to render you a stranger to the world in which your fortune and your name entitle you to make a conspicuous figure ? ”

“ Monsieur,” returned the young man, recovering his assurance as the count proceeded, “ make your mind easy on this score. Those who took me from my father, and who always intended sooner or later to sell me again to him, as they have now done, calculated that in order to make the most of their bargain it would be politic to leave me in possession of all my personal and hereditary worth, and even to increase the value if possible. I have therefore received a very good education, and have been treated by these kidnappers very much as the slaves were treated in Asia Minor, whose masters made them grammarians, doctors, and philosophers, in order that they might fetch a higher price in the Roman market.” Monte Cristo smiled with satisfaction. It appeared as if he had not expected so much from M. Andrea Cavalcanti. “ Besides,” continued the young man, “ if there did appear some defect in education, or offence against the established forms of etiquette, I suppose they would be excused, in consideration of the misfortunes which accompanied my birth and followed me through my youth.”

"Well," said Monte Cristo, in an indifferent tone, "you will do as you please, Viscount, for you are the master of your own actions, and are the person most concerned in the matter; but if I were you I would not divulge a word of these adventures. Your history is quite a romance; and the world, which delights in romances contained between two covers of yellow paper, strangely mistrusts those which are bound in living parchment, even though they be gilded like yourself. This is the kind of difficulty which I wished to represent to you, Monsieur the Viscount. You would hardly have recited to any one your touching history before it would go forth to the world, and be deemed unlikely and unnatural. You would be no longer a lost child found, but you would be looked upon as an upstart who had sprung up like a mushroom in the night. You might excite a little curiosity, but it is not every one who likes to be made the centre of observation and the subject of unpleasant remark."

"I agree with you, Monsieur the Count," said the young man, turning pale in spite of himself under the scrutinizing look of Monte Cristo; "such consequences would be extremely unpleasant."

"Nevertheless, you must not exaggerate the evil," said Monte Cristo, "or by endeavoring to avoid one fault you will fall into another. You must resolve upon one simple and single line of conduct; and for a man of your intelligence this plan is as easy as it is necessary. You must form honorable friendships, and by that means counteract the prejudice which may attach to the obscurity of your former life." Andrea visibly changed countenance. "I would offer myself as your surety and friendly adviser," said Monte Cristo, "did I not possess a moral distrust of my best friends, and a sort of inclination to lead

others to doubt them too ; therefore, in departing from this rule, I should (as the actors say) be playing a part quite out of my line, and should therefore run the risk of being hissed, which would be an act of folly."

" However, Monsieur the Count," said Andrea, " in consideration of Lord Wilmore, by whom I was recommended to you — "

" Yes, certainly," interrupted Monte Cristo ; " but Lord Wilmore did not omit to inform me, my dear M. Andrea, that the season of your youth was rather a stormy one. Ah ! " said the count, watching Andrea's countenance, " I do not demand any confession from you ; besides, it was to prevent your needing any one that your father was sent for from Lucca. You shall soon see him. He is a little stiff and pompous in his manner, and he is disfigured by his uniform ; but when it becomes known that he is in the Austrian service, all that will be pardoned. We are not generally very severe with the Austrians. In short, you will find your father a very presentable person, I assure you."

" Ah, sir, you have given me confidence ; it is so long since we were separated that I have not the least remembrance of him."

" And besides, you know that in the eyes of the world a large fortune covers all defects."

" My father, then, is really rich, Monsieur ? "

" He is a millionaire, — his income is five hundred thousand livres."

" Then," said the young man, with anxiety, " I shall be sure to be placed in an agreeable position."

" One of the most agreeable possible, my dear monsieur ; he will allow you an income of fifty thousand livres per annum during the whole time of your stay in Paris."

" In that case I shall always remain here."

" You cannot control circumstances, my dear monsieur ; man proposes, and God disposes."

Andrea sighed. " But," said he, " so long as I do remain in Paris, and no circumstance compels me to go away, do you mean to tell me that I may rely on receiving the sum you just now mentioned to me ? "

" You may."

" Shall I receive it from my father ? " asked Andrea, with some uneasiness.

" Yes, you will receive it from your father personally ; but Lord Wilmore will be the security for the money. He has, at the request of your father, opened an account of five thousand livres a month at M. Danglars', which is one of the safest banks in Paris."

" And does my father mean to remain long in Paris ? " asked Andrea.

" Only a few days," replied Monte Cristo. " His service does not allow him to absent himself more than two or three weeks at a time."

" Ah, my dear father ! " exclaimed Andrea, evidently charmed with the idea of his speedy departure.

" Therefore," said Monte Cristo, feigning to mistake his meaning, — " therefore I will not for another instant retard the pleasure of your meeting. Are you prepared to embrace your worthy father ? "

" I hope you do not doubt it."

" Go, then, into the drawing-room, my young friend, where you will find your father awaiting you."

Andrea made a low bow to the count, and entered the adjoining room. Monte Cristo watched him till he disappeared, and then touched a spring made to look like a picture, which in sliding partially from the frame discovered to view a small interstice, which was so cleverly contrived that it revealed all that was passing in the drawing-room

now occupied by Cavalcanti and Andrea. The young man closed the door behind him, and advanced towards the major, who had risen when he heard steps approaching him. "Ah! my dear father!" said Andrea, in a loud voice, in order that the count might hear him in the next room, "is it really you?"

"How do you do, my dear son?" said the major, gravely.

"After so many years of painful separation," said Andrea, in the same tone of voice, and glancing towards the door, "what a happiness it is to meet again!"

"Indeed it is, after so long a separation."

"Will you not embrace me, sir?" said Andrea.

"If you wish it, my son," said the major; and the two men embraced each other after the fashion of actors on the stage; that is to say, each rested his head on the other's shoulder.

"Then we are once more reunited?" said Andrea.

"Once more!" replied the major.

"Never more to be separated!"

"Why as to that, I think, my dear son, you must be by this time so accustomed to France as to look upon it almost as your own country."

"The fact is," said the young man, "that I should be exceedingly grieved to leave Paris."

"As for me, you must know I cannot possibly live out of Lucca; therefore I shall return to Italy as soon as I can."

"But before you leave France, my dear father, I hope you will put me in possession of the documents which will be necessary to prove my descent."

"Certainly, I am come expressly on that account; it has cost me so much trouble to find you — so that I might give them to you — that I have no wish to begin that search again; it would occupy all the few remaining years of my life."

"Where are these papers, then?"

"Here they are."

Andrea seized the certificate of his father's marriage and that of his own baptism; and after having opened them with all the eagerness which might be expected under the circumstances, he read them with a facility which proved that he was accustomed to similar documents, and with an expression which plainly denoted an unusual interest in the contents. When he had perused the documents, an indefinable expression of pleasure lighted up his countenance; and looking at the major with a most peculiar smile, he said in very excellent Tuscan, "Then there are no longer galleys in Italy?"

The major drew himself up to his full height. "Why? What do you mean by that question?"

"Since documents like these can be made with impunity. In France, my very dear father, for half as much as that they would send you to breathe the air of Toulon for five years."

"Will you be good enough to explain your meaning?" said the major, endeavoring to assume a majestic air.

"My dear M. Cavalcanti," said Andrea, taking the major by the arm in a confidential manner, "how much are you paid for being my father?" The major was about to speak, when Andrea continued in a low voice, "Nonsense! I am going to set you an example of confidence; they give me fifty thousand livres a year to be your son. Consequently, you can understand I shall never be disposed to deny that you are my father." The major looked anxiously around him. "Make yourself easy; we are quite alone," said Andrea. "Besides, we are conversing in Italian."

"Well, then," replied the major, "they paid me fifty thousand livres down."

"M. Cavalcanti," said Andrea, "do you believe in fairy tales?"

"I used not to do so; but I really feel now almost obliged to have faith in them."

"You have, then, had some proofs?"

The major drew from his pocket a handful of gold.
"Palpable," said he, "as you perceive."

"You think, then, that I may rely on the count's promises?"

"Certainly I do."

"You are sure he will keep his word with me?"

"To the letter; but at the same time, remember we must continue to play our respective parts. I as a tender father —"

"And I as a dutiful son, as they choose that I shall be descended from you."

"Whom do you mean by they?"

"*Ma foi!* I can hardly tell, but I was alluding to those who wrote the letter; you received one, did you not?"

"Yes."

"From whom?"

"From a certain Abbé Busoni."

"Have you any knowledge of him?"

"No, I have never seen him."

"What did he say in the letter?"

"You will promise not to betray me?"

"Rest assured of that; you well know that our interests are the same."

"Then read for yourself;" and the major gave a letter into the young man's hand. Andrea read in a low voice:—

You are poor; a miserable old age awaits you. Would you like to become rich, or at least independent? Set out immedi-

ately for Paris, and demand of the Count of Monte Cristo, Avenue des Champs Élysées, No. 30, the son whom you had by the Marquise Corsinari, and who was taken from you at five years of age. This son is named Andrea Cavalcanti. In order that you may not doubt the kind intention of the writer of this letter, you will find enclosed an order for two thousand livres, payable in Florence, at the house of M. Gozzi ; also a letter of introduction to M. le Comte de Monte Cristo, on whom I give you a draft for forty-eight thousand livres. Remember to go to the count May 26, at seven o'clock in the evening.

ABBÉ BUSONI.

“It is the same.”

“What do you mean ?” said the major.

“I mean that I received a letter almost to the same effect.”

“You ?”

“Yes.”

“From the Abbé Busoni ?”

“No.”

“From whom, then ?”

“From an Englishman, called Lord Wilmore, who takes the name of Sinbad the Sailor.”

“And of whom you have no more knowledge than I of the Abbé Busoni.”

“You are mistaken ; there I am in advance of you.”

“You have seen him, then ?”

“Yes, once.”

“Where ?”

“Ah ! that is just what I cannot tell you ; if I did I should make you as wise as myself, which it is not my intention to do.”

“And what did the letter contain ?”

“Read it.”

You are poor, and your future prospects are dark and gloomy. Do you wish for a name ; should you like to be rich, and your own master ?

"*Ma foi !*" said the young man ; "was it possible there could be two answers to such a question ?"

Take the post-chaise which you will find waiting at the Porte de Génès, as you enter Nice ; pass through Turin, Chambéry, and Pont de Beauvoisin. Go to the Count of Monte Cristo, Avenue des Champs Élysées, May 26, at seven o'clock in the evening, and demand of him your father. You are the son of the Marquis Cavalcanti and the Marquise Oliva Corsinari. The marquis will give you some papers which will certify this fact, and authorize you to appear under that name in the Parisian world. As to your rank, an annual income of fifty thousand livres will enable you to support it admirably. I enclose a draft for five thousand livres on M. Ferrea, banker at Nice, and also a letter of introduction to the Count of Monte Cristo, whom I have directed to supply all your wants.

SINBAD THE SAILOR.

"Humph !" said the major ; "very good ! You have seen the count, you say ?"

"I have only just left him."

"And has he conformed to all which the letter specified ?"

"He has."

"Do you understand it ?"

"Not in the least."

"There is a dupe somewhere."

"At all events, it is neither you nor I."

"Certainly not."

"Well, then — "

"It is none of our business, you think ?"

"Precisely ; I was about to say so. Let us play the game to the end, and go it blind."

"Agreed; you will see that I shall properly sustain my part."

"I have not doubted it for a moment, my dear father."

Monte Cristo chose this moment for re-entering the drawing-room. On hearing the sound of his footsteps, the two men threw themselves in each other's arms; the count found them thus embracing.

"Well, Marquis," said Monte Cristo, "you appear to be in no way disappointed in the son whom your good fortune has restored to you."

"Ah, Monsieur the Count, I am overwhelmed with delight."

"And what are your feelings?" said Monte Cristo, turning to the young man.

"As for me, my heart is overflowing with happiness."

"Happy father! happy son!" said the count.

"There is only one thing which grieves me," observed the major, "and that is the necessity for my leaving Paris so soon."

"Ah! my dear M. Cavalcanti," said Monte Cristo, "I trust you will not leave before I have had the honor of presenting you to some of my friends."

"I am at your service, Monsieur," replied the major.

"Now, Monsieur," said Monte Cristo, addressing Andrea, "make your confession."

"To whom?"

"Why, to your father; tell him something of the state of your finances."

"Ah, the devil!" said Andrea, "you have touched upon a tender chord."

"Do you hear what he says, Major?"

"Certainly I do."

"But do you understand?"

"I do."

"Your son says he requires money."

"Well! what would you have me do?" said the major.

"You should furnish him with some, of course," replied Monte Cristo.

"I?"

"Yes, you!" said the count, at the same time advancing towards Andrea, and slipping a packet of bank-notes into the young man's hand.

"What is this?"

"It is from your father."

"From my father?"

"Yes; did you not tell him just now that you wanted money? Well, he deputes me to give you this."

"Am I to consider this as part of my income on account?"

"No; it is towards the expenses of your settling in Paris."

"Ah! how good my dear father is!"

"Silence!" said Monte Cristo; "he does not wish you to know that it comes from him."

"I fully appreciate his delicacy," said Andrea, cramming the notes hastily into his pocket.

"And now, gentlemen, I wish you good-night," said Monte Cristo.

"And when shall we have the honor of seeing you again, Monsieur the Count?" asked Cavalcanti.

"Ah, yes!" said Andrea, "when may we hope for that pleasure?"

"On Saturday, if you will — yes — let me see — Saturday. I am to dine at my country-house, at Auteuil, on that day, Rue la Fontaine, No. 28. Several persons are invited, and among others M. Danglars, your banker. I will introduce you to him; it will be necessary that

he should know you both in order to pay you your money."

"Full dress?" said the major, half-aloud.

"Oh, yes, certainly!" said the count; "uniform, cross, small-clothes."

"And how shall I be dressed?" demanded Andrea.

"Oh, very simply; black trousers, polished boots, white waistcoat, either a black or blue coat, and a long cravat. Go to Blin or Veronique for your dress. Baptstin will tell you where they live, if you do not know where to find them. The less pretension there is in your dress the better will be the effect, as you are a rich man. If you mean to buy any horses, get them of Devedeux; and if you purchase a phaeton, go to Baptiste for it."

"At what hour shall we come?" asked the young man.

"About half-past six."

"We will be with you at that time," said the major.

The two Cavalcanti bowed to the count, and left the house. Monte Cristo went to the window, and saw them crossing the street, arm-in-arm. "There go two miscreants!" said he. "It is a pity they are not really related!" Then, after an instant of gloomy reflection, "Come, I will go to see the Morrels!" said he; "I think that disgust is even more sickening than hatred."

CHAPTER V.

THE TRYSTING-PLACE.

OUR readers must now allow us to transport them again to the enclosure surrounding M. de Villefort's house, and behind the gate, half-screened from view by the large chestnut-trees, we shall find some persons of our acquaintance. This time Maximilian was the first to arrive. He was intently watching for a shadow to appear among the trees, and awaiting with anxiety the sound of a light step on the gravel walk. At length the long-desired sound was heard, and instead of one figure, as he had expected, he perceived that two were approaching him. The delay of Valentine had been occasioned by a visit from Madame Danglars and Eugénie, which had been prolonged beyond the time at which she was expected. Then, that she might not fail in her promise to Maximilian, she proposed to Mademoiselle Danglars that they should take a walk in the garden, being anxious to show that the delay, which was doubtless a cause of vexation to him, was not occasioned by any neglect on her part. The young man, with the intuitive perception of a lover, quickly understood the circumstances in which she was involuntarily placed ; and he was comforted. Besides, although she avoided coming within speaking distance, Valentine arranged so that Maximilian could see her pass and repass ; and each time she did so, she managed, unperceived by her companion, to cast an expressive look at the young man, which seemed to say, " Have patience ! You see it

is not my fault." And Maximilian was patient, and employed himself in mentally contrasting the two girls,— one fair, with soft, languishing eyes, a figure gracefully bending like a weeping willow; the other a brunette, with a fierce and haughty expression, and as upright as a poplar. It is unnecessary to state that in the eyes of the young man, Valentine did not suffer by the contrast. At the end of about half an hour the ladies retired, and Maximilian understood that Mademoiselle Danglars's visit had at last come to a conclusion. In a few minutes Valentine re-entered the garden alone. For fear that any one should be observing her return, she walked slowly; and instead of immediately directing her steps towards the gate, she seated herself on a bank, and carefully looked around, to convince herself that she was not watched. Presently she rose and proceeded quickly to the gate.

"Good-evening, Valentine," said a voice.

"Good-evening, Maximilian; I have kept you waiting, but you saw the cause of my delay."

"Yes, I recognized Mademoiselle Danglars. I was not aware that you were so intimate with her."

"Who told you we were intimate, Maximilian?"

"No one, but you appeared to be so; from the manner in which you walked and talked together one would have thought you were two school-girls telling your secrets to each other."

"We were having a confidential conversation," returned Valentine. "She was owning to me her repugnance to the marriage with M. de Morcerf; and I on the other hand was confessing to her how wretched it made me to think of marrying M. d'Épinay."

"Dear Valentine!"

"That will account to you for the unreserved manner which you observed between me and Eugénie; it was

because in speaking of the man whom I cannot love, I thought of the man I love."

"Ah, how good you are in every way, Valentine! You possess a quality which can never belong to Mademoiselle Danglars! It is that indefinable charm which is to a woman what perfume is to the flower and flavor to the fruit; for the beauty of either is not the only quality we seek."

"It is your love which makes you look upon everything in that light."

"No, Valentine, I assure you. I was observing you both when you were walking in the garden, and on my honor, without at all wishing to depreciate the beauty of Mademoiselle Danglars, I cannot understand how any man can really love her."

"It is because, as you said, Maximilian, I was there; and my presence made you unjust."

"No; but tell me — it is a question of simple curiosity which was suggested by certain ideas passing in my mind relative to Mademoiselle Danglars — "

"Oh! very unjust ideas, I know without knowing what they are. When you sit in judgment on us poor women, we cannot expect indulgence."

"You cannot at least deny that you are very harsh judges of each other."

"If we are so, it is because we generally judge under the influence of excitement. But return to your question."

"Does Mademoiselle Danglars object to this marriage with M. de Morcerf on account of loving another?"

"I told you I was not on terms of strict intimacy with Eugénie."

"Yes; but girls tell each other secrets without being particularly intimate. Own, now, that you did question her on the subject. Ah! I see you are smiling."

"If you are already aware of the conversation that passed, the wooden partition which interposed between us and you has proved but a slight security."

"Come, what did she say?"

"She told me that she loved no one," said Valentine; "that she disliked the idea of being married; that she would infinitely prefer leading an independent and unfettered life; and that she almost wished her father might lose his fortune, that she might become an artist like her friend, Mademoiselle Louise d'Armilly."

"Ah, you see—"

"Well, what does that prove?" asked Valentine.

"Nothing," replied Maximilian, smiling.

"Then why do you smile?"

"Why, you yourself had your eyes fixed on me."

"Do you wish me to go?"

"Ah, no, no! but let us talk of you."

"True; we have scarcely ten minutes more to pass together."

"Good heavens!" said Maximilian, in consternation.

"Yes, Maximilian, you are right," said Valentine, in a tone of melancholy; "I am but a poor friend to you. What a life I cause you to lead, poor Maximilian, you who are formed for happiness! I bitterly reproach myself, I assure you."

"Well, what does it signify, Valentine, so long as I am satisfied, and feel that even this long and painful suspense is amply repaid by five minutes of your society, or two words from your mouth? And I have also a deep conviction that Heaven would not have created two hearts harmonizing as ours do, and united us to each other almost miraculously, at last to separate us."

"That is well said, and I thank you. Be hopeful for us both, Maximilian; that will make me partly happy."

"What has happened, then, Valentine, that you leave me so soon?"

"I do not know. Madame de Villefort has sent to request my presence, as she has a communication to make on which a part of my fortune depends. Let them take my fortune, I am already too rich; and perhaps when they have taken it, they will leave me in peace and quietness. You would love me as much if I were poor, would you not, Maximilian?"

"Oh! I shall always love you. What should I care for either riches or poverty if my Valentine were near me and I felt certain that no one could deprive me of her? But do you not fear that this communication may relate to your marriage?"

"I do not think so."

"Meanwhile listen to me, Valentine, and fear nothing; for as long as I live I shall never love any one but you."

"You expect to reassure me in saying that, Maximilian?"

"Pardon me; you are right,—I was thoughtless. Well, I was about to tell you that I met M. de Morcerf the other day."

"Well?"

"M. Franz is his friend, you know."

"What then?"

"M. de Morcerf has received a letter from Franz, announcing his immediate return."

Valentine turned pale and leaned against the gate for support. "Can it really be true; and is that why Madame de Villefort has sent for me? No; the communication would not be likely to come from her."

"Why not?"

"Because—I scarcely know why—but it has appeared that Madame de Villefort secretly objects to the marriage, although she does not openly oppose it."

"Is it so? Then I feel as if I could adore Madame de Villefort."

"Do not be in such a hurry to do that," said Valentine, with a sad smile.

"If she objects to your marrying M. d'Épinay, she would be all the more likely to listen to any other proposition."

"Put no trust in that, Maximilian; Madame de Villefort finds no fault with suitors, she objects to marriage."

"Marriage! if she dislikes that so much, why did she ever marry herself?"

"You do not understand me, Maximilian. About a year ago, I talked of retiring to a convent; Madame de Villefort, in spite of all the remarks which she considered it her duty to make, secretly approved of the proposition. My father consented to it at her instigation; and it was only on account of my poor grandfather that I finally abandoned the project. You can form no idea of the expression of that old man's eye when he looks at me,—the only person in the world whom he loves, and I had almost said, by whom he is beloved in return. When he learned my resolution, I shall never forget the reproachful look which he cast on me, and the tears of utter despair which chased each other down his lifeless cheeks. Ah, Maximilian, I experienced at that moment such remorse for my intention that throwing myself at his feet, I exclaimed, 'Forgive me, pray forgive me, my dear grandfather; they may do what they will with me, I will never leave you.' When I had ceased speaking, he thankfully raised his eyes to heaven, but without uttering a word. Ah, Maximilian! I may have much to suffer, but I feel as if my grandfather's look at that moment would more than compensate for all."

"Dear Valentine, you are an angel; and I am sure I do not know how I have deserved, in sabring to the right

and left among the Bedouins, — unless indeed God has considered the fact that they are infidels, — I do not know how I have deserved that you should be sent to me. But tell me what interest Madame de Villefort can have in your remaining unmarried."

"Have I not told you that I am rich, Maximilian, too rich? I possess an income of about fifty thousand livres in right of my mother; my grandfather and my grandmother, the Marquis and Marquise de Saint-Méran, will leave me as much more; and M. Noirtier evidently intends making me his heir. My brother Édouard, who inherits nothing from his mother, will therefore be poor in comparison with me. Now, Madame de Villefort loves that child to adoration; and if I had taken the veil, all my fortune, passing to my father, — who would inherit from the marquis, the marchioness, and myself, — would go to his son."

"Ah! how strange it seems that such a young and beautiful woman should be so avaricious."

"It is not for herself that she is so, but for her son; and what you regard as a vice becomes almost a virtue when looked at in the light of maternal love."

"But could you not compromise matters, and give up a portion of your fortune to her son?"

"How could I make such a proposition, especially to a woman who always professes to be so entirely disinterested?"

"Valentine, I have always regarded our love in the light of something sacred. Consequently I have covered it with the veil of respect, and hid it in the inmost recesses of my soul; no human being, not even my sister, is aware of its existence. Valentine, will you permit me to make a confidant of a friend and reveal to him the love I bear you?"

Valentine started. "A friend, Maximilian; and who is this friend? I tremble at the idea."

"Listen, Valentine. Have you never experienced for any one an irresistible sympathy which made you feel as if though seeing him for the first time, you had known him for a long time; and have you not sought to remember when and where you were acquainted with him; and unable to recall either time or place, have you not come to believe that it was in a former state of being, and that this sympathy is a remembrance newly awakened?"

"Yes."

"Well, that is precisely the feeling which I experienced when I first saw that extraordinary man."

"Extraordinary, did you say?"

"Yes."

"You have known him for some time, then?"

"Scarcely longer than eight or ten days."

"And do you call a man your friend whom you have only known for eight or ten days? Ah, Maximilian, I had hoped you set a higher value on the title of friend."

"Your logic is correct, Valentine; but say what you will, I can never renounce that instinctive sentiment. I believe that this man will be associated with all the good that may come to me in the future,—which sometimes his searching eye appears to foresee and his powerful hand to direct."

"He must be a prophet, then," said Valentine, smiling.

"Indeed!" said Maximilian, "I have often been almost tempted to believe that he can prophesy,—good things especially."

"Ah!" said Valentine, in a mournful tone, "do let me see this man, Maximilian; he may tell me whether I shall ever be loved sufficiently to make amends for all I have suffered."

" My poor girl ! you know him already."

" I know him ?"

" Yes ; it was he who saved the life of your stepmother and her son."

" The Count of Monte Cristo ?"

" The same."

" Ah ! " cried Valentine, " he is too much the friend of Madame de Villefort ever to be mine."

" The friend of Madame de Villefort ! My instinct would not deceive me on that point ; I am sure that you are mistaken."

" No, indeed, I am not ; for I assure you his power over our household is almost unlimited. Courted by my stepmother, who regards him as the epitome of human wisdom ; admired by my father, who says he has never before heard such sublime ideas so eloquently expressed ; idolized by Édouard, who notwithstanding his fear of the count's large black eyes, runs to meet him the moment he arrives and opens his hand, in which he is sure to find some delightful present, — M. de Monte Cristo appears to exert a mysterious and almost uncontrollable influence over all the members of our family."

" If such be the case, my dear Valentine, you must yourself have felt, or at all events will soon feel the effects of his presence. He meets Albert de Morcerf in Italy ; it is to rescue him from the hands of the banditti. He introduces himself to Madame Danglars ; it is that he may give her a royal present. Your stepmother and her son pass before his door ; it is that his Nubian may save them from destruction. This man evidently possesses the power to influence events. I never saw more simple tastes united to greater magnificence. His smile is so sweet when he addresses me that I forget it can ever be bitter to others. Ah, Valentine ! tell me, has he smiled

in that way upon you ? If so, depend on it, you will be happy."

" Me ! " said the young girl, " he never even glances at me ; on the contrary, if I accidentally cross his path, he appears rather to avoid me. Ah, he is not generous, neither does he possess that supernatural penetration which you attribute to him,— for if he had, he would have perceived that I am unhappy. And if he had been generous, seeing me sad and solitary he would have used his influence to my advantage ; and if, as you say, he resembles the sun, he would have warmed my heart with one of his life-giving rays. You say he loves you, Maximilian ; how do you know that he does ? Men pay deference to an officer like you, with a fierce mustache and a long sabre ; but they think they may crush a poor weeping girl with impunity."

" Ah, Valentine ! I assure you you are mistaken."

" If it were otherwise ; if he treated me diplomatically,— that is to say, like a man who wishes by some means or other to obtain a footing in the house, so that he may ultimately gain the power of dictating to its occupants,— he would, if it had been but once, have honored me with the smile which you extol so loudly ; but no, he saw that I was unhappy, he understood that I could be of no use to him, and therefore paid me no regard whatever. Who knows but that in order to please Madame de Villefort and my father, he may not persecute me by every means in his power ? It is not just that he should despise me thus, without any reason. Ah, forgive me," said Valentine, perceiving the effect which her words were producing on Maximilian ; " I have done wrong, for I have given utterance to thoughts concerning that man which I did not even know existed in my heart. I do not deny the influence of which you speak, or that I have myself expe-

rienced it; but with me it has been productive of evil rather than good."

"Well, Valentine," said Morrel, with a sigh, "we will not discuss the matter further. I will tell him nothing."

"Alas!" said Valentine, "I see that I have given you pain. Oh, that I might press your hand while I ask your pardon? But indeed I am not prejudiced beyond the power of conviction. Tell me, what has this Count of Monte Cristo done for you?"

"I own that your question embarrasses me, Valentine, for I cannot say that the count has rendered me any ostensible service. Still, as I have already told you, I have an instinctive affection for him, the source of which I cannot explain to you. Has the sun done anything for me? No; he warms me with his rays, and it is by his light that I see you,—nothing more. Has such and such a perfume done anything for me? No; its odor charms one of my senses,—that is all I can say when I am asked why I praise it. My friendship for him is as strange and unaccountable as his for me. A secret voice seems to whisper to me that there must be something more than chance in this sudden and unexpected friendship. In his most simple actions as well as in his most secret thoughts, I find a relation to my own. You will perhaps smile at me when I tell you that ever since I have known this man I have the absurd idea that all the good fortune which has befallen me originated from him. However, I have managed to live thirty years without this protection, you would say? No matter,—but wait; here is an example. He has invited me to dine with him on Saturday, which was a very natural thing for him to do. Well, what have I learned since? That your mother and M. de Villefort are both coming to this dinner. I shall meet them there; and who knows what future advantages

may result from the interview? These are circumstances very simple apparently; but I see in them something surprising; I draw from them a strange confidence. I say to myself that this singular man, who appears to fathom the motives of every one, has purposely arranged for me to meet Monsieur and Madame de Villefort; and sometimes, I confess, I have gone so far as to try to read in his eyes whether he has divined the secret of our love."

"My good friend," said Valentine, "I should take you for a visionary, and should tremble for your reason, if I were always to hear you talk in a strain like this. Is it possible that you can see anything more than the merest chance in this meeting? Pray reflect a little. My father, who never goes out, has several times been on the point of refusing this invitation; Madame de Villefort, on the contrary, is burning with the desire of seeing this extraordinary nabob in his own house, and she has with great difficulty prevailed on my father to accompany her. No, no! it is as I have said, Maximilian; there is no one in the world of whom I can ask help but yourself and my grandfather, who is little better than a corpse."

"I see that you are right, logically speaking," said Maximilian; "but your sweet voice, which usually has such power over me, fails to convince me to-day."

"Nor do your words convince me," said Valentine; "and I own that if you have no stronger proof to give me—"

"I have another," said Maximilian, hesitating; "but — in fact, Valentine, I am myself obliged to admit that it is even more absurd than the first."

"So much the worse," said Valentine, smiling.

"It is nevertheless conclusive to my mind. My ten years of service have also confirmed my ideas on the subject of sudden inspirations, for I have several times owed

my life to one of those mysterious impulses which directed me to move at once either to the right or to the left, so that the fatal bullet might pass by me."

"Dear Maximilian, why not attribute your escape to my constant prayers for your safety? When you are away, I pray no longer for myself, but for you."

"Yes, since you have known me," said Morrel, smiling; "but that cannot apply to the time previous to our acquaintance, Valentine."

"You are very provoking, and will not give me credit for anything; but let me hear this second example, which you yourself own to be absurd."

"Well, look through this opening, and you will see the beautiful new horse which I rode here."

"Ah, what a beautiful creature!" cried Valentine; "why did you not bring it close to the gate? I would have talked to it, and it would have understood me."

"It is, as you see, a very valuable animal," said Maximilian. "Well, you know that my means are limited, and that I am what they call a reasonable man. Well, I went to a horse-dealer's, where I saw this magnificent horse, which I have named Medea. I asked the price of it; they told me it was four thousand five hundred livres. I was therefore obliged to give it up, as you may imagine; but I own I went away with a heavy heart, for the horse had looked at me affectionately, had rubbed its head against me, and when I mounted it, had pranced in the most coquettish way imaginable. The same evening some friends of mine visited me,—M. de Château-Renaud, M. Debray, and five or six other choice spirits whom you do not know even by name. They proposed *la bouillotte*. I never play, for I am not rich enough to afford to lose, nor sufficiently poor to desire to gain. But I was at my own house, you understand; so there was nothing to be

done but to send for the cards, which I did. Just as they were sitting down to table, M. de Monte Cristo arrived. He took his seat among them ; they played and I won. I am almost ashamed to say that my gains amounted to five thousand livres. We separated at midnight. I could not defer my pleasure, so I took a cabriolet and drove to the horse-dealer's. Feverish and excited, I rang at the door. The person who opened it must have taken me for a madman, for I rushed at once to the stable. Medea was standing at the rack, eating her hay. I immediately put on the saddle and bridle, to which operation she lent herself with the best grace possible ; then putting the four thousand five hundred livres into the hands of the astonished dealer, I proceeded to fulfil my intention of passing the night in riding in the Champs Elysées. As I rode by the count's house I perceived a light in one of the windows, and fancied I saw the shadow of his figure moving behind the curtain. Now, Valentine, I firmly believe that he knew of my wish to possess this horse, and that he lost expressly to give me the means of procuring it."

" My dear Maximilian, you are really too fanciful ; you will not love me long. A man who accustoms himself to live in such a world of poetry and imagination must find far too little excitement in a common, every-day sort of attachment such as ours. But they are calling me. Do you hear ? "

" Ah, Valentine ! " said Maximilian, " give me but one finger through this opening in the grating, that I may have the happiness of kissing it."

" Maximilian, we said we would be to each other as two voices, two shadows."

" As you will, Valentine."

" Shall you be happy if I do what you wish ? "

" Oh, yes ! "

Valentine mounted the bank and passed not only her finger but her whole hand through the opening. Maximilian uttered a cry of delight, and springing forward, seized the hand extended towards him, and imprinted on it a fervent and impassioned kiss. The little hand was then immediately withdrawn, and the young man saw Valentine hurrying towards the house, as though she were almost terrified at her own sensations.

CHAPTER VI.

MONSIEUR NOIRTIER DE VILLEFORT.

WE will now relate what was passing in the house of the *procureur du roi* after the departure of Madame Danglars and her daughter, and during the time of the conversation between Maximilian and Valentine which we have just detailed. M. de Villefort entered his father's room, followed by Madame de Villefort. Both of the visitors, after saluting the old man and speaking to Barrois,—a faithful servant who had been twenty-five years in his service,—took their places on either side of the paralytic.

M. Noirtier was sitting in an armchair, which moved upon castors, in which he was wheeled into the room in the morning, and in the same way drawn out again at night. He was placed before a large glass which reflected the whole apartment, and permitted him to see without any attempt to move, which would have been impossible, all who entered the room and everything which was going on around him. M. Noirtier, immovable as a corpse, looked at the new-comers with a quick and intelligent expression, perceiving at once by their ceremonious courtesy, that they were come on business of an unexpected and official character. Sight and hearing were the only senses remaining, and they appeared left, like two solitary sparks, to animate the miserable body which seemed fit for nothing but the grave; it was only, however, by means of one of these senses that he could reveal the thoughts and feelings which still worked in his mind, and the look by

which he gave expression to this inner life resembled one of those distant lights which are sometimes seen in perspective by the benighted traveller while crossing some cheerless desert, apprising him that there is still another human being who is awake in that silence and darkness. Noirtier's hair was long and white, and flowed over his shoulders, while in his eyes, shaded by thick, black lashes, were concentrated, as it often happens with any organ which is used to the exclusion of the others, all the activity, address, force, and intelligence which were formerly diffused over his whole body. Certainly the movement of the arm, the sound of the voice, and the agility of the body were wanting ; but that powerful eye sufficed for all. He commanded with his eyes ; he expressed gratitude with his eyes, — in short, his whole appearance produced on the mind the impression of a corpse with living eyes ; and nothing could be more startling than to observe that face of marble lighted by a flash of anger or a gleam of delight.

Three persons only could understand this language of the poor paralytic ; these were Villefort, Valentine, and the old servant of whom we have already spoken. But as Villefort saw his father but seldom, and then only when absolutely obliged, and as when with him he never tried to give him pleasure by understanding him, all the old man's happiness was centred in his grand-daughter. Valentine, through her love, her patience, and her devotion, had learned to read in Noirtier's look all the varied feelings which were passing in his mind. To this dumb language, which was so unintelligible to others, she answered with all the tones of her voice, with all the expressions of her countenance, and with all the earnestness of her soul ; so that animated conversations were sustained between the young girl and the helpless invalid, whose body could

scarcely be called a living one, but who nevertheless was still a man of immense knowledge, of wonderful penetration, and a will as powerful as is still possible where the soul is shut up in matter which it can no longer command. Valentine had resolved this strange problem, and was able easily to understand his thoughts and to convey her own in return ; and by her untiring and devoted assiduity, it was seldom that in the ordinary transactions of every-day life she failed to apprehend the wishes of the living, thinking mind, or the wants of the almost inanimate body. As to the servant, he had, as we have said, been with his master for five and twenty years ; therefore he knew all his habits, and it was seldom that Noirtier found it necessary to ask for anything.

Villefort did not need the help of either Valentine or the domestic in order to carry on with his father the strange conversation which he was about to begin. As we have said, he perfectly understood the old man's vocabulary ; and if he did not use it more often it was only indifference and *ennui* which prevented him from so doing. He therefore allowed Valentine to go into the garden, sent away Barrois, and after having taken a place on the right hand of his father, while Madame de Villefort seated herself on the left, he addressed him thus :—

“ I trust you will not be displeased, Monsieur, that Valentine has not come with us, or that I dismissed Barrois, for our conference will be one which could not with propriety be carried on in the presence of either ; Madame de Villefort and I have a communication to make to you.”

Noirtier's face remained perfectly passive during this long preamble ; while on the contrary the eye of Villefort was endeavoring to penetrate into the inmost recesses of the old man's heart.

"This communication," continued the *procureur du roi*, in that cold and decisive tone which seemed at once to preclude all discussion, "will, we are sure, meet with your approbation."

The eye of the invalid still retained that vacancy of expression which prevented his son from obtaining any knowledge of the feelings which were passing in his mind; he listened, — nothing more.

"Monsieur," resumed Villefort, "we are thinking of marrying Valentine."

Had the old man's face been moulded in wax, it could not have shown less emotion at this news than was now to be traced there.

"The marriage will take place in less than three months," said Villefort.

Noirtier's eye still retained its inanimate expression. Madame de Villefort now took her part in the conversation and added, —

"We thought this news would possess an interest for you, Monsieur, who have always entertained a great affection for Valentine; it therefore only now remains for us to tell you the name of the young man for whom she is destined. It is one of the most desirable connections to which Valentine could aspire; he possesses fortune, a high rank in society, and personal qualifications which afford a guarantee for her happiness. His name, however, cannot be wholly unknown to you. The person to whom we allude is M. Franz de Quesnel, Baron d'Épinay."

During the time that his wife was speaking Villefort had narrowly watched the countenance of the old man. When Madame de Villefort pronounced the name of Franz, the pupil of M. Noirtier's eye began to dilate, and his eyelids trembled with the same movement as may be perceived on the lips of an individual about to speak, and he

darted a lightning glance at Madame de Villefort and his son. The *procureur du roi*, who knew the political hatred which had formerly existed between M. Noirtier and the elder D'Épinay, well understood the agitation and anger which the announcement had produced ; but feigning not to perceive either, he took up the conversation where his wife had ended.

" Monsieur," said he, " you are aware that Valentine is about to enter her nineteenth year, which renders it important that she should lose no time in forming a suitable connection. Nevertheless, you have not been forgotten in our plans, and we have fully ascertained beforehand that Valentine's future husband will consent, not to live in this house, for that might not be pleasant for the young people, but that you should live with them ; so that you and Valentine, who are so attached to each other, would not be separated, your habits would not be deranged, and you would have two children instead of one to take care of you."

Noirtier's look was furious ; it was very evident that something desperate was passing in the old man's mind, — for the cry of anger and grief rose to his throat, and not being able to find vent in utterance, appeared almost to choke him, for his face and lips turned quite purple with the struggle. Villefort quietly opened a window, saying, " It is very warm, and the heat affects M. Noirtier." He then returned to his place, but did not sit down.

" This marriage," added Madame de Villefort, " is quite agreeable to the wishes of M. d'Épinay and his family ; besides, he has no relations nearer than an uncle and aunt, his mother having died at his birth, and his father having been assassinated in 1815, — that is to say, when he was but two years old. He has therefore only his own will to consider."

"That assassination was a mysterious affair," said Villefort; "and the perpetrators have hitherto escaped detection, although suspicion has fallen on the head of more than one person." Noirtier made such an effort that his lips expanded into a smile. "Now," continued Villefort, "those to whom the guilt really belongs, by whom the crime was committed, on whose heads the justice of man may descend here, and the judgment of God hereafter, would rejoice to be in our place and to have a daughter to offer to M. Franz d'Épinay, and thus to obliterate every suspicious appearance."

Noirtier had succeeded in mastering his emotion more than could have been deemed possible to a person with such an enfeebled and shattered frame. "Yes, I understand," was the reply contained in his look; and this look expressed a feeling of strong indignation mixed with profound contempt. Villefort fully understood his father's meaning, and answered by a slight shrug of his shoulders. He then motioned to his wife to take leave.

"Now, Monsieur," said Madame de Villefort, "I must bid you farewell. Would you like me to send Édouard to you for a short time?"

It had been agreed that the old man should express his approbation by closing his eyes, his refusal by winking them several times, and if he had some desire or feeling to express he raised them to heaven. If he wanted Valentine, he closed his right eye only, and if Barrois, the left. At Madame de Villefort's proposition he instantly winked his eyes. Provoked by a complete refusal, she bit her lip and said, "Then shall I send Valentine to you?" The old man closed his eyes eagerly, thereby intimating that such was his wish. Monsieur and Madame de Villefort bowed and left the room, giving orders that Valentine should be summoned. Valentine already had been notified that she

would have special occasion during the day for an interview with M. Noirtier. She entered the room with a color still heightened by emotion, just after her parents had quitted it. One look was sufficient to tell her that her grandfather was suffering, and that there was much on his mind which he was wishing to communicate to her.

"Dear grandpapa," cried she, "what has happened? They have vexed you, and you are angry?"

The paralytic closed his eyes in token of assent.

"Against whom, then? Against my father? no. Against Madame de Villefort? no. Against me?"

The old man gave the sign of assent.

"Against me?" said Valentine, in astonishment.

The old man repeated the sign.

"And what have I done, dear grandpapa, that you should be angry with me?" cried Valentine.

There was no answer; and she continued, "I have not seen you all day. Has any one been speaking to you about me?"

"Yes," said the old man's look, with eagerness.

"Let me think a moment. I do assure you, grandpapa — Ah! Monsieur and Madame de Villefort have just left this room, have they not?"

"Yes."

"And it was they who told you something which made you angry? What was it, then? May I go and ask them, that I may have the opportunity of making my peace with you?"

"No, no!" said Noirtier's look.

"Ah! you frighten me. What can they have said?" and she again tried to think what it could be.

"Ah! I know," said she, lowering her voice and going close to the old man; "they have been speaking of my marriage, — have they not?"

"Yes," replied the angry look.

"I understand ; you are displeased at the silence I have preserved on the subject. The reason of it was that they had insisted on my keeping the matter a secret, and begged me not to tell you anything about it ; they did not even acquaint me with their intentions, and I only discovered them by chance, — that is why I have been so reserved with you, dear grandpapa. Pray forgive me."

But there was no look calculated to reassure her ; all it seemed to say was, "It is not only your reserve which afflicts me."

"What is it then ?" asked the young girl. "Perhaps you think I shall abandon you, dear grandpapa, and that I shall forget you when I am married ?"

"No."

"They told you, then, that M. d'Épinay consented to our all living together ?"

"Yes."

"Then why are you still vexed and grieved ?"

The old man's eyes beamed with an expression of gentle affection.

"Yes, I understand," said Valentine ; "it is because you love me."

The old man assented.

"And you are afraid I shall be unhappy ?"

"Yes."

"You do not like M. Franz ?"

The eyes repeated several times, "No, no, no."

"Then you are vexed with the engagement ?"

"Yes."

"Well, listen," said Valentine, throwing herself on her knees, and putting her arm round her grandfather's neck ; "I am vexed too, for I do not love M. Franz d'Épinay."

An expression of intense joy illumined the old man's eyes.

"When I wished to retire into a convent, you remember how angry you were with me?" A tear trembled in the eye of the invalid. "Well," continued Valentine, "the reason of my proposing it was that I might escape this hateful marriage, which drives me to despair." Noirtier's breathing became thick and short. "Then the idea of this marriage really grieves you too? Ah, if you could but help me; if we could both together defeat their plan! But you are unable to oppose them; you, whose mind is so quick, and whose will is so firm, are nevertheless as weak and unequal to the contest as I am myself. Alas, you, who would have been such a powerful protector to me in the days of your health and strength, can now only sympathize in my joys and sorrows! It is the last happiness which God has forgotten to take away with all the rest."

At these words there appeared in Noirtier's eye an expression of such deep meaning that the young girl thought she could read these words there, "You are mistaken; I can still do much for you."

"Do you think you can help me, dear grandpapa?" said Valentine.

"Yes." Noirtier raised his eyes; it was the sign agreed on between him and Valentine when he wanted anything.

"What is it you want, dear grandpapa?" said Valentine; and she endeavored to recall to mind all the things which he would be likely to need. And as the ideas presented themselves to her mind, she repeated them aloud; but finding that all her efforts elicited nothing but a constant "No," "Come," said she, "the grand resort, since I am so foolish." She then recited all the letters of the alphabet from A down to N, questioning with her smile the eye of the paralytic. At N, Noirtier made an affirmative sign.

"Ah," said Valentine, "the thing you desire begins

with the letter N ; it is with N that we have to do, then. Well, let me see, what can you want which begins with N ? Na — Ne — Ni — No — ”

“ Yes, yes, yes,” said the old man’s eye.

“ Ah, it is No, then ? ”

“ Yes.” Valentine brought a dictionary, which she placed on a desk before Noirtier ; she opened it, and seeing that the old man’s eye was thoroughly fixed on its pages, she ran her finger quickly up and down the columns. During the six years which had passed since Noirtier first fell into this sad state, Valentine’s powers of invention had been too often put to the test not to render her expert in devising expedients for gaining a knowledge of his wishes ; and the constant practice had so perfected her in the art that she guessed the old man’s meaning as quickly as if he himself had been able to seek for what he wanted. At the word “ notary,” Noirtier made a sign to her to stop. “ Notary,” said she ; “ do you want a notary, dear grandpapa ? ” The old man again signified that it was a notary he desired.

“ You wish a notary to be sent for, then ? ” said Valentine.

“ Yes.”

“ Shall my father be informed of your wish ? ”

“ Yes.”

“ Do you wish the notary to be sent for immediately ? ”

“ Yes.”

“ Then they shall go for him directly, dear grandpapa. Is that all you want ? ”

“ Yes.”

Valentine rang the bell and ordered the servant to tell Monsieur or Madame de Villefort that they were requested to come to M. Noirtier’s room.

“ Are you satisfied ? ” said Valentine. “ Yes ? I am sure you are. Eh ? it was n’t easy to discover that, was it ? ”

and the young girl smiled on her grandfather as if he had been a child.

M. de Villefort entered, followed by Barrois. "What do you want me for, Monsieur ?" demanded he of the paralytic.

"Monsieur," said Valentine, "my grandfather wishes for a notary."

At this strange and unexpected demand M. de Villefort and his father exchanged looks. "Yes," signified the latter, with a firmness which indicated that with the help of Valentine and his old servant, who both knew what his wishes were, he was quite prepared to maintain the contest.

"Do you wish for a notary ?" asked Villefort.

"Yes."

"What to do ?"

Noirtier made no answer.

"What do you want with a notary ?" repeated Villefort.

The invalid's eye remained fixed, by which expression he intended to intimate that his resolution was unalterable.

"Is it to do us some ill turn ? Do you think it is worth while ?" said Villefort.

"Still," said Barrois, prepared to insist with the freedom and fidelity of an old servant, "if M. Noirtier asks for a notary, I suppose he really wishes for a notary ; therefore I shall go at once and fetch one." Barrois acknowledged no master but Noirtier, and never allowed his desires in any way to be contradicted.

"Yes, I want a notary," intimated the old man, shutting his eyes with a look of defiance, which seemed to say, "and I should like to see the person who dares to refuse my request."

"You shall have a notary as you absolutely wish for one, Monsieur," said Villefort ; "but I shall explain to

him your state of health and make excuses for you, for the scene will be ridiculous."

"Never mind that," said Barrois; "I shall go and fetch a notary, nevertheless;" and the old servant departed triumphantly on his mission.

CHAPTER VII.

THE WILL.

As soon as Barrois had left the room, Noirtier looked at Valentine with that peculiar expression which conveyed so much deep meaning. The young girl perfectly understood the look, and so did Villefort, for his countenance became clouded, and he knitted his eyebrows angrily. He took a seat and quietly awaited the arrival of the notary. Noirtier saw him seat himself with an appearance of perfect indifference, at the same time giving a side look at Valentine, which made her understand that she also was to remain in the room. Three-quarters of an hour after, Barrois returned, bringing the notary with him.

"Monsieur," said Villefort, after the first salutations were over, "you were sent for by M. Noirtier, whom you see here. All his limbs have become completely paralyzed; he has lost his voice also, and we ourselves find much trouble in endeavoring to catch some fragments of his meaning." Noirtier cast an appealing look on Valentine, which look was at once so earnest and imperative that she answered immediately. "Monsieur," said she, "I perfectly understand my grandfather's meaning at all times."

"That is quite true," said Barrois; "and that is what I told the gentleman as we walked along."

"Permit me," said the notary, turning first to Villefort and then to Valentine,—"permit me to state that the

case in question is just one of those in which a public officer like myself cannot proceed inconsiderately without thereby incurring a dangerous responsibility. The first thing necessary to render an act valid is that the notary should be thoroughly convinced that he has faithfully interpreted the will of the person dictating. Now, I cannot be sure of the approbation or disapprobation of a client who cannot speak ; and as the object of his desire or his repugnance cannot be clearly proved to me, on account of his want of speech, my services here would be quite useless, and cannot be legally exercised."

The notary then prepared to retire. An imperceptible smile of triumph was expressed on the lips of the *procureur du roi*. Noirtier looked at Valentine with an expression so full of grief that she arrested the departure of the notary. "Monsieur," said she, "the language which I speak with my grandfather may be easily learned ; and I can teach you in a few minutes to understand it almost as well as I can myself. Will you tell me what you require in order to set your conscience quite at ease on the subject ?"

"In order to render an act valid I must be certain of the approbation or disapprobation of my client. Illness of the body would not affect the validity of the deed ; but sanity of mind is absolutely requisite."

"Well, Monsieur, by the help of two signs you may ascertain with perfect certainty that my grandfather is still in the full possession of all his mental faculties. M. Noirtier, being deprived of voice and motion, is accustomed to convey his meaning by closing his eyes when he wishes to signify 'yes,' and to wink when he means 'no.' You now know quite enough to enable you to converse with M. Noirtier ; try."

Noirtier gave Valentine such a look of tenderness and

gratitude that it was comprehended even by the notary himself. " You have heard and understood what your grand-daughter has been saying, Monsieur ? " asked the notary. Noirtier closed his eyes. " And you approve of what she said, — that is to say, you declare that the signs which she mentioned are really those by means of which you are accustomed to convey your thoughts ? "

" Yes."

" It was you who sent for me ? "

" Yes."

" To make your will ? "

" Yes."

" And you do not wish me to go away without fulfilling your original intentions ? " The old man winked violently.

" Well, Monsieur," said the young girl, " do you understand now, and is your conscience perfectly at rest on the subject ? "

But before the notary could answer, Villefort had drawn him aside.

" Monsieur," said he, " do you suppose for a moment that a man can sustain a physical shock such as M. Noirtier has received, without any detriment to his mental faculties ? "

" It is not exactly that, sir," said the notary, " which makes me uneasy ; but the difficulty will be to divine his thoughts so as to be able to elicit answers."

" You must see that to be an utter impossibility," said Villefort.

Valentine and the old man heard this conversation ; and Noirtier fixed his eye so earnestly on Valentine that she felt bound to make reply.

" Monsieur," said she, " that need not make you uneasy, however difficult it may at first sight appear to be.

I can discover and explain to you my grandfather's thoughts so as to put an end to all your doubts and fears on the subject. I have now been six years with M. Noirtier; and let him tell you if ever once during that time he has entertained a thought which he was unable to make me understand."

"No," signed the old man.

"Let us try what we can do, then," said the notary. "You accept this young lady as your interpreter, M. Noirtier?"

The paralytic made an affirmative sign.

"Well, sir, what do you require of me, and what document is it that you wish to be drawn up?"

Valentine named all the letters of the alphabet until she came to T. At this letter the eloquent eye of Noirtier gave her notice that she was to stop.

"It is very evident that it is the letter T which M. Noirtier wants," said the notary.

"Wait," said Valentine; and turning to her grandfather she repeated, "Ta — Te."

The old man stopped her at the second of these syllables. Valentine then took the dictionary, and the notary watched her while she turned over the pages. She passed her finger slowly down the columns, and when she came to the word "testament," M. Noirtier's eye bade her stop. "Testament!" cried the notary; "it is very evident that M. Noirtier wishes to make his will."

"Yes, yes, yes!" motioned the invalid.

"Really, Monsieur, you must allow that this is most extraordinary," said the astonished notary, turning to M. de Villefort.

"Yes," said the *procureur*, "and I think the will promises to be yet more extraordinary; for I cannot see how it is to be drawn up without the intervention of Valentine,

and she may perhaps be considered as too much interested in its contents to allow of her being a suitable interpreter of the obscure and ill-defined wishes of her grandfather."

"No, no, no!" replied the eye of the paralytic.

"What!" said Villefort, "Valentine is not interested in your will?"

"No."

"Monsieur," said the notary, whose interest had been greatly excited, and who had resolved on publishing far and wide the account of this extraordinary and picturesque scene, "what appeared so impossible to me an hour ago, has now become quite easy and practicable; and this may be a perfectly valid will, provided it be read in the presence of seven witnesses, approved by the testator, and sealed by the notary in the presence of the witnesses. As to the time, it will certainly occupy rather more than ordinary wills. There are certain forms necessary to be gone through, and which are always the same. As to the details, the greater part will be afforded by the state in which we find the affairs of the testator, and by yourself, who, having had the management of them, can doubtless give full information on the subject. But besides all this, in order that the instrument may be uncontested, we will give it the greatest possible authenticity; therefore one of my colleagues will help me, and contrary to custom will assist in the dictation of the testament. Are you satisfied, Monsieur?" continued the notary, addressing the old man.

"Yes," looked the invalid, delighted at being understood.

"What is he going to do?" thought Villefort, whose position demanded so much reserve, but who was longing to know what were the intentions of his father. He left

the room to give orders for another notary to be sent for ; but Barrois, who had heard all that passed, had guessed his master's wishes, and had already set out. The *procureur du roi* then told his wife to come up. In the course of a quarter of an hour every one had assembled in the chamber of the paralytic ; the second notary had also arrived. A few words sufficed for a mutual understanding between the two officers of the law. They read to Noirtier the formal copy of a will, in order to give him an idea of the terms in which such documents are generally couched ; then in order to test the capacity of the testator, the first notary said, turning towards him, "When a man makes his will, it is generally in favor or in prejudice of some person."

"Yes," intimated Noirtier.

"Have you an exact idea of the amount of your fortune ?"

"Yes."

"I will name to you several sums which will increase by gradation ; you will stop me when I reach the one representing the amount of your own possessions ?"

"Yes."

There was a kind of solemnity in this interrogation. Never had the struggle between mind and matter been more apparent than now ; and if it was not a sublime, it was at least a curious spectacle. They had formed a circle round the invalid ; the second notary was sitting at a table, prepared for writing, and his colleague was standing before the testator in the act of interrogating him on the subject to which we have alluded. "Your fortune exceeds three hundred thousand livres, does it not ?" asked he. Noirtier made a sign that it did. "Do you possess four hundred thousand livres ?" inquired the notary. Noirtier's eye remained immovable. "Five hundred

thousand?" The same expression continued. "Six hundred thousand; seven hundred thousand; eight hundred thousand; nine hundred thousand?" Noirtier stopped him at the last-named sum.

"You are then in possession of nine hundred thousand livres?" asked the notary.

"Yes."

"In landed property?"

"No."

"In stock?"

"Yes."

"The stock is in your own hands?"

The look which M. Noirtier cast on Barrois showed that there was something wanting which he knew where to find; the old servant left the room, and presently returned, bringing with him a small casket.

"Do you permit us to open this casket?" asked the notary. Noirtier gave his assent. They opened it, and found nine hundred thousand livres in bank scrip. The first notary handed over each note, as he examined it, to his colleague. The total amount was found to be as M. Noirtier had stated.

"It is all as he has said," observed the first notary; "it is very evident that the mind still retains its full force and vigor." Then turning towards the paralytic, he said, "You possess, then, nine hundred thousand livres of capital, which according to the manner in which you have invested it ought to bring in an income of about forty thousand livres?"

"Yes."

"To whom do you desire to leave this fortune?"

"Oh!" said Madame de Villefort, "there is not much doubt on that subject. M. Noirtier tenderly loves his grand-daughter, Mademoiselle de Villefort; she has nursed

and tended him for six years, and has by her devoted attention fully secured the affection, I had almost said the gratitude of her grandfather ; and it is but just that she should reap the fruit of her devotion."

The eye of Noirtier clearly showed by its expression that he was not deceived by the false construction given by Madame de Villefort to the motives which she supposed him to entertain.

"Is it, then, to Mademoiselle Valentine de Villefort that you leave these nine hundred thousand livres ?" demanded the notary, thinking he had only to insert this clause, but waiting first for the assent of Noirtier, which it was necessary should be given before all the witnesses of this singular scene. Valentine, when her name was made the subject of discussion, had stepped back to escape unpleasant observation; her eyes were cast down, and she was crying. The old man looked at her for an instant with an expression of the deepest tenderness ; then turning towards the notary, he significantly winked his eye in token of dissent.

"What !" said the notary, "do you not intend making Mademoiselle Valentine de Villefort your residuary legatee ?"

"No."

"You are not making any mistake, are you ?" said the notary ; "you really mean no ?"

"No !" repeated Noirtier ; "no !"

Valentine raised her head ; she was struck dumb with astonishment. It was not so much the conviction that she was disinherited which caused her grief, but her total inability to account for the feelings which had provoked her grandfather to such an act ; but Noirtier looked at her with so much affectionate tenderness that she exclaimed, "Oh, grandpapa ! I see now that it is only your

fortune of which you deprive me ; you still leave me the love which I have always enjoyed."

"Ah, yes, most assuredly !" said the eyes of the paralytic ; for he closed them with an expression which Valentine could not mistake.

"Thank you ! thank you !" she murmured.

The old man's declaration that Valentine was not the destined inheritor of his fortune had excited the hopes of Madame de Villefort ; she approached the invalid and said, "Then doubtless, dear M. Noirtier, you intend leaving your fortune to your grandson, Edouard de Villefort ?"

The winking of the eyes which answered this speech was most decided and terrible, and expressed a feeling almost amounting to hatred.

"No," said the notary ; "then perhaps it is to your son, M. de Villefort ?"

"No," replied the old man.

The two notaries looked at each other in mute astonishment. Villefort and his wife both blushed and changed color, one from shame, the other from anger.

"What have we all done, then, dear grandpapa ?" said Valentine ; "you no longer seem to love any of us." The old man's eye passed rapidly from Villefort and his wife, and rested on Valentine with a look of unutterable fondness. "Well," said she, "if you love me, grandpapa, try to conform to that love your actions at this present moment. You know me well enough to be quite sure that I have never thought of your fortune ; besides, they say I am already rich in right of my mother, — too rich, even. Explain yourself, then."

Noirtier fixed his intelligent eyes on Valentine's hand.

"My hand ?" said she.

"Yes."

"Her hand!" exclaimed every one.

"Oh, gentlemen! you see it is all useless, and that my father's mind is really impaired," said Villefort.

"Ah!" cried Valentine, suddenly, "I understand! it is my marriage you mean, is it not, dear grandpapa?"

"Yes, yes, yes," signed the paralytic, casting on Valentine a look of joyful gratitude for having divined his meaning.

"You are angry with us all on account of this marriage, are you not?"

"Yes."

"Really, this is too absurd," said Villefort.

"Excuse me, Monsieur," replied the notary; "on the contrary, M. Noirtier's meaning is quite evident to me, and I can quite easily connect the train of ideas passing in his mind."

"You do not wish me to marry M. Franz d'Épinay?" observed Valentine.

"I do not wish it," said the eye of her grandfather.

"And you disinherit your grand-daughter," continued the notary, "because she has contracted an engagement contrary to your wishes?"

"Yes."

"So that but for this marriage, she would have been your heir?"

"Yes."

There was a profound silence. The two notaries were holding a consultation; Valentine, clasping her hands, was looking at her grandfather with a smile of gratitude; Villefort was biting his lips with vexation; Madame de Villefort could not repress an inward feeling of joy, which in spite of herself appeared in her whole countenance.

"But," said Villefort, who was the first to break the silence, "I consider that I am the best judge of the pro-

priety of the marriage in question. I am the only person possessing the right to dispose of my daughter's hand. It is my wish that she should marry M. Franz d'Épinay, and she shall marry him!"

Valentine sank weeping into a chair.

"Sir," said the notary, "how do you intend disposing of your fortune in case Mademoiselle de Villefort still determines on marrying M. Franz?"

The old man gave no answer.

"You will of course dispose of it in some way?"

"Yes."

"In favor of some member of your family?"

"No."

"Do you intend devoting it to charitable purposes, then?" pursued the notary.

"Yes."

"But," said the notary, "you are aware that the law does not allow a son to be entirely deprived of his patrimony?"

"Yes."

"You intend, then, to dispose of only that part of your fortune which the law allows you to alienate?"

Noirtier made no answer.

"Do you still wish to dispose of all?"

"Yes."

"But they will contest the will after your death."

"No."

"My father knows me," replied Villefort; "he is quite sure that his wishes will be held sacred by me. Besides, he understands that in my position I cannot plead against the poor."

The eye of Noirtier beamed with triumph.

"What do you decide on, Monsieur?" asked the notary of Villefort.

"Nothing, Monsieur. It is a resolution which my father

has taken ; and I know he never alters his mind. I am quite resigned. These nine hundred thousand livres will go out of the family to enrich some hospital ; but I will not yield to the caprices of an old man. I shall act according to my conscience."

Having said this, Villefort quitted the room with his wife, leaving his father at liberty to do as he pleased. The same day the will was made, the witnesses were brought, it was approved by the old man, sealed in the presence of all, and given in charge to M. Deschamps, the family notary.

CHAPTER VIII

THE TELEGRAPH.

MONSIEUR AND MADAME DE VILLEFORT found on their return that the Count of Monte Cristo, who had come to visit them in their absence, had been ushered into the drawing-room and was still awaiting them there. Madame de Villefort, who was too excited to appear so soon before visitors, retired to her bedroom, while the *procureur du roi*, who could better depend upon himself, proceeded at once to the drawing-room. But whatever his mastery over his emotions, and however he controlled the expression of his face, he could not so entirely banish the cloud from his brow but that the count, who approached him with a radiant smile, was struck by his gloomy and thoughtful manner.

"Good heavens!" said Monte Cristo, after the first compliments were over, "what is the matter with you, M. de Villefort? Have I arrived at the moment that you were drawing up some capital indictment?"

Villefort tried to smile. "No, Monsieur the Count," he replied, "I am the only victim in this case. It is I who lose my cause; and it is ill-luck, obstinacy, and folly which have decided it against me."

"To what do you allude?" said Monte Cristo, with well-feigned interest. "Have you really met with some great misfortune?"

"Oh! Monsieur the Count," said Villefort, with a bitter

smile, "it is only a loss of money which I have sustained, — nothing worth mentioning, I assure you."

"True," said Monte Cristo, "the loss of money becomes almost immaterial with a fortune such as you possess, and a mind philosophical and elevated like your own."

"It is not so much the loss of the money which vexes me," said Villefort, "though, after all, nine hundred thousand livres are worth regretting ; but I am the more annoyed with this fate, chance, or whatever you please to call the power which has destroyed my hopes and my fortune, and may blast the prospects of my child also, as it is all occasioned by an old man relapsed into second childhood."

"What do you say ?" said the count ; "nine hundred thousand livres ? it is indeed a sum to be regretted, even by a philosopher. And who is the cause of all this annoyance ?"

"My father, of whom I have spoken to you."

"M. Noirtier ! but I thought you told me he had become entirely paralyzed, and that all his faculties were completely destroyed ?"

"Yes, his bodily faculties, for he can neither move nor speak ; nevertheless, he thinks, acts, and wills, as you see. I left him about five minutes ago, and he is now occupied in dictating his will to two notaries."

"But to do this he must have spoken ?"

"He has done better than that, — he has made himself understood."

"How was such a thing possible ?"

"By the help of his eyes, which are still full of life, and as you perceive, possess the power of inflicting mortal injury."

"My dear," said Madame de Villefort, who had just entered the room, "perhaps you exaggerate the evil."

"Good-morning, Madame!" said the count, bowing.

Madame de Villefort acknowledged the salutation with her most gracious smile.

"What is this that M. de Villefort has been telling me?" demanded Monte Cristo, "and what incomprehensible misfortune—"

"Incomprehensible is the word!" interrupted the *procureur du roi*, shrugging his shoulders; "an old man's caprice."

"And is there no way to make him revoke his decision?"

"Yes," said Madame de Villefort; "and it is still entirely in the power of my husband to cause the will, which is now in prejudice of Valentine, to be altered in her favor."

The count, who perceived that Monsieur and Madame de Villefort were beginning to speak in parables, appeared to pay no attention to the conversation, and feigned to be busily engaged in watching Édouard, who was mischievously pouring some ink into the bird's water-glass.

"My dear," said Villefort, in answer to his wife, "you know I have never been accustomed to play the patriarch in my family; nor have I ever considered that the fate of a universe was to be decided by my nod. Nevertheless, it is necessary that my will should be respected in my family, and that the folly of an old man and the caprice of a child should not be allowed to overturn a project which I have entertained for so many years. The Baron d'Épinay was my friend, as you know, and an alliance with his son is the most suitable thing that could possibly be arranged."

"Do you think," said Madame de Villefort, "that Valentine is in league with him? She has always been opposed to this marriage; and I should not be at all surprised if what we have just seen and heard is nothing but the execution of a plan concerted between them."

"Madame," said Villefort, "believe me, a fortune of nine hundred thousand livres is not so easily renounced."

"She could nevertheless make up her mind to renounce the world, Monsieur, since it is only about a year ago that she herself proposed entering a convent."

"Never mind," replied Villefort; "I say that this marriage shall be consummated!"

"Notwithstanding your father's wishes to the contrary?" said Madame de Villefort, selecting a new point of attack.
"That is a serious thing!"

Monte Cristo, who pretended not to be listening, heard however every word that was said.

"Madame," replied Villefort, "I can truly say that I have always entertained a high respect for my father, because to the natural feeling of relationship was added the consciousness of his moral superiority. The name of father is sacred in two senses,—he should be reverenced as the author of our being, and as a master whom we ought to obey; but under the present circumstances, I am justified in doubting the wisdom of an old man who because he hated the father vents his anger on the son; it would be ridiculous in me to regulate my conduct by such caprices. I shall still continue to preserve the same respect towards M. Noirtier. I will suffer without complaint the pecuniary deprivation to which he has subjected me; but I will remain firm in my determination, and the world shall see which party has reason on his side. Consequently I shall marry my daughter to the Baron Franz d'Épinay, because I consider it would be a proper and eligible match for her to make, and in short, because I choose to bestow my daughter's hand on whomsoever I please."

"What!" said the count, the approbation of whose eye Villefort had frequently solicited during this speech.
"What! do you say that M. Noirtier disinherits Made-

moiselle de Villefort because she is going to marry M. le Baron Franz d'Épinay ? ”

“ Yes, Monsieur, that is the reason,” said Villefort, shrugging his shoulders.

“ The apparent reason, at least,” said Madame de Villefort.

“ The real reason, Madame, I can assure you ; I know my father.”

“ It is inconceivable,” said the young woman. “ But I want to know in what way M. d'Épinay can have displeased your father more than any other person ? ”

“ I believe I know M. Franz d'Épinay,” said the count ; “ is he not the son of General de Quesnel, who was created Baron d'Épinay by Charles X. ? ”

“ The same,” said Villefort.

“ Well ; but he is a charming young man according to my ideas.”

“ He is, which makes me believe that it is only an excuse of M. Noirtier's to prevent his grand-daughter from marrying ; old men are always so selfish in their affection,” said Madame de Villefort.

“ But,” said Monte Cristo, “ do you not know any cause for this hatred ? ”

“ Ah, *mon Dieu !* who can tell ? ”

. “ Perhaps it is some political difference ? ”

“ My father and the Baron d'Épinay lived in those stormy times of which I saw only the last few days,” said Villefort.

“ Was not your father a Bonapartist ? ” asked Monte Cristo ; “ I think I remember that you told me something of that kind.”

“ My father has been a Jacobin more than anything else,” said Villefort, carried by his emotion beyond the bounds of prudence ; “ and the senator's robe which Na-

poleon cast on his shoulders only served to disguise the old man without in any degree changing him. When my father conspired, it was not for the emperor, it was against the Bourbons ; for M. Noirtier possessed this peculiarity,—he never projected any Utopian schemes which could not be realized, but strove for possibilities ; and he applied to the realization of these possibilities the terrible theories of the Montagnards, who never recoiled from any course of action."

" Well," said Monte Cristo, " it is just as I thought ; it was politics which brought Noirtier and M. d'Épinay into personal contact. Although General d'Épinay served under Napoleon, did he not still retain Royalist sentiments ? And was he not the person who was assassinated one evening on leaving a Bonapartist meeting to which he had been invited on the supposition of his favoring the cause of the emperor ? "

Villefort looked at the count almost with terror.

" Am I mistaken, then ? " said Monte Cristo.

" No, Monsieur, the facts were precisely what you have stated," said Madame de Villefort ; " and it was to prevent the renewal of old feuds that M. de Villefort formed the idea of uniting in the bonds of affection the two children of these inveterate enemies."

" It was a sublime and charitable thought," said Monte Cristo ; " and the whole world should applaud it. It would be fine to see Mademoiselle Noirtier de Villefort assuming the title of Madame Franz d'Épinay."

Villefort shuddered and looked at Monte Cristo as if he wished to read in his countenance the real feelings which had dictated the words he had just pronounced. But the count completely baffled the penetration of the *procureur du roi*, and prevented him from discovering anything beneath his habitual smile.

"Although," said Villefort, "it will be a serious thing for Valentine to lose the fortune of her grandfather, I do not think the marriage will be prevented on that account. I do not believe that M. d'Épinay will be frightened at this pecuniary loss. He will see that I am worth perhaps more than that amount, which I will sacrifice to the keeping of my word. Besides, he knows that Valentine is rich in right of her mother, and that she will in all probability inherit the fortune of Monsieur and Madame de Saint-Méran, her mother's parents, who both love her tenderly."

"And who deserve to be loved and cared for as Valentine has loved and cared for M. Noirtier," said Madame de Villefort. "Besides, they are to come to Paris in about a month; and Valentine, after the affront she has received, need not consider it necessary to continue to bury herself alive by being shut up with M. Noirtier."

The count listened with satisfaction to this tale of wounded self-love and defeated ambition. "But it seems to me," said he, — "and I must begin by asking your pardon for what I am about to say, — that if M. Noirtier disinherits Mademoiselle de Villefort on account of her marrying a man whose father he detested, he cannot have the same cause of complaint against that dear Édouard."

"True," said Madame de Villefort, with an intonation of voice which it is impossible to describe; "is it not unjust, — shamefully unjust? Poor Édouard is as much M. Noirtier's grandchild as Valentine, and yet if she had not been going to marry M. Franz, M. Noirtier would have left her all his money; and moreover, though Édouard bears the family name, Valentine will still be three times richer than he, even after being disinherited by her grandfather."

That stroke having succeeded, the count listened and said no more.

"Monsieur the Count," said Villefort, "we will not entertain you any longer with our family misfortunes. It is true that my patrimony will go to endow charitable institutions, and my father will have deprived me of my lawful inheritance without any reason for doing so; but I shall have the satisfaction of knowing that I have acted like a man of sense and feeling. M. d'Épinay, to whom I had promised the interest of this sum, shall receive it, even if I have to impose on myself the most cruel privations."

"However," said Madame de Villefort, returning to the one idea which incessantly occupied her mind, "perhaps it would be better to represent this unlucky affair to M. d'Épinay, in order to give him the opportunity of himself renouncing his claim to the hand of Mademoiselle de Villefort."

"Ah, that would be a great pity!" said Villefort.

"A great pity!" said Monte Cristo.

"Undoubtedly," said Villefort, moderating the tones of his voice; "a marriage, once concerted and then broken off, throws a sort of discredit on a young lady. Then, again, the old reports, which I was so anxious to put an end to, will instantly gain ground,—no, there will be nothing of the kind. M. d'Épinay, if he is an honorable man, will consider himself more than ever pledged to Mademoiselle de Villefort,—unless he were actuated by a decided feeling of avarice; but that is impossible."

"I agree with M. de Villefort," said Monte Cristo, fixing his eyes on Madame de Villefort; "and if I were sufficiently intimate with him to offer him advice, I would persuade him, since, as I have been told, M. d'Épinay is coming back, to settle this affair at once beyond all possibility of revocation. I will answer for the success of a project which will reflect so much honor on M. de Villefort."

The *procureur du roi* rose, delighted with the proposition ; but his wife slightly changed color. "Well, that is all that I wanted, and I will be guided by a counsellor such as you are," said he, extending his hand to Monte Cristo. "Therefore let every one here look upon what has happened to-day as if it had not happened ; there is no change in our plans."

"Sir," said the count, "the world, unjust as it is, will be pleased with your resolution ; your friends will be proud of you, and M. d'Epinay, even if he took Mademoiselle de Villefort without any dowry, which he will not do, would be delighted with the idea of entering a family which could make such sacrifices in order to keep a promise and fulfil a duty." At the conclusion of these words, the count rose to depart.

"Are you going to leave us, Monsieur the Count ?" said Madame de Villefort.

"I am sorry to say I must do so, Madame ; I came only to remind you of your promise for Saturday."

"Did you fear that we should forget it ?"

"You are very good, Madame ; but M. de Villefort has so many and sometimes so urgent occupations."

"My husband has given his word, Monsieur," said Madame de Villefort. "You see that he keeps it when he has everything to lose ; he will keep it by a stronger inducement when he has everything to gain by doing so."

"And," said Villefort, "is it at your house in the Champs Élysées that you receive your visitors ?"

"No," said Monte Cristo, "and that makes your kindness greater ; it is in the country."

"In the country ?"

"Yes."

"Where is it, then ? Near Paris, is it not ?"

"Very near ; only half a league from the barriers,— it is at Auteuil."

"At Auteuil?" said Villefort. "True, Madame told me you lived at Auteuil, since it was to your house that she was taken. And in what part of Auteuil do you reside?"

"Rue de la Fontaine."

"Rue de la Fontaine!" exclaimed Villefort, in an agitated tone ; "at what number?"

"No. 28."

"Ah!" cried Villefort, "it is you, then, who have bought M. de Saint-Méran's house?"

"Did it belong to M. de Saint-Méran?" demanded Monte Cristo.

"Yes," replied Madame de Villefort ; "and, would you believe it, Monsieur the Count—"

"Believe what?"

"You think that house is attractive, do you not?"

"I think it charming."

"Well ; my husband would never live in it."

"Indeed!" returned Monte Cristo ; "that is a prejudice on your part, Monsieur, for which I am quite at a loss to account."

"I do not like Auteuil, Monsieur," said the *procureur du roi*, making an effort to control himself.

"But I hope you will not carry your antipathy so far as to deprive me of the pleasure of your company, Monsieur," said Monte Cristo.

"No, Monsieur the Count—I hope—I assure you I will do all I can," stammered Villefort.

"Oh," said Monte Cristo, "I admit no excuse. On Saturday, at six o'clock, I shall be expecting you ; and if you fail to come, I shall think—for how do I know to the contrary?—that this house, which has remained un-

inhabited for twenty years, must have some gloomy tradition or dreadful legend connected with it."

"I will come, Monsieur the Count, I will be sure to come!" said Villefort, eagerly.

"Thank you," said Monte Cristo; "now you must permit me to take my leave of you."

"Ah, yes; you said you were compelled to leave us, Monsieur the Count," said Madame de Villefort, "and, I think, were on the point of telling us for what purpose, when you were interrupted by something else."

"Indeed, Madame," said Monte Cristo, "I scarcely know if I dare tell you where I am going."

"Bah! tell me, nevertheless."

"Well, then, I am going — idler that I am — to see a thing on which I have sometimes mused for hours together."

"What is it?"

"A telegraph. So now I have told my secret."

"A telegraph!" repeated Madame de Villefort.

"Yes, a telegraph! I have often seen one placed at the end of a road on a hillock; and in the light of the sun its black arms, bending in every direction, always reminded one of the claws of an immense beetle. And I assure you it was never without emotion that I gazed on it, for I could not help thinking that those queer signals, cleaving the air with precision, to convey to the distance of three hundred leagues the ideas and wishes of a man sitting at a table at one end of the line to another man similarly placed at the opposite extremity, would become visible on the gray background of clouds, or on the blue sky, simply by an act of volition on the part of the all-powerful individual communicating the intelligence. I have thought then of genii, sylphs, gnomes, — in short, of occult forces, — until I laughed aloud at the freaks of my

own imagination. Now, it never occurred to me to wish for a nearer inspection of these large insects, with their long black claws, for I always feared to find under their stone wings some little human genius very grave, very pedantic, stuffed with science, mystery, and the black arts. But one fine day I learned that the operator of each telegraph is only a poor devil, hired for twelve hundred livres a year, and employed all the day, not in studying the heavens like an astronomer, nor in gazing on the water like an angler, nor even in enjoying the privilege of observing the country around him, but in watching his fellow-insect, four or five leagues distant from him. So I have become possessed with a curiosity to see in close view this living chrysalis, and to watch the game it plays from the bottom of its shell with that other chrysalis, by pulling, one after the other, some bits of string."

"And are you going there?"

"I am."

"What telegraph station do you intend visiting,—that of the home department or of the Observatory?"

"Oh, no! I should find there people who would force me to understand things of which I prefer to remain ignorant, and who would try to explain to me in spite of myself a mystery which even they do not understand. No, indeed! I wish to preserve unimpaired my illusions concerning insects; it is quite enough to have those dissipated which I had formed of my fellow-creatures. I shall therefore not visit either the telegraph office of the home department or that of the Observatory. What I want to find is a station in the open country, where I shall have to do with some unsophisticated fellow frozen to his tower."

"You are a singular man," said Villefort.

"What line would you advise me to study?"

“That which is most in use just at this time.”

“The Spanish, you mean ?”

“Yes ; should you like a letter to the minister, that they might explain to you ?”

“No,” said Monte Cristo ; “since, as I told you before, I do not wish to comprehend it. The moment I understand it there will no longer exist a telegraph for me ; it will be nothing more than a signal from M. Duchâtel, or from M. Montalivet, transmitted to the prefect of Bayonne, mystified by two Greek words, *τῆλε γράφειν*. I wish to retain all my veneration for the insect with black claws and the terrible name.”

“Go, then ; for in the course of two hours it will be dark, and you will not be able to see anything.”

“The devil ! you alarm me ! Which is the nearest station ?”

“On the road to Bayonne ?”

“Yes ; the road to Bayonne.”

“It is the one at Châtillon.”

“And beyond the one at Châtillon ?”

“At the tower of Montlhéry, I think.”

“Thank you. Good-by. On Saturday I will give you my impressions.”

At the door the count was met by the two notaries, who had just completed the act which was to disinherit Valentine, and who were leaving under the conviction of having done a thing which could not fail of redounding considerably to their credit.

CHAPTER IX.

HOW TO GET RID OF DORMICE.

Not on the same evening, as he had said he should, but the next morning, the Count of Monte Cristo went out by the Barrier d'Enfer, taking the road to Orléans. Leaving the village of Linas without stopping at the telegraph station, whence radiated skeleton arms, he reached the tower of Montlhéry, situated, as every one knows, upon the highest point of the plain of that name. At the foot of the hill the count dismounted and began to ascend the mountain by a little winding path, about eighteen inches wide; when he reached the summit he found himself stopped by a hedge, upon which green fruit had succeeded to red and white flowers.

Monte Cristo looked for the door of the enclosure, and was not long in finding it. It was a little wooden gate, working on willow hinges, and fastened with a nail and string. The count soon understood its mechanism; and the door opened. He then found himself in a little garden, about twenty feet long by twelve wide, bounded on one side by part of the hedge in which was formed the ingenious machine which we have described as a door, and on the other by the old tower, covered with ivy and studded with wild flowers. No one would have thought on seeing it thus wrinkled and adorned, like an old lady whose grandchildren come to greet her on her birthday, that it could have related terrible tragedies if it could have added a voice to the menacing ears which an old

proverb assigns to walls. The garden was crossed by a path of red gravel, edged by a border of thick box of many years' growth, and of a tone and color that would have delighted the heart of Delacroix, our modern Rubens. This path was formed in the shape of the figure 8, thus in its windings making a walk of sixty feet in a garden only twenty feet in length. Never had Flora, the fresh and smiling goddess of gardeners, been honored with a purer or more minute worship than that which was paid to her in this little enclosure. In fact, of the twenty rose-trees which formed the *parterre*, not one bore the mark of the fly, nor were there to be seen any of those clusters of green insects which destroy plants growing in a damp soil. And yet it was not because the damp had been excluded from the garden. The earth, black as soot, and the thick foliage of the trees manifested its presence; besides, had natural humidity been wanting, it could have been immediately supplied by artificial means, thanks to a tank of water sunk in one of the corners of the garden, and upon which were stationed a frog and a toad, who, from antipathy, no doubt, always remained on the two opposite sides of the basin. There was not a blade of grass to be seen in the paths, nor a weed in the flower-beds; no fine lady ever trained and watered her geraniums, her cactus, and her rhododendrons with more pains than this gardener, as yet invisible, bestowed upon his little enclosure. Monte Cristo stopped after having closed the door and fastened the string to the nail, and cast a look around.

"The telegraph man," said he, "must either employ gardeners or devote himself passionately to agriculture." Suddenly he stumbled against something crouching behind a wheel-barrow filled with leaves. The something rose, uttering an exclamation of astonishment; and Monte Cristo found himself facing a man about fifty years old, who was

plucking strawberries, which he was placing upon vine-leaves. He had twelve leaves and about as many strawberries, which, on rising suddenly, he let fall from his hand.

" You are gathering your crop, Monsieur ? " said Monte Cristo, smiling.

" Excuse me, Monsieur," replied the man, raising his hand to his cap ; " I am not up there, I know, but I have only just come down."

" Do not let me interfere with you in anything, my friend," said the count ; " gather your strawberries, if indeed there are any left."

" I have ten left," said the man, " for here are eleven ; and I had twenty-one, five more than last year. But I am not surprised ; the spring has been warm this year, and strawberries require heat, Monsieur. This is the reason that instead of the sixteen I had last year, I have this year, you see, eleven already plucked, — twelve, thirteen, fourteen, fifteen, sixteen, seventeen, eighteen. Ah, I miss three ! they were here last night, Monsieur. I am sure they were here, — I counted them. It must be the son of Mère Simon who has stolen them ; I saw him strolling about here this morning. Ah, the young rascal ! stealing in a garden ! — he does not know where that may lead him."

" It is indeed a serious affair," said Monte Cristo ; " but you should take into consideration the youth and appetite of the delinquent."

" Of course," said the gardener ; " but that does not make it the less unpleasant. But, Monsieur, once more I beg pardon ; perhaps you are an officer whom I am detaining here ? " And he glanced timidly at the count's blue coat.

" Calm yourself, my friend," said the count, with that smile which at his will became so terrible or benevolent, and which this time beamed only with the latter expres-

sion ; "I am not an inspector, but a traveller, brought hither by curiosity. I begin to regret my visit, since it causes you to lose your time."

"Ah ! my time is not valuable," replied the man, with a melancholy smile. "Still, it belongs to Government, and I ought not to waste it ; but having received the signal that I might rest for an hour" (here he glanced at the sun-dial, for there was everything in the enclosure of Montlhéry, even a sun-dial), "and having ten minutes before me, and my strawberries being ripe, when a day longer — by the way, Monsieur, do you think dormice eat them ?"

"Indeed, I should think not," replied Monte Cristo, gravely ; "dormice, Monsieur, are bad neighbors for us who do not eat them preserved in honey, as the Romans did."

"What ! did the Romans eat them ?" said the gardener, — "eat dormice ?"

"I have read so in Petronius," said the count.

"Really ! They can't be nice, though they do say 'as fat as a dormouse.' It is not a wonder that they are fat, sleeping all day and waking only that they may eat all night. Listen ! Last year I had four apricots ; they stole one. I had one nectarine, only one — well, Monsieur, they ate half of it on the wall ; a splendid nectarine, I never ate a better."

"You ate it ?"

"That is to say, the half that was left, you understand ; it was exquisite, Monsieur. Ah, those gentlemen never choose the worst morsels, — like Mère Simon's son, who has not chosen the worst strawberries. But this next year," continued the horticulturist, "I 'll take care it shall not happen, even if I sit up the whole night to watch when the strawberries are nearly ripe."

Monte Cristo had seen enough. Every man has a devouring passion in his heart, as every fruit has its worm ; that of the telegraph man was horticulture. He began to pluck the vine-leaves which screened the sun from the grapes, and won the heart of the gardener.

"Did you come here, Monsieur, to see the telegraph ?" he said.

"Yes, if it be not contrary to the rules."

"Oh, no," said the gardener ; "there are no orders against it, and there is no danger in it, since no one knows and no one can know what we are saying."

"I have been told," said the count, "that you do not always yourselves understand the signals you repeat."

"Certainly, Monsieur ; and that is what I like best," said the man, smiling.

"Why do you like that best ?"

"Because then I have no responsibility. I am a machine then, and nothing else ; and so long as I perform my duties, nothing more is required of me."

"Is it possible," said Monte Cristo to himself, "that I can have met with a man who has no ambition ? That would spoil my plans."

"Monsieur," said the gardener, glancing at the sun-dial, "the ten minutes are nearly expired ; I must return to my post. Will you go up with me ?"

"I follow you."

Monte Cristo entered the tower, which was divided into three stories. The lowest contained gardening implements, such as spades, rakes, watering-pots, hung against the wall ; this was all the furniture. The second was the usual dwelling, or rather sleeping place of the man ; it contained a few poor articles of household furniture, — a bed, a table, two chairs, a stone pitcher, and some dry herbs hung up to the ceiling, which the count recognized as sweet peas,

and of which the good man was preserving the seeds, having labelled them with as much care as if he had been master botanist in the Jardin des Plantes.

"Does it require much study to learn the art of telegraphing, Monsieur?" asked Monte Cristo.

"The study does not take long; it was acting as a supernumerary that was so tedious."

"And what is the pay?"

"A thousand livres, Monsieur."

"It is very little."

"Yes; but then we are lodged, as you perceive."

Monte Cristo looked at the room. "It is to be hoped that he will not cling to his lodging!" he murmured.

They passed on to the third story; it was the room of the telegraph. Monte Cristo looked in turns at the two iron handles by which the machine was worked. "It is very interesting," he said; "but in the long run it is a life which must be very tedious to you."

"Yes. At first the continual watching gave me a crick in the neck, but at the end of a year I became used to it; and then we have our hours of recreation and our holidays."

"Holidays?"

"Yes."

"When?"

"When we have a fog."

"Ah, to be sure."

"Those are indeed holidays to me. I go into the garden; I plant, I prune, I trim, I kill the insects all day long."

"How long have you been here?"

"Ten years and five as a supernumerary make fifteen."

"You are—"

"Fifty-five years old."

"How long must you have served to claim the pension?"

"Oh, Monsieur, twenty-five years."

"And how much is the pension ?"

"A hundred crowns."

"Poor humanity !" murmured Monte Cristo.

"What did you say, Monsieur ?" asked the man.

"I said it is very interesting."

"What is ?"

"Everything you are showing me. And you really understand none of these signals ?"

"None at all."

"And have you never tried to understand them ?"

"Never. Why should I ?"

"But still there are some signals addressed only to you."

"Certainly."

"And do you understand them ?"

"They are always the same."

"And they mean — "

"Nothing new ; 'You have an hour ;' or 'To-morrow.'"

"This is simple enough," said the count ; "but look ! is not your correspondent making signals ?"

"Ah, yes ; thank you, Monsieur."

"And what is he saying, — anything which you can understand ?"

"Yes ; he asks if I am ready."

"And you reply ?"

"By a signal which tells my right-hand correspondent that I am ready, while it gives notice to my left-hand correspondent to prepare in his turn."

"It is very ingenious," said the count.

"You will see," said the man, proudly ; "in five minutes he will speak."

"I have, then, five minutes," said Monte Cristo to himself ; "it is more time than I require. My dear Monsieur, will you allow me to ask you a question ?"

“ What is it, Monsieur ? ”

“ You are fond of gardening ? ”

“ Passionately.”

“ And you would be pleased to have, instead of this terrace of twenty feet, an enclosure of two acres ? ”

“ Monsieur, I should make a terrestrial paradise of it.”

“ You live badly on your thousand livres ? ”

“ Badly enough, but yet live.”

“ Yes ; but you have only a wretched garden ! ”

“ True, the garden is not large.”

“ And then, such as it is, it is filled with dormice, who eat everything.”

“ Ah ! they are my scourges.”

“ Tell me, should you have the misfortune to turn your head while your right-hand correspondent is telegraphing — ”

“ I should not see anything.”

“ Then what would happen ? ”

“ I could not repeat the signals.”

“ And then ? ”

“ Not having repeated them through negligence, I should be fined.”

“ How much ? ”

“ A hundred livres.”

“ The tenth of your income ; that would be a pretty business ! ”

“ Ah ! ” said the man.

“ Has it ever happened to you ? ” said Monte Cristo.

“ Once, sir, when I was grafting a rose-tree.”

“ Well, suppose you were to alter a signal and substitute another ? ”

“ Ah, that is another case ; I should be turned off and lose my pension.”

“ Three hundred livres ? ”

"A hundred crowns, yes, Monsieur ; so you see that I am not likely to do anything of the kind."

"Not even for fifteen years' wages ? Come, it is worth thinking about, eh ? "

"For fifteen thousand livres ? "

"Yes."

"Monsieur, you alarm me."

"Nonsense."

"Monsieur, you are tempting me."

"Just so ; fifteen thousand livres, do you understand ? "

"Monsieur, let me see my right-hand correspondent now ! "

"On the contrary, do not look at him, but on this."

"What is it ? "

"What ! do you not know these little papers ? "

"Bank-notes ! "

"Exactly ; there are fifteen of them."

"And whose are they ? "

"Yours, if you like."

"Mine ! " exclaimed the man, half-suffocated.

"Yes ; yours, — your own property."

"Monsieur, my right-hand correspondent is signalling."

"Let him signal."

"Monsieur, you have distracted me ; I shall be fined."

"That will cost you a hundred livres ; you see it is your interest to take my bank-notes."

"Monsieur, my right-hand correspondent redoubles his signals ; he is impatient."

"Never mind, take these ;" and the count placed the packet in the hands of the man. "Now this is not all," he said ; "you cannot live upon your fifteen thousand livres."

"I shall still have my place."

"No; you will lose it, for you are going to alter the signals of your correspondent."

"Oh, Monsieur, what are you proposing ?"

"A jest."

"Monsieur, unless you force me — "

"I intend to force you effectually ;" and Monte Cristo drew another packet from his pocket. "Here are ten thousand more livres," he said; "with the fifteen thousand already in your pocket, they will make twenty-five thousand. With five thousand you can buy a pretty little house with two acres of land ; the remaining twenty thousand will bring you in a thousand livres a year."

"A garden with two acres of land !"

"And a thousand livres a year."

"Oh, heavens !"

"Come, take them !" and Monte Cristo forced the bank-notes into his hand.

"What am I to do ?"

"Nothing very difficult."

"But what is it ?"

"To repeat these signals." Monte Cristo took a paper from his pocket, upon which were drawn three signals, with numbers to indicate the order in which they were to be sent.

"There, you see it will not take long."

"Yes ; but — "

"Do this, and you will have nectarines and all the rest."

The mark was hit ; red with fever, while large drops fell from his brow, the man executed, one after the other, the three signals given by the count, notwithstanding the frantic excitement displayed by the right-hand correspondent, who, not understanding the change, began to think the gardener had become mad. As to the left-hand correspondent, he conscientiously repeated the same signals,

which were faithfully forwarded to the Minister of the Interior.

"Now you are rich," said Monte Cristo.

"Yes," replied the man; "but at what a price!"

"Listen, my friend," said Monte Cristo. "I do not wish to cause you any remorse; believe me, then, when I swear to you that you have done no one any wrong, and you have served the designs of Providence."

The man looked at the bank-notes, felt them, counted them; he turned pale, then red, then rushed into his room to drink a glass of water, but before reaching the water-jug, he fainted in the midst of his dried herbs.

Five minutes after the new telegram reached the minister, Debray had the horses put to his carriage, and hastened to Danglars's mansion.

"Has your husband any Spanish bonds?" he asked of the baroness.

"I think so, indeed! He has six millions' worth."

"He must sell them, at any price."

"Why?"

"Because Don Carlos has fled from Bourges, and has returned to Spain."

"How do you know?"

Debray shrugged his shoulders. "The idea of asking how I hear the news!" he said.

The baroness did not wait for a repetition; she ran to her husband, who immediately hastened to his agent and ordered him to sell at any price. When it was seen that Danglars sold, the Spanish funds fell directly. Danglars lost five hundred thousand livres; but he rid himself of all his Spanish shares. The same evening the following was read in "*Le Messager*":—

"*Telegraphic despatch.* — The king, Don Carlos, has escaped the vigilance exercised over him at Bourges, and has returned

to Spain by the Catalonian frontier. Barcelona has risen in his favor."

All that evening nothing was spoken of but the foresight of Danglars, who had sold his shares, and of the luck of the stock-jobber, who had lost only five hundred thousand livres by such a blow. Those who had kept their shares, or bought those of Danglars, considered themselves as ruined, and passed a very bad night.

Next morning "*Le Moniteur*" contained the following :

" It was without any foundation that '*Le Messager*' yesterday announced the flight of Don Carlos and the revolt of Barcelona. The king, Don Carlos, has not left Bourges, and the peninsula is in the enjoyment of profound peace. A telegraphic signal improperly interpreted, owing to the fog, was the cause of this error."

The funds rose by double the amount of the fall. This, reckoning his loss and what he had missed gaining, made the difference of a million to Danglars.

" Good ! " said Monte Cristo to Morrel, who was at his house when the news arrived of the strange reverse of fortune of which Danglars had been the victim ; " I have just made a discovery for twenty-five thousand livres for which I would have paid a hundred thousand."

" What have you discovered ? " asked Morrel.

" I have just discovered the method of ridding a gardener of the dormice that eat his peaches."

CHAPTER X.

GHOSTS.

AT first sight the exterior of the house at Auteuil presented nothing splendid, nothing one would expect to see in the residence of the magnificent Count of Monte Cristo. But this simplicity was but according to the will of its master, who had positively ordered nothing to be altered outside, — as was apparent to any one observing the interior. In fact, as soon as the door was opened, the scene changed. M. Bertuccio had outdone himself in the taste displayed in the furnishing, and in the rapidity with which it was executed. As formerly the Duc d'Antin had in a single night caused a whole avenue of trees to be cut down that annoyed Louis XIV., so in three days had M. Bertuccio planted an entirely bare court with poplars, large, spreading sycamores shading the different parts of the house, before which, instead of the usual paving-stones half hidden by the grass, there extended a turf lawn but that morning laid down, and upon which the water was yet glistening. For the rest, the orders had been issued by the count ; he himself had given a plan to Bertuccio, marking the spot where each tree was to be planted, and the shape and ex-

tent of the lawn which was to succeed the paving-stones. Thus the house had become unrecognizable ; and Bertuccio himself declared that he scarcely knew it, encircled as it was by a framework of trees. The steward would not have objected, while he was about it, to have made some improvements in the garden ; but the count had positively forbidden it to be touched. Bertuccio made amends, however, by loading the ante-chambers, staircases, and chimneys with flowers. What especially exhibited the skill of the steward and the profound science of the master — the one in service, the other in directing service — was that this house, which appeared only the night before so sad and gloomy, impregnated with that sickly smell one can almost fancy to be the smell of time, had in one day acquired the aspect of life, was scented with its master's favorite perfumes, and had the very light regulated according to his wish. When the count arrived, he had under his touch his books and arms ; his eyes rested upon his favorite pictures ; his dogs whose caresses he loved welcomed him in the ante-chamber ; the birds whose songs delighted him cheered him with their music ; and the house, awakened from its long sleep, like the palace of the Sleeping Beauty in the wood, lived, sang, and bloomed like the houses we have long cherished, and in which when we are forced to leave them we leave a part of our souls. The servants passed gayly along the fine courtyard ; some, belonging to the kitchens, glided down the stairs, restored but the previous day, as if they had always inhabited the house ; others occupied the coach-houses, where the equipages, encased and numbered, appeared to have been installed for the last fifty years ; and in the stables the horses replied by neighing to the grooms, who spoke to them with much more respect than many servants pay their masters.

The library was divided into two parts on two sides of the room and contained upwards of two thousand volumes. One division was entirely devoted to modern romances ; and even the one which had been published but the day before was to be seen in its place in all the dignity of its red and gold binding. On the other side of the house, corresponding with the library was the conservatory, ornamented with rare flowers blossoming in china jars ; and in the midst of the greenhouse, marvellous alike to sight and smell, was a billiard-table apparently abandoned during the last hour by the players who had left the balls on the cloth. One chamber alone had been respected by the magnificent Bertuccio. Before this room, situated in the left-hand corner of the first story, to which ascent was made by the grand staircase, and from which there was egress by the secret staircase, the servants passed with curiosity, and Bertuccio with terror. At five o'clock precisely, the count arrived before the house at Auteuil, followed by Ali. Bertuccio was awaiting this arrival with impatience mingled with uneasiness ; he hoped for some compliments, while at the same time he feared to encounter frowns. Monte Cristo descended from his carriage in the courtyard, went everywhere through the house and took a turn in the garden, silent and giving no sign either of approbation or displeasure. But on entering his bedroom, opposite the closed chamber, he extended his hand towards the drawer of a small rosewood table which he had noticed on his first visit to the house, "That will at least serve to put my gloves in," he said.

"Will your Excellency deign to open it ?" said the delighted Bertuccio ; "you will find gloves in it."

In other articles of furniture the count found everything he required,—smelling-bottles, cigars, *bijouterie*. "Good !" he said ; and M. Bertuccio withdrew enraptured,—so great,

so powerful was the influence exercised by this man over all who surrounded him.

At precisely six o'clock the clatter of horses' hoofs was heard at the entrance door ; it was our captain of Spahis, who had arrived on Medea. Monte Cristo awaited him at the entrance with a smile on his lips.

"I am sure I am the first," cried Morrel ; "I did it on purpose to have you a minute to myself before every one came. Julie and Emmanuel have a thousand things to tell you. Ah ! really this is magnificent ! But tell me, Count, will your people take care of my horse ?"

"Do not alarm yourself, my dear Maximilian ; they understand."

"I mean because he wants petting. If you had seen at what a pace he came, — like the wind !"

"I should think so, — a horse that cost five thousand livres !" said Monte Cristo, in the tone which a father would use towards a son.

"Do you regret them ?" asked Morrel, with his open laugh.

"I ? Certainly not !" replied the count. "No ; I should only regret if the horse had not proved good."

"It is so good that I have distanced M. de Château-Renaud, one of the best riders in France, and M. Debray, who both mount the minister's Arabians ; and close at their heels are the horses of Madame Danglars, who always go at six leagues an hour."

"Then they follow you ?" asked Monte Cristo.

"See ! they are here !" And at the same minute a carriage with smoking horses, accompanied by two mounted gentlemen, arrived at the gate, which opened before them. The carriage drove round and stopped at the steps, followed by the horsemen. The instant Debray had touched the ground, he was at the carriage-door. He offered his

hand to the baroness, who, descending, took it with a peculiarity of manner imperceptible to every one but Monte Cristo. But nothing escaped the count's notice ; and he observed a little note slipped with an indescribable ease, bespeaking the frequent practice of this manœuvre, from the hand of Madame Danglars to that of the minister's secretary. After his wife the banker descended, pale as though he had issued from his tomb instead of his carriage. Madame Danglars threw a rapid and inquiring glance around, which could be interpreted by Monte Cristo alone, embracing the courtyard, the peristyle, and the front of the house ; then, repressing a slight emotion, which must have been seen on her countenance if she had permitted her face to become pale, she ascended the steps, saying to Morrel, "Monsieur, if you were a friend of mine I should ask you if you would sell your horse."

Morrel smiled with an expression very like a grimace, and then turned round to Monte Cristo as if to ask him to extricate him from his embarrassment. The count understood him. "Ah, Madame !" he said, "why did you not make that request of me ?"

"With you, Monsieur," replied the baroness, "one can wish for nothing, one is so sure to obtain it. If it were so with M. Morrel — "

"Unfortunately," replied the count, "I am witness that M. Morrel cannot give up his horse, his honor being engaged in keeping it."

"How so ?"

"He laid a wager he would tame Medea in the space of six months. You understand now that if he were to get rid of it before the time named, he would not only lose his bet, but people would say he was afraid ; and a brave captain of Spahis cannot risk this, even to gratify a pretty

woman, which is in my opinion one of the most sacred obligations in the world."

"You see my position, Madame," said Morrel, bestowing a grateful smile on Monte Cristo.

"It seems to me," said Danglars, in his coarse tone, ill-concealed by a forced smile, "that you have already got horses enough."

Madame Danglars seldom allowed remarks of this kind to pass unnoticed; but to the surprise of the young people she pretended not to hear it, and said nothing. Monte Cristo smiled at her unusual humility, and showed her two immense porcelain jars, covered with marine plants of a size and delicacy that could be produced only by nature. The baroness was astonished. "Why," said she, "you could plant one of the chestnut-trees in the Tuilleries in one of those! How can such enormous jars have been manufactured?"

"Ah, Madame!" replied Monte Cristo, "you must not ask of us, the manufacturers of statuettes and of glass-muslin, such a question. It is the work of another age, constructed by the genii of earth and water."

"How so? At what period can that have been?"

"I do not know; I have only heard that an emperor of China had an oven built, and that in this oven twelve jars like this were successively baked. Two broke, from the heat of the fire; the other ten were sunk three hundred fathoms deep into the sea. The sea, knowing what was required of her, threw over them her weeds, encircled them with coral, and encrusted them with shells; the whole was cemented by remaining two hundred years beneath these almost impervious depths,—for a revolution carried away the emperor who wished to make the trial, and only left the documents proving the manufacture of the jars and their descent into the sea. At the end of two hundred

years the documents were found ; and they thought of bringing up the jars. Divers descended in machines, made expressly on the discovery, into the bay where they were thrown ; but of ten three only remained, the rest having been broken by the waves. I am fond of these jars, upon which perhaps misshapen, frightful monsters have fixed their cold dull eyes, and in which myriads of small fish have slept, seeking a refuge from the pursuit of their enemies."

Meanwhile Danglars, who cared little for curiosities, was mechanically tearing off the blossoms of a splendid orange-tree one after another. When he had finished with the orange-tree he began at the cactus ; but this, not being so easily plucked as the orange-tree, pricked him dreadfully. He shuddered, and rubbed his eyes as though awaking from a dream.

" Monsieur," said Monte Cristo to him, " I do not recommend my pictures to you who possess such splendid paintings ; but nevertheless here are two by Hobbema, a Paul Potter, a Mieris, two by Gerard Douw, a Raphael, a Vandyke, a Zurbaran, and two or three Murillos worth looking at."

" Stay ! " said Debray ; " I recognize this Hobbema."

" Ah, indeed ! "

" Yes ; it was proposed for the Museum."

" Which, I believe, does not contain one ? " said Monte Cristo.

" No ; and yet they refused to buy it."

" Why ? " said Château-Renaud.

" You pretend not to know ; because Government was not rich enough."

" Ah, pardon me ! " said Château-Renaud ; " I have heard of these things every day during the last eight years, and I cannot understand them yet."

" You will by and by," said Debray.

" I think not," replied Château-Renaud.

" Major Bartolomeo Cavalcanti and Vicomte Andrea Cavalcanti ! " announced Baptistin.

A black satin stock, fresh from the maker's hands, gray mustaches, a bold eye, a major's uniform ornamented with three medals and five crosses — in fact, the thorough bearing of an old soldier — such was the appearance of Major Bartolomeo Cavalcanti, that tender father with whom we are already acquainted. Close to him, dressed in entirely new clothes, advanced smilingly Vicomte Andrea Cavalcanti, the dutiful son, whom we also know. The three young men were talking together. On the entrance of the newcomers their eyes glanced from father to son, and then naturally enough rested on the latter, whom they began criticising.

" Cavalcanti ! " said Debray.

" A fine name ! " said Morrel.

" Yes," said Château-Renaud ; " these Italians are well named and badly dressed."

" You are fastidious, Château-Renaud," replied Debray ; " those clothes are well cut and quite new."

" That is just what I find fault with. That gentleman appears to be well dressed for the first time in his life."

" Who are those gentlemen ? " asked Danglars of Monte Cristo.

" You heard, — Cavalcanti."

" That tells me their name and nothing else."

" Ah, true ! You do not know the Italian nobility ; the Cavalcanti are all descended from princes."

" Have they any fortune ? "

" An enormous one."

" What do they do ? "

" They try to spend it all. They have some business

with you, I think, from what they told me the day before yesterday. I indeed invited them here to-day on your account. I will introduce you to them."

"But they appear to speak French with a very pure accent," said Danglars.

"The son has been educated in a college in the South,—in Marseilles, I believe, or in that neighborhood. You will find him quite enthusiastic."

"Upon what subject?" asked Madame Danglars.

"The French ladies, Madame. He has made up his mind to take a wife from Paris."

"A fine idea, that of his!" said Danglars, shrugging his shoulders.

Madame Danglars looked at her husband with an expression which at any other time would have indicated a storm, but for the second time she controlled herself.

"The baron appears thoughtful to-day," said Monte Cristo to her; "are they going to put him in the ministry?"

"Not yet, I think. More likely he has been speculating on the Bourse and has lost money."

"Monsieur and Madame de Villefort!" cried Baptistin.

The two persons thus announced entered. M. de Villefort, notwithstanding his self-control, was visibly affected; and when Monte Cristo touched his hand he perceived that it trembled. "Certainly, women alone know how to dissimulate," said he to himself, glancing at Madame Danglars, who was smiling on the *procureur du roi* and embracing his wife. After a short time the count saw Bertuccio, who until then had been occupied on the other side of the house, glide into an adjoining room. He went to him. "What do you want, M. Bertuccio?" said he.

"Your Excellency has not stated the number of guests."

"Ah, true!"

“ How many covers ? ”

“ Count for yourself.”

“ Is every one here, your Excellency ? ”

“ Yes.”

Bertuccio glanced through the door, which was ajar. The count watched him. “ Good heavens ! ” he exclaimed.

“ What is the matter ? ” said the count.

“ That woman ! that woman ! ”

“ Which ? ”

“ The one with a white dress and so many diamonds, — the fair one.”

“ Madame Danglars ? ”

“ I do not know her name ; but it is she, Monsieur, it is she ! ”

“ Whom do you mean ? ”

“ The woman of the garden ! — she that was *enceinte* — she who was walking while she waited for — ” Bertuccio stood at the open door, with his eyes starting and his hair on end.

“ Waiting for whom ? ”

Bertuccio, without answering, pointed to Villefort almost with the gesture which Macbeth used to point out Banquo.

“ Oh, oh ! ” he at length muttered, “ do you see ? ”

“ What ? Who ? ”

“ Him ! ”

“ Him ! M. de Villefort, the *procureur du roi* ? Certainly I see him.”

“ Then I did not kill him ! ”

“ Really, I think you are going mad, good Bertuccio,” said the count.

“ Then he is not dead ! ”

“ No ; you see plainly he is not dead. Instead of striking between the sixth and seventh left ribs, as your countrymen do, you must have struck higher or lower ; and life is

very tenacious in these lawyers,—or rather there is no truth in anything you have told me; it was a flight of the imagination, a dream of your fancy. You went to sleep full of thoughts of vengeance; they weighed heavily upon your stomach,—you had the nightmare, that's all. Come, calm yourself, and reckon: Monsieur and Madame de Villefort, two; Monsieur and Madame Danglars, four; M. de Château-Renaud, M. Debray, M. Morrel, seven; Major Bartolomeo Cavalcanti, eight."

"Eight!" repeated Bertuccio.

"Stop! You are in a shocking hurry to be off; you forget one of my guests. Lean a little to the left. Stay! look at M. Andrea Cavalcanti, that young man in a black coat, looking at Murillo's Madonna; now he is turning."

This time Bertuccio would have uttered an exclamation had not a look from Monte Cristo silenced him. "Benedetto!" he muttered; "fatality!"

"Half-past six o'clock has just struck, M. Bertuccio," said the count, severely; "I ordered dinner at that hour, and I do not like to wait;" and he returned to his guests, while Bertuccio, leaning against the walls, succeeded in reaching the dining-room. Five minutes afterwards the doors of the drawing-room were thrown open, and Bertuccio, appearing, said with a violent effort, "Monsieur the Count is served."

The Count of Monte Cristo offered his arm to Madame de Villefort. "M. de Villefort," he said, "will you conduct the Baronne Danglars?"

Villefort complied, and they passed on to the dining-room.

CHAPTER XI.

THE DINNER.

IT was evident that one sentiment animated all of the guests on entering the dining-room. Each one asked himself what strange influence had conducted them to this house ; and yet astonished, even uneasy though they were, they still felt they would not like to be absent. Though the recent date of the count's social relations, his eccentric and isolated position, his astounding and almost fabulous fortune should have suggested to the men the duty of circumspection, and to the women the impropriety of entering a house where there were no women to receive them, men and women broke the bounds of caution and conventionality ; and curiosity, urging with its irresistible spur, triumphed over everything. Even Cavalcanti and his son — the one in spite of his stiffness, the other in spite of his recklessness — seemed preoccupied on finding themselves in the house of this man whose purposes they could not comprehend, brought into association with other men whom they then saw for the first time. Madame Danglars had started when Villefort, on the count's invitation, offered his arm ; and Villefort felt that his glance was uneasy beneath his gold spectacles, when he felt the arm of the baroness press upon his own. Nothing of this had escaped the count ; and even by this mere contact of individuals the scene had already acquired considerable interest for an observer. M. de Villefort had on the right hand Madame Danglars, on his left Morrel. The count was seated be-

tween Madame de Villefort and Danglars ; the other seats were filled by Debray, who was placed between the two Cavalcanti, and by Château-Renaud, seated between Madame de Villefort and Morrel.

The repast was magnificent ; Monte Cristo had endeavored completely to overturn the Parisian symmetry, and to feed the curiosity rather than the appetite of his guests. It was an Oriental feast that he offered to them, but Oriental in the way that feasts of Arabian fairies might be. Every delicious fruit that the four quarters of the globe could provide was heaped in vases from China and jars from Japan. Rare birds, retaining their most brilliant plumage ; enormous fish, spread upon massive silver dishes ; together with every wine produced in the Archipelago, Asia Minor, or the Cape, sparkling in bottles whose grotesque shape seemed to give an additional flavor to the wine,—all these, like one of those displays with which Apicius of old gratified his guests, passed in review before the eyes of the Parisians, who understood that it was possible to expend one thousand louis upon a dinner for ten persons, but only on the condition of eating pearls, like Cleopatra, or drinking beaten gold, like Lorenzo de Medici. Monte Cristo noticed the general astonishment, and began laughing and joking about it. "Gentlemen," he said, "you will admit that when one has arrived at a certain degree of fortune the superfluities of life are the only necessities ; and the ladies will allow that after having risen to a certain eminence of position the ideal alone can be more exalted. Now, to follow out this reasoning, what is the marvellous ? That which we do not understand. What is it that we really desire ? That which we cannot obtain. Now, to see things which I cannot understand, to procure impossibilities, these are the study of my life. I gratify my wishes by two means, — my will and my money. I take

as much interest in the pursuit of some whim as you do, M. Danglars, in forming a new railway line ; you, M. de Villefort, in condemning a culprit to death ; you, M. Debray, in pacifying a kingdom ; you, M. de Château-Renaud, in pleasing a woman ; and you, Morrel, in breaking a horse that no one can ride. For example, you see these two fish,—one brought from fifty leagues beyond St. Petersburg, the other from within five leagues of Naples. Is it not amusing to see them both on the same table ? ”

“ What are the two fish ? ” asked Danglars.

“ M. de Château-Renaud, who has lived in Russia, will tell you the name of one,” replied Monte Cristo ; “ and Major Cavalcanti, who is an Italian, will tell you the name of the other.”

“ This one is, I think, a sterlet,” said Château-Renaud.

“ And that one,” said Cavalcanti, “ is, if I mistake not, a lamprey.”

“ Just so. Now, M. Danglars, ask these gentlemen where they are caught.”

“ Sterlets,” said Château-Renaud, “ are found only in the Volga.”

“ And,” said Cavalcanti, “ I know that Lake Fusaro alone supplies lampreys of that size.”

“ Exactly ; one comes from the Volga, and the other from Lake Fusaro.”

“ Impossible ! ” cried all the guests simultaneously.

“ Well, this is just what amuses me,” said Monte Cristo. “ I am like Nero, — *cupitor impossibilium* ; and that it is which is amusing you at this moment. This fish, which very likely is no better than perch or salmon, seems exquisite to you because it seemed impossible to procure it, and yet it is here.”

“ But how could you have these fish brought to France ? ”

“ Oh, nothing more easy. Each fish was brought over

in a cask,—one filled with river herbs and weeds, the other with rushes and lake plants; they were placed in a wagon built on purpose. And thus the sterlet lived twelve days, the lamprey eight; and both were alive when my cook seized them, killing one with milk, and the other with wine. You do not believe me, M. Danglars!"

"I cannot help doubting," answered Danglars, with his stupid smile.

"Baptistin," said the count, "have the other fish brought in,—the sterlet and the lamprey which came in the other casks, and which are yet alive." Danglars opened his bewildered eyes; the company clapped their hands. Four servants carried in two casks covered with aquatic plants, and in each of which was breathing a fish similar to those on the table.

"But why have two of each sort?" asked Danglars.

"Merely because one might die," carelessly answered Monte Cristo.

"You are certainly an extraordinary man," said Danglars; "and philosophers may well say it is a fine thing to be rich."

"And to have ideas," added Madame Danglars.

"Oh, do not give me credit on that score, Madame; it was a practice much in vogue among the Romans. Pliny relates that they sent slaves from Ostia to Rome, who carried on their heads fish of the species which he calls the *mulus*, and which from the description was probably the gold-fish. It was also considered a luxury to have them alive, it being an amusing sight to see them die,—for when dying they change color three or four times, and like the rainbow when it disappears, pass through all the prismatic shades; after that they were sent to the kitchen. Their agony formed part of their merit; if they were not seen alive, they were despised when dead."

"Yes," said Debray; "but then Ostia is only a few leagues from Rome."

"True," said Monte Cristo; "but what would be the use of living eighteen hundred years after Lucullus, if we can do no better than he could?"

The two Cavalcanti opened their eyes, but had the good sense not to say anything.

"All this is very extraordinary," said Château-Renaud; "still, what I admire the most, I confess, is the marvellous promptitude with which your orders are executed. Is it not true that you bought this house only five or six days ago?"

"Certainly not longer."

"Well, I am sure it is quite transformed since last week. If I remember rightly, it had another entrance, and the courtyard was paved and empty; while to-day we have a splendid lawn, bordered by trees which appear to be a hundred years old."

"Why not? I am fond of grass and shade," said Monte Cristo.

"Yes," said Madame de Villefort; "the door was towards the road before. And on the day of my miraculous escape you brought me into the house from the road, I remember."

"Yes, Madame," said Monte Cristo; "but I preferred having an entrance which would allow me to see the Bois de Boulogne over my gate."

"In four days!" said Morrel; "it is extraordinary!"

"Indeed," said Château-Renaud, "to make a new house out of an old one is a wonderful achievement; this house was very old, and dull too. I recollect coming for my mother to look at it when M. de Saint-Méran advertised it for sale two or three years ago."

"M. de Saint-Méran!" said Madame de Villefort;

"then this house belonged to M. de Saint-Méran before you bought it?"

"It appears so," replied Monte Cristo.

"What! 'it appears?' Do you not know of whom you purchased it?"

"No, indeed; my steward transacts all this business for me."

"It is certainly ten years since the house had been occupied," said Château-Renaud; "and it was quite melancholy to look at it, with the blinds closed, the doors locked, and the weeds in the court. Really, if the house had not belonged to the father-in-law of the *procureur du roi*, one might have thought it some accursed place where a horrible crime had been committed."

Villefort, who had hitherto not tasted the three or four glasses of rare wine which were placed before him, here took one, and drank it off. Monte Cristo allowed a moment to elapse, and then said, "It is singular, Baron, but the same idea came to me the first time I entered the house; it looked so gloomy I should never have bought it if my steward had not acted for me. Perhaps the fellow had been bribed by the notary."

"It is probable," stammered out Villefort, trying to smile; "but believe me, I have nothing to do with that bribery. This house is part of the marriage-portion of Valentine; and M. de Saint-Méran wished to sell it, for if it had remained another year or two uninhabited, it would have fallen to ruin." It was Morrel's turn to become pale.

"There was especially one room," continued Monte Cristo, "very plain in appearance, hung with red damask, which, I know not why, appeared to me quite dramatic."

"Why so?" asked Debray; "why dramatic?"

"Can we account for instinct?" said Monte Cristo.

"Are there not some places where we seem to breathe sadness? why, we cannot tell. A chain of recollections, an idea, carries you back to other times, to other places, which very likely have no connection with the time and place in which we are at the moment. And there is something in that chamber which reminds me forcibly of the chamber of the Marquise de Ganges or that of Desdemona. Stay! since we have finished dinner, I will show it to you; and then we will take coffee in the garden. After dinner, the spectacle."

Monte Cristo looked inquiringly at his guests. Madame de Villefort rose, Monte Cristo did the same, and the rest followed their example. Villefort and Madame Danglars remained for a moment as if rooted to their seats; they interrogated each other with cold, glazed eyes.

"Did you hear?" said Madame Danglars.

"We must go," replied Villefort, offering his arm.

All the others were already scattered in different parts of the house, urged by curiosity,—for they thought the visit would not be limited to the one room, and that at the same time they would obtain a view of the rest of the building which Monte Cristo had made into a palace. Each one went out by the open doors. Monte Cristo waited for the two who remained; then when they had passed, he closed the procession with a smile, which if they could have understood it would have alarmed them much more than a visit to the room they were about to enter. They began by walking through the apartments, many of which were fitted up in the Eastern style, with cushions and divans instead of beds, and pipes instead of furniture. The drawing-rooms were decorated with the rarest pictures by the old masters; the boudoirs hung with draperies from China, of fanciful colors, fantastic design, and wonderful texture. At length they arrived at

the famous room. There was nothing particularly noticeable in it, except that although daylight had disappeared, it was not lighted, and everything in it remained antique, while the other rooms had been redecorated. These two causes were enough to give it a gloomy effect.

"Oh!" cried Madame de Villefort. "It is really frightful!"

Madame Danglars tried to utter a few words, but was not heard. Many observations were made, which expressed the unanimous opinion that the chamber had a sinister appearance.

"Is it not so?" asked Monte Cristo. "Look at that large clumsy bed, hung with that gloomy, blood-colored drapery! And those two crayon portraits, that have faded from the damp, do they not seem to say with their pale lips and staring eyes, 'We have seen'?"

Villefort became livid; Madame Danglars fell into a long seat placed near the chimney.

"Oh!" said Madame de Villefort, smiling, "are you courageous enough to sit down upon the very seat perhaps upon which the crime was committed?"

Madame Danglars rose suddenly.

"And then," said Monte Cristo, "this is not all."

"What is there more?" said Debray, who had not failed to notice the agitation of Madame Danglars.

"Ah! what else is there?" said Danglars; "for at present I cannot say that I have seen anything extraordinary. What do you say, M. Cavalcanti?"

"Ah!" said he, "we have at Pisa the tower of Ugolino; at Ferraro, the prison of Tasso; at Rimini, the room of Francesca and Paolo."

"Yes, but you have not this little staircase," said Monte Cristo, opening a door concealed by the drapery. "Look at it, and tell me what you think of it."

"What a wicked-looking crooked staircase," said M. de Château-Renaud, smiling.

"I do not know whether the wine of Chios produces melancholy, but certainly everything appears to me black in this house," said Debray.

Ever since Valentine's dowry had been mentioned, Morrel had been silent and sad.

"Can you imagine," said Monte Cristo, "some Othello or Abbé de Ganges, on a stormy, dark night, descending these stairs step by step, carrying a funereal burden, which he wishes to hide from the sight of man, if not from God ?"

Madame Danglars half fainted on the arm of Villefort, who was obliged to support himself against the wall.

"Ah, Madame !" cried Debray, "what is the matter with you ? How pale you look !"

"This is what is the matter with her," said Madame de Villefort ; "it is very simple,—M. de Monte Cristo is relating horrible stories to us, doubtless intending to frighten us to death."

"Yes," said Villefort, "really, Count, you frighten the ladies."

"What is the matter ?" asked Debray, in a whisper, of Madame Danglars.

"Nothing," she replied with a violent effort. "I want air ! that is all."

"Will you come into the garden ?" said Debray, advancing towards the back staircase.

"No, no !" she answered ; "I would rather remain here."

"Are you really frightened, Madame ?" said Monte Cristo.

"Oh, no, Monsieur," said Madame Danglars ; "but you suppose scenes in a manner which gives them the appearance of reality."

"Ah, yes!" said Monte Cristo, smiling; "it is all a matter of the imagination. Why should we not imagine this the apartment of an honest family-woman; and this bed with red hangings, a bed visited by the goddess Luccina; and that mysterious staircase, the passage through which, not to disturb their sleep, the doctor and nurse pass, or even the father carrying the sleeping child?"

Here Madame Danglars, instead of being calmed by the pleasing picture, uttered a groan and fainted.

"Madame Danglars is ill," said Villefort; "it would be better to take her to her carriage."

"Oh! and I have forgotten my smelling-bottle!" said Monte Cristo.

"I have mine," said Madame de Villefort; and she passed over to Monte Cristo a bottle full of the same kind of red liquid whose good properties the count had tested on Édouard.

"Ah!" said Monte Cristo, taking it from her hand.

"Yes," she said, "at your advice I have tried."

"And have you succeeded?"

"I think so."

Madame Danglars was carried into the adjoining room; Monte Cristo dropped a very small portion of the red liquid upon her lips; she returned to consciousness. "Ah!" she cried, "what a frightful dream!"

Villefort pressed her hand to let her know it was not a dream. M. Danglars was sought, but little interested in poetical ideas, he had gone into the garden, and was talking with Major Cavalcanti on the projected railway from Leghorn to Florence. Monte Cristo seemed in despair. He took the arm of Madame Danglars, and conducted her into the garden, where they found Danglars taking coffee between the Cavalcanti. "Really, Madame," he said, "did I alarm you much?"

"Oh, no, Monsieur," she answered, "but you know things impress us differently, according to our different moods."

Villefort forced a laugh. "And sometimes, you know," he said, "an idea, a supposition, is sufficient."

"Well," said Monte Cristo, "you may believe me if you like, but it is my belief that a crime has been committed in this house."

"Take care!" said Madame de Villefort, "the *procureur du roi* is here."

"Ah!" replied Monte Cristo, "since that is the case I will take advantage of his presence to make my declaration."

"Your declaration!" said Villefort.

"Yes, before witnesses."

"Oh, this is very interesting," said Debray; "if there really has been a crime, we will investigate it."

"There has been a crime," said Monte Cristo. "Come this way, gentlemen; come, M. de Villefort, for a declaration to be available should be made before the competent authorities." He then took Villefort's arm, and at the same time holding that of Madame Danglars under his own, he dragged the *procureur* to the plantain-tree, where the shade was thickest. All the other guests followed. "Stay," said Monte Cristo, "here, in this very spot" (and he stamped upon the ground), "I had the earth dug up and fresh mould put in, to refresh these old trees; well, my man, digging, found a box, or rather the iron-work of a box, in the midst of which was the skeleton of a newly-born infant."

Monte Cristo felt the arm of Madame Danglars stiffen, while that of Villefort trembled.

"A newly-born infant!" repeated Debray; "the devil! the affair is becoming serious, it seems to me!"

"Well," said Château-Renaud, "I was not wrong just now, then, when I said that houses had souls and faces

like men, and that their exteriors carried the impress of their characters. This house was gloomy because it was remorseful ; it was remorseful because it concealed a crime."

"Who said it was a crime ?" asked Villefort, with a last effort.

"What ! is it not a crime to bury a living child in a garden ?" cried Monte Cristo. "And pray what do you call such an action ?"

"But who said it was buried alive ?"

"Why bury it there if it were dead ? This garden has never been a cemetery."

"What is done to infanticides in this country ?" asked Major Cavalcanti, innocently.

"Oh, their heads are soon cut off," said Danglars.

"Ah, indeed !" said Cavalcanti.

"I think so ; am I not right, M. de Villefort ?" asked Monte Cristo.

"Yes, Count," replied M. de Villefort, in a voice now scarcely human.

Monte Cristo saw that the two persons for whom he had prepared this scene could bear no more ; so not wishing to carry it too far, he said, "Come, gentlemen, some coffee, we seem to have forgotten it ;" and he conducted the guests back to the table on the lawn.

"Indeed, Count," said Madame Danglars, "I am ashamed to own it, but all your frightful stories have so upset me that I must beg you to let me sit down ;" and she fell into a chair.

Monte Cristo bowed, and went to Madame de Villefort. "I think Madame Danglars again requires your bottle," he said.

But before Madame de Villefort could reach her friend, the *procureur* had found time to whisper to Madame Danglars, "I must speak to you."

"When?"

"To-morrow."

"Where?"

"In my office, if you will; that is the safest place."

"I will go." At this moment Madame de Villefort approached. "Thanks, my dear friend," said Madame Danglars, trying to smile; "it is over now, and I am much better."

CHAPTER XII.

THE BEGGAR.

THE evening passed on ; Madame de Villefort expressed a desire to return to Paris, which Madame Danglars had not dared to do, notwithstanding the uneasiness she experienced. On his wife's request, M. de Villefort was the first to give the signal of departure. He offered a seat in his landau to Madame Danglars, that she might be under the care of his wife. As for M. Danglars, absorbed in an interesting conversation with M. Cavalcanti, he paid no attention to anything that was passing.

Monte Cristo, when he had begged the smelling-bottle of Madame de Villefort, had remarked the approach of Villefort to Madame Danglars, and had divined what he had said to her, though the words had been uttered in so low a voice as hardly to be heard by Madame Danglars. Without opposing their arrangements, he allowed Morrel, Château-Renaud, and Debray to leave on horseback, and the ladies in M. de Villefort's carriage. Danglars, more and more delighted with Major Cavalcanti, had offered him a seat in his carriage.

Andrea Cavalcanti found his tilbury waiting at the door ; the groom, in every respect a caricature of the English fashion, was standing on tiptoe to hold a large iron-gray horse. Andrea had spoken very little during dinner ; he was an intelligent lad, and he feared to utter some absurdity before so many grand people, among whom his dilating eyes beheld, not without fear, the *procureur du*

roi. Then he had been seized upon by Danglars, who, after a rapid glance at the stiffnecked old major and his modest son, taking into consideration the hospitality of the count towards them, made up his mind that he was in the society of some nabob come to Paris to finish the worldly education of his only son. He contemplated with unspeakable delight the large diamond which shone on the major's little finger ; for the major, like a prudent man, in the fear that some accident might happen to his banknotes, had immediately converted them into articles of value. Then after dinner, on the pretext of business, he had questioned the father and son upon their mode of living ; and the father and son, previously informed that it was through Danglars the one was to receive his forty-eight thousand livres, and the other fifty thousand livres annually, were so full of affability that they would have shaken hands even with the banker's servants, so much did their gratitude feel the need of expression. One thing above all the rest heightened the respect, we almost might say the veneration of Danglars for Cavalcanti. The latter, faithful to the principle of Horace, *nil admirari*, had contented himself in proving his knowledge by saying in what lake the best lampreys were caught. Then he had eaten his portion of the one that was served without saying a word. Danglars therefore concluded that such luxuries were common at the table of the illustrious descendant of the Cavalcanti, who most likely in Lucca fed upon trout brought from Switzerland, and lobsters sent from England, by the same means used by the count to bring the lampreys from the Lake Fusaro, and the sterlets from the Volga ; and therefore he received with marked cordiality these words of Cavalcanti, "To-morrow, Monsieur, I shall have the honor of waiting upon you on business."

"And I, Monsieur," said Danglars, "shall be most

happy to receive you." Upon which he offered to take Cavalcanti in his carriage to the Hôtel des Princes, if it would not be depriving him of the company of his son. To this Cavalcanti replied by saying that for some time past his son had lived independently of him ; that he had his own horses and carriages ; and that not having come together, it would not be difficult for them to leave separately. The major seated himself therefore by the side of Danglars, who was more and more charmed with the ideas of order and economy which ruled this man, who yet allowed his son fifty thousand livres a year, — which would imply a fortune of five hundred thousand or six hundred thousand livres.

As for Andrea, he began, by way of showing off, to scold his groom, who, instead of bringing the tilbury to the steps of the house, had taken it to the outer door, thus giving him the trouble of walking thirty steps to reach it. The groom heard him with humility, took the bit of the impatient animal with his left hand, and with the right held out the reins to Andrea, who, taking them from him, rested his polished boot lightly on the step. At that moment a hand touched his shoulder. The young man turned round, thinking that Danglars or Monte Cristo had forgotten something they wished to tell him, and had recalled the matter just as he was departing. But instead of either of these, he saw a strange face, sunburnt and encircled by a beard, with eyes brilliant as carbuncles, and a smile upon the mouth which displayed a perfect set of white teeth, pointed and sharp as the wolf's or jackal's. A red handkerchief encircled his gray head ; torn and filthy garments covered his large bony limbs, which seemed as though, like those of a skeleton, they would rattle as he walked ; and the hand with which he leaned upon the young man's shoulder, and which was the

first thing Andrea saw, seemed of a gigantic size. Did the young man recognize that face by the light of the lantern in his tilbury, or was he merely struck with the horrible appearance of his interrogator? We cannot say, but only relate the fact that he shuddered and stepped back suddenly. "What do you want of me?" he asked.

"Pardon me, my friend, if I disturb you," said the man with the red handkerchief; "but I want to speak to you."

"You have no right to beg at night," said the groom, making a movement to rid his master of the troublesome intruder.

"I am not begging, my fine fellow," said the unknown to the servant, with so ironical an expression of eye and so frightful a smile that he started back; "I only wish to say two or three words to your master, who gave me a commission to execute about a fortnight ago."

"Come," said Andrea, with sufficient nerve for his servant not to perceive his agitation, "what do you want? Speak quickly, friend."

The man said in a low voice, "I wish—I wish you to spare me the walk back to Paris. I am very tired; and not having eaten so good a dinner as you have, I can scarcely support myself."

The young man shuddered at this strange familiarity. "Tell me," he said,—"tell me what you want."

"Well, then, I want you to take me up in your fine carriage, and carry me back." Andrea turned pale, but said nothing. "Yes," said the man, thrusting his hands into his pockets, and looking impudently at the youth; "I have taken the whim into my head; do you understand, M. Benedetto?"

At this name, no doubt, the young man reflected a little, for he went towards his groom, saying, "This man is right; I did indeed charge him with a commission, the

result of which he must tell me. Walk to the barrier ; there take a cab, that you may not be too late." The surprised groom retired.

" Let me at least reach a shady spot," said Andrea.

" Oh ! as for that, I 'll conduct you to a splendid spot," said the man with the handkerchief ; and taking the horse's bit, he led the tilbury to a place where it was certainly impossible for any one to witness the honor that Andrea conferred upon him.

" Don't think I want the honor of riding in your fine carriage," said he ; " oh, no, it 's only because I am tired, and also because I have a little business to talk over with you."

" Come, step in ! " said the young man.

It was a pity this scene had not occurred in daylight, for it would have been a curious spectacle to see this rascal throwing himself heavily down on the cushion beside the young and elegant driver of the tilbury. Andrea drove past the last house in the village without saying a word to his companion, who smiled complacently, as though well pleased to find himself travelling in so comfortable a vehicle. Once out of Auteuil, Andrea looked around, in order to assure himself that he could be neither seen nor heard ; and then stopping the horse and crossing his arms before the man, he asked, " Now, tell me why you come to disturb my tranquillity ? "

" But you, my boy, why have you deceived me ? "

" How have I deceived you ? "

" How,—do you ask ? When we parted at the Pont du Var, you told me you were going to travel through Piedmont and Tuscany ; but instead of that, you come to Paris."

" How does that annoy you ? "

" It does not ; on the contrary, I think it will answer my purpose."

"So," said Andrea, "you are speculating upon me?"

"What fine words he uses!"

"I warn you, M. Caderousse, that you are mistaken."

"Well, well, don't be angry, my boy. You know well enough what it is to be unfortunate; and misfortunes make us jealous. I thought you were earning a living in Tuscany or Piedmont by acting as *facchino* or *cicerone*; and I pitied you sincerely, as I would a child of my own. You know I always did call you my child."

"Come, come, what then?"

"Patience! patience!"

"I am patient, but go on."

"All at once I see you pass through the barrier with a groom, a tilbury, and fine new clothes. You must have discovered a mine, or else become a stock-broker."

"So that, as you acknowledge, you are jealous?"

"No, I am pleased,—so pleased that I wished to congratulate you; but as I am not quite properly dressed, I chose my opportunity, that I might not compromise you."

"Yes, and a fine opportunity you have chosen!" exclaimed Andrea; "you speak to me before my servant."

"How can I help that, my boy? I speak to you when I can catch you. You have a quick horse, a light tilbury, you are naturally as slippery as an eel; if I had missed you to-night, I might not have had another chance."

"You see I do not conceal myself."

"You are lucky; I wish I could say as much. I do conceal myself; and then I was afraid you would not recognize me,—but you did," added Caderousse, with his unpleasant smile. "It was very polite of you."

"Come," said Andrea, "what do you want?"

"You do not speak affectionately to me, Benedetto, my old friend; that is not right. Take care, or I may become troublesome."

This menace smothered the young man's passion. He put his horse to a trot. "You should not speak so to an old friend, Caderousse, as you said just now. You are a native of Marseilles ; I am — "

"Do you know, then, what you are now ?"

"No ; but I was brought up in Corsica. You are old and obstinate ; I am young and wilful. Between folks like us threats are out of place ; everything should be amicably arranged. Is it my fault if Fortune, which has frowned on you, has been kind to me ?"

"Fortune has been kind to you, then ? Your tilbury, your groom, your clothes, are not then hired ? Good ! so much the better !" said Caderousse, his eyes sparkling with avarice.

"Oh ! you knew that well enough before speaking to me," said Andrea, becoming more and more excited. "If I had been wearing a handkerchief like yours on my head, rags on my back, and worn-out shoes on my feet, you would not have known me."

"You wrong me, my boy ; at any rate, now that I have found you, nothing prevents my being as well dressed as any one, knowing, as I do, the goodness of your heart. If you have two coats, you will give me one of them. I used to divide my soup and beans with you when you were hungry."

"True," said Andrea.

"What an appetite you used to have ! is it as good now ?"

"Oh, yes," replied Andrea, laughing.

"How did you come to be dining with that prince whose house you have just left ?"

"He is not a prince ; simply a count."

"A count, and a rich one too, eh ?"

"Yes, but you had better not have anything to say to him ; he is probably not very patient."

"Oh, be satisfied ! I have no design upon your count, and you shall have him all to yourself. But," added Caderousse, again smiling with the disagreeable expression he had before assumed, "you must pay for it, you understand ?"

"Well, what do you want ?"

"I think that with a hundred livres per month — "

"Well ?"

"I could live — "

"Upon a hundred livres !"

"Poorly, you understand ; but with — "

"With ?"

"With a hundred and fifty livres I should be quite happy."

"Here are two hundred," said Andrea ; and he placed ten louis d'or in the hand of Caderousse.

"Good !" said Caderousse.

"Apply to the steward on the first day of every month, and you will receive the same sum."

"There now, again you degrade me."

"How so ?"

"You put me in communication with the servants ; no, take notice that I will have business only with you."

"Well, be it so, then. Take it from me, then, and on the first of every month, so long at least as I receive my income, you shall be paid yours."

"Come, come ; I always said you were a fine fellow, and it is a blessing when good fortune happens to such as you. But tell me all about it."

"Why do you wish to know ?" asked Cavalcanti.

"What ! do you still distrust me ?"

"No ; well, I have found my father."

"What ! a real father ?"

"Of course, so long as he pays me — "

" You 'll honor and believe him,—that 's right. What is his name ? "

" Major Cavalcanti."

" Is he pleased with you ? "

" So far I have appeared to answer his purpose."

" And who found this father for you ? "

" The Count of Monte Cristo."

" The man whose house you have just left ? "

" Yes."

" I wish you would try to find me a situation with him as grandfather, since he holds the money-chest."

" Well, I will mention you to him. Meanwhile, what are you going to do ? "

" I ? "

" Yes, you."

" It is very kind of you to trouble yourself about me," said Caderousse.

" Since you interest yourself in my affairs, I think it is now my turn to ask you some questions."

" Ah, true ! Well ; I shall rent a room in some respectable house, wear a decent coat, shave every day, and go and read the papers in a café. Then in the evening I will go to the theatre ; I shall have the appearance of a retired baker. This is my wish."

" Come, if you will only put this scheme into execution, and be steady, nothing could be better."

" Do you think so, M. Bossuet ? And you, what will you become,—a peer of France ? "

" Ah !" said Andrea, " who knows ? "

" Major Cavalcanti is already one perhaps ; but unfortunately hereditary rank is abolished."

" No politics, Caderousse ! And now that you have all you want, and we understand each other, jump down from the tilbury and disappear."

"Not at all, my good friend."

"What! not at all?"

"Why, just think for a moment; with this red handkerchief on my head, with scarcely any shoes, no papers, and ten gold napoleons in my pocket, without reckoning what was there before, making in all just two hundred livres,—why, I should certainly be arrested at the barriers! Then to justify myself, I should be obliged to say that you gave me the money. This would cause inquiries; it would be found that I left Toulon without giving due notice, and I should then be reconducted to the shores of the Mediterranean. Then I should become simply No. 106; and good-by to my dream of resembling the retired baker! No, no, my boy; I prefer remaining honorably in the capital."

Andrea scowled. Certainly, as he had himself boasted, the reputed son of Major Cavalcanti was a wicked fellow. He drew up for an instant, and as he threw a rapid glance around, his hand went innocently into his pocket and began playing with the trigger-guard of a pocket-pistol. But meanwhile Caderousse, who had never taken his eyes off his companion, passed his hand behind his back, and very gently opened a long Spanish knife, which he always carried with him to be ready in case of need. The two friends, as we see, were worthy of and understood one another. Andrea's hand left his pocket inoffensively, and was carried up to the red mustache, which it played with for some time. "Good Caderousse!" he said; "how happy you will be!"

"I will do my best," said the innkeeper of the Pont du Gard, returning his knife to his sleeve.

"Well, then, we will go into Paris. But how will you pass through the barrier without exciting suspicion? It seems to me that you are in more danger riding than on foot."

"Wait," said Caderousse, "we shall see." He then took the great-coat with the large collar, which the groom had left behind in the tilbury, and put it on his back; then he took off Cavalcanti's hat, which he placed upon his own head, and finally assumed the careless attitude of a servant whose master drives himself.

"But tell me," said Andrea, "am I to remain bare-headed?"

"Pooh!" said Caderousse; "it is so windy that your hat will appear to have been blown away."

"Come on, then," said Andrea; "and let us end it."

"Who is stopping you?" said Caderousse; "not I, I hope."

"Pshaw!" said Andrea.

They passed the barrier without accident. At the first cross-street Andrea stopped his horse, and Caderousse leaped out.

"Well!" said Andrea, "my servant's coat and my hat?"

"Ah!" said Caderousse, "you would not like me to risk taking cold?"

"But what am I to do?"

"You! oh, you are young, while I am beginning to get old. *Au revoir, Benedetto;*" and running into a court, he disappeared.

"Alas!" said Andrea, sighing, "one cannot be completely happy in this world!"

CHAPTER XIII.

A CONJUGAL SCENE.

AT the Place Louis XV. the three young people separated,—that is to say, Morrel went by way of the boulevards, Château-Renaud took the Pont de la Révolution, and Debray followed the direction of the quay. Most probably Morrel and Château-Renaud returned to their “domestic hearths,” as they say in the forum of the Chamber in well-turned speeches, and in the theatre of the Rue Richelieu in well-written pieces; but it was not so with Debray. When he reached the wicket of the Louvre, he turned to the left, galloped across the Carrousel, passed through the Rue St. Roch, and issuing from the Rue de la Michodière, he arrived at M. Danglars’s door at the same time that Villefort’s landau, after having deposited him and his wife at the Faubourg St. Honoré, stopped to leave the baroness at her own house. Debray, with the air of a man familiar with the house, entered first into the court, threw his bridle to a footman, and returned to the carriage-door to receive Madame Danglars, to whom he offered his arm to conduct her to her apartments. The gate once closed, and Debray and the baroness alone in the court, he asked, “What was the matter with you, Hermine? and why were you so affected at that story, or rather fable, which the count related?”

“Because I have been in such shocking spirits all the evening, my friend,” said the baroness.

“No, Hermine,” replied Debray; “you cannot make

me believe that. On the contrary, you were in excellent spirits when you arrived at the count's. M. Danglars was disagreeable, certainly ; but I know how much you care for his ill-humor. Some one has vexed you. Tell me about it ; you know well that I will not allow you to endure any impertinence."

" You are deceived, Lucien, I assure you," replied Madame Danglars ; " and what I have told you is true, besides the ill-humor you remarked, but which I did not think it worth while to allude to."

It was evident that Madame Danglars was suffering from that nervous irritability which women frequently cannot account for even to themselves ; or that, as Debray had conjectured, she had experienced some secret agitation that she would not acknowledge to any one. Being a man familiar with moodiness as one of the elements of female life, he did not then press his inquiries, but waited for a more appropriate opportunity, either to question her again or to receive an explanation voluntarily given. At the door of her chamber the baroness met Mademoiselle Cornélie, her confidential maid. " What is my daughter doing ? " she asked.

" She practised all the evening and then went to bed," replied Mademoiselle Cornélie.

" Yet I think I hear her piano."

" It is Mademoiselle Louise d'Armilly, who is playing while Mademoiselle is in bed."

" Well," said Madame Danglars, " come and undress me."

They entered the bedroom. Debray stretched himself upon a large couch, and Madame Danglars passed on into her dressing-room with Mademoiselle Cornélie.

" My dear M. Lucien," said Madame Danglars, through the *portière*, " you are always complaining that Eugénie will not address a word to you."

"Madame," said Lucien, playing with a little dog, who, recognizing him as a friend of the house, expected to be caressed, "I am not the only one who makes similar complaints; I think I heard Morcerf say that he could not extract a word from his *fiancée*."

"True," said Madame Danglars; "but I think that one of these days all that will be changed, and that you will see her enter your study."

"My study?"

"I mean that of the minister."

"And what for?"

"To ask for an engagement at the opera. Really, I never saw such an infatuation for music; it is quite ridiculous for a young lady of fashion."

Debray smiled. "Well," said he, "let her come with your consent and that of the baron, and we will try and give her an engagement, though we are very poor to pay such talent as hers."

"Go, Cornélie," said Madame Danglars; "I do not need you any longer."

Cornélie obeyed; and the next minute Madame Danglars left her room in a charming loose dress and came and sat down close to Debray. Then, thoughtful, she began to caress the little spaniel. Lucien looked at her for a moment in silence. "Come, Hermine," he said after a short time, "answer candidly; something vexes you, is it not so?"

"Nothing," answered the baroness. And yet, as she could scarcely breathe, she rose and went towards a looking-glass. "I am frightful to-night," she said.

Debray rose, smiling, and was about to contradict the baroness upon this latter point, when the door opened suddenly. M. Danglars appeared; Debray reseated himself. At the noise of the door Madame Danglars turned

round and looked upon her husband with an astonishment she took no trouble to conceal.

"Good-evening, Madame!" said the banker; "good-evening, M. Debray!"

Probably the baroness thought this unexpected visit signified a desire to make amends for the sharp words he had uttered during the day. Assuming a dignified air, she turned round to Debray without answering her husband. "Read me something, M. Debray," she said.

Debray, who was slightly disturbed at this visit, recovered himself when he saw the calmness of the baroness, and took up a book marked by a mother-of-pearl knife inlaid with gold.

"Excuse me," said the banker; "but you will tire yourself, Baroness, by such late hours. It is eleven o'clock; and M. Debray lives at some distance from here."

Debray was petrified, — not that there was anything surprising in Danglars's tone, which was entirely calm and polite; but through that calm and that politeness appeared a certain unusual determination to oppose for that evening the wishes of his wife. The baroness was also surprised, and showed her astonishment by a look which would doubtless have had some effect upon her husband if he had not been intently occupied with the paper, where he was seeking the closing price of the funds; so that the fierce look shot at him was wholly wasted.

"M. Lucien," said the baroness, "I assure you I have no desire to sleep; that I have a thousand things to tell you this evening; and that you are going to spend the night listening to me, even though you should sleep standing."

"I am at your service, Madame," replied Lucien, quietly.

"My dear M. Debray," said the banker, "do not kill yourself listening all night to the follies of Madame Danglars, for you can hear them as well to-morrow; but I claim

to-night, and will devote it, if you will allow me, to talking over some serious matters with my wife."

This time the blow was so well aimed and hit so directly that Lucien and the baroness were staggered ; and they interrogated each other with their eyes, as if to seek help against this aggression ; but the irresistible will of the master of the house prevailed, and the husband was victorious.

"Do not think I wish to turn you out, my dear Debray," continued Danglars ; "oh, no ! not at all ! An unexpected occurrence forces me to ask my wife to have a little conversation with me ; I make such a request so seldom that I am sure you cannot think unkindly of me for it."

Debray muttered something, bowed, and went out, knocking himself against the edge of the door, like Nathan in "*Athalie*."

"It is extraordinary," he said, when the door was closed behind him, "how easily these husbands, whom we ridicule, gain an advantage over us."

Lucien having left, Danglars took his place on the sofa, closed the open book, and placing himself in an attitude outrageously affected, he began playing with the dog ; but the animal, not liking him so well as Debray, and attempting to bite him, Danglars seized him by the skin of his neck, and threw him to the other side of the room upon a couch. The animal uttered a cry during the transit, but arrived at its destination, it crouched behind the cushions, and stupefied at such unusual treatment, remained silent and motionless.

"Do you know, Monsieur," asked the baroness, "that you are improving ? Generally you are only rude ; to-night you are brutal."

"It is because I am in a worse humor than usual," replied Danglars.

Hermine looked at the banker with supreme disdain.

These glances ordinarily exasperated the proud Danglars ; but this evening he took no notice of them.

"And what have I to do with your ill-humor ?" said the baroness, irritated at the impassiveness of her husband. "Do these things concern me ? Keep your ill-humor to yourself, or confine it to your offices ; and since you have clerks whom you pay, vent it upon them."

"Not so," replied Danglars ; "your advice is wrong, so I shall not follow it. My offices are my Pactolus, as I think M. Demoustier says ; and I will not retard its course, or disturb its calm. My clerks are honest men who earn my fortune, whom I pay much below their deserts, if I may value them according to what they bring in ; therefore I shall not get into a passion with them. Those with whom I will be in a passion are those who eat my dinners, mount my horses, and exhaust my fortune."

"And pray who are the persons who exhaust your fortune ? Explain yourself more clearly, I beg you, Monsieur."

"Oh, make yourself easy ! I am not speaking riddles, and you will soon know what I mean. The people who exhaust my fortune are those who draw out seven hundred thousand livres in the course of an hour."

"I do not understand you, Monsieur," said the baroness, trying to disguise the agitation of her voice and the flush of her face.

"You understand me very well, on the contrary," said Danglars ; "but if you will persist, I will tell you that I have just lost seven hundred thousand livres upon the Spanish loan."

"Ah, indeed !" said the baroness, with a sneer ; "and you hold me responsible for that loss ?"

"Why not ?"

"Is it my fault that you have lost seven hundred thousand livres?"

"Certainly it is not mine."

"Once for all, Monsieur," replied the baroness, sharply, "I have told you never to talk money to me; it is a language that I never heard in the house of my parents or in that of my first husband."

"Oh! I can well believe that, for neither of them was worth a penny."

"The better reason for my not being conversant with the slang of the bank, which is here dinning in my ears from morning to night; that noise of jingling crowns which are counted and recounted is odious to me. I know only one sound which is more disagreeable to me, and that is the sound of your voice."

"Really!" said Danglars. "Well, this surprises me, for I thought you took the liveliest interest in my affairs!"

"I! What could put such an idea into your head?"

"Yourself!"

"Ah! indeed!"

"Most assuredly."

"I should like to know upon what occasion?"

"Ah, that is very easily done! Last February you were the first who told me of the Haytian funds. You had dreamed that a ship had entered the harbor at Havre; that this ship brought news that a payment we had looked upon as lost was going to be made. I know how clear-sighted your dreams are; I therefore purchased immediately as many shares as I could of the Haytian debt, and I gained four hundred thousand livres by it, of which one hundred thousand have been honestly paid to you. You spent it as you pleased,—that was your business. In March there was a question about a grant to a railway. Three companies presented themselves, each offering equal securities.

You told me that your instinct, — and although you pretend to know nothing about speculations, I think, on the contrary, that your instinct is well developed in regard to certain affairs, — well, you told me that your instinct led you to believe the grant would be given to the company called the Southern. I bought two-thirds of the shares of that company ; as you had foreseen, the shares became of triple value, and I picked up a million, from which two hundred and fifty thousand livres were paid to you for pin-money. How have you spent this two hundred and fifty thousand livres ? ”

“ When are you coming to the point ? ” cried the baroness, shivering with anger and impatience.

“ Patience, Madame ! I am coming to it.”

“ That’s fortunate ! ”

“ In April you went to dine at the minister’s. You heard a private conversation respecting the affairs of Spain, — the expulsion of Don Carlos. I bought some Spanish shares. The expulsion took place ; and I pocketed six hundred thousand livres the day Charles V. repassed the Bidassoa. Of these six hundred thousand livres you took fifty thousand crowns. They were yours ; you disposed of them according to your fancy, and I asked no questions. But it is not the less true that you have this year received five hundred thousand livres.”

“ Well, Monsieur, what next ? ”

“ Ah, yes, what next ? Well, right on the heels of that, the whole thing is muddled.”

“ Really, your manner of speaking — ”

“ It expresses my meaning, and that is all I want. Well, three days after that you talk politics with M. Debray, and you fancy from his words that Don Carlos has returned to Spain. Then I sell my shares ; the news spreads, a panic ensues, and I no longer sell but give them. Next

day it appears that the news was false, and that by this false news I have lost seven hundred thousand livres."

" Well ? "

" Well ! since I gave you a fourth of my gains, I think you owe me a fourth of my losses ; the fourth of seven hundred thousand livres is one hundred and seventy-five thousand livres."

" What you say is absurd, and I cannot see why M. Debray's name is mixed up in this affair."

" Because if you do not possess the one hundred and seventy-five thousand livres which I reclaim, you must have lent them to your friends ; and M. Debray is one of your friends."

" For shame ! " exclaimed the baroness.

" Oh ! let us have no gestures, no screams, no modern drama, Madame, or you will oblige me to tell you that I see from here Debray laughing over the five hundred thousand livres which you have counted out to him this year, and saying to himself that he has found what the most skilful gamblers have never discovered, — a game in which one wins without putting up money, and loses without loss."

The baroness became enraged. " Wretch ! " she cried ; " will you dare to tell me you did not know that with which you now reproach me ? "

" I do not say that I did know it ; and I do not say that I did not know it. I merely tell you to look into my conduct during the last four years since we ceased to be husband and wife, and see whether it has not always been consistent. Some time after our rupture you wished to study music under the celebrated baritone who made such a successful *début* at the Théâtre Italien ; at the same time I felt inclined to learn dancing of the *danseuse* who acquired such a reputation in London. This cost me on

your account and mine, one hundred thousand livres. I said nothing, for we must have peace in the house ; and one hundred thousand livres for a lady and gentleman to be properly instructed in music and dancing are not too much. Well, you soon become tired of singing, and you take a fancy to study diplomacy with the minister's secretary. I allow you to study. You understand, — what is it to me so long as you pay for your lessons out of your own cash-box ? But to-day I find you are drawing on mine, and that your apprenticeship may cost me seven hundred thousand livres per month. Stop there, Madame ! for this cannot go on. Either the diplomatist must give his lessons gratis, and I will tolerate him, or he must never set his foot again in my house, — do you understand, Madame ? ”

“ Oh, this is too much, Monsieur,” cried Hermine, choking ; “ you go beyond the bounds of vulgarity.”

“ But,” continued Danglars, “ I see with pleasure that you have not remained on this side of them, and that you have voluntarily complied with the maxim of the Code, ‘ the wife follows her husband. ’ ”

“ Insults ! ”

“ You are right ; let us establish our facts, and reason coolly. I have never interfered in your affairs, excepting for your good ; treat me in the same way. You say you have nothing to do with my cash-box. Be it so. Do as you like with your own, but do not fill or empty mine. Besides, how do I know that this was not a political trick ; that the minister, enraged at seeing me in the opposition, and jealous of the popular sympathy I excite, has not concerted with M. Debray to ruin me ? ”

“ How probable that is ! ”

“ Why not ? Who ever heard of such a thing ? — a false telegraphic despatch ! that borders on the impossible.

Signals totally different given in the last two telegrams ! It was done on purpose for me, I am sure of it."

" Monsieur," said the baroness, humbly, " you seem not to be aware that that employee has been discharged ; that they even intended to bring him into court ; that orders were issued to arrest him ; and that this order would have been put into execution if he had not escaped the first search by flight, which proves either his madness or his culpability. It was a mistake."

" Yes, which made fools laugh ; which made the minister have a sleepless night ; which made the minister's secretaries blacken several sheets of paper ; but which cost me seven hundred thousand livres."

" But, Monsieur," said Hermine, suddenly, " if all this is, as you say, caused by M. Debray, why, instead of going direct to him, do you come and tell me of it ? Why to accuse the man do you address the woman ? "

" Do I know M. Debray ; do I wish to know him ; do I wish to know that he gives advice ; do I wish to follow it ; do I speculate ? No ; it is you who do all this, not I."

" Still it seems to me that as you profit by it — "

Danglars shrugged his shoulders. " Foolish creatures," he exclaimed, " are the women who fancy they have talent because they have managed two or three intrigues without being the talk of Paris ! But know that if you had even hidden your irregularities from your husband, which is but the commencement of the art, — for generally husbands do not wish to see, — you would then have been but a faint imitation of half your friends among the women of the world. But it has not been so with me, — I see, and always have seen. During the last sixteen years, you may perhaps have hidden a thought ; but not a step, not an action, not a fault has escaped me, while you flattered yourself upon your address, and firmly believed you had

deceived me. What has been the result ? That, thanks to my pretended ignorance, there are none of your friends, from M. de Villefort to M. Debray, who have not trembled before me. There is not one who has not treated me as the master of the house, — the only title I desire with respect to you ; there is not one, in fact, who would have dared to speak of me as I have spoken of them this day. I will allow you to make me hateful ; but I will prevent your rendering me ridiculous, and, above all, I forbid you to ruin me."

The baroness had been tolerably composed until the name of Villefort had been pronounced ; but then she became pale, and rising as if moved by a spring, she stretched out her hands like one who seeks to exorcise an apparition. She then took two or three steps towards her husband, as if to tear the secret from him of which he was ignorant, or which perhaps in pursuance of some scheme, odious, like all his schemes, he was unwilling wholly to disclose. "M. de Villefort ! what do you mean ?"

" I mean that M. de Nargonne, your first husband, being neither a philosopher nor a banker, or perhaps being both, and seeing there was nothing to be got out of a *procureur du roi*, died of grief or anger at finding, after an absence of nine months, that you had been *enceinte* six. I am brutal, — I not only allow it, but boast of it ; it is one of the reasons of my success in commercial business. Why did he kill himself instead of you ? Because he had no cash to save. My life belongs to my cash. M. Debray has made me lose seven hundred thousand livres ; let him bear his share of the loss, and we will go on as before. If not, let him become bankrupt for the one hundred and seventy thousand livres, and do as all bankrupts do, — disappear. He is a charming fellow, I allow, when his news is correct ; but when it is not, there are fifty others in the world who would do better than he."

Madame Danglars was rooted to the spot ; however, she made a violent effort to reply to this last attack. She fell upon a chair, thinking of Villefort, of the dinner scene, of the strange series of misfortunes which had taken place in her house during the last few days and had transformed her quiet establishment into a scene of scandalous discussions. Danglars did not even look at her, though she tried all she could to faint. He shut the bedroom door after him without adding another word, and returned to his apartments ; and when Madame Danglars recovered from her half-fainting condition, she could almost believe she had had a disagreeable dream.

CHAPTER XIV.

MATRIMONIAL PROJECTS.

THE day following this scene, at the hour which Debray usually chose to pay a visit to Madame Danglars on his way to his office, his coupé did not appear in the court. At that hour, — that is, about half-past twelve, — Madame Danglars ordered her carriage and went out. Danglars, placed behind a curtain, watched the departure he had been waiting for. He gave orders that he should be informed when Madame Danglars reappeared ; but at two o'clock she had not returned. He then called for his horses, drove to the Chamber, and inscribed his name to speak against the budget. From twelve to two o'clock he had remained in his study, unsealing his despatches, and becoming more and more sad every minute, heaping figure upon figure, and receiving, among other visits, one from Major Cavalcanti, who, as stiff and as exact as ever, presented himself precisely at the hour named the night before, to terminate his business with the banker. On leaving the Chamber, Danglars, who had shown violent marks of agitation during the sitting, and had been more bitter than ever against the ministry, re-entered his carriage, and told the coachman to drive to the Avenue des Champs Élysées, No. 30.

Monte Cristo was at home ; but he was engaged with some one, and begged Danglars to wait for a moment in the drawing-room. While the banker was waiting, the door opened, and a man dressed as an abbé entered,

who, doubtless more familiar with the house than he was, instead of waiting merely bowed, and passing on to the inner apartments, disappeared. A minute after, the door by which the priest had entered reopened, and Monte Cristo appeared. "Pardon me," said he, "my dear baron, but one of my friends, the Abbé Busoni, whom you perhaps saw pass by, has just arrived in Paris; not having seen him for a long time, I could not make up my mind to leave him sooner. I hope you will find this a sufficient excuse for my having made you wait."

"Nay," said Danglars, "it is my fault; I have chosen a wrong time for my visit, and will retire."

"Not at all; on the contrary, be seated. But what is the matter with you? you look careworn. Really you alarm me! For a capitalist to be sad presages, like the appearance of a comet, some misfortune to the world."

"I have been in ill-luck for several days," said Danglars; "and I have heard nothing but bad news."

"Ah, indeed!" said Monte Cristo. "Have you had another fall at the Bourse?"

"No; I am cured of that for some days at least. My trouble now arises from a bankruptcy at Trieste."

"Really! Does your bankrupt happen to be Jacopo Manfredi?"

"Exactly so. Imagine a man who has transacted business with me for I do not know how long, to the amount of eight hundred thousand or nine hundred thousand livres per year. Never a mistake or delay, — a fellow who paid like a prince. Well, I was a million in advance with him, and now my fine Jacopo Manfredi suspends payment!"

"Really?"

"It is an unheard of fatality. I draw upon him for six hundred thousand livres, my bills are returned unpaid; and more than that, I hold bills of exchange signed by

him to the value of four hundred thousand livres, payable at his correspondent's in Paris at the end of this month. To-day is the 30th. I send to him for payment ; and behold, the correspondent has disappeared ! This, with my Spanish affairs, makes a pretty end to the month for me."

" Then you really lost by that affair in Spain ? "

" Yes ; seven hundred thousand livres out of my cash-box, — only that ! "

" Why, how could you make such a mistake, — an old lynx like you ? "

" Oh, it is my wife's fault. She dreamed Don Carlos had returned to Spain ; she believes in dreams. It is magnetism, she says ; and when she dreams a thing it is sure to happen, she assures me. On this conviction I allow her to speculate. She has her bank and her stock-broker ; she speculates and she loses. It is true she speculates with her own money, not mine ; nevertheless, you can understand that when seven hundred thousand livres leave the wife's pocket the husband always finds it out. But do you mean to say you have not heard of this ? Why, the thing has made a tremendous noise ! "

" Yes, I heard it spoken of, but I did not know the details ; and then no one can be more ignorant than I am of the affairs in the Bourse."

" Then you do not speculate ? "

" I ? How could I speculate when I already have so much trouble in regulating my income ? I should be obliged, besides my steward, to keep a clerk and a boy. But touching these Spanish affairs, I think the baroness did not altogether dream that story of Don Carlos's return. The papers said something about it, did they not ? "

" Then you believe the newspapers ? "

" I ? — not the least in the world ; only I fancied

that the honest ‘*Messager*’ was an exception to the rule, and that it announced genuine news,—telegraphic news.”

“ Well! this is what puzzles me,” replied Danglars; “ the news of the return of Don Carlos was in fact telegraphic news.”

“ So that,” said Monte Cristo, “ you have lost nearly one million seven hundred thousand livres this month.”

“ Not nearly, indeed; that is exactly my loss.”

“ *Diable!*” said Monte Cristo, compassionately, “ it is a hard blow for a third-rate fortune.”

“ Third-rate,” said Danglars, rather humbled, “ what do you mean by that?”

“ Certainly,” continued Monte Cristo; “ I classify fortunes in three grades,—first-rate, second-rate, and third-rate fortunes. I call those first-rate which are composed of treasures one possesses under one’s hand, such as mines, lands, and funded property, in such states as France, Austria, and England, provided these treasures and property form a total of about a hundred millions. I call those second-rate fortunes gained by manufacturing enterprises, joint-stock companies, viceroyalties, and principalities, not yielding an income of more than one million five hundred thousand livres, and constituting in all a capital of about fifty millions. Finally, I call those third-rate fortunes which consist of a capital accumulated in diverse enterprises, depending for increase upon the will of others or upon chance, which a bankruptcy can impair, and a telegraphic despatch can throw into disorder,—fortunes, in short, resting on speculations and operations that are subject to that fatality which may be compared to nature’s forces as the smaller to the greater; the whole forming a capital, fictitious or real, of about fifteen millions. I think this is about your position, is it not?”

"Confound it ! yes !" replied Danglars.

"The result, then, of six more such months as this," continued Monte Cristo, quietly, "would be to reduce a third-rate house to despair."

"Oh !" said Danglars, becoming very pale, "how you are running on !"

"Let us imagine seven such months," continued Monte Cristo, in the same tone. "Tell me, have you ever thought that seven times one million seven hundred thousand livres make about twelve millions ? No ? well, you are right, for if you indulged in such reflections you would never risk your principal, which is to the speculator what the skin is to civilized man. We have our clothes, some more splendid than others, — this is our credit ; but when a man dies, he has only his skin. In the same way, on retiring from business, you have nothing but your real principal of about five or six millions at the most ; for third-rate fortunes are never more than a fourth of what they appear to be, — like the locomotive on a railway, the size of which is magnified by the smoke and steam surrounding it. Well, out of the five or six millions which form your real capital you have just lost nearly two millions, which must of course in the same degree diminish your credit and fictitious fortune ; to follow out my simile, your skin has been opened by bleeding, which, repeated three or four times, will cause death. Ah ! you must give your attention to it, my dear M. Danglars. Do you want money ? Do you wish me to lend you some ?"

"What a bad calculator you are !" exclaimed Danglars, calling to his assistance all his philosophy and dissimulation. "I have made money at the same time by speculations which have succeeded. I have made up for the loss of blood by nutrition. I lost a battle in Spain, I have been defeated in Trieste ; but my naval army in India will

have taken some galleons, and my Mexican pioneers will have discovered some mine."

"Very good! very good! But the wound remains, and will reopen at the first loss."

"No! for I am embarked only in certainties," replied Danglars, with the cheap eloquence of a charlatan bolstering up his credit; "to overturn me three governments must fall."

"Well; such things have been!"

"The earth must withhold its harvests!"

"Recollect the seven fat and the seven lean kine."

"Or the sea must withdraw itself, as in the days of Pharaoh. There are still many seas remaining; and in an emergency of that kind the vessels might be turned into caravans."

"So much the better! I congratulate you, my dear M. Danglars," said Monte Cristo. "I see I was deceived, and that you rank among those whose fortunes are of the second grade."

"I think I may aspire to that honor," said Danglars, with a smile, which reminded Monte Cristo of one of those sickly moons which bad artists are so fond of daubing into their pictures of ruins; "but while we are speaking of business," he added, pleased to find an opportunity of changing the subject, "tell me what I am to do for M. Cavalcanti."

"Give him money, if he has letters of credit to you which appear to be trustworthy."

"Excellent! he presented himself this morning with a draft on you for forty thousand livres, payable at sight, signed by Busoni, and sent by you to me with your indorsement; of course, I immediately counted him over the forty bank-notes."

Monte Cristo nodded his head in token of assent.

"But that is not all," continued Danglars ; "he has opened an account with my house for his son."

"May I ask how much he allows the young man ?"

"Five thousand livres per month."

"Sixty thousand livres per year. I suspected that Cavalcanti to be a stingy fellow. How can a young man live upon five thousand livres a month ?"

"But you understand that if the young man should want a few thousands more — "

"Do not advance it ; the father will never repay it. You do not know these ultramontane millionnaires ; they are regular misers. And by whom is that credit opened ?"

"Oh, by the house of Fenzi, one of the best in Florence."

"I do not mean to say you will lose, but nevertheless mind you hold to the terms of the letter."

"Have you, then, no confidence in this Cavalcanti ?"

"I ? oh, I would advance six millions on his signature. I was only speaking in reference to the second-rate fortunes we were mentioning just now."

"And with all this, how plain he is ! I never should have taken him for anything more than a mere major."

"And you would have flattered him, for certainly, as you say, he has no manner. The first time I saw him he appeared to me like an old lieutenant who had grown mouldy beneath his epaulette. But all the Italians are the same ; they are like old Jews when they are not glittering like the magi of the East."

"The young man is better," said Danglars.

"Yes ; a little nervous perhaps, but upon the whole he appeared very well. I was uneasy about him."

"Why ?"

"Because when you met him at my house he had but just made his entrance in the social world, as they told

me. He has been travelling with a very severe tutor, and had never been to Paris before."

"All these Italians of rank marry among themselves, do they not?" asked Danglars, carelessly; "they like to unite their fortunes."

"It is usual, certainly; but Cavalcanti is an original who does nothing like other people. I cannot help thinking he has brought his son to France to choose a wife."

"Do you think so?"

"I am sure of it."

"And you have heard his fortune mentioned?"

"Nothing else was talked of; only some said he was worth millions, and others that he did not possess a farthing."

"And what is your opinion?"

"I ought not to influence you, because it is only my own personal impression."

"Well; and it is that—"

"My opinion is that all these old *podesstats*, these ancient *condottieri*, — for the Cavalcanti have commanded armies and governed provinces, — my opinion, I say, is that they have buried their millions in corners, the secret of which they have only transmitted to their eldest sons, who have done the same from generation to generation; and the proof is that they are all yellow and dry, like the florins of the republic, a reflected likeness of which they acquire by dint of looking at them."

"Certainly," said Danglars, "and this is further supported by the fact of their not possessing an inch of land."

"Very little at least; I know of none which Cavalcanti possesses except his palace in Lucca."

"Ah! he has a palace?" said Danglars, laughing; "come, that is something."

" Yes ; and more than that, he lets it to the Minister of Finance, while he lives in a simple house. Oh ! as I told you before, I think the good man is very close ! "

" Come, you do not flatter him."

" I scarcely know him ; I think I have seen him three times in my life. All I know relating to him is through the Abbé Busoni and himself ; the abbé was speaking to me this morning of Cavalcanti's plans in regard to his son, and gave me to understand that Cavalcanti, tired of letting his property lie dormant in Italy, which is a dead nation, wished to find a method, either in France or England, of multiplying his millions. But remember that though I place great confidence in the Abbé Busoni, personally I am not responsible for this."

" Never mind ; accept my thanks for the client you have sent me. It is a fine name to inscribe on my lists ; and my cashier was quite proud of it when I explained to him who the Cavalcanti were. By the way, — a question in passing, — when men of that sort marry their sons, do they give them any fortune ? "

" Oh, that depends upon circumstances. I know an Italian prince, rich as a gold mine, one of the noblest families in Tuscany, who, when his sons married according to his wish, gave them millions ; and when they married against his consent, allowed them only thirty crowns a month. Should Andrea marry according to his father's views, he will perhaps give him one, two, or three millions. For example, supposing it were the daughter of a banker, he might take an interest in the house of the father-in-law of his son. Then again, if the proposed daughter-in-law is displeasing to him, — good-by ; Father Cavalcanti takes the key, double-locks his coffer, and M. Andrea is obliged to live like the son of a Parisian family, by shuffling cards or rattling the dice."

"Ah! that boy will find out some Bavarian or Peruvian princess; he will want a crown and an immense fortune."

"No, these grand lords on the other side of the Alps frequently marry into plain families; like Jupiter, they like to cross the race. But do you wish to marry Andrea, my dear M. Danglars, that you are asking so many questions?"

"Upon my word!" said Danglars, "it would not be a bad speculation, I fancy; and you know I am a speculator."

"You are not thinking of Mademoiselle Danglars, I hope; you would not like poor Andrea to have his throat cut by Albert?"

"Albert!" repeated Danglars, shrugging his shoulders; "ah, yes; he would care very little about it, I think."

"But he is betrothed to your daughter, I believe?"

"Certainly, M. de Morcerf and I have talked about this marriage; but Madame de Morcerf and Albert—"

"You do not mean to say that it would not be a good match?"

"Indeed, I imagine that Mademoiselle Danglars is as good as M. de Morcerf."

"Mademoiselle Danglars's fortune will be great, no doubt, especially if the telegraph should not make any more mistakes."

"Oh! I do not mean her fortune only; but tell me—"

"What?"

"Why did you not invite Morcerf and his family to your dinner?"

"I did so; but he excused himself on account of Madame de Morcerf being obliged to go to Dieppe for the benefit of sea air."

"Yes, yes," said Danglars, laughing; "it would do her a great deal of good."

“ Why so ? ”

“ Because it is the air that she breathed in her youth.” Monte Cristo let the epigram pass without appearing to notice it.

“ But still, if Albert be not so rich as Mademoiselle Danglars,” said the count, “ you must allow that he has a good name ? ”

“ So he has ; but I like mine as well.”

“ Certainly, your name is popular, and does honor to the title they have bestowed upon you ; but you are too intelligent not to know that according to a prejudice too firmly rooted to be exterminated, a nobility which dates back five centuries is worth more than one that can reckon only twenty years.”

“ And for this very reason,” said Danglars, with a smile which he tried to make sardonic, “ I prefer M. Andrea Cavalcanti to M. Albert de Morcerf.”

“ Still, I should not think the Morcerfs would yield to the Cavalcantis.”

“ The Morcerfs ! Stay, my dear count,” said Danglars ; “ you are a clever man, are you not ? ”

“ I think so.”

“ And you understand heraldry ? ”

“ A little.”

“ Well, look at my coat-of-arms, it is worth more than Morcerf’s.”

“ Why so ? ”

“ Because, though I am not a baron by birth, my real name is at least Danglars.”

“ Well, what then ? ”

“ While his name is not Morcerf.”

“ How ! — not Morcerf ? ”

“ Not the least in the world.”

“ Oh, come now ! ”

"I have been made a baron, so that I actually am one; he made himself a count, so that he is not one at all."

"Impossible!"

"Listen, my dear count; M. de Morcerf has been my friend, or rather my acquaintance, during the last thirty years. You know I have made the most of my arms, though I never forgot my origin."

"A proof of great humility or great pride," said Monte Cristo.

"Well, when I was a clerk, Morcerf was a mere fisherman."

"And then he was called—"

"Fernand."

"Only Fernand?"

"Fernand Mondego."

"You are sure?"

"I should think so! I have bought enough fish of him to know his name."

"Then why did you think of giving your daughter to him?"

"Because Fernand and Danglars, being both *parvenus*, both having become noble, both rich, are about equal in worth, excepting that there have been certain things mentioned of him that were never said of me."

"What are they?"

"Oh, nothing!"

"Ah, yes! what you tell me recalls to mind something about the name of Fernand Mondego. I have heard that name in Greece."

"In conjunction with the affairs of Ali Pacha?"

"Exactly so."

"This is the mystery," said Danglars; "I acknowledge I would have given anything to find it out."

"It would be very easy if you much wished it."

"How so?"

"Probably you have some correspondent in Greece?"

"Of course I have."

"At Janina?"

"Everywhere."

"Well, write to your correspondent in Janina, and ask him what part was played by a Frenchman named Ferdinand Mondego in the catastrophe of Ali Tebelin."

"You are right," exclaimed Danglars, rising quickly; "I will write to-day."

"Do so."

"I will do it."

"And if you should hear of anything very scandalous indeed —"

"I will communicate it to you."

"You will oblige me." Danglars rushed out of the room, and made but one bound into his carriage.

CHAPTER XV.

THE OFFICE OF THE PROCUREUR DU ROI.

LET us leave the banker driving his horses at their fullest speed, and follow Madame Danglars in her morning excursion. We have said that at half-past twelve o'clock Madame Danglars had ordered her horses, and had left home in the carriage. She directed her course towards the Faubourg St. Germain, went down the Rue Mazarine, and stopped at the Passage du Pont Neuf. She descended, and crossed the passage. She was very plainly dressed, as would be the case with a woman of taste going out in the morning. At the Rue Guénégaud she called a *fiacre*, and gave as her destination the Rue du Harlay. As soon as she was seated in the coach, she drew from her pocket a very thick black veil, which she tied on to her straw hat. She then replaced the hat, and saw with pleasure, in a little pocket-mirror, that her white complexion and brilliant eyes were alone visible. The *fiacre* crossed the Pont Neuf and entered the Rue du Harlay by the Place Dauphine. The driver was paid as the door opened, and stepping lightly up the stairs, Madame Danglars soon reached the hall of the Pas Perdus.

There was a great deal going on that morning, and many busy persons were at the Palais. Busy persons pay very little attention to women ; and Madame Danglars crossed the hall without exciting any more attention than would any other woman calling upon her lawyer. There was a great press of people in M. de Villefort's ante-cham-

ber; but Madame Danglars had no occasion even to pronounce her name. The instant she appeared, the door-keeper rose, came to her, and asked her whether she was not the person with whom the *procureur du roi* had made an appointment; and on her affirmative answer being given, he conducted her by a private passage to M. de Villefort's office. The magistrate was seated in an armchair, writing, with his back towards the door; he heard it open, and the doorkeeper pronounce the words, "Walk in, Madame," and then reclose it, and did not move; but no sooner had the man's footsteps ceased than he started up, drew the bolts, closed the curtains, and examined every corner of the room. Then, when he had assured himself that he could neither be seen nor heard, and was relieved of that anxiety, he said, "Thanks, Madame,—thanks for your punctuality;" and he offered a chair to Madame Danglars, which she accepted, for her heart beat so violently that she felt nearly suffocated.

"It is a long time, Madame," said the *procureur du roi*, describing a half-circle with his chair, so as to place himself exactly opposite to Madame Danglars,—"it is a long time since I had the pleasure of speaking alone with you; and I regret that we have now met only to enter upon a painful conversation."

"Nevertheless, Monsieur, you see I have answered your first appeal; although certainly the conversation must be much more painful for me than for you."

Villefort smiled bitterly. "It is true, then," he said, rather uttering his thoughts aloud than addressing his companion,—"it is true, then, that all our actions leave their traces—some sad, others bright—on our paths! It is then true that every step in our lives resembles the course of an insect on the sand,—it leaves its track! Alas! to many the path is traced by tears."

"Monsieur," said Madame Danglars, "you can feel for my emotion, can you not? Spare me, then, I beseech you! When I look at this room, whence so many guilty creatures have departed trembling and ashamed; when I look at that chair before which I now sit trembling and ashamed,—oh! it requires all my reason to convince me that I am not a very guilty woman and you a menacing judge."

Villefort dropped his head and sighed. "And I," he said, "I feel that my place is not in the judge's seat, but on the prisoner's stool."

"You?" said Madame Danglars, astonished.

"Yes, I."

"I think, Monsieur, that your puritanism exaggerates the situation," said Madame Danglars, whose beautiful eyes sparkled for a moment. "The paths of which you were just speaking have been traced by all young men of ardent imaginations. Besides the pleasure there is in the indulgence of our passions, there is always a little remorse; and for that reason the gospel, that eternal resource of the unhappy, has given us for our comfort—us poor women—the admirable parable of the adulterous woman. And so, I declare to you, in recalling those transports of my younger days, I think sometimes that God has forgiven them; for a compensation if not an excuse for them may be found in my sufferings. But you,—what have you to apprehend from all that,—you men, whom all the world excuses, and whom scandal ennobles?"

"Madame," replied Villefort, "you know that I am no hypocrite, or at least that I never deceive without a reason. If my brow be severe, it is because many misfortunes have clouded it; if my heart be petrified, it is that it might sustain the blows it has received. I was not so in my youth; I was not so on the night of the betrothal, when we were all seated round a table in the Rue du Cours

at Marseilles. But since then everything has changed in and about me ; I am accustomed to brave difficulties, and in the conflict to crush those who by their own free will or by chance, voluntarily or involuntarily, interfere with me in my career. It is generally the case that what we most ardently desire is as ardently withheld from us by those from whom we wish to obtain it, or from whom we attempt to snatch it. Thus, the greater number of a man's errors come before him disguised under the specious form of necessity ; then after error has been committed in a moment of excitement, of delirium, or of fear, we see that we might have avoided and escaped it. The means we might have used, which we in our blindness could not see, then seem simple and easy, and we say, 'Why did I not do this, instead of that ?' Women, on the contrary, are rarely tormented with remorse, — for the decision does not come from you ; your misfortunes are generally imposed upon you, and your faults are almost always the crimes of others."

"In any case, Monsieur, you will allow," replied Madame Danglars, "that even if the fault were mine alone, I last night received a severe punishment for it."

"Poor woman !" said Villefort, pressing her hand, "it was too severe for your strength, for you were twice overwhelmed ; and yet —"

"Well ?"

"Well, I must tell you. Collect all your courage, for you have not yet reached the end !"

"Good heavens !" exclaimed Madame Danglars, alarmed, "what is there still remaining ?"

"You only look back to the past ; and it is indeed bad enough. Well, picture to yourself a future more gloomy still, — certainly frightful, perhaps sanguinary !"

The baroness knew how calm Villefort naturally was,

and his present excitement frightened her so much that she opened her mouth to scream, but the sound died in her throat.

"How has this terrible past been recalled?" cried Villefort; "how is it that it has escaped from the depths of the tomb and the recesses of our hearts, where it was buried, to visit us now, like a phantom, whitening our cheeks and flushing our brows with shame?"

"Alas!" said Hermine, "doubtless it is chance!"

"Chance!" replied Villefort; "no, no, Madame, there is no such thing as chance!"

"Oh, yes; is it not chance that has done all this? Was it not by chance that the Count of Monte Cristo bought this house? Was it not by chance that he caused the earth to be dug? Is it not by chance that the unfortunate child was disinterred under the trees? — that poor innocent offspring of mine, which I never even kissed, but for whom I wept many, many tears! Ah, my heart clung to the count when he mentioned the dear remains found beneath the flowers."

"Well, no, Madame! this is the terrible news I have to tell you," said Villefort, in a hollow voice. "No, nothing was found beneath the flowers; there was no child disinterred. No, you must not weep, you must not groan; you must tremble!"

"What can you mean?" asked Madame Danglars, shuddering.

"I mean that M. de Monte Cristo, digging underneath these trees, found neither skeleton nor chest, because neither of them was there!"

"Neither of them there!" repeated Madame Danglars, fixing upon him her eyes, which by their fearful dilatation indicated how much she was alarmed. "Neither of them there!" she again said, like a person who endeavors by

the utterance of words and the sound of the voice, to keep fast hold of ideas that are ready to escape.

"No!" said Villefort, burying his face in his hands, "no & a hundred times no!"

"Then you did not bury the poor child there, Monsieur? Why did you deceive me, — with what purpose? Come, speak!"

"I buried it there! But listen to me — listen — and you will pity one who has for twenty years alone borne the heavy burden of grief I am about to reveal, without casting the least portion upon you."

"My God, you frighten me! But speak; I will listen."

"You recollect that sad night, when you were half-expiring on that bed in the red damask room, while I, scarcely less agitated than you, awaited your delivery. The child was born, was given to me, without movement, without breath, without voice; we thought it dead." Madame Danglars made a startled movement, as though she would spring from her chair; but Villefort stopped her, clasping his hands as if to implore her attention. "We thought it dead," he repeated. "I placed it in the chest, which was to take the place of a coffin; I descended to the garden; I dug a hole, and hastily buried the chest. Scarcely had I covered it with mould, when the arm of the Corsican was stretched towards me; I saw a shadow rise, and at the same time a flash of light. I felt pain; I wished to cry out, but an icy shiver ran through my veins and stifled my voice; I fell lifeless, and fancied myself killed. Never shall I forget your sublime courage, when, having returned to consciousness, I dragged myself, expiring, to the foot of the stairs, where, expiring yourself, you came to meet me. We were obliged to keep silent upon the dreadful catastrophe. You had the fortitude to regain your house, assisted by your

nurse. A duel was the pretext for my wound. Though we scarcely expected it, our secret remained in our own keeping alone. I was taken to Versailles; for three months I struggled with death. At last, as I seemed to cling to life, I was ordered to the South. Four men carried me from Paris to Châlons, walking six leagues a day. Madame de Villefort followed the litter in her carriage. At Châlons I was put upon the Saône, thence I passed on to the Rhône, and drifted on the current down to Arles; at Arles I was again placed on my litter, and continued my journey to Marseilles. My convalescence lasted six months. I never heard you mentioned, and I did not dare inquire for you. When I returned to Paris, I learned that, widow of M. de Nargonne, you had married M. Danglars.

"What had been the subject of my thoughts ever since consciousness had returned to me? Always the same,—always the child's corpse, which every night in my dreams, rising from the earth, hovered above the grave with a menacing look and gesture. Immediately on my return to Paris I made inquiries; the house had not been inhabited since we left it, but it had just been let for nine years. I found the tenant. I pretended that I disliked the idea of a house belonging to my wife's father and mother passing into the hands of strangers. I offered to pay them for yielding up the lease; they demanded six thousand livres. I would have given ten thousand; I would have given twenty thousand. I had the money with me; I made the tenant sign the cancelling deed, and when I had obtained what I so much wanted, I galloped to Auteuil. No one had entered the house since I had left it. It was five o'clock in the afternoon; I ascended into the red room and waited for night. There all the thoughts which had disturbed me during my year of constant agony occurred with double force. The Corsican, who had declared the

vendetta against me, who had followed me from Nîmes to Paris, who had hid himself in the garden, who had struck me, had seen me dig the grave, had seen me inter the child ; he might become acquainted with your person, — nay, he might even then have known it. Would he not one day make you pay for keeping this terrible secret ? Would it not be a sweet revenge for him when he found I had not died from the blow of his dagger ? It was therefore necessary before everything else, and at all risks, that I should cause all traces of the past to disappear, — that I should destroy every material vestige ; too much reality would always remain in my recollection. It was for this I had annulled the lease ; it was for this I had come ; it was for this I was waiting. Night arrived ; I waited until it was quite dark. I was without a light in that room ; when the wind shook all the doors, behind which I continually expected to see some concealed spy, I trembled. I seemed everywhere to hear your moans behind me in the bed, and I dared not turn round. My heart beat so violently that I feared my wound would open. At length, one by one, all the varied noises of the neighborhood ceased. I understood that I had nothing to fear, that I should neither be seen nor heard ; so I decided upon descending to the garden.

“ Listen, Hermine ! I consider myself as brave as most men, but when I drew from my breast the little key of the staircase, which I had found in my coat, — that little key we both used to cherish so much, which you wished to have fastened to a golden ring ; when I opened the door and saw the pale moon shedding a long stream of white light on the spiral staircase like a spectre, — I leaned against the wall and nearly shrieked. I seemed to be going mad. At last I mastered my agitation. I descended the staircase step by step ; the only thing I could not con-

quer was a strange trembling in my knees. I grasped the railings ; if I had relaxed my hold for a moment, I should have fallen. I reached the lower door. Outside this door a spade was placed against the wall ; I took it and advanced towards the thicket. I had provided myself with a dark lantern. In the middle of the lawn I stopped to light it, then I continued on my course.

"It was the end of November. All the freshness of the garden had disappeared ; and the trees were nothing more than skeletons with long bony arms, and the dead leaves sounded on the gravel under my feet. My terror overcame me to such a degree as I approached the thicket that I took a pistol from my pocket and armed myself. I fancied continually that I saw the figure of the Corsican between the branches. I examined the thicket with my dark lantern ; it was empty. I threw searching glances in all directions ; I was indeed alone. No noise disturbed the silence of the night but the plaint of the owl, whose sharp weird cry seemed like a call to the phantoms of the night. I tied my lantern to a forked branch which I had noticed a year before at the precise spot where I stopped to dig the hole. The grass had grown very thick there during the summer, and when autumn arrived no one had been there to mow it. Still, one place less covered attracted my attention ; it evidently was where I had turned up the ground. I addressed myself to the work. The hour, then, for which I had been waiting during the last year had at length arrived. How I worked, how I hoped, how I sounded every piece of turf, thinking to find some resistance to my spade ! But no, I found nothing, though I made a hole twice as large as the first. I thought I had been deceived,—had mistaken the spot. I turned round, I looked at the trees, I tried to recall the details which had struck me at the time. A cold sharp wind whistled

through the leafless branches, and yet drops of perspiration fell from my forehead. I recollect that I was stabbed just as I was trampling the ground to fill up the hole. While doing so I had leaned against a false ebony-tree. Behind me was an artificial rock intended to serve as a resting-place for persons walking in the garden. In falling, my hand, relaxing its hold of the tree, had felt the coldness of this stone. On my right I saw the tree; behind me the rock. I stood in the same attitude, and threw myself down. I rose, and again began digging and enlarging the hole; still I found nothing, nothing, — the chest was not there! ”

“ The chest not there! ” murmured Madame Danglars, choking with fear.

“ Do not think that I contented myself with this one effort,” continued Villefort. “ No; I searched the whole thicket. I thought that perhaps the assassin, having discovered the chest, and supposing it to be a treasure, had intended carrying it off, but perceiving his error, had dug another hole and deposited it; but there was nothing. Then the idea struck me that he had not taken these precautions, and had simply thrown it in a corner. In that case I must wait for daylight to make my research. I regained the room and waited.”

“ Oh, Heaven! ”

“ When daylight dawned I went down again. My first visit was to the thicket. I hoped to find some traces which had escaped me in the dark. I had turned up the earth over a surface of more than twenty feet square, and to a depth of more than two feet. A laborer would not have done in a day what I had done in an hour. But I could find nothing, — absolutely nothing. Then I searched for the chest on the supposition that it had been thrown into some corner. That would probably be on the path which

led to the little gate ; but this examination was as useless as the first, and with a bursting heart I returned to the thicket, which now contained no hope for me."

"Oh," cried Madame Danglars, "it was enough to drive you mad !"

"I hoped for a moment that it might," said Villefort ; "but that good fortune was denied me. However, recovering my strength and my ideas, 'Why,' said I, 'should that man have carried away the corpse ?'"

"But you said," replied Madame Danglars, "he would need it as a proof ?"

"Ah, no, Madame, that could not be. Dead bodies are not kept a year ; they are shown to a magistrate, and the evidence is taken. Now, nothing of the kind has happened."

"What then ?" asked Hermine, trembling violently.

"Something more terrible, more fatal, more alarming for us ! — the child was perhaps alive, and the assassin saved it !"

Madame Danglars uttered a piercing cry, and seizing Villefort's hands, "My child was alive !" said she ; "you buried my child alive, Monsieur ! You were not certain that my child was dead, and you buried it ! Ah — "

Madame Danglars had risen, and stood with an expression almost threatening before the *procureur*, whose hands she wrung in her feeble grasp.

"What do I know about it ? I merely suppose so, as I might suppose anything else," replied Villefort, with a stony gaze which indicated that his powerful mind was on the verge of despair and madness.

"Ah, my child, my poor child !" cried the baroness, falling on her chair, and stifling her sobs in her handkerchief.

Villefort, recovering himself, perceived that to avert

the maternal storm gathering over his head, he must inspire Madame Danglars with the terror he felt. "You understand, then, that if that were so," said he, rising in his turn, and approaching the baroness, to speak to her in a lower tone, "we are lost. This child lives; and some one knows it lives,—some one is in possession of our secret. And since Monte Cristo speaks before us of a child disinterred, when that child could not be found, it is he who is in possession of our secret."

"Just God! avenging God!" murmured Madame Danglars.

Villefort replied only by a muffled groan.

"But the child—the child, Monsieur?" repeated the agitated mother.

"How have I searched for him!" replied Villefort, wringing his hands; "how have I called him in my long sleepless nights! How have I longed for royal wealth to purchase a million of secrets from a million of men, that I might find mine among them! At last, one day when for the hundredth time I took up my spade, I asked myself again and again what the Corsican could have done with the child. A child encumbers a fugitive; perhaps on perceiving it was still alive, he had thrown it into the river."

"Impossible!" cried Madame Danglars; "a man may murder another out of revenge, but he would not deliberately drown a child."

"Perhaps," continued Villefort, "he had put it in the foundling hospital."

"Oh, yes, yes!" cried the baroness; "my child is there!"

"I hastened to the hospital and learned that the same night—the night of the 20th of September—a child had been brought there, wrapped in part of a fine linen

napkin, purposely torn in half. This portion of the napkin was marked with half a baron's crown, and the letter H."

"That was it!" cried Madame Danglars; "all my linen was marked thus. M. de Nargonne was a baron, and my name is Hermine. Thank God! my child was not dead!"

"No, it was not dead."

"And you can tell me so without fearing to make me die of joy, Monsieur? Where is it? Where is my child?"

Villefort shrugged his shoulders. "Do I know?" said he; "and do you believe that if I knew I would relate to you all its trials and all its adventures as would a dramatist or a novel-writer? Alas, no! I know not. A woman about six months after came to claim it with the other half of the napkin. This woman gave all the requisite particulars; and it was intrusted to her."

"But you should have inquired for the woman; you should have traced her."

"And how do you think, then, that I have been occupied, Madame? I feigned a criminal process, and employed all the most acute bloodhounds and skilful agents in search of her. They traced her to Châlons, and there they lost her."

"They lost her?"

"Yes, forever."

Madame Danglars had listened to this recital with a sigh, a tear, or a shriek for every circumstance. "And this is all?" said she; "and you stopped there?"

"Oh, no!" said Villefort; "I never ceased to search and to inquire. However, for the last two or three years I have allowed myself some respite. But now I will begin with more perseverance and fury than ever; and

you will see that I shall succeed,—for it is no longer conscience that drives me, it is fear."

"But," replied Madame Danglars, "the Count of Monte Cristo can know nothing, or he would not seek our society as he does."

"Oh, the wickedness of man is very great," said Villefort, "since it surpasses the goodness of God. Have you observed that man's eyes while he was speaking to us?"

"No."

"But have you ever watched him carefully?"

"Certainly. He is odd, but that is all. One thing I have noticed,—of all the exquisite things he placed before us, he touched nothing; it was always from another dish that he helped himself."

"Yes, yes!" said Villefort; "I also noticed that. If I had known what I know now, I would not have touched anything myself; I should have believed that he intended to poison us."

"And you see you would have been mistaken."

"Yes, doubtless; but believe me, that man has other projects. For that reason I wished to see you, to speak to you, to warn you against every one, but especially against him. Tell me," cried Villefort, fixing his eyes more steadfastly on her than he had done before, "did you ever reveal to any one our connection?"

"Never, to any one."

"You understand me?" replied Villefort, affectionately; "when I say any one,—pardon my urgency,—I mean to any one in the world."

"Yes, yes, I understand very well," said the baroness, blushing; "never, I swear to you."

"Were you ever in the habit of writing in the evening what had happened during the day? Do you keep a journal?"

"No ; alas ! my life has been passed in frivolity. I wish to forget it myself."

"Do you talk in your sleep ?"

"I sleep like a child ; do you not remember ?" The color mounted to the baroness's face, and Villefort turned pale.

"It is true," said he, in so low a tone that he could hardly be heard.

"Well ?" said the baroness.

"Well, I understand what I now have to do," replied Villefort. "In one week from this time I shall know who this M. de Monte Cristo is, whence he comes, where he goes, and why he speaks in our presence of children who have been disinterred in his garden."

Villefort pronounced these words with an accent which would have made the count shudder had he heard him. Then he pressed the hand the baroness reluctantly gave him, and led her respectfully to the door. Madame Danglars returned in another *fiacre* to the passage, on the other side of which she found her carriage, and her coachman sleeping peacefully on his box while waiting for her.

CHAPTER XVI.

A SUMMER BALL.

THE same day, during the interview of Madame Danglars with the *procureur*, a travelling-carriage entered the Rue du Helder, passed through the gateway of No. 27, and stopped in the yard. In a moment the door was opened, and Madame de Morcerf alighted, leaning on her son's arm. Albert soon left her, ordered his horses, and having arranged his toilet, drove to the Champs Élysées, to the house of Monte Cristo. The count received him with his habitual smile. It was a strange thing that no one ever appeared to advance a step towards intimacy with that man. Those who would, so to speak, force a passage to his heart, encountered an impassable barrier. Morcerf, who ran towards him with open arms, was chilled as he drew near, in spite of the friendly smile, and ventured only to hold out his hand. Monte Cristo shook it coldly, according to his invariable practice.

"Well!" said Albert; "here I am, dear count."

"Welcome home again!"

"I arrived an hour ago."

"From Dieppe?"

"No, from Tréport."

"Ah, true!"

"And my first visit is to you."

"That is extremely kind of you," said Monte Cristo, with a tone of perfect indifference.

"Well! what is the news?"

" You should not ask a stranger, a foreigner, for news."

" I know it ; but in asking for news, I mean, have you done anything for me ? "

" Had you intrusted me with some commission ? " said Monte Cristo, feigning uneasiness.

" Come, come ! " said Albert ; " do not assume indifference. It is said that there are sympathetic communications that may come from a distance, — well, at Tréport I felt the electric shock ; you have either been working for me or thinking of me."

" Possibly," said Monte Cristo, " I have indeed thought of you ; but the magnetic current of which I was the conductor acted, I must confess, without my knowledge."

" Indeed ! pray tell me how it happened ? "

" It is a simple matter, — M. Danglars dined with me."

" I know it ; to avoid meeting him, my mother and I left town."

" But he dined also with M. Andrea Cavalcanti."

" Your Italian prince ? "

" Not so fast ; M. Andrea only calls himself viscount."

" Calls himself, do you say ? "

" Yes, calls himself."

" Is he not a viscount ? "

" Eh ! how do I know ? He calls himself so. I of course give him the same title, and every one else does the same."

" What a strange man you are ! What next ? You say M. Danglars dined here ? "

" Yes."

" With your Vicomte Andrea Cavalcanti ? "

" With Vicomte Cavalcanti, the marquis his father, Madame Danglars, Monsieur and Madame de Villefort, — charming people, — M. Debray, Maximilian Morrel, and

then who else ? Wait a moment — ah ! M. de Château-Renaud."

" Did they speak of me ? "

" Not a word."

" So much the worse."

" Why so ? I thought you wished them to forget you ? "

" If they did not speak of me, I am sure they thought about me ; and I am in despair."

" How will that affect you, since Mademoiselle Danglars was not among the number here who thought of you ? It is true, she might have thought of you at home."

" I have no fear of that ; or if she did, it was only in the same way in which I think of her."

" Touching sympathy ! so you hate each other ? " said the count.

" Listen ! " said Morcerf. " If Mademoiselle Danglars were disposed to take pity on the martyrdom which I do not suffer on her account, and to recompense me outside of the matrimonial formalities arranged between our two families, that would suit me completely. In a word, Mademoiselle Danglars would make a charming mistress ; but a wife, *diable* ! "

" And this, " said Monte Cristo, " is the way in which you think of your intended spouse ? "

" Yes, rather brutal, it is true, but at least exact. But as this dream cannot be realized, since Mademoiselle Danglars must become my wife, — that is to say, must live with me, sing to me, compose verses and music within ten paces of me, and that for my whole life, — it frightens me. One may forsake a mistress, but a wife, good heavens ! that is another thing ; that is perpetual, — be she near or far away, it is a permanent thing. Now it is frightful to think of always having Mademoiselle Danglars, — even at a distance."

" You are difficult to please, Viscount."

" Yes, for I often wish for what is impossible."

" What is that ? "

" To find such a wife as my father found."

Monte Cristo turned pale, and looked at Albert, while playing with some magnificent pistols.

" Your father was fortunate, then ? " said he.

" You know my opinion of my mother, Count ; look at her, still beautiful, still vivacious, — more than ever. For any other son to have accompanied his mother four days at Tréport would have been a bit of drudgery, a bore ; but I have spent four days in her society with more satisfaction, more repose, more — poetry, shall I say ? — than if I had taken Queen Mab or Titania as my companion."

" That is an overwhelming perfection ; and you would make every one vow to live a single life."

" This is the reason," continued Morcerf, " why, knowing that there is in the world an accomplished woman, I am not eager to marry Mademoiselle Danglars. Have you ever noticed how much a thing is heightened in value when we obtain possession of it ? The diamond which glittered in the window of Marlé or of Fossin shines with more splendor when it is our own ; but if we are compelled to acknowledge the superiority of another, and still must retain the one that is inferior, do you understand what must be the suffering ? "

" Worldling ! " murmured the count.

" Thus I shall rejoice when Mademoiselle Eugénie perceives I am but a pitiful atom, with scarcely as many hundred thousand livres as she has millions."

Monte Cristo smiled.

" One plan occurred to me," continued Albert ; " Franz likes all that is eccentric. I tried to make him fall in love with Mademoiselle Danglars ; but in spite of four letters,

written in the most alluring style, he invariably answered : ‘ My eccentricity may be great, but it will not make me break my promise.’ ”

“ That is what I call devoted friendship, to recommend to another one whom you would not marry yourself.”

Albert smiled. “ By the way,” continued he, “ Franz is coming soon. But that will not interest you ; you dislike him, I think ? ”

“ I ! ” said Monte Cristo ; “ my dear viscount, what has led you to think that I do not like M. Franz ? I like every one.”

“ And you include me in the expression ‘ every one ’ ? Thanks ! ”

“ Let us not mistake,” said Monte Cristo ; “ I love every one as God commands us to love our neighbor,— in the Christian sense ; but I thoroughly hate only a few. Let us return to M. Franz d’Épinay. You say that he is coming ? ”

“ Yes ; summoned by M. de Villefort, who is apparently as anxious to get Mademoiselle Valentine married as M. Danglars is to see Mademoiselle Eugénie settled. It must be a very irksome office to be the father of a grown-up daughter ; it seems to make them feverish, and that their pulse beats ninety strokes per minute until they get rid of them.”

“ But M. d’Épinay, unlike you, bears his misfortune patiently.”

“ Still more, he talks seriously about the matter, puts on a white cravat, and speaks already of his family. Besides, he has a very high opinion of Monsieur and Madame de Villefort.”

“ Which they deserve, do they not ? ”

“ I believe they do. M. de Villefort has always passed for a severe but a just man.”

"There is, then, one," said Monte Cristo, "whom you do not condemn as you do that poor Danglars?"

"Because I am not compelled to marry his daughter, perhaps," replied Albert, laughing.

"Indeed, my dear monsieur," said Monte Cristo, "you are revoltingly self-conceited."

"I self-conceited!"

"Yes, you; take a cigar."

"Very willingly. And how am I self-conceited?"

"Why, because here you are defending yourself, struggling to escape marrying Mademoiselle Danglars. Let things take their course; perhaps you will not be the first to withdraw."

"Bah!" said Albert, staring.

"Doubtless, Monsieur the Viscount, they will not put your neck under the yoke by force. Come, seriously, do you wish to break off your engagement?"

"I would give a hundred thousand livres to be able to do so."

"Then make yourself quite happy. M. Danglars would give double that sum to attain the same end."

"Am I, indeed, so happy?" said Albert, who still could not prevent an almost imperceptible cloud from passing over his brow. "But, my dear count, M. Danglars has reasons, then?"

"Ah! there is your proud and selfish nature. You would expose the self-love of another with a hatchet, but you shrink if your own is attacked with a needle."

"No, but it seems to me that M. Danglars —"

"Ought to be delighted with you, eh? Well, he is a man of bad taste, and is still more enchanted with another."

"With whom?"

"I do not know; study and judge for yourself."

"Thank you, I understand. Listen : my mother—no, not my mother, I mistake — my father intends giving a ball."

"A ball at this season ?"

"Summer balls are fashionable."

"If they were not, the countess has only to wish it, and they would become so."

"You are right ; you know they are unmixed balls, — those who remain in Paris in July must be true Parisians. Will you take charge of our invitation to M.M. Cavalcanti ?"

"When will it take place ?"

"On Saturday."

"M. Cavalcanti the elder will be gone."

"But the son will be here ; will you invite young M. Cavalcanti ?"

"I do not know him, Viscount."

"You do not know him ?"

"No, I have never seen him until a few days since, and am not responsible for him in any respect."

"But you receive him at your house ?"

"That is another thing ; he was recommended to me by a good abbé, who may be deceived. Give him a direct invitation, but do not ask me to present him ; if he were afterwards to marry Mademoiselle Danglars you would accuse me of intrigue, and would be challenging me, — besides, I may not be there myself."

"Where ?"

"At your ball."

"Why should you not be there ?"

"For one reason, because you have not yet invited me."

"But I come expressly for that purpose."

"You are very kind, but I may be prevented."

"If I tell you one thing you will be so amiable as to set aside all impediments."

"Tell me what it is."

"My mother begs you to come."

"The Comtesse de Morcerf?" said Monte Cristo, starting.

"Ah, Count," said Albert, "I assure you Madame de Morcerf speaks freely to me; and if you have not felt those sympathetic fibres of which I spoke just now thrill within you, you must be entirely devoid of them, for during the last four days we have spoken of no one else."

"You have talked of me?"

"Yes, that is your privilege, being a living problem."

"Then I am also a problem to your mother? I should have thought her too reasonable for such vagaries of the imagination."

"A problem, my dear count, for every one,—for my mother as well as others. Much studied, but not solved, you still remain an enigma; do not fear. My mother is always asking how it is that you are so young. I believe that while the Comtesse G—— takes you for Lord Ruthven, my mother imagines you to be Cagliostro or Comte Saint-Germain. The first opportunity you have confirm her in her opinion; it will be easy for you, as you have the philosopher's stone of the one and the wit of the other."

"I thank you for the warning," said the count; "I shall endeavor to be prepared for all suppositions."

"You will, then, come on Saturday?"

"Yes, since Madame de Morcerf invites me."

"You are very kind."

"Will M. Danglars be there?"

"He has already been invited by my father. We shall try to persuade the great D'Aguessau, M. de Villefort, to come, but have not much hope of seeing him."

"'Never despair,' says the proverb."

"Do you dance, Count?"

"I dance?"

"Yes, you ; what is there surprising in that ?"

"That is very well before one is above forty. No, I do not dance, but I like to see others. Does Madame de Morcerf dance ?"

"Never ; you can talk to her, she so much wishes to converse with you."

"Indeed !"

"Yes, truly ; and I assure you, you are the only man for whom she has shown that curiosity."

Albert rose and took his hat ; the count conducted him to the door. "I have one thing to reproach myself with," said he, stopping Albert on the steps.

"What is it ?"

"I have spoken to you indiscreetly about Danglars."

"On the contrary, speak to me always in the same strain about him."

"Good ! you reassure me. By the way, when do you expect M. d'Épinay ?"

"Five or six days hence at the latest."

"And when is he to be married ?"

"Immediately on the arrival of Monsieur and Madame de Saint-Méran."

"Bring him to see me. Although you say I do not like him, I assure you I shall be happy to see him."

"I will obey your orders, my Lord."

"Good-by."

"Until Saturday, when I may expect you, may I not ?"

"Yes, I promised you."

The count watched Albert, waving his hand to him. When he had mounted his phaeton Monte Cristo turned, and seeing Bertuccio, "What news ?" said he.

"She went to the Palais," replied the steward.

"Did she stay there long ?"

"An hour and a half."

“Did she return home?”

“Directly.”

“Well, my dear Bertuccio,” said the count, “I now advise you to go in quest of the little estate I spoke to you of in Normandy.”

Bertuccio bowed; and as his wishes were in perfect harmony with the order he had received, he started the same evening.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE INQUIRY.

M. DE VILLEFORT kept the promise he had made to Madame Danglars to endeavor to find out how the Count of Monte Cristo had discovered the history of the house at Auteuil. He wrote the same day to M. de Boville (who, from having been an inspector of prisons, was promoted to a high office in the police) for the information he desired ; and the latter begged two days to ascertain who would be most likely to give him the desired information. At the end of the second day, M. de Villefort received the following note :—

“The person called M. le Comte de Monte Cristo is an intimate acquaintance of Lord Wilmore, a rich foreigner who is sometimes seen in Paris, and who is there at this moment; he is also known to the Abbé Busoni, a Sicilian priest of high repute in the East, where he has done much good.”

M. de Villefort replied by ordering the strictest inquiries to be made respecting these two persons ; his orders were executed, and the following evening he received these details :—

“The abbé, who was in Paris for a month, inhabited a small house behind St. Sulpice, composed of a single story over the ground-floor; two rooms were on each floor, and he was the only tenant. The two lower rooms consisted of a dining-room, with a table, chairs, and side-board of walnut, and a wainscoted parlor, without ornaments, carpet, or timepiece. It was evi-

dent that the abbé limited himself to objects of strict necessity. The abbé preferred the sitting-room upstairs, which, being furnished with theological books and parchments in which he delighted to bury himself during whole months, was more a library than a parlor. His valet looked at the visitors through a sort of wicket; and if their countenances were unknown to him or displeased him, he replied that Monsieur the Abbé was not in Paris,—an answer which satisfied most persons, because the abbé was known to be a great traveller. Besides, whether at home or not, whether in Paris or Cairo, the abbé always left something to give away, which the valet distributed through this wicket in his master's name. The other room, near the library, was a bedroom. A bed without curtains, four arm-chairs, and a couch covered with yellow Utrecht velvet, composed, with an ottoman, all its furniture.

"Lord Wilmore resided in Rue Fontaine St. George. He was one of those English tourists who consume a large fortune in travelling. He hired his apartments furnished, passed only a few hours in the day there, and rarely slept there. One of his peculiarities was never to speak a word of French, which however he wrote with great purity."

The day after these important particulars had been furnished to the *procureur*, a man alighted from a carriage at the corner of the Rue Férou, and rapping at an olive-green door, asked if the Abbé Busoni were within.

"No, he went out early this morning," replied the valet.

"I cannot be contented with that answer," replied the visitor, "for I come from one to whom every one must be at home. But have the kindness to give the Abbé Busoni — "

"I have already told you that he is not at home!" repeated the valet.

"Then, on his return give him that card and this sealed paper. Will he be at home at eight o'clock this evening?"

"Doubtless ; unless he is at work, which is the same as if he were out."

"I will come again at that time," replied the visitor, who then retired.

At the appointed hour the same man returned in the same carriage, which instead of stopping this time at the end of the Rue Férou, drove up to the green door. He knocked, and it was opened immediately to admit him. From the signs of respect the valet paid him, he saw that his note had produced the desired effect. "Is the abbé at home ?" he asked.

"Yes, he is at work in his library ; but he expects you, sir," replied the valet. The stranger ascended a rough staircase, and before a table illumined by a lamp whose light was concentrated by a large shade, while the rest of the apartment was in partial darkness, he perceived the abbé in a monk's dress, with a cowl on his head such as was used by learned men of the Middle Ages. "Have I the honor of addressing the Abbé Busoni ?" asked the visitor.

"Yes, Monsieur," replied the abbé ; "and you are the person whom M. de Boville, formerly an inspector of prisons, sends to me from the prefect of police ?"

"Exactly, Monsieur."

"One of the agents appointed to secure the safety of Paris ?"

"Yes, Monsieur," replied the stranger, with a slight hesitation, and blushing.

The abbé replaced the large spectacles, which covered not only his eyes but his temples, and sitting down, motioned to his visitor to do the same. "I am at your service, Monsieur," said he, with a marked Italian accent.

"The mission with which I am charged, Monsieur," replied the visitor, speaking with hesitation, "is a confi-

dential one on the part of him who fulfils it and on the part of him to whom he is sent." The abbé bowed. "Your probity," replied the stranger, "is so well known to the prefect that he wishes, as a magistrate, to ascertain from you some particulars connected with the public safety; to ascertain which I am deputed to see you. It is hoped that no ties of friendship or humane consideration will induce you to conceal the truth."

"Provided, Monsieur, the particulars you wish for do not interfere with my scruples or my conscience. I am a priest, Monsieur; and the secrets of confession, for instance, must remain between me and the justice of God, and not between me and human justice."

"Do not alarm yourself, Monsieur the Abbé, we will duly respect your conscience."

At this moment the abbé, by pressing down the shade on the side nearest himself, raised it on the other and threw a bright light on the face of the stranger, while his own remained obscured.

"Excuse me, Monsieur the Abbé," said the envoy of the prefect of the police, "but the light tries my eyes very much."

The abbé lowered the shade. "Now, Monsieur," he said, "I am listening; speak!"

"I will come at once to the point. Do you know the Count of Monte Cristo?"

"You mean M. Zaccione, I presume?"

"Zaccione! is not his name Monte Cristo?"

"Monte Cristo is the name of an estate, or rather, of a rock, and not a family name."

"Well, be it so—let us not dispute about words; and since M. de Monte Cristo and M. Zaccione are the same—"

"Absolutely the same."

"Let us speak of M. Zacccone."

"Well?"

"I asked you if you know him?"

"Intimately."

"Who is he?"

"The son of a rich ship-builder in Malta."

"I know that is the report; but, as you are aware, the police does not content itself with vague reports."

"However," replied the abbé, with an affable smile, "when that report is in accordance with the truth, everybody must believe it, — the police as well as all the rest."

"But are you sure of what you assert?"

"What do you mean by that question?"

"Understand, Monsieur, I do not in the least suspect your veracity; I ask you, are you certain of it?"

"I knew his father, M. Zacccone."

"Ah, ah!"

"And when a child I often played with the son in the ship-yards."

"But whence does he derive the title of count?"

"You are aware that may be bought."

"In Italy?"

"Everywhere."

"And his wealth, which is immense according to common report —"

"Oh, as to that," said the abbé, "'immense' is the proper word."

"How much do you suppose he possesses?"

"From one hundred and fifty to two hundred thousand livres per annum."

"This is reasonable," said the visitor; "I have heard that he had three or four millions."

"Two hundred thousand per annum would make four millions of capital."

"But I was told that he had four millions per annum."

"Oh, that is not credible."

"Do you know this island of Monte Cristo ?"

"Certainly ; every one who has returned from Palermo, from Naples, or from Rome to France, by sea, must know it, since he has passed close to it, and must have seen it."

"I am told that it is a delightful place."

"It is a rock."

"And why has the count bought a rock ?"

"For the sake of being a count. In Italy one must have a county to be a count."

"You have doubtless heard the adventures of M. Zaccone's youth ?"

"The father's ?"

"No, the son's."

"I know nothing certain ; at that period of his life I lost sight of my young comrade."

"Did he go to war ?"

"I think he entered the service."

"In what force ?"

"In the navy."

"Are you not his confessor ?"

"No, sir ; I believe he is a Lutheran."

"A Lutheran ?"

"I say I believe such is the case, I do not affirm it ; besides, I believe liberty of conscience is established in France ?"

"Doubtless, and we are not now inquiring into his creed, but his actions ; in the name of the prefect of police, I summon you to tell me what you know of him."

"He passes for a very charitable man. Our Holy Father, the pope, has made him a chevalier of Christ — a favor accorded only to princes — for the services he rendered to

the Christians in the East ; he has five or six ribbons of distinguished orders, as testimonials from Eastern monarchs for his services."

"Does he wear them ?"

"No ; but he is proud of them. He is better pleased with rewards given to the benefactors of man than to his destroyers."

"He is a Quaker, then ?"

"Exactly ; he is a Quaker, with the exception of the peculiar dress."

"Has he any friends ?"

"Yes, every one who knows him is his friend."

"But has he any enemies ?"

"One only."

"What is his name ?"

"Lord Wilmore."

"Where is he ?"

"He is in Paris just now."

"Can he give me any particulars ?"

"Important ones ; he was in India with Zacccone."

"Do you know his abode ?"

"It is somewhere in the Chaussée d'Antin ; but I know neither the street nor the number."

"Are you at variance with the Englishman ?"

"I love Zacccone, and he hates him ; we are consequently not friends."

"Do you think the Count of Monte Cristo had ever been in France before he made this visit to Paris ?"

"To that question I can answer positively. No, Monsieur, he had never been here, because he applied to me six months since for information that he needed. In my turn, as I knew not when I might again come to Paris, I recommended M. Cavalcanti to him."

"Andrea ?"

"No ; Bartolomeo, his father."

"Now, Monsieur, I have but one question more to ask ; and I charge you in the name of honor, of humanity, and of religion, to answer me candidly."

"What is it, Monsieur ?"

"Do you know with what design M. de Monte Cristo purchased a house at Auteuil ?"

"Certainly, for he told me."

"With what design, Monsieur ?"

"To make a lunatic asylum of it, similar to that founded by the Baron de Pisani at Palermo. Do you know that asylum ?"

"I have heard of it."

"It is a magnificent institution." Having said this, the abbé bowed to imply that he wished to pursue his studies. The visitor either understood the abbé's meaning, or had no more questions to ask ; he rose, and the abbé accompanied him to the door.

"You are a great almsgiver," said the visitor ; "and although you are said to be rich, I will venture to offer you something for your poor people. Will you accept my offering ?"

"I thank you, Monsieur ; I am jealous of only one thing ; namely, that the relief I give should be entirely from my own resources."

"However —"

"My resolution, Monsieur, is unchangeable ; but you have only to search for yourself, and you will find, alas ! too many objects upon whom to exercise your benevolence." The abbé once more bowed as he opened the door ; the stranger bowed and took his leave. The carriage conducted him straight to the house of M. de Villefort. An hour afterwards the carriage was again ordered, and this time it went to the Rue Fontaine St. George,

and stopped at No. 5, where Lord Wilmore lived. The stranger had written to Lord Wilmore, requesting an interview, which the latter had fixed for ten o'clock. As the envoy of the prefect of police arrived ten minutes before ten, he was told that Lord Wilmore, who was precision and punctuality personified, was not yet come in, but that he would be sure to return at ten exactly.

The visitor was ushered into the drawing-room, which was like all other furnished drawing-rooms. A mantelpiece, with two modern Sèvres vases; a timepiece representing Cupid with his bent bow; a looking-glass with an engraving on each side,—one representing Homer carrying his guide, the other, Belisarius begging; a grayish paper; red and black tapestry,—such was the appearance of Lord Wilmore's drawing-room. It was illuminated by lamps, with ground-glass shades, which gave only a feeble light, as if out of consideration for the weak sight of the prefect's emissary. After ten minutes' expectation the clock struck ten; at the fifth stroke the door opened, and Lord Wilmore appeared. He was rather above the middle height, with thin reddish whiskers, light complexion, and light hair, turning gray. He was dressed with all the English eccentricity,—namely, in a blue coat with gilt buttons and high collar, in the fashion of 1811, a white kerseymere waistcoat, and nankeen trousers three inches too short, but which were prevented by straps from slipping up to the knee. His first remark on entering was, “ You know, Monsieur, I do not speak French ? ”

“ I know you do not like to converse in our language,” replied the envoy.

“ But you may use it,” replied Lord Wilmore; “ for though I do not speak it, I understand it.”

“ And I,” replied the visitor, changing his idiom, “ know

enough of English to keep up the conversation. Do not put yourself to the slightest inconvenience."

"Heigh-ho!" said Lord Wilmore, with that tone which is known only to natives of Great Britain.

The envoy presented his letter of introduction, which the latter read with English coolness; and having finished, "I understand," said he,—"I understand very well."

Then began the questions, which were similar to those which had been addressed to the Abbé Busoni; but as Lord Wilmore, in the character of the count's enemy, was less restrained in his answers, they were more numerous. He described the youth of Monte Cristo, who, he said, at ten years of age entered the service of one of those petty sovereigns of India who make war on the English; it was there that Wilmore had first met him and fought against him. In that war Zaccione had been taken prisoner, sent to England, and confined in a prison-ship, whence he had escaped by swimming. Then began his travels, his duels, his passions; then came the insurrection in Greece, and he had served in the Grecian ranks. While in that service he had discovered a silver mine in the mountains of Thessaly; but he had been careful to conceal it from every one. After the battle of Navarino, when the Greek Government was consolidated, he asked of King Otho a mining grant for that district, which was given him. Hence that immense fortune, which might in Lord Wilmore's opinion amount to one or two millions per annum,—a precarious fortune which might be suddenly lost by the failure of the mine.

"But," asked the visitor, "do you know why he came to France?"

"He is speculating in railways," said Lord Wilmore; "and being a skilful chemist, and a physicist not less dis-

tinguished, he has discovered a new telegraph, which he is seeking to bring into use."

"How much does he spend yearly?" asked the prefect's emissary.

"Not more than five or six hundred thousand livres," said Lord Wilmore; "he is a miser."

Hatred evidently inspired the Englishman, who, knowing no other reproach to bring on the count, accused him of avarice.

"Do you know his house at Auteuil?"

"Certainly."

"What do you know respecting it?"

"Do you wish to know why he bought it?"

"Yes."

"The count is a speculator, who will certainly ruin himself in Utopian experiments. He supposes there is in the neighborhood of the house he has bought a mineral spring equal to those at Bagnères, Luchon, and Cauterets. He is going to turn his house into a *bad-haus*, as the Germans term it. He has already dug up all the garden two or three times to find the famous spring, and being unsuccessful, he will soon purchase all the contiguous houses. Now, as I dislike him, and hope his railway, his electric telegraph, or his search for baths will ruin him, I am watching for his discomfiture, which must soon take place."

"What was the cause of your quarrel?"

"When in England he seduced the wife of one of my friends."

"Why do you not seek revenge?"

"I have already fought three duels with him," said the Englishman; "the first with the pistol, the second with the sword, and the third with the two-handed sword."

"And what was the result of those duels?"

"The first time, he broke my arm ; the second, he wounded me in the breast, and the third time, made this large wound." The Englishman turned down his shirt-collar, and showed a scar whose redness proved it to be a recent one. "So that I am his enemy, and I am sure that he will die by my hand."

"But," said the envoy, "you are not now on the way to kill him, it seems to me."

"Heigh-ho!" said the Englishman, "I practise shooting every day, and every other day Grisier comes to my house."

This was all the visitor wished to ascertain, or rather, all the Englishman appeared to know. The agent rose ; and having bowed to Lord Wilmore, who returned his salutation with the stiff politeness of the English, he retired. Lord Wilmore, having heard the door close after him, returned to his bedroom, where with one hand he pulled off his light hair, his red whiskers, his false jaw, and his scar, to resume the black hair, the dark complexion, and the pearly teeth of the Count of Monte Cristo. It was M. de Villefort, and not the prefect's emissary, who returned to the house of M. de Villefort. The *procureur du roi* felt more at ease, although he had learned nothing really satisfactory ; and for the first time since the dinner-party at Auteuil, he slept soundly.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE BALL.

IT was in the warmest days of July, when in due course of time the Saturday arrived upon which the ball of M. de Morcerf was to take place. It was ten o'clock at night ; the large trees in the garden of the count's hotel stood out distinctly against the sky, studded with golden stars, where the last mists of a storm, which had threatened all day, yet floated. From the halls on the ground-floor might be heard the sound of music, with the whirl of the waltz and galop, while brilliant streams of light shone through the openings of the Venetian blinds. At this moment the garden was occupied only by ten servants, who had just received orders from their mistress to prepare the supper, the serenity of the weather continuing to increase. Until now, it had been undecided whether the supper should take place in the dining-room or under a long tent erected on the lawn ; but the beautiful blue sky covered with stars had determined the case in favor of the lawn. The gardens were illuminated with colored lanterns, according to the Italian custom ; and the supper-table was loaded with wax-lights and flowers, according to the custom in all countries where the luxuries of the table are well understood.

At the time the Comtesse de Morcerf returned to the rooms after giving her orders, many guests were arriving, more attracted by the charming hospitality of the countess than by the distinguished position of the count, — for owing to the good taste of Mercédès, one was sure of finding

some arrangements at her fête worthy of relating, or even copying in case of need. Madame Danglars, in whom the events we have related had caused deep anxiety, had hesitated about going to Madame de Morcerf's, when during the morning her carriage happened to cross that of M. de Villefort. The latter made a sign; and the carriages having drawn close together, he said, " You are going to Madame de Morcerf's, are you not ? "

" No," replied Madame Danglars, " I am too ill."

" You are wrong," replied Villefort, significantly; " it is important that you should be seen there."

" Do you think so ? " demanded the baroness.

" I do."

" In that case I will go." And the two carriages passed on towards their different destinations.

Madame Danglars therefore came, not only beautiful in person but radiant with splendor; she entered by one door at the same time Mercédès appeared at the other. The countess sent Albert to meet Madame Danglars. He approached, paid her some well-merited compliments on her toilet, and offered his arm to conduct her to a seat. Albert looked around him.

" You are looking for my daughter ? " said the baroness, smiling.

" I confess it," replied Albert. " Could you have been so cruel as not to bring her ? "

" Calm yourself. She has met Mademoiselle de Villefort, and has taken her arm. See, they are following us, both in white dresses,—one with a bouquet of camellias, the other with one of myosotis. But tell me — "

" Well, what do you wish to know ? "

" Will not the Count of Monte Cristo be here to-night ? "

" Seventeen ! " replied Albert.

" What do you mean ? "

"I only mean that the count seems the rage," replied the viscount, smiling, "and that you are the seventeenth person who has asked me the same question. The count is in fashion ; I congratulate him upon it."

"And have you replied to every one as you have to me ?"

"Ah ! to be sure, I have not answered you. Be satisfied ; we shall have this lion. We are among the privileged ones."

"Were you at the opera yesterday ?"

"No."

"He was there."

"Ah, indeed ! And did the eccentric person commit any new originality ?"

"Can he show himself without doing so ? Elssler was dancing in 'Le Diable Boiteux ;' the Greek princess was in ecstasies. After the *cachucha* he placed a magnificent ring on the stem of a bouquet, and threw it to the charming *danseuse*, who in the third act, to do honor to the gift, reappeared with it on her finger. And the Greek princess, will she be here ?"

"No, you will be deprived of that pleasure ; her position in the count's establishment is not sufficiently understood."

"Wait ; leave me here, and go and speak to Madame de Villefort, who is longing to engage your attention."

Albert bowed to Madame Danglars, and advanced towards Madame de Villefort, whose lips opened as he approached. "I wager anything," said Albert, interrupting her, "that I know what you were about to say."

"Well, what is it ?"

"If I guess rightly, will you confess it ?"

"Yes."

"On your honor ?"

“On my honor.”

“You were going to ask me if the Count of Monte Cristo were arrived, or expected.”

“Not at all. It is not of him that I am now thinking. I was going to ask you if you had received any news of M. Franz ?”

“Yes, yesterday.”

“What did he tell you ?”

“That he was leaving at the same time as his letter.”

“Well, now then, the count ?”

“The count will come ; be satisfied.”

“You know that he has another name besides Monte Cristo ?”

“No, I did not know it.”

“Monte Cristo is the name of an island ; and he has a family name.”

“I never heard it.”

“Well, then, I am better informed than you ; his name is Zaccione.”

“It is possible.”

“He is a Maltese.”

“That is also possible.”

“The son of a ship-owner.”

“Really, you should relate all this aloud ; you would have the greatest success.”

“He served in India, discovered a mine in Thessaly, and comes to Paris to form a mineral-water establishment at Auteuil.”

“Well ! I ’m sure,” said Morcerf, “this is indeed news ! Am I allowed to repeat it ?”

“Yes, but cautiously ; tell one thing at a time, and do not say I told you.”

“Why so ?”

“Because it is a secret just discovered.”

“By whom ?”

“The police.”

“Then the news originated — ”

“At the prefect’s last night. Paris, you can understand, is astonished at the sight of such unusual splendor, and the police have made inquiries.”

“Good ! nothing more is wanting than to arrest the count as a vagabond, on the pretext of his being too rich.”

“Indeed, this would doubtless have happened if his credentials had not been so favorable.”

“Poor count ! And is he aware of the danger he has been in ?”

“I think not.”

“Then it will be but charitable to inform him. When he arrives, I will not fail to do so.”

Just then a handsome young man, with bright eyes, black hair, and glossy mustache, respectfully bowed to Madame de Villefort. Albert extended him his hand. “Madame,” said Albert, “allow me to present to you M. Maximilian Morrel, captain of Spahis, one of our best, and above all, of our bravest officers.”

“I have already had the pleasure of meeting this gentleman at Auteuil, at the house of the Count of Monte Cristo,” replied Madame de Villefort, turning away with marked coldness of manner. This answer, and above all the tone in which it was uttered, chilled the heart of poor Morrel. But a recompense was in store for him ; turning round, he saw near the door a beautiful fair face, whose large blue eyes were, without any marked expression, fixed upon him, while the bouquet of myosotis was gently raised to her lips.

The salutation was so well understood that Morrel, with the same expression in his eyes, placed his handker-

chief to his mouth ; and these two living statues, whose hearts beat so violently under their marble aspect, separated from each other by the whole length of the room, forgot themselves for a moment, or rather forgot the world in their mutual contemplation. They might have remained much longer lost in one another, without any one noticing their abstraction, — the Count of Monte Cristo had just entered. We have already said that there was something in the count which attracted universal attention wherever he appeared. It was not the coat, unexceptionable in its cut, though simple and unornamented ; it was not the plain white waistcoat ; it was not the trousers, that displayed the foot so perfectly formed, — it was none of these things that attracted the attention. It was his pale complexion, his waving black hair ; it was the expression so calm and serene ; it was the eye so dark and melancholy ; it was the mouth, chiselled with such marvellous delicacy, which so easily expressed such high disdain, — these were what fixed all eyes upon him. Many men might have been handsomer ; but certainly there could be none whose appearance was more *significant*, if the expression may be used. Everything about the count seemed to have its meaning, for the constant habit of thought which he had acquired had given to the expression of his face, and even to the most trifling gesture, an incomparable ease and force. Yet the Parisian world is so strange that even all this might not have won attention, had there not been, besides this, a mysterious story gilded by an immense fortune.

Meanwhile he advanced under a multitude of curious glances, and attended by slight salutations, to Madame de Morcerf, who, standing before a mantel-piece ornamented with flowers, had seen his entrance in a looking-glass placed opposite the door, and was prepared to receive him.

She turned towards him with a serene smile just at the moment he was bowing to her. No doubt she fancied the count would speak to her, while on his side the count thought she was about to address him ; but both remained silent, and after a mere bow, Monte Cristo directed his steps to Albert, who received him cordially.

“Have you seen my mother ? ” asked Albert.

“I have just had the pleasure,” replied the count ; “but I have not seen your father.”

“See, he is down there, talking politics with that little group of great geniuses.”

“Indeed ! ” said Monte Cristo ; “and so those gentlemen down there are men of great talent. I should not have guessed it. And for what kind of talent are they celebrated ? You know there are different sorts.”

“There is, in the first place, a scholar,—that tall dry-looking man ; he discovered in the neighborhood of Rome a kind of lizard with a vertebra more than usual, and he immediately laid his discovery before the Institute. The thing was contested for a long time, but finally decided in his favor. I can assure you the vertebra made a great noise in the learned world, and the gentleman, who was only a knight of the Legion of Honor, was made an officer.”

“Come,” said Monte Cristo, “this cross seems to me to be wisely awarded ; I suppose had he found an additional vertebra, they would have made him a commander ? ”

“Very likely,” said Albert.

“And who can that person be who has taken it into his head to wrap himself up in a blue coat embroidered with green ? ”

“Oh, that coat is not his own idea ; it is the republic’s, which deputed David to draw a uniform for the academicians.”

"Indeed!" said Monte Cristo; "so this gentleman is an academician?"

"Within the last week he has been made one of the learned assembly."

"And what is his especial talent?"

"His talent? I believe he thrusts pins into the heads of rabbits; that he makes fowls eat madder; and that he pushes out the spinal marrow of dogs with whalebone."

"And he is made a member of the Academy of Sciences for this?"

"No; of the French Academy."

"But what has the French Academy to do with all this?"

"I was going to tell you. It seems—"

"That his experiments have very considerably advanced the cause of science, doubtless?"

"No; that his style of writing is very good."

"This must be very flattering to the feelings of the rabbits into whose heads he has thrust pins, to the fowls whose bones he has dyed red, and to the dogs whose spinal marrow he has removed?"

Albert laughed.

"And the other one?" demanded the count.

"That one?"

"Yes, the third."

"Ah! in the dark blue coat?"

"Yes."

"He is a colleague of the count, and has very warmly opposed the Chamber of Peers having a uniform. He had a great oratorical success upon that question. He stood badly with the Liberal papers, but his noble opposition to the wishes of the court has recommended him to them. They talk of making him an ambassador."

"And what are his claims to the peerage?"

"He has composed two or three comic operas, written four or five articles in the '*Siecle*,' and voted five or six years for the minister."

"Bravo, Viscount!" said Monte Cristo, smiling; "you are a delightful *cicerone*. And now you will do me a favor, will you not?"

"What is it?"

"Do not introduce me to any of these gentlemen; and should they wish it, you will warn me."

Just then the count felt his arm pressed. He turned round; it was Danglars. "Ah! is it you, Baron?" said he.

"Why do you call me baron?" said Danglars; "you know that I care nothing for my title. I am not like you, Viscount; you like your title, do you not?"

"Certainly," replied Albert, "seeing that without my title I should be nothing; while you, sacrificing the baron, would still remain the millionaire."

"Which seems to me the finest title under the royalty of July," replied Danglars.

"Unfortunately," said Monte Cristo, "one's title to a millionaire does not last for life, like that of baron, peer of France, or academician; for example, the millionnaires Frank and Poulmann, of Frankfort, who have just become bankrupts."

"Indeed!" said Danglars, becoming pale.

"Yes; I received the news this evening by a courier. I had about a million in their hands, but warned in time, I withdrew it a month ago."

"Ah," exclaimed Danglars, "they have drawn on me for two hundred thousand livres!"

"Well, you can guard against it; their signature is worth five per cent."

"Yes, but it is too late," said Danglars; "I have honored their bills."

"Good!" said Monte Cristo; "here are two hundred thousand livres gone after—"

"Hush! do not mention these things," said Danglars; then, approaching Monte Cristo, he added, "especially before young M. Cavalcanti;" after which he smiled and turned towards the young man in question.

Albert had left the count to speak to his mother, Danglars had gone to converse with young Cavalcanti; Monte Cristo was for an instant alone. Meanwhile the heat became excessive. The footmen were hastening through the rooms with trays loaded with ices. Monte Cristo wiped the perspiration from his forehead, but drew back when the waiter was presented to him; he took no refreshment. Madame de Morcerf did not lose sight of Monte Cristo; she saw the tray pass without his touching anything, and even noticed the movement with which he withdrew from it.

"Albert," she asked, "did you notice that?"

"What, Mother?"

"That the count will never accept an invitation to dine with us."

"Yes; but then he breakfasted with me,—indeed, he made his first appearance in the world on that very occasion."

"But your house is not M. de Morcerf's," murmured Mercédès; "and since he has been here I have watched him."

"Well?"

"Well, he has taken nothing yet."

"The count is very temperate."

Mercédès smiled sadly. "Approach him," said she; "and when the next tray passes, insist upon his taking something."

"But why, Mother?"

"Oblige me, Albert," said Mercédès.

Albert kissed his mother's hand and drew near to the count. Another salver passed, loaded like the preceding ones ; she saw Albert attempt to persuade the count, but he obstinately refused. Albert rejoined his mother ; she was very pale.

"Well," said she, "you see he refuses ?"

"Yes ; but why need this annoy you ?"

"You know, Albert, women are singular creatures. I should like to have seen the count take something in my house, if only a morsel of pomegranate. Perhaps he cannot reconcile himself to the French style of living, and might prefer something else."

"Oh, no ! I have seen him in Italy eat everything ; no doubt he does not feel inclined this evening."

"And besides," said the countess, "accustomed as he is to burning climates, possibly he does not feel the heat as we do."

"I do not think that, for he has complained of feeling almost suffocated, and asked why the Venetian blinds were not opened as well as the windows."

"In fact," said Mercédès, "it suggests a way of assuring myself whether his abstinence was intended ;" and she left the room. A minute afterwards the blinds were thrown open ; and through the jessamine and clematis that overhung the window might be seen the garden ornamented with lanterns, and the supper laid under the tent. Dancers, players, talkers, — all uttered an exclamation of joy ; every one inhaled with delight the breeze that floated in. At the same time, Mercédès reappeared, paler than before, but with that immovable expression of countenance which she sometimes wore. She went straight to the group of which her husband formed the centre. "Do not detain these gentlemen here, Count," she said ; "they would

prefer, I should think, to breathe in the garden rather than suffocate here, since they are not playing."

"Ah," said a gallant old general who in 1809 had sung "*Partant pour la Syrie*," "we will not go alone to the garden."

"Then," said Mercédès, "I will lead the way." Turning towards Monte Cristo, she added, "Count, will you oblige me with your arm?"

The count almost staggered at these simple words; then he fixed his eyes on Mercédès. It was but the glance of a moment; but it seemed to the countess to have lasted for a century, so much was expressed in that one look. He offered his arm to the countess; she leaned upon it, or rather just touched it with her little hand, and they together descended the steps, lined with rhododendrons and camellias. Behind them, by another outlet, a group of about twenty persons rushed into the garden with loud exclamations of delight.

CHAPTER XIX.

BREAD AND SALT.

MADAME DE MORCERF entered an archway of trees with her companion. It was a grove of lindens conducting to a conservatory.

"It was too warm in the salon, was it not, Count?" she asked.

"Yes, Madame; and it was an excellent idea of yours to open the doors and the blinds." As he spoke these words, the count perceived that the hand of Mercédès trembled. "But you," he continued, "with that light dress, and without anything to cover you but that gauze scarf, perhaps you feel cold?"

"Do you know where I am leading you?" said the countess, without replying to the question of Monte Cristo.

"No, Madame," replied Monte Cristo; "but you see I make no resistance."

"We are going to the green-house that you see at the end of this path."

The count looked at Mercédès as if to interrogate her, but she continued her course without speaking; Monte Cristo also was silent. They reached the building, ornamented with magnificent fruits, which ripen even in July in the artificial temperature which is substituted for the warmth of the sun, which in our climate is so often obscured. The countess left the arm of Monte Cristo, and picked a bunch of Muscatel grapes. "See, Count," she said with

a smile so sad in its expression that one could almost see the tears on her eyelids,—“see; our French grapes are not to be compared, I know, with yours of Sicily and Cyprus, but you will make allowance for our northern sun.”

The count bowed, and stepped back.

“Do you refuse?” said Mercédès, in a tremulous voice.

“Pray excuse me, Madame,” replied Monte Cristo, “but I never eat Muscatel grapes.”

Mercédès let them fall, and sighed. A magnificent peach was hanging against an adjoining wall, ripened by the same artificial heat. Mercédès drew near, and plucked the fruit. “Take this peach, then,” she said.

The count again refused.

“What, again!” she exclaimed in so plaintive an accent that it seemed to suppress a sob; “really, you pain me.”

A long silence succeeded this scene; the peach, like the grapes, had fallen on the ground.

“Count,” said Mercédès, with a supplicating glance, “there is a beautiful Arabian custom which makes eternal friends of those who have together eaten bread and salt beneath the same roof.”

“I know it, Madame,” replied the count; “but we are in France, and not in Arabia. And in France eternal friendships are as rare as the custom of sharing bread and salt.”

“But,” said the countess, breathlessly, with her eyes fixed on Monte Cristo, whose arm she convulsively pressed with both hands, “we are friends, are we not?”

The count became pale as death; the blood rushed to his heart, and then again rising, dyed his cheeks with crimson; his eyes swam like those of a man suddenly

dazzled. "Certainly, we are friends," he replied ; "why should we not be ?"

The answer was so little like the one Mercédès desired that she turned away to give vent to a sigh which sounded like a groan. "Thank you," she said ; and they recommenced walking. They went the whole length of the garden without uttering a word. "Monsieur," suddenly exclaimed the countess, after their walk had continued ten minutes in silence, "is it true that you have seen so much, travelled so far, and suffered so deeply?"

"I have suffered deeply, Madame," answered Monte Cristo.

"But now you are happy?"

"Doubtless," replied the count, "since no one hears me complain."

"And your present happiness, has it softened your heart?"

"My present happiness equals my past misery," said the count.

"Are you not married?" asked the countess.

"I married!" exclaimed Monte Cristo, shuddering ; "who could have told you that?"

"No one told me you were ; but you have frequently been seen at the opera with a young and lovely person."

"She is a slave whom I bought at Constantinople, Madame, — the daughter of a prince. I have adopted her as my daughter, having no one else to love in the world."

"You live alone, then?"

"I live alone."

"You have no sister, no son, no father?"

"I have no one."

"How can you live so, without anything to attach you to life?"

"It is not my fault, Madame. At Malta, I loved a

young girl, was on the point of marrying her, when war came and carried me away. I thought she loved me well enough to wait for me, and even to remain faithful to my grave. When I returned she was married. This is the history of most men who have passed twenty years of age. Perhaps my heart was weaker than those of others, and I suffered more than they would have done in my place, — that is all the difference."

The countess stopped for a moment, as if gasping for breath. "Yes," she said, "and you have still preserved this love in your heart, — one can love but once ; and did you ever see her again ?"

"Never !"

"Never ?"

"I never returned to the country where she lived."

"At Malta ?"

"Yes, at Malta."

"She is, then, now at Malta ?"

"I think so."

"And have you forgiven her for all she has made you suffer ?"

"Yes, I have pardoned *her*."

"But only her ; do you, then, still hate those who separated you from her ?" The countess placed herself before Monte Cristo, still holding in her hand a portion of the perfumed grapes. "Take some," she said.

"Madame, I never eat Muscatel grapes," replied Monte Cristo, as if the subject had not been mentioned before.

The countess threw the grapes into the nearest thicket with a gesture of despair. "Inflexible !" she murmured. Monte Cristo remained as unmoved as if the reproach had not been addressed to him.

Albert at this moment ran in. "Oh, Mother !" he exclaimed, "a great misfortune has happened !"

"What? what has happened?" asked the countess, as though awakening from a sleep to the realities of life.
"Did you say a misfortune? Indeed, I should expect misfortunes."

"M. de Villefort is here."

"Well?"

"He comes to seek his wife and daughter."

"Why so?"

"Because Madame de Saint-Méran has just arrived in Paris, bringing the news of M. de Saint-Méran's death, which took place on the first stage of the journey from Marseilles. Madame de Villefort, who was in very good spirits, could not readily comprehend the calamity or believe that it had occurred; but Mademoiselle Valentine, at the first words, noticing certain precautions on the part of her father, guessed the whole truth; the blow struck her like a thunderbolt, and she fell senseless."

"And how was M. de Saint-Méran related to Mademoiselle de Villefort?" said the count.

"He was her grandfather on the mother's side. He was coming here to hasten her marriage with Franz."

"Ah, indeed!"

"Now, then," said Albert, "Franz has a reprieve; why is not M. de Saint-Méran also grandfather to Mademoiselle Danglars?"

"Albert! Albert!" said Madame de Morcerf, in a tone of mild reproof, "what are you saying? Ah, Count, he esteems you so highly, tell him that he has spoken amiss;" and she took two or three steps forward.

Monte Cristo looked at her so strangely, and with an expression so thoughtful and so full of affectionate admiration that she retraced her steps. Then she took his hand, and at the same time grasped that of her son, and joined them together. "We are friends; are we not?" she asked.

"Oh, Madame, I do not presume to call myself your friend ; but at all times I am your most respectful servant."

The countess went away with an indescribable pang in her heart ; and before she had taken ten steps the count saw her raise her handkerchief to her eyes.

"Do not my mother and you agree ?" asked Albert, astonished.

"On the contrary," replied the count, "did you not hear her declare that we were friends ?"

They re-entered the drawing-room, which Valentine and Monsieur and Madame de Villefort had just left. It is unnecessary to say that Morrel had followed them.

CHAPTER XX.

MADAME DE SAINT-MÉRAN.

A GLOOMY scene had indeed occurred at the house of M. de Villefort. After the ladies had departed for the ball, whither all the entreaties of Madame de Villefort had failed in persuading him to accompany them, the *procureur du roi* had as usual shut himself up in his study, with a heap of papers calculated to alarm any one else, but which generally scarcely satisfied his vigorous appetite for work. But this time the papers were a mere matter of form. Villefort had secluded himself, not to study, but to reflect; and with the door locked, and having given orders that he should not be disturbed excepting for important business, he sat down in his armchair, and began to ponder over those events the remembrance of which had during the last week filled his mind with so many gloomy thoughts and bitter recollections. Then, instead of attacking the mass of papers piled before him, he opened the drawer of his desk, touched a spring, and drew out a parcel of notes, precious documents, among which he had carefully arranged, in characters known only to himself, the names of all those who, either in his political career, in money matters, at the bar, or in his mysterious love affairs, had become his enemies. Their number was formidable now that he had begun to fear, and yet these names, powerful though they were, had often caused him to smile with the same kind of satisfaction experienced by a traveller who from the summit of a mountain be-

holds at his feet the craggy eminences, the almost impassable paths, and the fearful chasms along which he has so perilously climbed. When he had run over all these names in his memory, again read and studied them, commenting meanwhile upon his lists, he shook his head. "No!" he murmured, "none of my enemies would have worked patiently and laboriously for so long a time that they might now crush me with this secret. Sometimes, as Hamlet says,—

'Deeds will rise,
Tho' all the earth o'erwhelm them, to men's eyes ;'

but, like a phosphoric light, they rise but to mislead. The story has been told by the Corsican to some priest, who in his turn has also repeated it. M. de Monte Cristo may have heard it, and to enlighten himself — but why should he wish to enlighten himself upon the subject?" asked Villefort, after a moment's reflection. "What interest can this M. de Monte Cristo, M. Zacccone, son of a ship-owner of Malta, discoverer of a mine in Thessaly, now visiting Paris for the first time, — what interest can he take in discovering a gloomy, mysterious, and useless fact like this? However, amid all the incoherent details given to me by the Abbé Busoni and by Lord Wilmore, by that friend and that enemy, one thing appears to me to be clearly and definitely established, — that in no period, in no case, in no circumstance, could there have been any contact between him and me."

But Villefort uttered words which even he himself did not believe. He dreaded not the revelation so much, for he could reply to, or deny its truth; he cared little for that "Mene, Tekel, Phares," which appeared suddenly in letters of blood upon the wall; what he was really anxious for was to discover whose hand had traced it. At the moment when he was endeavoring to calm his fears, and

when, instead of dwelling upon the political future that had so often been the subject of his ambitious dreams, he was imagining a future limited to the enjoyments of home, fearing to awaken the enemy that had so long slept, the noise of a carriage sounded in the yard ; then he heard the steps of an aged person ascending the stairs, followed by tears and lamentations, such as servants always assume when they wish to appear interested in their master's grief. He drew back the bolt of his door, and almost immediately an old lady entered, unannounced, carrying her shawl on her arm, and her bonnet in her hand. The white hair was thrown back from her yellow forehead, and her eyes, already sunken by the furrows of age, now almost disappeared beneath eyelids swollen with grief. "Oh, Monsieur," she said, — "oh, Monsieur, what a misfortune ! I shall die of it ; oh, yes, I shall certainly die of it !"

And then falling upon the chair nearest the door, she burst into a paroxysm of sobs. The servants, standing in the doorway, not daring to approach nearer, were looking at Noirtier's old servant, who, having heard the noise while in his master's room, had hastened to the scene and remained behind the others. Villefort rose, and ran towards his mother-in-law, for it was she. "Why, what can have happened ?" he exclaimed. "What has thus disturbed you ? Is not M. de Saint-Méran with you ?"

"M. de Saint-Méran is dead !" answered the old marchioness, without preface, without expression ; she appeared stupefied.

Villefort drew back, and clasping his hands together, exclaimed, "Dead ! so suddenly ?"

"A week ago," continued Madame de Saint-Méran, "we started together in the carriage after dinner. M. de Saint-Méran had been unwell for some days. Still, the idea of see-

ing our dear Valentine again inspired him with courage ; and notwithstanding his illness, he wished to set out. When we were six leagues from Marseilles, after having eaten some of the lozenges he is accustomed to take, he fell into such a deep sleep that it appeared to me unnatural ; still I hesitated to wake him, when I fancied his face became red, and that the veins in his temples throbbed more violently than usual. However, as it became dark, and I could no longer see, I let him sleep. Presently he uttered a muffled cry of distress, like that of a man suffering in his dreams, and with a sharp movement threw back his head. I stopped the postilion, I called M. de Saint-Méran, I applied my smelling-salts ; but all was over, and I arrived at Aix by the side of a corpse."

Villefort stood with his mouth half open, quite stupefied.
" Of course you sent for a doctor ? "

" Immediately ; but, as I have told you, it was too late."

" Yes ; but at least he could tell of what complaint the poor marquis had died."

" Oh, yes, Monsieur, he told me ; it appears to have been an apoplectic stroke."

" And what did you do then ? "

" M. de Saint-Méran had always expressed a desire, in case of his death happening during his absence from Paris, that his body might be brought to the family vault. I had him put into a leaden coffin, and I am preceding him by a few days."

" Oh, poor mother !" said M. de Villefort, " to have those duties to perform after such a blow and at your age ! "

" God has supported me through all ! And then, the dear marquis, he would certainly have done everything for me that I performed for him. It is true that since I left him I seem to have lost my senses. I cannot weep ; at my age they say that we have no more tears. Still I think

that when one is in trouble we should have the power of weeping. Where is Valentine, sir ? It is on her account I am here ; I wish to see Valentine."

Villefort thought it would be terrible to reply that Valentine was at a ball ; so he only said that she had gone out with her stepmother, and that she should be sent for.

" This instant, sir ! this instant, I beseech you !" said the old lady.

Villefort placed the arm of Madame de Saint-Méran within his own, and conducted her to his apartment. " Rest yourself, Mother," he said.

The marchioness raised her head at this word ; and beholding the man who so forcibly reminded her of her deeply-regretted child, who still lived for her in Valentine, she felt touched at that word " mother," and bursting into tears, she fell on her knees before an armchair, in which she buried her venerable head. Villefort left her to the care of the women, while old Barrois ran, half-scared, to his master, — for nothing frightens old men so much as when death relaxes its vigilance over them for a moment in order to strike some other old man. Then, while Madame de Saint-Méran, still on her knees, remained praying fervently, Villefort sent for a carriage and went himself to bring his wife and daughter from Madame de Morcerf's. He was so pale when he appeared at the door of the ball-room, that Valentine ran to him, saying, —

" Oh, Father ! some misfortune has happened ! "

" Your grandmamma has just arrived, Valentine," said M. de Villefort.

" And grandpapa ? " inquired the young girl, trembling with apprehension.

M. de Villefort replied only by offering his arm to his daughter. It was time, for Valentine's head swam, and she staggered ; Madame de Villefort instantly has-

tened to her assistance, and aided her husband in dragging her to the carriage, saying, "What a singular event! Who could have thought it? Ah, yes, it is indeed strange!" And the wretched family departed, leaving a cloud of sadness hanging over the rest of the party.

At the foot of the stairs Valentine found Barrois awaiting her. "M. Noirtier wishes to see you to-night," he said in an undertone.

"Tell him I will come when I leave my dear grand-mamma," she replied, feeling with true delicacy that the person to whom she could be of the most service just then was Madame de Saint-Méran.

Valentine found her grandmother in bed. Silent caresses, heartwrung sobs, broken sighs, burning tears, were all that passed in this sad interview; while Madame de Villefort, leaning on her husband's arm, maintained all outward forms of respect, at least towards the poor widow. She soon whispered to her husband, "I think it would be better for me to retire, with your permission, for the sight of me appears still to afflict your mother-in-law."

Madame de Saint-Méran heard her. "Yes, yes," she said softly to Valentine, "let her leave; but do you stay."

Madame de Villefort left, and Valentine remained alone beside the bed, for the *procureur du roi*, overcome with consternation at the unexpected death, had followed his wife. Meanwhile, Barrois had returned for the first time to old Noirtier, who, having heard the noise in the house, had, as we have said, sent his old servant to inquire the cause; on his return, his quick and intelligent eye interrogated the messenger.

"Alas, sir!" exclaimed Barrois, "a great misfortune has happened. Madame de Saint-Méran has arrived, and her husband is dead!"

M. de Saint-Méran and Noirtier had never been on strict

terms of friendship ; still, the death of one old man always considerably affects another. Noirtier let his head fall upon his chest, apparently overwhelmed and thoughtful ; then he closed one eye.

“ Mademoiselle Valentine ? ” said Barrois.

Noirtier nodded his head.

“ She is at the ball, as you know, since she came to say good-by to you in full dress.”

Noirtier again closed his left eye.

“ Do you wish to see her ? ”

Noirtier again made an affirmative sign.

“ Well, they have gone to bring her, no doubt, from Madame de Morcerf’s ; I will await her return, and beg her to come up here. Is that what you wish for ? ”

“ Yes,” replied the invalid.

Barrois therefore, as we have seen, watched for Valentine and informed her of her grandfather’s wish. Consequently, Valentine came up to Noirtier on leaving Madame de Saint-Méran, who in the midst of her grief had at last yielded to fatigue and fallen into a feverish sleep. Within reach of her hand they placed a small table, upon which stood a bottle of orangeade, her usual beverage, and a glass. Then, as we have said, the young girl left the bedside to see M. Noirtier. Valentine kissed the old man, who looked at her with such tenderness that her eyes again filled with tears, whose sources she thought had been exhausted. The old gentleman continued to dwell upon her with the same expression.

“ Yes, yes,” said Valentine, “ you mean that I have yet a kind grandfather left, do you not ? ”

The old man intimated that such was his meaning.

“ Alas ! happily I have,” replied Valentine. “ Without that, what would become of me ? ”

It was one o’clock in the morning. Barrois, who wished

to go to bed himself, observed that after such sad events every one stood in need of rest. Noirtier would not say that the only rest he needed was to see his child, but wished her good-night, for grief and fatigue had made her appear quite ill.

The next morning Valentine found her grandmother in bed. The fever had not abated; on the contrary, her eyes glistened, and she appeared to be suffering from violent nervous irritability. "Oh, dear grandmamma! are you worse?" exclaimed Valentine, on perceiving all these signs of agitation.

"No, my child, no!" said Madame de Saint-Méran, "but I was impatiently waiting for your arrival, that I might send for your father."

"My father?" inquired Valentine, uneasily.

"Yes; I wish to speak to him."

Valentine did not venture to oppose her grandmother's wish, the cause of which she knew not; and an instant afterwards Villefort entered.

"Monsieur," said Madame de Saint-Méran, without using any circumlocution, and as if fearing she had no time to lose, "you wrote to me that there is a project of marriage for this child?"

"Yes, Madame," replied Villefort; "it is not only projected, but arranged."

"Your intended son-in-law is named M. Franz d'Epinay?"

"Yes, Madame."

"Is he not the son of General d'Epinay, who was on our side, and who was assassinated some days before the usurper returned from the Isle of Elba?"

"The same."

"Does he not dislike the idea of marrying the granddaughter of a Jacobin?"

"Our civil dissensions are now happily extinguished, Mother," said Villefort. "M. d'Épinay was quite a child when his father died ; he knows very little of M. Noirtier, and will meet him, if not with pleasure, at least with indifference."

"Is it a suitable match ?"

"In every respect."

"And the young man ?"

"Possesses universal esteem."

"He is agreeable ?"

"He is one of the most distinguished young men I know."

During the whole of this conversation Valentine had remained silent.

"Well, Monsieur," said Madame de Saint-Méran, after a few minutes' reflection, "I must hasten the marriage, for I have but a short time to live."

"You, Madame ?" "You, dear mamma ?" exclaimed M. de Villefort and Valentine at the same time.

"I know what I am saying," continued the marchioness ; "I must hurry you, so that having no mother, she may at least have a grandmother to bless her marriage. I am all that is left to her belonging to my poor Renée, whom you so soon forgot, Monsieur."

"Ah, Madame," said Villefort, "you forget that I was obliged to give a mother to my child."

"A stepmother is never a mother, Monsieur. But this is not to the purpose ; our business concerns Valentine. Let us leave the dead in peace."

All this was said with such rapidity that there was something in the conversation that seemed like the beginning of delirium.

"It shall be as you wish, Madame," said Villefort, — "more especially since your wishes coincide with mine ; and as soon as M. d'Épinay arrives in Paris — "

"My dear mother," interrupted Valentine, "consider decorum,—the recent death. You would not have me marry under so sad auspices?"

"My child," exclaimed the old lady, sharply, "let us hear none of those conventional objections that deter weak minds from establishing firmly their future lives. I also was married at the death-bed of my mother, and certainly I have not been less happy on that account."

"Still, that idea of death, Madame!" said Villefort.

"Still?—always! I tell you I am going to die; do you understand? Well, before dying, I wish to see my son-in-law. I wish to tell him to make my child happy; I wish to read in his eyes whether he intends to obey me,—I wish to know him, in short," continued the old lady, with a fearful expression, "that I may rise from the depths of my grave and find him, if he should not fulfil his duty!"

"Madame," said Villefort, "you must lay aside these exalted ideas, which touch the border of madness. The dead, once buried in their graves, sleep there, and never rise."

"Oh, yes, yes, dear mother, calm yourself," said Valentine.

"And I tell you, Monsieur, that you are mistaken. This night I have had a fearful sleep. It seemed as though my soul were already hovering over my body. My eyes, which I tried to open, closed against my will; and what will appear impossible, especially to you, Monsieur, I saw with my eyes shut, in the spot where you are now standing, issuing from that corner where there is a door leading into Madame de Villefort's dressing-room,—I saw, I tell you, silently enter, a white figure."

Valentine screamed. "It was the fever that disturbed you, Madame," said Villefort.

"Doubt, if you please, but I am sure of what I say. I saw a white figure ; and as if to prevent my discrediting the testimony of only one of my senses, I heard my glass removed, — the same which is there now on the table."

"Oh, dear mother, it was a dream."

"So little was it a dream that I stretched my hand towards the bell ; but when I did so the shade disappeared. My maid then entered with a light."

"But she saw no one ?"

"Phantoms are visible to those only who ought to see them. It was the soul of my husband ! Well, if my husband's soul can come to me, why should not my soul reappear to guard my granddaughter ? the tie is even more direct, it seems to me."

"Oh, Madame," said Villefort, deeply affected in spite of himself, "do not yield to those gloomy thoughts ; you will long live with us, happy, loved, and honored, and we will make you forget — "

"Never, never, never !" said the marchioness. "When does M. d'Épinay return ?"

"We expect him every moment."

"It is well. As soon as he arrives, inform me. We must be expeditious. And then I also wish to see a notary, that I may be assured that all our property returns to Valentine."

"Ah, my mother !" murmured Valentine, pressing her lips on the burning brow of her grandmother, "do you wish to kill me ? Oh, how feverish you are ! We must not send for a notary, but for a doctor ! "

"A doctor !" said she, shrugging her shoulders, "I am not ill ; I am thirsty, — that is all."

"What are you drinking, dear mamma ?"

"The same as usual, my dear ; my glass is there on the table. Give it me, Valentine."

Valentine poured the orangeade into a glass, and gave it to her grandmother with a certain degree of dread, for it was the same glass, she fancied, that had been touched by the spectre. The marchioness drained the glass at a single draught, and then turned on her pillow, repeating, “The notary ! the notary ! ”

M. de Villefort left the room, and Valentine seated herself at the bedside of her grandmother. The poor child appeared herself to require the doctor she had recommended to her aged relative. A burning spot flushed her cheek, her respiration was short and difficult, and her pulse beat with feverish excitement. She was thinking of the despair of Maximilian when informed that Madame de Saint-Méran, instead of being an ally, was unconsciously acting as his enemy. More than once she thought of revealing all to her grandmother, and she would not have hesitated a single moment if Maximilian Morrel had been named Albert de Morcerf or Raoul de Château-Renaud ; but Morrel was of plebeian extraction, and Valentine knew how the haughty Marquise de Saint-Méran despised all who were not noble. Her secret had always been repressed when she was about to reveal it by the sad conviction that it would be useless to do so, — for were it once discovered by her father and mother, all would be lost.

Two hours passed thus ; Madame de Saint-Méran was in a feverish sleep, and the notary had arrived. Though announced in a very low tone, Madame de Saint-Méran arose from her pillow. “The notary ?” she exclaimed, “let him come in ! ”

The notary, who was at the door, immediately entered. “Go, Valentine,” said Madame de Saint-Méran, “and leave me with this gentleman.”

“But, Mother—”

“Leave me ! go !” The young girl kissed her grand-

mother, and left with her handkerchief to her eyes ; at the door she found the *valet de chambre*, who told her the doctor was waiting in the dining-room. Valentine instantly ran down. The doctor was a friend of the family, and at the same time one of the cleverest men of the day, and very fond of Valentine, whose birth he had witnessed. He had himself a daughter of about her age, whose mother had been consumptive ; his life was continually disturbed by fear on account of his child.

"Oh," said Valentine, "we have been waiting for you with such impatience, dear M. d'Avrigny. But first of all, how are Madeleine and Antoinette ?"

Madeleine was the daughter of M. d'Avrigny, and Antoinette his niece. M. d'Avrigny smiled sadly. "Antoinette is very well," he said, "and Madeleine tolerably so. But you sent for me, my dear child. It is not your father or Madame de Villefort who is ill ? As for you, although it is obvious that we cannot get rid of our nerves, I fancy you have no further need of me than to recommend you not to allow your imagination to take too wide a field."

Valentine colored. M. d'Avrigny carried the science of divination almost to a miracle, for he was one of those doctors who always work upon the body through the mind. "No," she replied, "it is for my poor grandmother ; you know the calamity that has happened to us, do you not ?"

"I know nothing," said M. d'Avrigny.

"Alas !" said Valentine, restraining her tears, "my grandfather is dead."

"M. de Saint-Méran ?"

"Yes."

"Suddenly ?"

"From an apoplectic stroke."

"An apoplectic stroke ?" repeated the doctor.

"Yes; and my poor grandmother fancies that her husband, whom she never left, has called her, and that she must go and join him. Oh, M. d'Avrigny, I beseech you, do something for her!"

"Where is she?"

"In her room, with the notary."

"And M. Noirtier?"

"Just as he was; his mind is perfectly clear, but he is still motionless and dumb."

"And he has the same love for you, eh, my dear child?"

"Yes," said Valentine; "he is very fond of me."

"Who does not love you?"

Valentine smiled sadly.

"What are your grandmother's symptoms?"

"An extreme nervous excitement, and a strangely agitated sleep. She fancied this morning in her sleep that her soul was hovering above her body, which she at the same time watched; it must have been delirium. She fancies too that she saw a phantom enter her chamber, and even heard the noise it made on touching her glass."

"It is singular," said the doctor; "I was not aware that Madame de Saint-Méran was subject to such hallucinations."

"It is the first time I ever saw her thus," said Valentine. "And this morning she frightened me so that I thought her mad; and my father, who, you know, is a strong-minded man, himself appeared deeply impressed."

"We will go and see," said the doctor; "what you tell me seems very strange."

The notary here descended, and Valentine was informed that her grandmother was alone. "Go upstairs," she said to the doctor.

"And you?"

"Oh, I dare not, — she forbade my sending for you ; and, as you say, I am myself agitated, feverish, and unwell. I will go and take a turn in the garden to recover myself."

The doctor pressed Valentine's hand ; and while he went up to her grandmother, she descended the steps. We need not say which portion of the garden was her favorite walk. After remaining for a short time in the *parterre* surrounding the house, and gathering a rose to place in her waist or hair, it was her wont to turn into the dark avenue which led to the bank, and from the bank to go to the gate. As usual, Valentine strolled for a short time among her flowers, but without gathering them. The mourning in her heart forbade her assuming this simple ornament, though she had not yet had time to put on the outward semblance of woe. She then turned towards the avenue. As she advanced she fancied she heard a voice pronounce her name. She stopped, astonished ; then the voice reached her ear more distinctly, and she recognized it as that of Maximilian.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE PROMISE.

It was indeed Maximilian Morrel, who had passed a wretched existence since the previous day. With the instinct peculiar to lovers, he had anticipated, after the return of Madame de Saint-Méran and the death of the marquis, that something would occur at M. de Villefort's of interest to him as Valentine's lover. His presentiments were realized, as we shall see, and it was no longer a simple uneasiness which led him, pale and trembling, to the gate under the chestnut-trees. Valentine had not been informed that Morrel was waiting; and as it was not his accustomed hour for visiting her, pure chance, or rather a happy sympathy, led her at the moment to that spot. Morrel called her, and she ran to the gate. "You here at this hour?" said she.

"Yes, my poor girl," replied Morrel; "I come to bring and to hear bad tidings."

"This is indeed a house of mourning!" said Valentine; "speak, Maximilian, although the cup of sorrow seems already full."

"Dear Valentine," said Morrel, endeavoring to conceal his own emotion, "listen, I entreat you; what I am about to say is solemn. When are you to be married?"

"I will tell you all," said Valentine; "from you I have nothing to conceal. This morning the subject was introduced; and my dear grandmother, on whom I had counted as a support on whom I could rely, not only declared herself

favorable to it, but is so anxious for it that they only await the arrival of M. d'Épinay, and the following day the contract will be signed."

A deep sigh escaped the young man, who gazed long and mournfully at her whom he loved. "Alas!" he said in a low voice, "it is frightful to hear such words spoken tranquilly by the woman one loves: 'The time of your execution is appointed; in a few hours it will take place. But it is of no consequence; it must be so, and I will not interfere to prevent it.' Well, since, as you say, nothing remains but for M. d'Épinay to arrive, that the contract may be signed, since on the day after his arrival you will belong to him, — to-morrow you will be engaged to M. d'Épinay, for he came this morning to Paris."

Valentine uttered a cry.

"I was at the house of Monte Cristo an house since," said Morrel; "we were speaking, he of the sorrow your family had experienced, and I of your grief, when a carriage rolled into the courtyard. Never till then had I placed any confidence in preseutiments, but now I cannot help believing them, Valentine. At the sound of that carriage I shuddered; soon I heard steps on the staircase, which terrified me as much as the footsteps of the commander did Don Juan. The door at last opened; Albert de Morcerf entered first, and I began to discredit my fears, when after him another young man advanced, and the count exclaimed, 'Ah! M. le Baron Franz d'Épinay!' I summoned all my strength and courage to my support. Perhaps I turned pale, perhaps I trembled; but I am sure that I continued to smile with my lips. Five minutes later I departed, without having heard a word that had been spoken in those five minutes, — I was annihilated!"

"Poor Maximilian!" murmured Valentine.

"Valentine, the time has arrived when you must answer

me. And remember, my life depends on your answer. What do you intend doing ? ”

Valentine held down her head ; she was overwhelmed.

“ Listen ! ” said Morrel ; “ it is not the first time you have contemplated our present position, which is a serious and urgent one. I do not think it is a moment to give way to useless sorrow ; leave that for those who like to suffer at their ease and drink their tears at leisure. There are such persons in the world, and God will doubtless reward them in heaven for their resignation on earth ; but those who mean to contend must not lose one precious moment, but must return immediately the blow which fortune strikes. Do you intend to struggle against our ill-fortune ? Tell me, Valentine, for it is that which I have come to ask.”

Valentine trembled, and stared at Morrel in terror. The idea of resisting her father, her grandmother, and all the family, had never occurred to her. “ What do you say, Maximilian ? ” asked Valentine. “ What do you term a struggle ? Oh, it would be a sacrilege ! What ! I resist my father’s order and my dying grandmother’s wish ? Impossible ! ” Morrel started. “ You are too noble not to understand me, and you understand me so well that you already yield, dear Maximilian. No, no ! I shall need all my strength to struggle with myself and to drink my tears, as you say. But to grieve my father ; to disturb my grandmother’s last moments, — never ! ”

“ You are right,” said Morrel, calmly.

“ Good heavens ! in what a tone you say that ! ” said Valentine, wounded.

“ I speak as one who admires you, Mademoiselle.”

“ Mademoiselle ! ” cried Valentine ; “ Mademoiselle ! Oh, selfish man ! he sees me in despair, and pretends he cannot understand me ! ”

" You mistake ; I understand you perfectly. You will not oppose M. de Villefort ; you will not displease the marchioness ; and to-morrow you will sign the contract which will bind you to your husband."

" But tell me, how can I do otherwise ? "

" Do not appeal to me, Mademoiselle. I shall be a bad judge in such a case ; my selfishness will blind me," replied Morrel, whose low voice and clinched hands showed his increasing exasperation.

" What then would you have proposed, Morrel, had you found me willing to accede ? Come, answer me. It is not a time to tell me I am doing wrong ; you must give me your advice."

" Do you say that to me seriously, Valentine, — that I ought to advise you ? "

" Certainly, dear Maximilian, for if it is good, I will follow it ; you know my devotion to you."

" Valentine," said Morrel, pushing aside a plank already loose, " give me your hand in proof that you forgive my anger ; my senses are confused, and during the last hour the most extravagant thoughts have passed through my brain. Oh ! if you refuse my advice — "

" What do you advise ? " said Valentine, raising her eyes to heaven, and sighing.

" I am free," replied Maximilian, " and rich enough to support you. I swear to make you my lawful wife before my lips shall approach your forehead."

" You make me tremble ! " said the young girl.

" Follow me," said Morrel ; " I will take you to my sister, who is worthy to be yours also. We will embark for Algiers, for England, for America, or if you prefer it, retire to the country and not return to Paris until our friends have reconciled your family."

Valentine shook her head. " I feared it, Maximilian,"

said she; "it is the counsel of a madman, and I should be more mad than you did I not stop you at once with the single word, 'Impossible, Morrel, impossible ! ' "

" You will then submit to what fate decrees for you without even attempting to contend against it ? " said Morrel, sorrowfully.

" Yes,—if I die ! "

" Well, Valentine," resumed Maximilian, " I say again, you are right. Truly, it is I who am mad ; and you prove to me that passion blinds the most correct minds. I thank you therefore, who can reason without passion. It is, then, understood, — to-morrow you will be irrevocably promised to M. Franz d'Epinay, not only by that theatrical formality invented to heighten the effect of a comedy, and which is called the signing of the contract, but by your own will ? "

" Again you drive me to despair, Maximilian," said Valentine ; " again you turn the dagger in the wound ! What would you do — tell me — if your sister listened to such a proposition ? "

" Mademoiselle," replied Morrel, with a bitter smile, " I am selfish ; you have already said so. And as a selfish man, I think not of what others would do in my situation, but of what I intend doing myself. I think only that I have known you now a whole year. From the day I first saw you I committed all my hopes of happiness to the possibility that I might win your love. One day you acknowledged that you loved me ; and since that day my hopes have centred in the desire to possess you,—that was my life. Now, I think no more ; I say only that fortune has turned against me. I had thought to gain heaven, and I have lost it. It is an every-day occurrence for a gambler to lose not only what he has, but also what he has not."

Morrel pronounced these words with perfect calmness ; Valentine looked at him a moment with her large, searching eyes, endeavoring not to let Morrel discover the grief which struggled in her heart. "But, in a word, what are you going to do ?" asked she.

"I am going to have the honor of saying adieu to you, Mademoiselle, calling God to witness, who hears my words and who reads my secret thoughts, that I wish your life may be so calm, so happy, and so fully occupied, that there may be no place in it for remembrance of me."

"Oh !" murmured Valentine.

"Adieu, Valentine, adieu !" said Morrel, bowing.

"Where are you going ?" cried the young girl, extending her hand through the opening, and seizing Maximilian by his coat, for she understood from her own agitated feelings that her lover's calmness could not be real, — "where are you going ?"

"I am going to take a course by which I shall avoid bringing additional trouble into your family, and to set an example which every honest and devoted man, situated as I am, may follow."

"Before you leave me, tell me what you are going to do, Maximilian."

The young man smiled sorrowfully.

"Speak ! speak !" said Valentine ; "I entreat you."

"Has your resolution changed, Valentine ?"

"It cannot change, unhappy man ! you know it must not !" cried the young girl.

"Then adieu, Valentine !"

Valentine shook the gate with an energy of which she would have been thought incapable, and as Morrel was going away, she thrust both her hands through the opening, clasping them and turning her arms. "I must know what you mean to do ?" said she. "Where are you going ?"

"Oh, fear not!" said Maximilian, stopping at a short distance; "I do not intend to render another man responsible for the rigorous fate reserved for me. Another might threaten to seek M. Franz, to provoke him, and to fight with him; all that would be folly. What has M. Franz to do with it? He saw me this morning for the first time, and has already forgotten he has seen me. He did not even know that I was in existence when it was arranged by your two families that you should be united. I have no enmity against M. Franz, and promise you the punishment shall not fall on him."

"On whom, then, — on me?"

"On you, Valentine! Oh, Heaven forbid! Woman is sacred; the woman one loves is holy."

"On yourself, then, unhappy man, — on yourself?"

"I am the only guilty person, am I not?" replied Maximilian.

"Maximilian!" said Valentine, "Maximilian, return, I entreat you!"

He drew near, with his sweet smile, and but for his paleness one might have thought him in his usual happy frame. "Listen, my dear, my adored Valentine," said he, in his melodious and grave tone; "those who, like us, have never had a thought for which they need blush before the world, before their family friends, or before God, are able to read in one another's hearts as in an open book. I never was romantic, and am no melancholy hero. I imitate neither Manfred nor Anthony; but without words, without protestations, and without vows, my life has entwined itself with yours. You leave me, and you are right in doing so, — I repeat it, you are right; but in losing you, I lose my life. The moment you leave me, Valentine, I am alone in the world. My sister is happily married; her husband is only my brother-in-law, — that is, a man

whom the ties of social life alone attach to me. No one, then, longer needs my useless life. This is what I shall do : I will wait until the very moment you are married, for I will not lose the shadow of one of those unexpected chances which are sometimes reserved for us, — for after all, M. Franz may die before that time. A thunderbolt may fall on the altar as you approach it ; nothing appears impossible to one condemned to die, and miracles appear quite reasonable when his escape from death is concerned. I will, then, wait until the last moment, and when my misery is certain, irremediable, hopeless, I will write a confidential letter to my brother-in-law, another to the prefect of police, to acquaint them with my intention ; and at the corner of some wood, on the brink of some abyss, on the bank of some river, I will put an end to my existence, as certainly as I am the son of the most honest man who ever lived in France."

Valentine trembled convulsively ; she loosed her hold of the gate, her arms fell by her side, and two large tears rolled down her cheeks. The young man stood before her, sorrowful and resolute.

"Oh ! for pity's sake," said she, "you will live, will you not ?"

"No ! on my honor," said Maximilian ; "but that will not affect you. You will have done your duty, and your conscience will be at rest."

Valentine fell on her knees and pressed her almost bursting heart. "Maximilian !" said she, "Maximilian, my friend, my brother on earth, my true husband in heaven, I entreat you, do as I do, live in suffering ; perhaps we may one day be united."

"Adieu, Valentine," repeated Morrel.

"My God," said Valentine, raising both her hands to heaven with a sublime expression, "I have done my

utmost to remain a submissive daughter,— I have begged, entreated, implored ; he has regarded neither my prayers, my entreaties, nor my tears. It is done," cried she, wiping away her tears, and resuming her firmness ; "I am resolved not to die of remorse, I will rather die of shame. You will live, Maximilian, and I will belong to no one but you. At what hour ? At what moment ? Shall it be immediately ? Speak, command ! I am ready."

Morrel, who had already gone some steps away, again returned, and pale with joy, extended both hands towards Valentine through the opening. "Valentine," said he, "dear Valentine, you must not speak thus,— rather let me die. Why should I obtain you by violence, if our love is mutual ? Is it from mere humanity you bid me live ? I would then rather die."

"Truly," murmured Valentine, "who on this earth cares for me, if he does not ? Who has consoled me in my sorrow but he ? On whom do my hopes rest ? On whom does my bleeding heart repose ? On him, on him ; always on him ! Yes, you are right ; Maximilian, I will follow you. I will leave the paternal home, I will give up all. Oh, ungrateful girl that I am," cried Valentine, sobbing, "I will give up all, even my dear old grandfather, whom I had forgotten."

"No," said Maximilian, "you shall not leave him. M. Noirtier has evinced, you say, a kind feeling towards me. Well, before you leave, tell him all ; his consent would be your justification in God's sight. As soon as we are married, he shall come and live with us ; instead of one child, he shall have two. You have told me how you talk to him and how he answers you ; I shall very soon learn that language by signs, Valentine. Oh, I promise you solemnly that instead of despair, it is happiness that awaits us."

"Oh, see, Maximilian, see the power you have over me ! You almost make me believe you ; and yet what you tell me is madness, for my father will curse me. He is inflexible, — he will never pardon me. Now listen to me, Maximilian ; if by artifice, by entreaty, by accident, — in short, if by any means I can delay this marriage, will you wait ?"

"Yes, I promise you, as you also promise me, that this horrible marriage shall not take place, and that if you are dragged before a magistrate or a priest, you will refuse."

"I swear it to you by that which is most sacred to me in the world, — by my mother."

"We will wait, then," said Morrel.

"Yes, we will wait," replied Valentine, who revived at these words ; "there are so many things which may save unhappy beings such as we are."

"I rely on you, Valentine," said Morrel ; "all that you do will be well done. Only if they disregard your prayers, if your father and Madame de Saint-Méran insist that M. d'Épinay should be called to-morrow to sign the contract — "

"Then you have my promise, Morrel."

"Instead of signing — "

"I will rejoin you, and we will fly ; but from this moment until then, let us not tempt Providence, Morrel ; let us not see each other. It is a miracle, it is a providence that we have not been discovered ; if we were surprised, if it were known that we meet thus, we should have no further resource."

"You are right, Valentine ; but how shall I ascertain — "

"From the notary, M. Deschamps."

"I know him."

"And from me ; I will write to you, depend on me. I dread this marriage, Maximilian, as much as you do."

"Thank you, my adored Valentine, thank you ; that is

enough. When once I know the hour, I will hasten to this spot ; you can easily get over this fence with my assistance, a carriage will await us at the gate, in which you will accompany me to my sister's. There living, retired or mingling in society, as you wish, we shall be enabled to use our power to resist oppression, and will not suffer ourselves to be put to death like sheep, which defend themselves only by sighs."

"Agreed," said Valentine. "I will say to you as you said to me : Maximilian, all that you do will be well done."

"Oh !"

"Well ! are you satisfied with your wife ?" asked the young girl, sorrowfully.

"My adored Valentine, to say yes is to say but little."

"Say it, however."

Valentine had approached, or rather had placed her lips so near the fence that they nearly touched those of Morrel, which were pressed against the other side of the cold and inexorable barrier.

"Good-by, then, till we meet again," said Valentine, tearing herself away.

"I shall hear from you ?"

"Yes."

"Thanks, thanks, dear love, good-by !" The sound of a kiss, innocent and wasted, was heard ; and Valentine fled through the avenue. Morrel listened to catch the last sound of her dress brushing the branches, and of her footstep on the path, then raised his eyes with an ineffable smile of thankfulness to heaven for being permitted to be thus loved ; and then he also disappeared. The young man returned home and waited all the evening and all the next day without receiving anything. It was only on the following day, at about ten o'clock in the morning, as he was starting to call on M. Deschamps, the notary,

that he received from the postman a small billet, which he knew to be from Valentine, although he had not before seen her writing. It was to this effect :—

Tears, entreaties, prayers, have availed me nothing. Yesterday, for two hours, I was at the church of St. Philippe du Roule, and for two hours I prayed to God from the depths of my soul. Heaven is as inflexible as man; and the signing of the contract is appointed for this evening at nine o'clock. I have but one promise and but one heart to give. That promise is pledged to you; that heart is yours. This evening, then, at quarter of nine, at the gate. Your betrothed,

VALENTINE DE VILLEFORT.

P. S. — My poor grandmother gets worse and worse. Yesterday her fever amounted to delirium ; to-day her delirium is almost madness. You will be very kind to me, will you not, Morrel, to make me forget my sorrow in leaving her thus ? I think it is kept a secret from Grandpapa Noirtier that the contract is to be signed this evening.

Morrel was not satisfied with the information received from Valentine ; he went to the notary, who confirmed to him the news that the signing of the contract was to take place at nine o'clock that evening. Then he went to call on Monte Cristo, and heard still more. Franz had been to announce the solemnity, and Madame de Villefort had also written to beg the count to excuse her not inviting him ; the death of M. de Saint-Méran and the dangerous illness of his widow would cast a gloom over the meeting which she would regret that the count should share, whom she wished might enjoy every happiness. The day before, Franz had been presented to Madame de Saint-Méran, who had left her bed to receive him, but had been obliged to return to it immediately after. It is easy to suppose that Morrel's agitation would not escape the count's penetrating eye. And therefore Monte Cristo was more

affectionate than ever ; indeed, his manner was so kind that several times Morrel was on the point of telling him all. But he recalled the promise he had made to Valentine, and kept his secret. The young man read Valentine's letter twenty times in the course of the day. It was her first ; and on what an occasion ! Each time he read it he renewed his vow to make her happy. How great is the authority of a young girl who has made so courageous a resolution ! What devotion does she deserve from him to whom she has sacrificed everything ! How ought she to be, in fact, to her lover the first and most worthy object of his worship ! She becomes at once a queen and a wife ; and it is impossible to thank and love her sufficiently. Morrel thought with indescribable agitation of the moment when Valentine should draw near, saying, "Here I am, Maximilian ; take me." He had arranged everything for her escape : two ladders were hidden in the clover-field ; a cabriolet which Maximilian himself was to drive was in waiting, — without a servant, without lights ; at the turning of the first street they would light the lamps, as it would be foolish to attract the notice of the police by too many precautions. Occasionally he shuddered ; he thought of the moment when from the top of that wall he should protect the descent of Valentine, and when he should hold her, trembling and unresisting, in his arms, — her whose hand only he had pressed, and whom he had kissed only on the tips of her fingers.

When the afternoon arrived, and he saw that the hour was drawing near, he wished for solitude. His blood boiled ; the trivial questions, even the voice alone, of a friend would have irritated him. He shut himself in his room, and tried to read ; but his eye glanced over the page without recognizing the words, and finally he threw away the book, and for the second time sat down to sketch

his plan, the ladders, and the fence. At length the hour was at hand. Never did a man deeply in love allow the clocks to go on peacefully. Morrel tormented his so effectually that they indicated half-past eight at six o'clock. He then said, "It is time to start; the signature was indeed fixed to take place at nine o'clock, but perhaps Valentine will not wait for that." Consequently, Morrel, having left the Rue Meslay at half-past eight by his timepiece, entered the clover-field while the clock of St. Philippe du Roule was striking eight. The horse and cabriolet were concealed behind a small ruin, where Morrel had often waited. The night gradually drew on, and the foliage in the garden assumed a deeper hue. Then Morrel came out from his hiding-place with a beating heart, and looked through the small opening in the paling; there was no one to be seen. The clock struck half-past eight; and still another half-hour was passed in waiting, while Morrel looked to and fro, and gazed more and more frequently through the opening. The garden became darker still, but in the darkness he looked in vain for the white dress; and in the silence he vainly listened for the sound of footsteps. The house, which was discernible through the trees, remained in darkness, and gave no indication that so important an event as the signature of a marriage-contract was going on. Morrel looked at his watch, which indicated quarter of ten; but soon the same clock he had already heard strike two or three times rectified the error of his watch by striking half-past nine. This was already half an hour after the time Valentine had herself appointed. It was a terrible moment for the young man's heart, on which each second fell like a leaden mallet. The slightest rustling of the foliage, the least whistling of the wind attracted his attention and drew the perspiration to his brow; then he tremblingly fixed his ladder, and

not to lose a moment, placed his foot on the first step. Amid all these alternations of hope and fear, the clock struck ten. "It is impossible," said Maximilian, "that the signing of a contract should occupy so long a time, without unexpected interruptions. I have weighed all the chances, calculated the time required for all the forms; something has happened." And then he walked rapidly to and fro, and pressed his burning forehead against the fence. Had Valentine fainted after the signing of the contract; or had she been discovered and stopped in her flight? These were the only explanations the young man could conjecture,—both of them without hope.

The idea which fixed his attention was that Valentine's strength had failed her in attempting to escape, and that she had fainted in one of the paths. "Oh! if that is the case," he cried, running up to the top of the ladder, "I should lose her, and by my own fault." The demon which had whispered that idea to him did not leave him, and buzzed in his ear with a persistence which after a moment changed surmises to convictions. His eyes, searching the increasing darkness, seemed to perceive something lying on the shaded path. He ventured to call, and it seemed to him that the wind wafted back an inarticulate sigh. At last the half-hour struck. It was impossible to wait longer. His temples throbbed violently; his eyes were growing dim. He passed one leg over the wall, and in a moment leaped down on the other side. He was on Villefort's premises, had arrived there by scaling the wall. What might be the consequences? However, he had not ventured thus far to draw back. He went a short distance close under the wall, then crossed a path, and entered a clump of trees. In a moment he had passed through them, and could see the house distinctly. Then Morrel was convinced of one thing; in-

stead of lights at every window, as is customary on days of ceremony, he saw only a gray mass, which was veiled also by a cloud, which at that moment obscured the moon's feeble light. A light moved rapidly from time to time past three windows of the first floor. These three windows were in Madame de Saint-Méran's room. Another remained motionless behind some red curtains which were in Madame de Villefort's bedroom. Morrel understood all this. So many times, in order to follow Valentine in thought at every hour in the day, had he made her describe all the house that without having seen it, he knew it all.

This darkness and silence alarmed Morrel still more than Valentine's absence had done. Almost mad with grief, and determined to venture everything in order to see Valentine once more, and to assure himself in regard to the misfortune he feared, Morrel gained the edge of the clump of trees, and was going to pass as quickly as possible through the flower-garden, when the sound of a voice still at some distance, but which was borne upon the wind, reached him. At this sound, as he was already partially exposed to view, he stepped back and concealed himself completely, remaining motionless and still. He had formed his resolution : if it was Valentine alone, he would speak as she passed ; if she was accompanied, and he could not speak, still he should see her and know that she was safe ; if they were strangers, he would listen to their conversation, and might understand something of this hitherto incomprehensible mystery.

The moon had just then escaped from behind the cloud which had concealed it, and Morrel saw Villefort come out upon the steps, followed by a gentleman in black. They descended, and advanced towards the clump of trees, and Morrel soon recognized the other gentleman as Dr. d'Avrigny. On seeing them approach, he drew back me-

chanically, until he found himself stopped by a sycamore-tree in the centre of the clump ; there he was compelled to remain. Soon the two gentlemen stopped also.

"Ah, my dear doctor," said the *procureur*, "Heaven declares itself against my house ! What a dreadful death ; what a blow ! Seek not to console me ! Alas ! nothing can alleviate so great a sorrow ; the wound is too deep and too fresh ! She is dead ! she is dead !"

A cold dampness covered the young man's brow, and his teeth chattered. Who, then, was dead in that house, which Villefort himself had called accursed ?

"My dear M. de Villefort," replied the doctor, with a tone which redoubled the terror of the young man, "I have not led you here to console you ; on the contrary — "

"What can you mean ?" asked the *procureur*, alarmed.

"I mean that behind the misfortune which has just happened to you, there is another, perhaps still greater."

"Oh, my God !" murmured Villefort, clasping his hands. "What are you going to tell me ?"

"Are we quite alone, my friend ?"

"Yes, quite ; but why all these precautions ?"

"Because I have a terrible secret to communicate to you," said the doctor. "Let us sit down."

Villefort fell, rather than seated himself. The doctor stood before him, with one hand placed on his shoulder. Morrel, horrified, supported his head with one hand, and with the other pressed his heart, lest its beatings should be heard. "Dead ! dead !" repeated he within himself ; and he felt as if he were also dying.

"Speak, Doctor ! I am listening," said Villefort ; "strike ! I am prepared for everything !"

"Madame de Saint-Méran was doubtless advancing in years, but she enjoyed excellent health."

Morrel, for the first time in ten minutes, breathed freely.

"Grief has consumed her," said Villefort, — "yes, grief, Doctor! After living forty years with the marquis —"

"It is not grief, my dear Villefort," said the doctor; "grief may kill, although it rarely does, but never in a day, never in an hour, never in ten minutes."

Villefort answered nothing; he simply raised his head, which had been cast down before, and looked at the doctor with amazement.

"Were you present during the last struggle?" asked M. d'Avrigny.

"I was," replied the *procureur*; "you begged me not to leave."

"Did you notice the symptoms of the disease to which Madame de Saint-Méran has fallen a victim?"

"I did. Madame de Saint-Méran had three successive attacks at intervals of some minutes, each one more serious than the former. When you arrived, Madame de Saint-Méran had already been panting for breath some minutes. She then had a fit, which I took to be simply a nervous attack; and it was only when I saw her raise herself in the bed, and her limbs and neck appear stiffened, that I became really alarmed. Then I understood from your countenance there was more to fear than I had thought. This crisis past, I endeavored to catch your eye, but could not. You held her hand, — you were feeling her pulse, — and the second fit came on before you had turned towards me. This was more terrible than the first; the same nervous movements were repeated, and the mouth contracted and turned purple."

"And at the third she expired."

"At the end of the first attack I discovered symptoms of tetanus; you confirmed my opinion."

"Yes, before others," replied the doctor; "but now we are alone."

"Oh, heavens! what are you going to tell me?"

"That the symptoms of tetanus and poisoning by vegetable substances are the same."

M. de Villefort started from his seat, then in a moment fell down again, silent and motionless. Morrel knew not if he were dreaming or awake.

"Listen," said the doctor; "I know the full importance of the statement I have just made, and the character of the man to whom I have made it."

"Do you speak to me as a magistrate or as a friend?" asked Villefort.

"As a friend, and only as a friend, at this moment. The similarity in the symptoms of tetanus and poisoning by vegetable substances is so great that were I obliged to affirm by oath what I have now stated, I should hesitate; I therefore repeat to you, I speak not to a magistrate, but to a friend. And to that friend I say, during the three-quarters of an hour that the struggle continued I watched the agony, the convulsions, the death of Madame de Saint-Méran, and I am not only satisfied that she died of poison, but I could name, — yes, I could name the poison that killed her."

"Monsieur! Monsieur!"

"The symptoms are marked, do you see? — sleep disturbed by nervous fits, excitement of the brain, torpor of the system. Madame de Saint-Méran has sunk under a violent dose of brucine or of strychnine, which by some mistake, perhaps, has been given to her."

Villefort seized the doctor's hand. "Oh, it is impossible!" said he; "I must be dreaming! It is frightful to hear such things from such a man as you! Tell me, I entreat you, my dear doctor, that you are perhaps in error."

"Doubtless I may be, but — "

"But ?"

"But I do not think so."

"Have pity on me, Doctor ! So many dreadful things have happened to me lately that I think I am on the verge of madness."

"Has any one besides me seen Madame de Saint-Méran ?"

"No one."

"Has anything been sent for from a chemist's that I have not examined ?"

"Nothing."

"Had Madame de Saint-Méran any enemies ?"

"Not to my knowledge."

"Has any one an interest in her death ?"

"No, indeed ! My God ! no, indeed ! My daughter is her only heiress, — Valentine alone. Oh, if such a thought came to me, I would stab myself to punish my heart for having for one instant harbored it."

"Indeed, my dear friend," said M. d'Avrigny, "I would not accuse any one ; I speak only of an accident, you understand, — a mistake. But whether accident or mistake, the fact is there ; it speaks to my conscience and compels me to speak aloud to you. Make inquiry."

"Of whom ? how ? of what ?"

"May not Barrois, the old servant, have made a mistake, and have given Madame de Saint-Méran a dose prepared for his master ?"

"For my father ?"

"Yes."

"But how could a medicine prepared for M. Noirtier poison Madame de Saint-Méran ?"

"Nothing is more simple. You know poisons become remedies in certain diseases ; paralysis is one of those

diseases. For instance, having tried every other remedy to restore movement and speech to M. Noirtier, I resolved to try one last means, and for three months I have been giving him brucine ; so that in the last dose I ordered for him there were six centigrammes. This quantity, which is without effect upon the paralyzed frame of M. Noirtier, — which, too, has become gradually accustomed to it, — would be sufficient to kill another person."

" My dear doctor, there is no communication between M. Noirtier's apartment and that of Madame de Saint-Méran, and Barrois never entered my mother-in-law's room. In short, Doctor, although I know you to be the most skilful physician and the most conscientious man in the world, and although in all circumstances your word is for me a guiding light as clear as sunlight, — well, Doctor, notwithstanding that trust in you, I must fall back upon the axiom, *errare humanum est.*"

" Listen, Villefort," said the doctor ; " is there one of my brethren in whom you have as much confidence as in myself ? "

" Why do you ask me that ? What do you wish ? "

" Send for him ; I will tell him what I have seen and we will consult together and examine the body."

" And you will find traces of poison ? "

" No, not of poison, — I have not said we could do that, — but we shall establish the excited condition of the nervous system. We shall discover the obvious, indisputable asphyxia ; and we shall say to you : Dear Villefort, if this thing arises from negligence, watch over your servants ; if from hatred, watch your enemies."

" What do you propose to me, D'Avrigny ? " said Villefort, in despair. " So soon as another is admitted into our secret, an inquest will become necessary ; and an inquest in my house — impossible ! Still," continued the *procu-*

reur, looking at the doctor with uneasiness, “if you wish it, if you insist upon it, it shall be done. In fact, perhaps I ought to push that inquiry ; my position devolves on me this obligation. But, Doctor, you see me already so grieved — how can I introduce into my house so much scandal, after so much sorrow ? My wife and my daughter would die of it ! And I — Doctor, you know that one does not arrive at the post I occupy — one has not been *procureur du roi* twenty-five years — without having made some enemies ; mine are numerous. This affair, once got abroad, will be for them a triumph which will make them leap for joy, and it will cover me with shame. Pardon me, Doctor, these worldly ideas ! Were you a priest I should not dare tell you that ; but you are a man, and you know mankind. Doctor, Doctor, let it be as if you had told me nothing.”

“ My dear M. de Villefort,” replied the doctor, “ my first duty is humanity. I would have saved Madame de Saint-Méran if science could have done it ; but she is dead, — my duty regards the living. Let us bury this terrible secret in the deepest recesses of our hearts ; I am willing, if any one should suspect this, that my silence on this subject should be imputed to my ignorance. Meanwhile, Monsieur, watch always ; watch diligently, — for perhaps the evil may not stop here. And when you have found the culprit, if you find him, I will say to you, You are a magistrate, do as you will ! ”

“ I thank you, Doctor,” said Villefort, with indescribable joy ; “ I never had a better friend than you.” And as if he feared Dr. d’Avrigny would recall his promise, he hurried him towards the house.

When they were gone Morrel ventured out from under the trees, and the moon shone upon his face, which was so pale that he might have been taken for a ghost. “ God protects me in an obvious, but terrible manner,” said he.

" But Valentine, poor girl ! how will she bear so much sorrow ? "

As he said these words, he looked alternately at the window with red curtains and the three windows with white curtains. The light had almost disappeared from the former ; doubtless Madame de Villefort had just put out her lamp, and the night-lamp alone reflected its dull light on the window. At the extremity of the building, on the contrary, he saw one of the three windows open. A wax-light placed on the mantel-piece threw some of its pale rays without, and a shadow was seen for one moment on the balcony. Morrel shuddered ; he thought he heard a sob.

It cannot be wondered at that his mind, generally so courageous, but now disturbed by the two strongest human passions, love and fear, was weakened even to the indulgence of superstitious thoughts. Although it was impossible Valentine could see him, hidden as he was, he thought he heard the shadow at the window call him. His disturbed mind told him so ; his glowing heart repeated it. This double error became an irresistible reality ; and by one of those incomprehensible transports of youth, he bounded from his hiding-place, and with two strides, at the risk of being seen, at the risk of alarming Valentine, at the risk of being discovered by some exclamation which might escape the young girl, he crossed the flower-garden, which by the light of the moon resembled a large white lake, and having passed the rows of orange-trees which extended in front of the house, he reached the step, ran quickly up, and pushed the door, which opened without resistance. Valentine had not seen him ; her eyes, raised towards heaven, were watching a silvery cloud gliding over the azure. Its form was that of a shadow mounting towards heaven ; her poetic and excited mind pictured it

as the soul of her grandmother. Meanwhile, Morrel had traversed the ante-room and found the staircase, which being carpeted prevented his approach being heard ; and besides, he had reached such a pitch of exaltation that the presence of M. de Villefort even would not have alarmed him. Had he encountered him, his resolution was formed ; he would have approached him and acknowledged all, begging him to excuse and sanction the love which united him to his daughter, and his daughter to him. Morrel was mad. Happily he did not meet any one. Now especially did he find the description Valentine had given of the interior of the house useful to him ; he arrived safely at the top of the staircase, and while at that point he paused in doubt, a sob indicated the direction he was to take. He turned back ; a door partly open enabled him to see the reflection of a light, and to hear the sorrowing voice. He pushed it open and entered. At the other end of the room, under a white sheet which covered its head and showed the outline of its form, lay the dead body, especially appalling in the eyes of Morrel since the revelation of the secret which by chance he had overheard. By the side of the bed, on her knees, and her head buried in the cushion of an easy-chair, was Valentine, trembling and sobbing, her hands extended above her head, clasped and stiff. She had turned from the window, which remained open, and was praying in accents that would have affected the most unfeeling ; her words were rapid, incoherent, unintelligible, — for the burning weight of grief almost stopped her utterance. The moon shining through the open blinds made the lamp appear to burn paler, and cast a sepulchral hue over that scene of desolation. Morrel could not resist this ; he was not exemplary for piety, he was not easily impressed, but Valentine suffering, weeping, wringing her hands before

him, was more than he could bear in silence. He sighed and whispered a name ; and the head bathed in tears and pressed on the velvet cushion of the chair—a head resembling the Magdalen of Correggio—was raised and turned towards him. Valentine perceived him without any sign of surprise. A heart overwhelmed with one great grief is insensible to minor emotions. Morrel held out his hand to her. Valentine, as her only excuse for not having met him, pointed to the corpse under the sheet and began to sob again. Neither dared for some time to speak in that room. They hesitated to break the silence which death seemed to impose ; at length Valentine ventured.

“ My friend,” said she, “ how came you here ? Alas ! I would say you are welcome, had not death opened the way for you into this house.”

“ Valentine,” said Morrel, with a trembling voice, “ I had waited since half-past eight, and did not see you come ; I became uneasy, leaped the wall, found my way through the garden, when voices conversing about the fatal event — ”

“ What voices ? ” asked Valentine.

Morrel shuddered,—for all the conversation of the doctor and M. de Villefort came to his remembrance, and he thought he could see through the sheet the extended hands, the stiff neck, and the purple lips. “ The voices of your servants,” said he, “ told me all.”

“ But to come here is to ruin everything, my friend,” said Valentine, without fear, and without anger.

“ Forgive me,” replied Morrel, in the same tone ; “ I will go away.”

“ No,” said Valentine, “ you might meet some one ; stay.”

“ But if any one should come here ? ”

The young girl shook her head. "No one will come," said she; "do not fear, there is our safeguard," pointing to the bed.

"But what has become of M. d'Epinay?" replied Morrel.

"M. Franz arrived to sign the contract just as my dear grandmother was dying."

"Alas!" said Morrel, with a feeling of selfish joy,—for he thought this death would cause the wedding to be postponed indefinitely.

"But what redoubles my sorrow," continued the young girl, as if this feeling must be punished instantly, "is that this poor dear grandmamma, on her death-bed, requested the marriage might take place as soon as possible; she also,—my God!—she also, thinking to protect me, took part against me."

"Hark!" said Morrel.

They both listened; steps were distinctly heard in the corridor and on the stairs.

"It is my father, who has just left his cabinet," said Valentine.

"To accompany the doctor to the door," added Morrel.

"How do you know it is the doctor?" asked Valentine, astonished.

"I imagine it must be," said Morrel.

Valentine looked at the young man. They heard the street door close; then M. de Villefort locked the garden door and returned upstairs. He stopped a moment in the ante-room, as if hesitating whether to turn to his own apartment or to Madame de Saint-Méran's. Morrel concealed himself behind a door. Valentine remained motionless; grief seemed to deprive her of all fear. M. de Villefort passed on to his own room.

"Now," said Valentine, "you can go out neither by

the front door nor by the garden." Morrel looked at her with astonishment. "There is but one way left you that is safe," said she; "it is through my grandfather's room." She rose; "Come," she added.

"Where?" asked Maximilian.

"To my grandfather's room."

"I in M. Noirtier's apartment?"

"Yes."

"Can you mean it, Valentine?"

"I have long wished it. He is my only remaining friend, and we both need his help; come."

"Be careful, Valentine," said Morrel, hesitating to comply with the young girl's wishes; "I now see my error; I acted as a madman in coming in here. Are you sure you are more reasonable?"

"Yes," said Valentine; "and I have but one scruple, — that of leaving my dear grandmother's remains, which I had undertaken to watch."

"Valentine," said Morrel, "death is in itself sacred."

"Yes," said Valentine; "besides, it will be for only a short time." She then crossed the corridor, and led the way down a narrow staircase to M. Noirtier's room; Morrel followed her on tiptoe. At the door they found the old servant.

"Barrois," said Valentine, "shut the door, and let no one come in." She entered first.

Noirtier, seated in his chair, and listening to every sound, was watching the door; he saw Valentine, and his eye brightened. There was something grave and solemn in the appearance of the young girl which struck the old man, and immediately his bright eye began to interrogate.

"Dear grandfather," said Valentine, hurriedly, "you know poor grandmamma died an hour since, and now I have no friend in the world but you."

An expression of infinite tenderness came to the eyes of the old man.

"It is, then, to you alone, is it not, that I ought to confide my sorrows and my hopes?"

The paralytic made an affirmative sign.

Valentine took Maximilian's hand. "Look attentively, then, at this gentleman." The old man fixed his searching gaze with slight astonishment on Morrel. "It is M. Maximilian Morrel," said she; "the son of that good merchant of Marseilles, of whom you have doubtless heard."

"Yes," said the old man.

"It is an irreproachable name, which Maximilian is likely to render glorious, since at thirty years of age he is a captain, and an officer of the Legion of Honor."

The old man signified that he recollects him.

"Well, Grandpapa," said Valentine, kneeling before him, and pointing to Maximilian, "I love him, and will be only his; were I compelled to marry another, I would destroy myself."

The eyes of the paralytic expressed a multitude of tumultuous thoughts.

"You like M. Maximilian Morrel, do you not, Grandpapa?" asked Valentine.

"Yes," said the motionless old man.

"And you will protect us, who are your children, against the will of my father?"

Noirtier cast an intelligent glance at Morrel, as if to say, "That depends."

Maximilian understood him. "Mademoiselle," said he, "you have a sacred duty to fulfil in your deceased grandmother's room; will you allow me the honor of a few minutes' conversation with M. Noirtier?"

"That is it," said the old man's eye. Then he looked anxiously at Valentine.

"Do you fear he will not understand you, dear grand-papa?"

"Yes."

"Oh! we have so often spoken of you that he knows exactly how I talk to you." Then turning to Maximilian with an adorable smile, although shaded by sorrow, "He knows everything I know," said she.

Valentine rose, placed a chair for Morrel, requested Barrois not to admit any one, and having tenderly embraced her grandpapa, and sorrowfully taken leave of Morrel, she went away. To prove to Noirtier that he was in Valentine's confidence and knew all their secrets, Morrel took the dictionary, a pen, and some paper, and placed them all on a table where there was a light.

"But first," said Morrel, "allow me, Monsieur, to tell you who I am, how much I love Mademoiselle Valentine, and what are my designs respecting her."

Noirtier made a sign that he would listen. It was an imposing spectacle,—this old man, apparently a useless burden, becoming the sole protector, support, and adviser of the lovers, who were both young, beautiful, and strong. His remarkably noble and austere expression struck Morrel, who began his recital with trembling. He related the manner in which he had become acquainted with Valentine, and how he had loved her; and that Valentine, in her solitude and unhappiness, had accepted the offer of his devotion. He told him of his birth, his position, his fortune; and more than once when he consulted the look of the paralytic, that look answered, "That is good; proceed."

"And now," said Morrel, when he had finished the first part of his recital,—"now I have told you of my love and my hopes, may I inform you of our plans?"

"Yes," signified the old man.

"This was our resolution : a cabriolet was in waiting at the gate, in which I intended to carry off Valentine to my sister's house, to marry her, and to await, in an attitude of respectful expectation, M. de Villefort's pardon."

"No," said Noirtier.

"We must not do so ?"

"No."

"You do not sanction our project ?"

"No."

"There is another way," said Morrel.

The old man's interrogative eye said, "What ?"

"I will go," continued Maximilian, "I will go and find M. Franz d'Épinay,— I am happy to be able to say this in Mademoiselle de Villefort's absence,— and will conduct myself towards him so as to compel him to act as a man of honor."

Noirtier's look continued to interrogate.

"You wish to know what I will do ?"

"Yes."

"I will find him, as I told you ; I will tell him of the ties which bind me to Mademoiselle Valentine. If he be a sensible man, he will prove it by renouncing of his own accord the hand of his betrothed, and will secure my friendship and love until death ; if he refuse, either through interest or ridiculous pride, after I have proved to him that he would be forcing my wife from me, that Valentine loves me, and will love no other, I will fight with him, give him every advantage, and I shall kill him, or he will kill me. If I am victorious, he will not marry Valentine ; and if I die, I am very sure Valentine will not marry him."

Noirtier watched with indescribable pleasure this noble and sincere countenance, on which every sentiment his tongue uttered was depicted, adding by the expression of his fine features all that coloring adds to a sound and

faithful drawing. Still, when Morrel had finished, he shut his eyes several times, which was his manner of saying "No."

"No?" said Morrel; "you disapprove of this second project, as you did of the first?"

"I do," signified the old man.

"But what must then be done, Monsieur?" asked Morrel. "Madame de Saint-Méran's last request was that the marriage might not be delayed; must I let things take their course?"

Noirtier did not move.

"I understand," said Morrel; "I am to wait."

"Yes."

"But delay will ruin us, Monsieur," replied the young man. "Alone, Valentine has no power; she will be compelled to submit. I am here almost miraculously, and can scarcely hope for so good an opportunity to occur again. Believe me, there are only the two plans I have proposed to you; forgive my vanity, and tell me which you prefer. Do you authorize Mademoiselle Valentine to intrust herself to my honor?"

"No."

"Do you prefer I should seek M. d'Épinay?"

"No."

"But, good heavens! whence will come the succor we believe that Providence will send?"

The old man smiled with his eyes, as he was accustomed to smile when any one spoke to him of Providence. There was always a little atheism in the ideas of the old Jacobin.

"From chance?" continued Morrel.

"No."

"From you?"

"Yes."

" You thoroughly understand me, Monsieur ? Pardon my eagerness, for my life depends on your answer. Will our help come from you ? "

" Yes."

" You are sure of it ? "

" Yes."

There was so much firmness in the look which gave this answer that there could be no doubt of his will, at least, though there might be of his power.

" Oh, thank you a thousand times ! But how, unless a miracle should restore your speech, your gesture, your movement, — how can you, chained to that armchair, dumb and motionless, oppose this marriage ? "

A smile lit up the old man's face, — a strange smile of the eyes on a paralyzed face.

" Then I must wait ? " asked the young man.

" Yes."

" But the contract ? "

The same smile returned.

" Will you assure me it shall not be signed ? "

" Yes," said Noirtier.

" So the contract will not be even signed ! " cried Morrel. " Oh, pardon, Monsieur ! on the announcement of a great happiness one has a right to be incredulous, — the contract will not be signed ? "

" No," said the paralytic.

Notwithstanding that assurance, Morrel still hesitated. This promise of an impotent old man was so strange that instead of being the result of the power of his will, it might arise from feebleness of mind. Is it not natural that the madman, ignorant of his folly, should promise to accomplish things beyond his control ? The weak man talks of burdens he can raise, the timid of giants he can confront, the poor of treasures he spends, the most humble

peasant, in the height of his pride, calls himself Jupiter. Whether Noirtier understood the young man's indecision, or whether he had not full confidence in his docility, he looked steadily at him.

"What do you wish, Monsieur," asked Morrel, — "that I should renew my promise of remaining tranquil ?"

Noirtier's eye remained fixed and firm, as if to imply that a promise did not suffice ; then it passed from his face to his hands.

"Shall I swear to you, Monsieur ?" then asked Maximilian.

"Yes," said the paralytic, with the same solemnity.

Morrel understood that the old man attached great importance to that oath. He raised his hand. "I swear to you, on my honor," said he, "to await your decision respecting the course I am to pursue with M. d'Épinay."

"Good !" said the old man's eyes.

"Now," said Morrel, "do you wish me to retire ?"

"Yes."

"Without seeing Mademoiselle Valentine ?"

"Yes."

Morrel made a sign that he was ready to obey. "But," said he, "first, Monsieur, allow your son to embrace you as your daughter did just now."

Noirtier's expression could not be misunderstood. The young man pressed his lips on the same spot on the old man's forehead where Valentine's had been. Then he bowed a second time, and retired. He found the old servant outside the door, to whom Valentine had given directions ; he conducted Morrel along a dark passage, which led to a little door opening on the garden. Morrel soon found the spot where he had entered ; with the assistance of the shrubs he gained the top of the wall, and by his ladder was in an instant in the clover-field, where

his cabriolet was still waiting for him. He got into it; and thoroughly wearied by so many emotions, but with a heart less burdened with anxiety, he arrived about midnight in the Rue Meslay, threw himself on his bed, and slept as if he had been deeply intoxicated.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE VILLEFORT FAMILY VAULT.

Two days after, a considerable crowd was assembled, towards ten o'clock in the morning, round the door of M. de Villefort's house ; and a long file of mourning-coaches and private carriages extended along the Faubourg St. Honoré and the Rue de la Pépinière. Among them was one of a very singular form, which appeared to have come from a distance. It was a kind of covered wagon, painted black, and was one of the first at the funereal gathering. Inquiry was made ; and it was ascertained that by a strange coincidence, this carriage contained the body of the Marquis de Saint-Méran, and that those who had come thinking to attend one funeral would follow two corpses. Their number was great. The Marquis de Saint-Méran—one of the most zealous and faithful dignitaries of Louis XVIII. and King Charles X.—had retained a great number of friends ; and these, added to the personages on whom the usages of society gave Villefort a claim, formed a considerable body.

Due information was given to the authorities, and permission obtained that the two funerals should take place at the same time. A second hearse, decked with the same funereal pomp, was brought to M. de Villefort's door, and the coffin removed into it from the post-wagon. The two bodies were to be interred in the cemetery of Père la Chaise, where M. de Villefort had long since had a tomb prepared for the reception of his family. The remains of

poor Renée were already deposited there, whom, after ten years of separation, her father and mother were now going to rejoin. The Parisians, always curious, always affected by funereal display, looked on with religious silence, while the splendid procession accompanied to their last abode two of the number of the old aristocracy, — the most celebrated for their traditional habits of mind, their reliability, and their obstinate devotion to principles. In one of the mourning-coaches Beauchamp, Albert, and Château-Renaud were talking of the very sudden death of the marquess. “I saw Madame de Saint-Méran only last year at Marseilles,” said Château-Renaud, “and should have supposed she might have lived to be a hundred years old, from her apparent sound health and great activity of mind and body. How old was she?”

“Franz assured me,” replied Albert, “that she was seventy years old. She has not died of old age, but of grief; it appears that since the death of the marquis, which affected her very deeply, she has not completely recovered her reason.”

“But of what disease did she then die?” asked Beauchamp.

“It is said to have been a congestion of the brain, or apoplexy, which is the same thing, is it not?”

“Nearly.”

“It is difficult to believe it was apoplexy,” said Beauchamp. “Madame de Saint-Méran, whom I have seen once or twice, was short, of slender form, and of a much more nervous than sanguine temperament; grief could hardly produce apoplexy in such a constitution as that of Madame de Saint-Méran.”

“At any rate,” said Albert, “whatever disease or doctor may have killed her, M. de Villefort, or rather, Mademoiselle Valentine, — or rather again, our friend Franz,

inherits a magnificent fortune, amounting, I believe, to eighty thousand livres per annum."

"And this fortune will be doubled at the death of the old Jacobin, Noirtier."

"That is a tenacious old grandfather," said Beauchamp, — "*tenacem propositi virum.* I think he must have made an agreement with Death to outlive all his heirs; and he appears likely to succeed. He resembles the old Conventionalist of '93, who said to Napoleon in 1814, ' You bend because your empire is a young stem, weakened by rapid growth. Take the republic for a tutor; let us return with renewed strength to the battle-field, and I promise you five hundred thousand soldiers, another Marengo, and a second Austerlitz. Ideas do not become extinct, Sire; they slumber sometimes, but only revive the stronger before they sleep entirely.'

"It appears," said Albert, "that to him ideas and men are alike. One thing only puzzles me, — how Franz d'Épinay will like a grandfather who cannot be separated from his wife. But where is Franz?"

"In the first carriage, with M. de Villefort, who considers him already as one of the family."

Such was the conversation in almost all the carriages. These two sudden deaths, so quickly following each other, astonished every one; but no one suspected the terrible secret which M. d'Avrigny had communicated in his nocturnal walk to M. de Villefort. They arrived in about an hour at the cemetery; the weather was mild but dull, and in harmony with the funeral ceremony. Among the groups which flocked towards the family vault, Château-Renaud recognized Morrel, who had come alone in a cabriolet, and walked, pale and silent, along the path bordered with yew-trees. "You here!" said Château-Renaud passing his arms through the young captain's; "are you a

friend of Villefort? How is it that I have never met you at his house?"

"I am no acquaintance of M. de Villefort's," answered Morrel, "but I was of Madame de Saint-Méran."

Albert came up to them at this moment with Franz. "The time and place are but ill-suited for an introduction," said Albert; "but we are not superstitious. M. Morrel, allow me to present to you M. Franz d'Epinay,—a delightful travelling companion, with whom I made the tour of Italy. My dear Franz, M. Maximilian Morrel,—an excellent friend I have acquired in your absence, and whose name you will hear me mention every time I make any allusion to affection, wit, or amiability."

Morrel hesitated for a moment. He feared it would be hypocritical to accost in a friendly manner the man whom he was tacitly opposing; but his oath and the gravity of the circumstances recurred to his memory. He struggled to conceal his emotion, and bowed to Franz.

"Mademoiselle de Villefort is in deep sorrow, is she not?" said Debray to Franz.

"Extremely," replied he; "she looked so pale this morning that I scarcely knew her."

These apparently simple words pierced Morrel to the heart. This man had then seen Valentine, and spoken to her! The young and high-spirited officer required all his strength of mind to resist breaking his oath. He took the arm of Château-Renaud, and turned towards the vault, where the attendants had already placed the two coffins.

"This is a magnificent habitation," said Beauchamp, looking towards the mausoleum; "a summer and winter palace. You will, in turn, enter it, my dear D'Epinay, for you will soon be numbered as one of the family. I, as a philosopher, should like a little country-house,—a cottage down there under the trees, without so many hewn-stones

over my poor body. In dying, I will say to those around me what Voltaire wrote to Piron, '*Eo rus, and all will be over.*' But come, Franz, take courage; your wife inherits."

"Indeed, Beauchamp," said Franz, "you are unbearable. Politics have made you laugh at everything, and men of business generally believe in nothing. But when you have the honor of associating with ordinary men, and the pleasure of leaving politics for a moment, try to find your affectionate heart, which you leave with your stick when you go to the Chamber of Deputies, or to the Chamber of Peers."

"Eh! my God!" said Beauchamp, "what is life? A pause in Death's ante-room."

"I am prejudiced against Beauchamp," said Albert, drawing Franz away, and leaving the former to finish his philosophical dissertation with Debray.

The Villefort vault formed a square of white stones, about twenty feet high; an interior partition separated the two families, Saint-Méran and Villefort, and each compartment had its entrance-door. Here were not, as in other tombs, those ignoble drawers, one above another, where economy encloses its dead with an inscription resembling a ticket; all that was visible within the bronze gates was a gloomy-looking room separated by a wall from the vault itself. The two doors before-mentioned were in the middle of this wall and opened into the Villefort and Saint-Méran tombs. There grief might freely expend itself without being disturbed by the trifling loungers who might come as a picnic party to visit Père la Chaise, or by lovers who made it their rendezvous.

The two coffins were placed on trestles previously prepared for their reception, and were borne into the right-hand division, belonging to the Saint-Méran family. Villefort, Franz, and a few near relatives alone entered the sanctuary.

As the religious ceremonies had all been performed at the door and there was no address given, the party separated immediately ; Château-Renaud, Albert, and Morrel went one way, and Debray and Beauchamp another. Franz remained with M. de Villefort at the gate of the cemetery. Morrel made an excuse to wait ; he saw Franz and M. de Villefort get into the same mourning-coach, and thought this *tête-à-tête* foreboded evil. He then returned to Paris ; and although in the same carriage with Château-Renaud and Albert, he did not hear one word of their conversation.

As Franz was about to take leave of M. de Villefort, “ When shall I see you again ? ” said the latter.

“ At what time you please, Monsieur,” replied Franz.

“ As soon as possible.”

“ I am at your command, Monsieur ; shall we return together ? ”

“ If that will not disarrange your plans.”

“ Not at all.”

Thus the future father-in-law and son-in-law stepped into the same carriage, and Morrel, seeing them pass, became, with reason, very anxious. Villefort and Franz returned to the Faubourg St. Honoré. The *procureur*, without going to see either his wife or his daughter, passed rapidly to his cabinet, and offering the young man a chair, “ M. d’Epinay,” said he, “ allow me to remind you at this moment, which is perhaps not so ill-chosen as at first sight may appear, — for obedience to the wishes of the departed is the first offering which should be made at their tomb, — allow me, then, to remind you of the wish expressed by Madame de Saint-Méran on her death-bed, that Valentine’s wedding might not be deferred. You know the affairs of the deceased are in perfect order, and that her will bequeaths to Valentine the entire property of the

Saint-Méran family ; the notary showed me the documents yesterday which will enable us to draw up the marriage-contract with precise details. The notary is M. Deschamps, Place Beauvau, Faubourg St. Honoré."

"Monsieur," replied M. d'Épinay, "it is not perhaps the moment for Mademoiselle Valentine, who is in deep distress, to think of a husband ; indeed, I fear — "

"Valentine," interrupted M. de Villefort, "will have no greater pleasure than that of fulfilling her grandmother's last injunctions ; there will be no obstacle from that quarter, I assure you."

"In that case," replied Franz, "as I shall raise none, you may make arrangements when you please ; I have pledged my word, and shall feel pleasure and happiness in adhering to it."

"Then," said Villefort, "nothing further is required ; the contract was to have been signed three days since. We shall find it all ready, and can sign it to-day."

"But the mourning ?" said Franz, hesitating.

"Fear not," replied Villefort ; "no demands of property will be neglected in my house. Mademoiselle de Villefort may retire during the prescribed three months to her estate of Saint-Méran, — I say 'her estate,' for that property belongs to her. There, in a week, if you like, the civil marriage shall be celebrated without pomp or ceremony. Madame de Saint-Méran wished her granddaughter to be married there. When that is over, you, Monsieur, can return to Paris, while your wife passes the time of her mourning with her stepmother."

"As you please, Monsieur," said Franz.

"Then," replied M. de Villefort, "have the kindness to wait half an hour ; Valentine shall come down into the drawing-room. I will send for M. Deschamps ; we will read and sign the contract before we separate, and

this evening Madame de Villefort shall accompany Valentine to her estate, where we will rejoin them in a week."

"Monsieur," said Franz, "I have one request to make."

"What is it ?"

"I wish Albert de Morcerf and Raoul de Château-Renaud to be present at this signing ; you know they are my witnesses."

"Half an hour will suffice to apprise them ; will you go for them yourself, or will you send ?"

"I prefer going, Monsieur."

"I shall expect you, then, in half an hour, Baron ; and Valentine will be ready."

Franz bowed and left the room. Scarcely had the door closed when M. de Villefort sent to tell Valentine to be ready in the drawing-room in half an hour, as he expected the notary and M. d'Epinay and his witnesses. The news caused a great sensation throughout the house ; Madame de Villefort would not believe it, and Valentine was thunderstruck. She looked round for help and would have gone down to her grandfather's room ; but she met M. de Villefort on the stairs, who took her arm and led her into the drawing-room. In the ante-room Valentine met Barrois, and looked despairingly at the old servant. One moment after, Madame de Villefort entered the drawing-room with her little Édouard. It was evident that she had shared the grief of the family, for she was pale and looked fatigued. She sat down, took Édouard on her knees, and from time to time pressed almost convulsively to her bosom this child, on whom she seemed to concentrate her whole life. Two carriages were soon heard to enter the courtyard. One was the notary's ; the other, that of Franz and his friends. In a moment the whole party was assembled. Valentine was so pale that one might trace the blue veins from her temples round her eyes and down

her cheeks. Franz was deeply affected. Château-Renaud and Albert looked at each other with amazement ; the ceremony which was just concluded had not appeared more sorrowful than did that which was about to begin. Madame de Villefort had placed herself in the shade behind a velvet curtain ; and as she constantly bent over her child, it was difficult to read the expression of her face. M. de Villefort was, as usual, unmoved.

The notary, after having, according to the customary method, arranged the papers on the table, taken his place in an armchair, and raised his spectacles, turned towards Franz. "Are you M. Franz de Quesnel, Baron d'Épinay ?" asked he, although he knew it perfectly.

"Yes, Monsieur," replied Franz.

The notary bowed. "I have, then, to inform you, Monsieur," said he, "at the request of M. de Villefort, that your projected marriage with Mademoiselle de Villefort has changed the feeling of M. Noirtier towards his grandchild, and that he disinherits her entirely of the fortune he would have left her. Let me hasten to add," continued he, "that the testator, having only the right to alienate a part of his fortune, and having alienated it all, the will will not sustain an attack, and will be declared null and void."

"Yes," said Villefort ; "but I warn M. d'Épinay that during my lifetime my father's will shall never be attacked, since my position forbids incurring a breath of scandal."

"Monsieur," said Franz, "I regret much that such a question has been raised in the presence of Mademoiselle Valentine ; I have never inquired into the amount of her fortune, which, however limited it may be, exceeds mine. My family has sought consideration in this alliance with M. de Villefort ; all I seek is happiness."

Valentine imperceptibly thanked him, while two silent tears rolled down her cheeks.

"Besides, Monsieur," said Villefort, addressing himself to his future son-in-law, "aside from this loss of a part of your expectations, this surprising will contains nothing which should wound you personally; M. Noirtier's weakness of mind sufficiently explains it. It is not because Mademoiselle Valentine is going to marry you that he is angry, but because she will marry; a union with any other would have caused him the same sorrow. Old age is selfish, Monsieur; and Mademoiselle de Villefort has been a faithful companion to M. Noirtier, which she cannot be when Madame la Baronne d'Épinay. My father's melancholy state prevents our speaking to him on many subjects which the weakness of his mind would incapacitate him from understanding; and I am very sure that at the present time, although he knows his granddaughter is going to be married, M. Noirtier has even forgotten the name of his intended grandson."

M. de Villefort had scarcely said these words, to which Franz responded with a bow, when the door opened, and Barrois appeared. "Gentlemen," said he, in a tone strangely firm for a servant speaking to his masters under such solemn circumstances, — "gentlemen, M. Noirtier de Villefort wishes to speak immediately to M. Franz de Quesnel, Baron d'Épinay." He, like the notary, that there might be no mistake in the person, gave all his titles to the bridegroom elect.

Villefort started; Madame de Villefort let her son slip from her knees; Valentine rose, pale and dumb as a statue. Albert and Château-Renaud exchanged a second look, more full of amazement than the first. The notary looked at Villefort.

"It is impossible," said the *procureur du roi*. "M.

le Baron d'Épinay cannot leave the drawing-room at this moment."

"It is at this moment," replied Barrois, with the same firmness, "that M. Noirtier, my master, wishes to speak on important subjects to M. Franz d'Épinay."

"Grandpapa Noirtier can speak now, then," said Édouard, with his habitual impertinence. However, his remark did not make Madame de Villefort even smile, so much was every mind engaged, and so solemn was the situation.

"Say to M. Noirtier," said Villefort, "that it is impossible to comply with his request."

"Then M. Noirtier announces to these gentlemen," said Barrois, "that he will have himself brought into the drawing-room."

Astonishment was at its height. A kind of smile was perceptible on Madame de Villefort's countenance. Valentine instinctively raised her eyes as if to thank Heaven.

"Pray go, Valentine," said M. de Villefort, "and see what this new fancy of your grandfather's is." Valentine rose quickly, and was hastening towards the door, when M. de Villefort altered his intention.

"Stop!" said he; "I will go with you."

"Excuse me, Monsieur," said Franz; "it seems to me that since M. Noirtier has sent for me it is I who should respond to his wishes. Besides, I shall be happy to pay my respects to him, not having yet had the honor of doing so."

"Pray, Monsieur," said Villefort, with marked uneasiness, "do not disturb yourself."

"Forgive me, Monsieur," said Franz, in a resolute tone. "I would not lose this opportunity of proving to M. Noirtier how wrong it would be in him to entertain feelings of dislike to me, which I am determined to conquer, what-

ever they may be, by my devotedness." And without listening to Villefort he rose and followed Valentine, who was running down stairs with the joy of a shipwrecked mariner who finds a rock to cling to. M. de Villefort followed them. Château-Renaud and Morcerf exchanged a third look of still increasing wonder.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE DEPOSITION.

NOIRTIER was prepared to receive them, dressed in black, and installed in his armchair. When the three persons he expected had entered, he looked at the door, which his valet immediately closed.

"Listen," whispered Villefort to Valentine, who could not conceal her joy ; "if M. Noirtier wishes to communicate anything which would delay your marriage, I forbid you to understand him."

Valentine blushed, but did not answer. Villefort approached Noirtier. "Here is M. Franz d'Epinay," said he ; "you requested to see him. We have all wished for this interview, and I trust it will convince you how unfounded are your objections to Valentine's marriage."

Noirtier answered only by a look which made Villefort's blood run cold. He made with his eyes a sign to Valentine to approach. In a moment, thanks to her habit of conversing with her grandfather, she understood that he asked for a key. Then his eye was fixed on the drawer of a small chest between the windows. She opened the drawer and found a key ; and understanding that was what he wanted, again watched his eyes, which turned towards an old secretary long since forgotten, and supposed to contain none but useless documents.

"Shall I open the secretary ?" asked Valentine.

"Yes," said the old man.

"And the drawers ?"

"Yes."

"Those at the side?"

"No."

"The middle one?"

"Yes."

Valentine opened it and drew out a bundle of papers.
"Is that what you wish for?" asked she.

"No."

She took out successively all the other papers till the drawer was empty. "But there are no more," said she.

Noirtier's eye was fixed on the dictionary.

"Yes, I understand, Grandfather," said the young girl.

She pointed to each letter of the alphabet. At the letter S the old man stopped her. She opened the dictionary and searched down to the word "secret."

"Ah! is there a secret?" said Valentine.

"Yes," intimated Noirtier.

"And who knows it?"

Noirtier looked at the door where the servant had gone out.

"Barrois?" said she.

"Yes."

"Shall I call him?"

"Yes."

Valentine went to the door and called Barrois. Villefort's impatience during this scene made the perspiration roll from his forehead; and Franz was stupefied. The old servant came.

"Barrois," said Valentine, "my grandfather has told me to open that drawer in the secretary, but there is a secret about it which you know; will you open it?"

Barrois looked at the old man.

"Obey," said Noirtier's intelligent eye.

Barrois touched a spring; the false bottom came out,

and they saw a bundle of papers tied with a black string.

"Is that what you wish for, Monsieur ?" inquired Barrois.

"Yes."

"Shall I give these papers to M. de Villefort ?"

"No."

"To Mademoiselle Valentine ?"

"No."

"To M. Franz d'Epinay ?"

"Yes."

Franz, astonished, advanced a step. "To me, Monsieur ?" said he.

"Yes."

Franz took them from Barrois, and casting his eye on the cover, read :—

"To be given, after my death, to General Durand, who shall bequeath the packet to his son, with an injunction to preserve it as containing a document of the greatest importance."

"Well, Monsieur," asked Franz, "what do you wish me to do with this paper ?"

"To preserve it, sealed up as it is, doubtless," said the *procureur du roi*.

"No !" replied Noirtier, eagerly.

"Do you wish him to read it ?" said Valentine.

"Yes," replied the old man.

"You understand, Monsieur the Baron, my grandfather wishes you to read this paper," said Valentine.

"Then let us sit down," said Villefort, impatiently, "for it will take some time."

"Sit down," said the eye of the old man.

Villefort took a chair ; but Valentine remained standing by her grandfather's side, and Franz stood before him.

He took the mysterious paper in his hand. "Read," said the eyes of the old man. Franz broke the envelope, and in the midst of the most profound silence, read :—

"*Extract from the Procés-verbaux of a meeting of the Bonapartist Club in the Rue St. Jacques, held Feb. 5, 1815.*"

Franz stopped. "Feb. 5, 1815!" said he; "it is the day my father was murdered."

Valentine and Villefort were dumb; the eye of the old man alone seemed to say clearly, "Go on."

"But it was on leaving this club," said he, "that my father disappeared."

Noirtier's eye continued to say, "Read."

He resumed :—

"The undersigned—Louis Jacques Beaurepaire, lieutenant-colonel of artillery, Étienne Duchampy, brigadier-general, and Claude Lecharpal, keeper of streams and forests—declare that on the 4th of February a letter arrived from the Isle of Elba, recommending to the kindness and the confidence of the Bonapartist Club General Flavien de Quesnel, who, having served the emperor from 1804 to 1814, was supposed to be devoted to the interests of the Napoleon dynasty, notwithstanding the title of baron, which Louis XVIII. had just granted to him with his estate of Epinay.

"A note was in consequence addressed to General de Quesnel, begging him to be present at the meeting next day, the 5th. The note indicated neither the street nor the number of the house where the meeting was to be held; it bore no signature, but it announced to the general that some one would call for him, if he would be ready at nine o'clock. The meetings were always held from that time till midnight. At nine o'clock the president of the club presented himself; the general was ready. The president informed him that one of the conditions of his introduction was that he should be forever ignorant of the place of meeting, and that he would allow his eyes to be bandaged, swearing that he would not endeavor to take off the bandage.

General de Quesnel accepted the condition, and promised, on his honor, not to seek to discover the road they should take. The general's carriage was ready; but the president told him it was impossible to use it, since it would be superfluous to blind the eyes of the master, if the coachman was to go with eyes wide open to recognize the streets through which he passed. 'What must, then, be done?' asked the general. 'I have my carriage here,' said the president. 'Have you, then, so much confidence in your servant that you can intrust him with a secret you will not allow me to know?' 'Our coachman is a member of the club,' said the president; 'we shall be driven by a state-councillor.' 'Then we run another risk,' said the general, laughing, 'that of being turned out.' We insert this joke to prove that the general was not in the least compelled to attend this meeting, but that he came willingly. When they were seated in the carriage, the president reminded the general of his promise to allow his eyes to be bandaged, to which he made no opposition. On the road the president thought he saw the general make an attempt to remove the handkerchief, and reminded him of his oath. 'True,' said the general. The carriage stopped at a passage leading to the Rue St. Jacques. The general alighted, leaning on the arm of the president, of whose dignity he was not aware, considering him simply as a member of the club; they crossed the passage, mounted to the first story, and entered the meeting-room.

"The deliberations had already commenced. The members, apprised of the sort of presentation which was to be made that evening, were all in attendance. When in the middle of the room the general was invited to remove his bandage. He did so immediately, and appeared much surprised to see so many well-known faces in a society of whose existence he had till then been ignorant. They questioned him as to his sentiments; but he contented himself with answering that the letters from the Isle of Elba ought to have informed them —"

Franz interrupted himself by saying, "My father was a Royalist; they need not have asked his sentiments, which were well known."

"And hence," said Villefort, "arose my affection for your father, my dear M. Franz. A similarity of opinion soon binds."

"Read," the eye of the old man continued to say.

Franz continued :—

"The president then sought to make him speak more explicitly ; but M. de Quesnel replied that he wished first to know what they wanted with him. He was then informed of the contents of the letter from the Isle of Elba, in which he was recommended to the club as a man who would be likely to advance the interests of their party. One paragraph alluded to the return of Bonaparte, and promised another letter, and further details, on the arrival of the 'Pharaon,' belonging to the ship-builder Morrel, of Marseilles, whose captain was entirely devoted to the emperor. During all this time, the general, on whom they thought to have relied as on a brother, manifested evident signs of discontent and repugnance. When the reading was finished he remained silent, with knit brow. 'Well,' asked the president, 'what do you say to this letter, General?' 'I say that it is too soon after declaring myself for Louis XVIII. to break my vow in behalf of the ex-emperor.'

"This answer was too clear to leave any doubt as to his sentiments. 'General,' said the president, 'we acknowledge no King Louis XVIII., nor an ex-emperor, but his Majesty the Emperor and King, driven from France, which is his kingdom, by violence and treason.' 'Excuse me, gentlemen,' said the general, 'you may not acknowledge Louis XVIII., but I do, as he has made me a baron and a field-marshall, and I shall never forget that for these two titles I am indebted to his happy return to France.'

"'Monsieur,' said the president, in a most serious tone, and rising as he spoke, 'be careful what you say; your words clearly show us that they are deceived concerning you in the Isle of Elba, and that we have been deceived ! The communication which has been made to you testifies to the confidence placed in you, and consequently to a sentiment which does

you honor. Now we discover our error ; a title and promotion attach you to the government we wish to overturn. We will not constrain you to help us, — we enroll no one against his conscience ; but we will compel you to act honorably even if you are not disposed to do so.' ' You would call it acting honorably to know your conspiracy, and not to reveal it ; that is what I should call becoming your accomplice. You see I am more candid than you.' "

" Ah, my father ! " said Franz, interrupting himself. " I understand now why they murdered him."

Valentine could not help casting one glance towards the young man, whose filial enthusiasm it was delightful to behold. Villefort walked to and fro behind him. Noirtier watched the expression of each one, and preserved his dignified and commanding attitude. Franz returned to the manuscript, and continued : —

" ' Monsieur,' said the president, ' you have been invited to join this assembly ; you were not forced here. It was proposed to you to come blindfolded ; you accepted. When you complied with this twofold request you well knew we did not wish to secure the throne of Louis XVIII., or we should not take so much care to avoid the vigilance of the police. It would be conceding too much to allow you to put on a mask to aid you in the discovery of our secret, and then to remove it that you may ruin those who have confided in you. No, no ; you must first say if you declare yourself for the king of a day who now reigns, or for his Majesty the Emperor.' ' I am a Royalist,' replied the general ; ' I have taken the oath of allegiance to Louis XVIII., and I will adhere to it.' These words were followed by a general murmur ; and it was evident that several of the members were discussing the propriety of making the general repent of his rashness. The president again rose, and having imposed silence, said, ' Monsieur, you are too serious and too sensible a man not to understand the consequences of our present situation, and your candor has already dictated to us the conditions which remain for us to

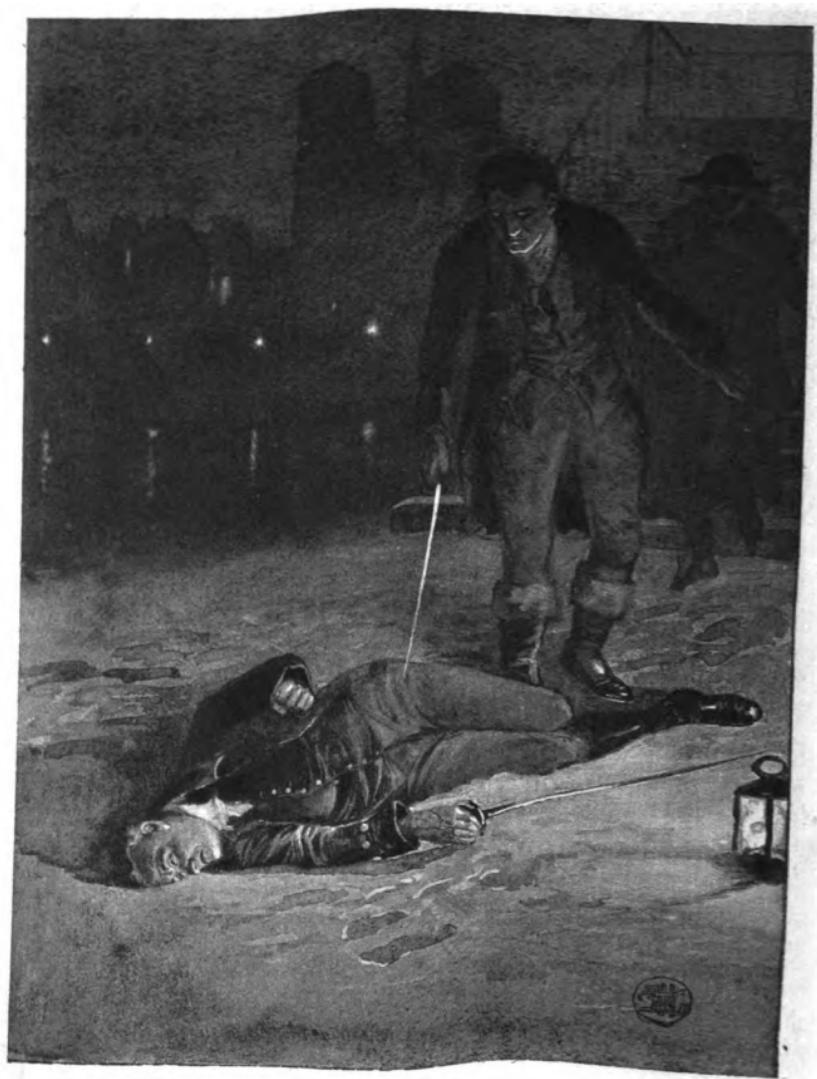
offer you. You will swear, then, upon honor, not to disclose anything that you have heard.' The general, putting his hand on his sword, exclaimed, 'If you talk of honor, do not begin by disavowing its laws, and impose nothing by violence.' 'And you, Monsieur,' continued the president, with a calmness still more terrible than the general's anger, 'do not touch your sword, I advise you.' The general looked around him with slight uneasiness ; however, he did not yield, but recalling all his strength, 'I will not swear,' said he. 'Then you must die,' replied the president, calmly. M. d'Épinay became very pale. He looked round him a second time ; several members of the club were whispering, and getting their arms from under their cloaks. 'General,' said the president, 'do not alarm yourself. You are among men of honor, who will use every means to convince you before resorting to the last extremity ; but as you have said, you are among conspirators, you are in possession of our secret, and you must restore it to us.' A significant silence followed these words, and as the general did not reply, 'Close the doors,' said the president to the door-keepers. The same deadly silence succeeded these words. Then the general advanced, and making a violent effort to control his feelings, 'I have a son,' said he ; 'and I must think of him, on finding myself among assassins.' 'General,' said the chief of the assembly, with a noble air, 'one man may insult fifty ; it is the privilege of weakness. But he does wrong to use his privilege. Follow my advice, swear, and do not insult.'

The general, again daunted by the superiority of the chief, hesitated a moment ; then advancing to the president's desk, 'What is the form ?' said he. 'It is this : "I swear by my honor not to reveal to any one what I have seen and heard on the 5th of February, 1815, between nine and ten o'clock in the evening ; and I admit myself deserving of death should I ever violate this oath." ' The general appeared to be affected by a nervous shudder, which prevented his answering for some moments ; then overcoming his manifest repugnance, he pronounced the required oath, but in so low a tone as to be scarcely audible to the majority of the members, who insisted on his

repeating it clearly and distinctly, which he did. ‘Now am I at liberty to retire?’ said he. The president rose, appointed three members to accompany him, and got into the carriage with the general after bandaging his eyes. One of those three members was the coachman who had driven them there. The other members of the club silently dispersed. ‘Where do you wish to be taken?’ asked the president. ‘Anywhere out of your presence,’ replied M. d’Epinay. ‘Beware, Monsieur,’ replied the president; ‘you are no longer in the assembly, and have only to do with individuals; do not insult them unless you wish to be held responsible.’ But instead of listening, M. d’Epinay went on, ‘You are still as brave in your carriage as in your assembly, because you are still four against one.’ The president stopped the coach. They were at that part of the Quai des Ormes where the steps lead down to the river. ‘Why do you stop here?’ asked D’Epinay. ‘Because Monsieur,’ said the president, ‘you have insulted a man, and that man will not go one step farther without demanding honorable reparation.’ ‘Another method of assassination?’ said the general, shrugging his shoulders. ‘Make no noise, Monsieur, unless you wish me to consider you as one of those men whom you designated just now as cowards, who take their weakness for a shield. You are alone; one alone shall answer you. You have a sword by your side; I have one in my cane. You have no witness; one of these gentlemen will serve you. Now, if you please, remove your bandage.’ The general tore the handkerchief from his eyes. ‘At last,’ said he, ‘I shall know with whom I have to do.’ They opened the door; the four men alighted.”

Franz again interrupted himself, and wiped the cold drops from his brow; there was something awful in hearing the son, trembling and pale, read aloud these details of his father’s death, which had hitherto remained unknown. Valentine clasped her hands as if in prayer. Noirtier looked at Villefort with an almost sublime expression of contempt and pride. Franz continued:—

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" It was, as we said, the 5th of February. For three days there had been five or six degrees of frost ; the steps were covered with ice. The general was stout and tall ; the president offered him the side of the railing to assist him in getting down. The two witnesses followed. It was a dark night. The ground from the steps to the river was covered with snow and hoar-frost ; the water of the river looked black and deep. One of the seconds went for a lantern in a coal-boat near, and by its light they examined the arms. The president's sword, which was simply, as he had said, one he carried in his cane, was five inches shorter than the general's and had no guard. The general proposed to cast lots for the swords, but the president said it was he who had given the provocation ; and when he had given it he had supposed each would use his own arms. The witnesses endeavored to insist, but the president bade them be silent. The lantern was placed on the ground ; the two adversaries put themselves in position ; and the duel commenced. The light made the two swords appear like flashes of lightning ; as for the men, they were scarcely perceptible, the darkness was so great. M. le Général d'Épinay passed for one of the best swordsmen in the army ; but he was pressed so closely in the onset that he missed his aim and fell. The witnesses thought he was dead, but his adversary, who knew he had not struck him, offered him the assistance of his hand to rise. The circumstance irritated instead of calming the general, and he rushed on his adversary. But his opponent did not miss one stroke. Receiving him on his sword, three times the general drew back, and finding himself too closely pressed, returned to the charge. At the third he fell again. They thought he had slipped, as at first, and the witnesses, seeing that he did not move, approached and endeavored to raise him, but the one who passed his arm around the body felt under his hand a moist warmth, — it was blood. The general, who had almost fainted, revived. ' Ah ! ' said he, ' they have sent some fencing-master to fight with me.' The president, without answering, approached the witness, who held the lantern, and raising his sleeve, showed him two wounds he had received in his arm ; then opening his coat, and unbutton-

ing his waistcoat, displayed his side, pierced with a third wound. Still he had not even uttered a sigh. The General d'Épinay died five minutes after."

Franz read these last words in a voice so choked that they were hardly audible, and then stopped, passing his hand over his eyes as if to dispel a cloud ; but after a moment's silence, he continued :—

" The president went up the steps, after pushing his sword into his cane ; a track of blood on the snow marked his course. He had scarcely arrived at the top when he heard a heavy splash in the water ; it was the general's body, which the witnesses had just thrown into the river after ascertaining he was dead. The general fell, then, in a loyal duel, and not in ambush, as it might have been reported. In proof of this we have signed this paper to establish the truth of the facts, lest the moment should arrive when either of the actors in this terrible scene should be accused of premeditated murder or of infringement of the laws of honor.

" BEAUREPAIRE,
" DUCHAMPY,
" LECHARPAL."

When Franz had finished reading this account, so dreadful for a son ; when Valentine, pale with emotion, had wiped away a tear ; when Villefort, trembling and crouched in a corner, had endeavored to lessen the storm by supplicating glances at the implacable old man,— " Monsieur," said D'Épinay to Noirtier, " since you are well acquainted with all these details, which are attested by honorable signatures ; since you appear to take some interest in me, although you have manifested it hitherto only by causing me sorrow,— refuse me not one final satisfaction ; tell me the name of the president of the club, that I may at least know who killed my poor father."

Villefort mechanically felt for the handle of the door ; Valentine, who had anticipated sooner than any one her grandfather's answer, and who had often seen two scars upon his right arm, drew back a few steps.

"Mademoiselle," said Franz, turning towards Valentine, "unite your efforts with mine to find out the name of the man who made me an orphan at two years of age."

Valentine remained dumb and motionless.

"Hold, Monsieur !" said Villefort, "do not prolong this dreadful scene. The names have been purposely concealed. My father himself does not know who this president was, and if he knows he cannot tell you ; proper names are not in the dictionary."

"Oh, misery !" cried Franz ; "the only hope which sustained me and enabled me to read to the end was that of knowing at least the name of him who killed my father ! Monsieur ! Monsieur !" cried he, turning to Noirtier, "in Heaven's name, do what you can ! Make me understand in some way !"

"Yes," replied Noirtier.

"Oh, Mademoiselle ! Mademoiselle !" cried Franz, "your grandfather says he can indicate — that man. Help me ! lend me your assistance !"

Noirtier looked at the dictionary. Franz took it with a nervous trembling and repeated the letters of the alphabet successively until he came to M. At that letter the old man signified "Yes."

"M," repeated Franz. The young man's finger glided over the words, but at each one Noirtier answered by a negative sign. Valentine hid her head between her hands. At length Franz arrived at the word *moi* (myself).

"Yes," indicated the old man.

"You ?" cried Franz, whose hair stood on end ; "you, M. Noirtier ? — you killed my father ?"

"Yes," replied Noirtier, fixing a majestic look on the young man.

Franz fell powerless on a chair; Villefort opened the door and escaped, for the idea had entered his mind to stifle the little remaining life in the old man's heart.

CHAPTER XXIV.

PROGRESS OF M. CAVALCANTI THE YOUNGER.

MEANWHILE M. Cavalcanti the elder had returned to his service, not in the army of his Majesty the Emperor of Austria, but at the gaming-table of the baths of Lucca, of which he was one of the most assiduous attendants. He had spent every farthing that had been allowed for his journey, and as a reward for the majestic and solemn manner in which he had maintained his assumed character of father. M. Andrea at his departure had inherited all the papers which proved that he had indeed the honor of being the son of the Marquis Bartolomeo and the Marquise Oliva Corsinari. He was now fairly launched in that Parisian society which gives such ready access to foreigners, and treats them, not as what they really are, but as what they wish to be considered. Besides, what is required of a young man in Paris? To speak its language tolerably, to make a good appearance, to be a good gamester, and pay in cash. They are certainly less particular with a foreigner than with a Frenchman. Andrea had then, in a fortnight, attained a very fair position. He was entitled Monsieur the Count; he was said to possess fifty thousand livres per annum; and his father's immense riches, buried in the quarries of Saravezza, were a constant theme of conversation. A learned man, before whom the last circumstance was mentioned as a fact, declared that he had seen the quarries in question, which gave great

weight to assertions hitherto somewhat doubtful, but which now assumed the garb of reality.

Such was the condition of affairs in the circle of Parisian society to which we have introduced our readers, when Monte Cristo went one evening to pay M. Danglars a visit. M. Danglars was out ; but the count was asked to go and see the baroness, and he accepted the invitation. It was never without a nervous shudder, since the dinner at Auteuil and the events which followed it, that Madame Danglars heard Monte Cristo's name announced. If he did not come, the painful sensation became most intense ; if on the contrary he appeared, his noble countenance, his brilliant eyes, his amiability, his polite attention even towards Madame Danglars, soon dispelled every impression of fear. It appeared impossible to the baroness that a man of such delightfully pleasing manners should entertain evil designs against her. Besides, the most corrupt minds only suspect evil when it would answer some interested end ; useless injury is repugnant to every mind. When Monte Cristo entered the boudoir to which we have already once introduced our readers, and where the baroness was examining some drawings which her daughter passed to her after having looked at them with M. Cavalcanti, his presence soon produced its usual effect ; and it was with smiles that the baroness received the count, although she had been a little disconcerted at the announcement of his name. The latter embraced the whole scene at a glance.

The baroness was partially reclining on a *causeuse*, Eugénie sat near her, and Cavalcanti was standing. Cavalcanti, dressed in black, like one of Goethe's heroes, with japanned shoes and open white silk stockings, passed a white and tolerably nice-looking hand through his light hair, in the midst of which sparkled a diamond which, in

spite of Monte Cristo's advice, the vain young man had been unable to resist putting on his little finger. This movement was accompanied by killing glances at Mademoiselle Danglars, and sighs addressed to the same party. Mademoiselle Danglars was still the same, — cold, beautiful, and satirical. Not one of these glances, nor one sigh, escaped her ; they might have been said to fall on the shield of Minerva, — a shield which some philosophers assert protected sometimes the breast of Sappho. Eugénie bowed coldly to the count, and availed herself of the first moment when the conversation became earnest to escape to her study, whence very soon two cheerful and noisy voices, in connection with notes of the piano, assured Monte Cristo that Mademoiselle Danglars preferred to his society and to that of M. Cavalcanti the company of Mademoiselle Louise d'Armilly, her music-teacher.

It was then especially while conversing with Madame Danglars, and apparently absorbed by the charm of the conversation, that the count remarked M. Andrea Cavalcanti's solicitude, his manner of listening to the music at the door he dared not pass, and of manifesting his admiration. The banker soon returned. His first look was indeed directed towards Monte Cristo, but the second was for Andrea. As for his wife, he bowed to her in the manner of certain husbands towards their wives, but which bachelors will never comprehend until a very extensive code is published on conjugal life.

"Have not the ladies invited you to join them at the piano ?" said Danglars to Andrea.

"Alas ! no, Monsieur," replied Andrea, with a sigh still more marked than the former ones. Danglars immediately advanced towards the door and opened it.

The two young ladies were seen seated on the same chair at the piano, accompanying themselves, each with

one hand, — an exercise to which they had taken a fancy, and in which they had developed remarkable efficiency. Mademoiselle d'Armilly, whom they then perceived through the open doorway, formed with Eugénie one of those living pictures of which the Germans are so fond. She was somewhat beautiful, and exquisitely genteel, — a little fairy-like figure, with large curls falling on her neck, (which was rather too long, as Perugino sometimes makes his Virgins), and eyes dull from fatigue. It was said that she had a weak chest, and like Antonia of the “Violin de Crémone,” would die one day while singing. Monte Cristo cast a rapid and curious glance round this sanctum ; it was the first time he had ever seen Mademoiselle d'Armilly, of whom he had heard much.

“ Well ! ” said the banker to his daughter, “ are we then all to be excluded ? ” He then led the young man into the study, and either by chance or manœuvre, the door was partially closed after Andrea, so that from the place where they sat neither the count nor the baroness could see anything ; but as the banker had accompanied Andrea, Madame Danglars appeared to take no notice of it.

The count soon heard Andrea's voice, singing a Corsican song, accompanied by the piano. While the count smiled at hearing this song, which made him lose sight of Andrea in the recollection of Benedetto, Madame Danglars was boasting to Monte Cristo of her husband's strength of mind, who that very morning had lost three or four hundred thousand francs by a failure at Milan. The praise was well deserved, for had not the count heard it from the baroness, or by one of those means by which he knew everything, the baron's countenance would not have led him to suspect it. “ Hem ! ” thought Monte Cristo, “ he begins to conceal his losses ; a month since he boasted of

them." Then aloud, "Oh, Madame, M. Danglars is so skilful, he will soon regain at the Bourse what he loses elsewhere."

"I see you are maintaining an erroneous idea, as well as many more," said Madame Danglars.

"What is it?" said Monte Cristo.

"That M. Danglars speculates, whereas he never does."

"Truly, Madame, I recollect M. Debray told me—By the way, what has become of him? I have seen nothing of him the last three or four days."

"Nor I," said Madame Danglars, with wonderful self-possession; "but you began a sentence and did not finish."

"What was it?"

"M. Debray had told you—"

"Ah, yes, he told me it was you who sacrificed to the demon of speculation."

"I was once very fond of it, I confess," said Madame Danglars; "but I am so no longer."

"Then you are wrong, Madame. Fortune is precarious; and if I were a woman, and had fate made me a banker's wife, whatever might be my confidence in my husband's good fortune,—for in speculation, you know, it is all a matter of good fortune or bad fortune,—well, as I was saying, whatever confidence I might have in my husband's good fortune, I would secure for myself a fortune independent of him, even if I acquired it by placing my interest in hands unknown to him."

Madame Danglars blushed, in spite of all her efforts.

"Stay," said Monte Cristo, as though he had not observed her confusion; "I have heard of a lucky hit that was made yesterday in the Neapolitan bonds."

"I have none, nor have I ever possessed any; but really we have talked long enough of money, Count. We

are like two stock-brokers. Have you heard how fate is persecuting the poor Villeforts ? ”

“ What has happened ? ” said the count, apparently ignorant of all.

“ You know the Marquis de Saint-Méran died a few days after he had set out on his journey to Paris, and the marchioness a few days after her arrival ? ”

“ Yes,” said Monte Cristo, “ I have heard that ; but, as Claudio said to Hamlet, ‘ it is a law of nature ; their fathers died before them, and they mourned their loss ; they will die before their children, who will in their turn grieve for them.’ ”

“ But that is not all.”

“ Not all ! ”

“ No ; they were going to marry their daughter — ”

“ To M. Franz d’Epinay. Is it broken off ? ”

“ Yesterday morning, it appears, Franz declined the honor.”

“ Indeed ! And is the reason known ? ”

“ No.”

“ How extraordinary ! And how does M. de Villefort bear all these misfortunes ? ”

“ As usual, — like a philosopher.”

Danglars returned at this moment alone.

“ Well ! ” said the baroness, “ do you leave M. Cavalcanti with your daughter ? ”

“ And Mademoiselle d’Armillly,” said the banker ; “ do you consider her no one ? ” Then, turning to Monte Cristo, he said, “ Prince Cavalcanti is a charming young man, is he not ? But is he really a prince ? ”

“ I will not answer for it,” said Monte Cristo. “ His father was introduced to me as a marquis, so he ought to be a count ; but I think he makes no great pretension to that title.”

"Why?" said the banker. "If he is a prince, he is wrong not to maintain his rank. Every one should hold to his rights; it does not please me that any should deny his origin."

"Oh! you are a pure democrat," said Monte Cristo, smiling.

"But do you see," said the baroness, "to what you are exposing yourself? If, perchance, M. de Morcerf came, he would find M. Cavalcanti in that room, where he, the betrothed of Eugénie, has never been admitted."

"You may well say perchance," replied the banker; "for he comes so seldom it would seem only chance that brings him."

"But should he come, and find that young man with your daughter, he might be displeased."

"He! you are mistaken. M. Albert would not do us the honor to be jealous of his betrothed; he does not love her enough for that. Besides, I care not for his displeasure."

"Still, situated as we are—"

"Yes, do you know how we are situated? At his mother's ball he danced once with Eugénie, and M. Cavalcanti three times, and he took no notice of it."

The valet announced M. le Vicomte Albert de Morcerf. The baroness rose hastily, and was going into the study, when Danglars stopped her. "Stay!" said he. She looked at him in amazement. Monte Cristo appeared to be unconscious of what passed. Albert entered, looking very handsome and in high spirits. He bowed politely to the baroness, familiarly to Danglars, and affectionately to Monte Cristo. Then turning to the baroness, "May I ask how Mademoiselle Danglars is?" said he.

"She is quite well," replied Danglars, quickly; "at this moment she is practising music with M. Cavalcanti in her little salon."

Albert preserved his calm and indifferent manner ; he might feel perhaps annoyed, but he knew Monte Cristo's eye was on him. "M. Cavalcanti has a fine tenor voice," said he, "and Mademoiselle Eugénie a splendid soprano ; and then she plays on the piano like Thalberg. The concert must be a delightful one."

"They suit each other remarkably well," said Danglars.

Albert appeared not to notice this remark, which was, however, so rude that Madame Danglars blushed.

"I too," said the young man, "am a musician, — at least, my masters used to tell me so ; but it is strange that my voice never would suit any other, and a soprano less than any."

Danglars smiled, and seemed to say, It is of no consequence. Then, hoping doubtless to effect his purpose, he said, "The prince and my daughter were universally admired yesterday. You were not of the party, M. de Morcerf ? "

"What prince ?" asked Albert.

"Prince Cavalcanti," said Danglars, who persisted in giving the young man that title.

"Pardon me," said Albert, "I was not aware he was a prince. And Prince Cavalcanti sang with Mademoiselle Eugénie yesterday ? It must have been charming, indeed. I regret not having heard them. But I was unable to accept your invitation, having promised to accompany my mother to a German concert given by the Baronne de Château-Renaud." Then, after a silence, and as if the subject had not been mentioned, "May I be allowed," said Morcerf, "to pay my respects to Mademoiselle Danglars ?"

"Wait a moment," said the banker, stopping the young man ; "do you hear that delightful cavatina ? Ta, ta, ta, ti, ta, ti, ta ; it is charming. Let them finish ; one mo-

ment ! Bravo ! bravi ! brava ! ” The banker was enthusiastic in his applause.

“ Indeed,” said Albert, “ it is exquisite ; it is impossible to understand the music of his country better than Prince Cavalcanti does. You said ‘ prince,’ did you not ? But he can easily become one, if he is not already ; it is no uncommon thing in Italy. But to return to the charming musicians, you should give us a treat, M. Danglars. Without telling them there is a stranger present, ask them to sing one more song ; it is so delightful to hear music at a little distance in an obscurity, without being seen, without seeing, and consequently without annoying the performer, who thus is left free to yield himself to all the inspirations of his genius or to all the buoyancy of his spirits.”

Danglars was quite annoyed by the young man’s indifference. He took Monte Cristo aside. “ What do you think of our lover ? ” said he.

“ He appears cool ! But then your word is given.”

“ Yes, doubtless I have promised to give my daughter to a man who loves her, but not to one who does not. Even if Albert had Cavalcanti’s fortune, he is so proud that I would not care to see him marry her.”

“ Oh ! ” said Monte Cristo, “ my fondness may blind me, but I assure you that M. de Morcerf is a charming young man, who will make your daughter happy, and who sooner or later will amount to something,—for the position of the father is excellent.”

“ Hem ! ” said Danglars.

“ Why that doubt ? ”

“ The past,—that obscurity on the past.”

“ But the past life of the father does not affect the son.”

“ That is true.”

“ Come, don’t be obstinate ; a month ago you wished

for this marriage. You understand me,—I am in despair; it was at my house that you met that young Cavalcanti, of whom, I repeat to you, I know nothing."

"But I do."

"Have you made inquiry?"

"Is there any need of that? Would not one know at first sight with whom he had to deal? In the first place, he is rich."

"I am not sure of that."

"You are responsible for him, however."

"For fifty thousand livres,—a trifle."

"He has a distinguished education."

"Hem!" said Monte Cristo, in his turn.

"He is a musician."

"So are all Italians."

"Come, Count, you do not do that young man justice."

"Well, I acknowledge it annoys me, knowing your connection with the Morcerf family, to see him throw himself in the way."

Danglars burst out laughing. "What a Puritan you are!" said he; "that happens every day."

"But you cannot break it off thus; the Morcerfs are depending on this union."

"Indeed?"

"Positively."

"Then let them explain themselves; you should give the father a hint, you are so intimate with the family."

"I? Where the devil did you find out that?"

"At their ball; it was apparent enough. Why, did not the countess, the proud Mercédès, the disdainful Cata-lane, who will scarcely open her lips to her oldest acquaintances, take your arm, lead you into the garden into the private walks, and remain there for half an hour? Will you undertake to speak to the father?"

"Willingly, if you wish it."

"But so that this time the affair may be settled explicitly and positively. If he demands my daughter, let him fix the day, declare his conditions,—in short, let us either understand each other or quarrel. You understand,—no more delay."

"Yes, Monsieur, I will give my attention to the subject."

"I do not say I expect him with pleasure, but I do expect him. A banker must, you know, be a slave to his promise." And Danglars sighed as M. Cavalcanti had done half an hour before.

"Bravi! bravo! brava!" cried Morcerf, imitating the banker, as he applauded the piece of music just finished.

Danglars began to look suspiciously at Morcerf, when some one came and whispered a few words to him. "I shall soon return," said the banker to Monte Cristo; "wait for me. I shall perhaps have something to say to you."

The baroness took advantage of her husband's absence to push open the door of her daughter's study, and M. Andrea, who was sitting before the piano with Mademoiselle Eugénie, started up like a spring. Albert bowed to Mademoiselle Danglars with a smile, who, not appearing in the least disturbed, returned his bow with her usual coolness. Cavalcanti was evidently embarrassed; he bowed to Morcerf, who replied with the most impudent look possible. Then Albert launched out in praise of Mademoiselle Danglars's voice, and on his regret, after what he had just heard, that he had been unable to be present the previous evening.

Cavalcanti, being left alone, turned to Monte Cristo.

"Come," said Madame Danglars, "leave music and compliments, and let us go and take tea."

"Come, Louise," said Mademoiselle Danglars to her friend.

They passed into the next drawing-room, where tea was prepared. Just as they were beginning, in the English fashion, to leave the spoons in their cups, the door again opened, and Danglars entered, visibly agitated. Monte Cristo observed it particularly, and by a look asked the banker for an explanation. "I have just received my courier from Greece," said Danglars.

"Ah! ah!" said the count; "that was the reason of your being called away from us."

"Yes."

"How is King Otho?" asked Albert, in the most sprightly tone.

Danglars cast another suspicious look towards him without answering; and Monte Cristo turned away to conceal the expression of pity which passed over his features, but which was gone in a moment.

"We shall go together, shall we not?" said Albert to the count.

"If you like," replied the latter.

Albert could not understand the banker's look, and turning to Monte Cristo, who understood it perfectly, "Did you see," said he, "how he looked at me?"

"Yes," said the count; "but did you think there was anything particular in his look?"

"Indeed I did; and what does he mean by his news from Greece?"

"How can I tell you?"

"Because I imagine you have correspondents in that country."

Monte Cristo smiled significantly.

"Stop," said Albert, "here he comes. I shall compliment Mademoiselle Danglars on her cameo, while the father talks to you."

"If you compliment her at all, let it be on her voice, at least," said Monte Cristo.

"No, every one would do that."

"My dear viscount, you are dreadfully impertinent."

Albert advanced towards Eugénie, smiling. Meanwhile, Danglars stooped to Monte Cristo's ear. "Your advice was excellent," said he; "there is a horrible history in those two words, 'Fernand' and 'Janina.' "

"Indeed!" said Monte Cristo.

"Yes, I will tell you all; but take away the young man. I cannot endure his presence."

"He is going with me. Shall I send the father to you?"

"With more reason than ever."

"Very well." The count made a sign to Albert; they bowed to the ladies and took their leave,—Albert perfectly indifferent to Mademoiselle Danglars's contempt, Monte Cristo reiterating his advice to Madame Danglars on the prudence a banker's wife should exercise in providing for the future. M. Cavalcanti remained master of the field.

CHAPTER XXV.

HAYDÉE.

SCARCELY had the count's horses cleared the angle of the boulevard, when Albert, turning towards the count, burst into a loud fit of laughter,—so loud, in fact, as to seem somewhat forced. “Well!” said he, “I will ask you the same question which Charles IX. put to Catherine de Medicis, after the massacre of St. Bartholomew. ‘How have I played my little part?’”

“To what do you allude?” asked Monte Cristo.

“To the installation of my rival at M. Danglars's!”

“What rival?”

“Well, that is good! What rival? Why, your *protégé*, M. Andrea Cavalcanti!”

“Ah! no joking, Viscount, if you please; M. Andrea is no *protégé* of mine,—at least, not in his relations with M. Danglars.”

“And you would be to blame for not assisting him if the young man really needed your help in that quarter; but happily for me, he can dispense with it.”

“What! do you think he is paying his addresses?”

“I am certain of it; his languishing looks and modulated tones when addressing Mademoiselle Danglars fully proclaim his intentions. He aspires to the hand of the proud Eugénie.”

“What does that signify, so long as they favor your suit?”

"But it is not the case, my dear count; on the contrary, I am repulsed on both sides."

"On both sides?"

"It is so indeed; Mademoiselle Eugénie scarcely answers me, and Mademoiselle d'Armillly, her confidant, does not speak to me at all."

"But the father has the greatest regard for you," said Monte Cristo.

"He! oh, no! he has plunged a thousand daggers into my heart,—tragedy-weapons, I own, which instead of wounding sheath their points in their own handles, but daggers which he nevertheless believed to be real and deadly."

"Jealousy indicates affection."

"True; but I am not jealous."

"He is."

"Of whom,—of Debray?"

"No, of you."

"Of me? I will wager that before a week is past the door will be closed against me."

"You are mistaken, my dear viscount."

"Prove it to me."

"Do you wish me to do so?"

"Yes."

"Well! I am charged with the commission of endeavouring to induce M. le Comte de Morcerf to make some definite arrangement with the baron."

"By whom are you charged?"

"By the baron himself."

"Oh!" said Albert, with all the cajolery of which he was capable; "you surely will not do that, my dear count?"

"Certainly I shall, Albert, as I have promised to do it."

" Well ! " said Albert, with a sigh, " it seems you are determined to marry me."

" I am determined to try and be on good terms with everybody, at all events," said Monte Cristo. " But speaking of Debray, how is it that I have not seen him lately at the baron's house ? "

" There has been a quarrel."

" What, with the baroness ? "

" No, with the baron."

" Has he perceived anything ? "

" Ah ! that is a good joke ! "

" Do you think he suspects ? " said Monte Cristo, with a charming *naïveté*.

" Where have you come from, my dear count ? " said Albert.

" From Congo, if you will."

" It must be from farther off than even that."

" But what do I know of your Parisian husbands ? "

" Oh, my dear count, husbands are pretty much the same everywhere ; an individual husband of any country is a pretty fair specimen of the whole race."

" But then what can have led to the quarrel between Danglars and Debray ? they seemed to understand each other so well ! " said Monte Cristo, with renewed simplicity.

" Ah ! now you are trying to penetrate into the mysteries of Isis, in which I am not initiated. When M. Andrea Cavalcanti has become one of the family, you can ask him that question."

The carriage stopped. " Here we are," said Monte Cristo. " It is only half-past ten o'clock ; come in."

" Most willingly."

" My carriage shall take you back."

" No, thank you ; I gave orders for my coupé to follow me."

"There it is, then," said Monte Cristo, as he stepped out of the carriage. They both went into the house. The drawing-room was lighted up; they entered it. "You will make tea for us, Baptistin," said the count. Baptistin left the room without waiting to answer, and in two seconds reappeared, bringing a tray well filled, which appeared to have sprung from the ground, like the repasts which we read of in fairy tales.

"Really, my dear count," said Morcerf, "what I admire in you is not so much your riches,—for perhaps there are people even wealthier than yourself; nor is it only your wit,—for Beaumarchais might have possessed as much,—but it is your manner of being served, without any questions, in a moment, in a second. It is as if they guessed what you wanted by your manner of ringing, and made a point of keeping everything you can possibly desire in constant readiness."

"What you say is perhaps true; they know my habits. For instance, you shall see; how do you wish to occupy yourself during tea-time?"

"Well, I should like to smoke."

Monte Cristo took the gong and struck it once. In about a second a private door opened, and Ali appeared, bringing two chibouques filled with excellent latakia.

"It is wonderful!" said Albert.

"Oh, no, it is very simple," replied Monte Cristo. "Ali knows that I generally smoke while I am taking my tea or coffee; he knows that I ordered tea, and he also knows that I brought you home with me. When I summon him, he understands the reason of my doing so, and as he comes from a country where hospitality is especially exercised with the pipe, he brings two chibouques instead of one."

"Certainly you give a commonplace explanation, but it

is not the less true that you alone — Ah ! but what do I hear ! ” and Morcerf inclined his head towards the door, through which sounds seemed to issue resembling those of a guitar.

“ Upon my word, my dear viscount, you are fated to hear music this evening ; you have escaped from the piano of Mademoiselle Danglars only to be attacked by the *guzla* of Haydée.”

“ Haydée ! what an adorable name ! Are there, then, really women who bear the name of Haydée anywhere but in Byron’s poems ? ”

“ Certainly there are. Haydée is a very uncommon name in France, but it is common enough in Albania and Epirus ; it is as if you said, for example, Chastity, Modesty, Innocence, — it is a kind of baptismal name, as you Parisians call it.”

“ Oh, that is charming ! ” said Albert ; “ how I should like to hear my countrywomen called Mademoiselle Goodness, Mademoiselle Silence, Mademoiselle Christian Charity ! Only think, then, if Mademoiselle Danglars, instead of being called Claire Marie Eugénie, had been named Mademoiselle Chastity Modesty Innocence Danglars ; what a fine effect that would produce in the publication of the banns ! ”

“ Silence ! ” said the count, “ do not joke in so loud a tone ; Haydée may hear you, perhaps.”

“ And you think she would be angry ? ”

“ No, certainly not,” said the count, with a haughty expression.

“ She is very amiable, then, is she not ? ” said Albert.

“ It is not to be called amiability, it is her duty ; a slave does not offend her master.”

“ Come ; you are joking yourself now. Are there slaves still ? ”

" Undoubtedly, since Haydée is mine."

" Really, Count, you do nothing, and have nothing like other people. The slave of M. le Comte de Monte Cristo ! why, it is a rank of itself in France. At the rate in which you lavish money, it is a place that must be worth a hundred thousand crowns a year."

" A hundred thousand crowns ! the poor girl originally possessed more than that ; she was born to treasures in comparison with which those recorded in the ' Thousand and One Nights' would be trivial."

" She must be a princess, then ?"

" You are right ; and one of the greatest in her country ! "

" I thought so. But how did it happen that such a great princess became a slave ? "

" How was it that Dionysius the Tyrant became a schoolmaster ? The fortune of war, my dear viscount, — the caprice of fortune."

" And is her name a secret ?"

" As regards the world it is ; but not for you, my dear viscount, who are one of my friends, and who will be silent — will you not ? — if you promise silence — "

" Oh ! on my word of honor."

" You know the history of the Pacha of Janina ? "

" Of Ali Tebelin ? Certainly ! it was in his service that my father made his fortune."

" True, I had forgotten that."

" Well ! what is Haydée to Ali Tebelin ? "

" His daughter only."

" What ? the daughter of Ali Pacha ? "

" Of Ali Pacha and the beautiful Vasiliki."

" And your slave ? "

" Why, yes, to be sure."

" But how did she become so ? "

"Why, I bought her one day, as I was passing through the market at Constantinople."

"Wonderful! With you, my dear count, one does not live, one dreams. Now, I am going perhaps to make an imprudent and thoughtless request, but —"

"Say on."

"But since you go out with Haydée, and sometimes even take her to the opera —"

"Well?"

"I think I may venture to ask you this favor."

"You may venture to ask me anything."

"Well, then, my dear count, present me to your princess."

"I will do so; but on two conditions."

"I accept them at once."

"The first is that you will never tell any one that I have granted the interview."

"Very well," said Albert, extending his hand; "I swear I will not."

"The second is that you will not tell her that your father ever served hers."

"I swear to that also."

"Enough, Viscount; you will remember those two vows, will you not? But I know you to be a man of honor."

The count again struck the gong. Ali reappeared. "Tell Haydée," said he, "that I will take coffee with her; and give her to understand that I desire permission to present one of my friends to her." Ali bowed and left the room.

"Now, understand me," said the count, "no direct questions, my dear Morcerf; if you wish to know anything, tell me, and I will ask her."

"Agreed."

Ali reappeared for the third time, and drew back the

tapestried hanging which concealed the door, to signify to his master and Albert that they were at liberty to pass on.

"Let us go in," said Monte Cristo.

Albert passed his hand through his hair and curled his mustache, then, having satisfied himself as to his personal appearance, followed the count into the room, the latter having previously resumed his hat and gloves. Ali was stationed as a kind of advanced guard; and the door was kept by the three French waiting-women, under direction of Myrto. Haydée was awaiting her visitors in the first room of her suite of apartments, which was the drawing-room. Her large eyes were dilated with surprise and expectation, for it was the first time that any man, except Monte Cristo, had been accorded an entrance into her presence. She was sitting on a sofa placed in an angle of the room, with her legs crossed under her in the Eastern fashion, and had made for herself a nest, so to speak, in striped and embroidered silks,—the richest manufactures of the East. Near her was the instrument on which she had just been playing; in that attitude, amid those surroundings, she was charming. On perceiving Monte Cristo, she rose and welcomed him with a smile peculiar to herself, expressing at once obedience and love. Monte Cristo advanced towards her and extended his hand, which she raised to her lips.

Albert had remained near the door, fascinated by that strange beauty, which he then saw for the first time, and of which, in France, one could form no idea.

"Whom do you bring?" asked the young girl, in Romaic, of Monte Cristo; "is it a friend, a brother, a simple acquaintance, or an enemy?"

"A friend," said Monte Cristo, in the same language.

"What is his name?"

"Comte Albert ; it is the man whom I rescued from the hands of the banditti at Rome."

"In what language would you like me to converse with him ? "

Monte Cristo turned to Albert. "Do you know modern Greek," asked he.

"Alas ! no," said Albert ; "nor even ancient Greek, my dear count. Never had Homer and Plato a more negligent, and I will even venture to say a more contemptuous student."

"Then," said Haydée, proving by her remark that she had quite understood Monte Cristo's question and Albert's answer, — "then I will speak either in French or Italian, if my Lord wishes me to speak."

Monte Cristo reflected one instant. "You will speak in Italian," said he. Then, turning towards Albert, "It is a pity you do not understand either ancient or modern Greek, both of which Haydée speaks so fluently ; the poor child will be obliged to talk to you in Italian, which will give you perhaps a false idea of her." The count made a sign to Haydée. "Monsieur," said she to Morcerf, "you are most welcome as the friend of my lord and master." This was said in excellent Tuscan, and with that soft Roman accent which makes the language of Dante as sonorous as that of Homer. Then, turning to Ali, she directed him to bring coffee and pipes ; and when he had left the room to execute the orders of his young mistress, she beckoned Albert to approach nearer to her. Monte Cristo and Morcerf drew their seats towards a small table, on which were arranged music, drawings, and vases of flowers. Ali then entered, bringing coffee and chibouques ; as to M. Baptiste, this portion of the building was interdicted to him. Albert refused the pipe which the Nubian offered him.

"Oh, take it ; take it !" said the count. "Haydée is

almost as civilized as a Parisian ; the smell of a Havana is disagreeable to her, but the tobacco of the East is a perfume, you know."

Ali left the room. The cups of coffee were all prepared, with the addition of a sugar-glass, which had been brought for Albert. Monte Cristo and Haydée took Arabian drink in the Arabian manner ; that is to say, without sugar. Haydée took the porcelain cup in her little slender fingers, and conveyed it to her mouth with the simple pleasure of a child when eating or drinking something which it likes. At this moment two women entered, bringing salvers laden with ices and sherbet, which they placed on two small tables appropriated to that purpose.

" My dear host, and you, Signora," said Albert, in Italian, " excuse my apparent stupidity. I am quite bewildered, and no wonder. Here I am in the heart of Paris ; but a moment ago I heard the rumbling of the omnibuses and the tinkling of the bells of the lemonade-sellers, and now I feel as if I were suddenly transported to the East,—not such as I have seen it, but such as my dreams have painted it. Oh, Signora, if I could but speak Greek, your conversation, added to the fairy scene which surrounds me, would furnish an evening which it would be impossible for me ever to forget."

" I speak sufficient Italian to enable me to converse with you, Monsieur," said Haydée, quietly ; " and if you like the East, I will do what I can to enable you to find it here."

" On what subject shall I converse with her ? " said Albert, in a low tone to Monte Cristo.

" Just what you please. You may speak of her country and of her youthful reminiscences ; or, if you like it better, you can talk of Rome, Naples, or Florence."

" Oh ! " said Albert, " it is not worth while to be in

the company of a Greek to converse with her as one would with a Parisian ; let me speak to her of the East."

"Do so, then ; for of all themes which you could choose, that will be the most agreeable to her taste."

Albert turned towards Haydée. "At what age did you leave Greece, Signora ?" asked he.

"I left it when I was but five years old," replied Haydée.

"And have you any recollection of your country ?"

"When I shut my eyes and think, I seem to see it all again. The soul has its organ of vision as well as the body ; and while what is seen by the eye of the body is sometimes forgotten, that which the soul has seen it always remembers."

"And how far back into the past do your recollections extend ?"

"I could scarcely walk when my mother, who was called Vasiliki, which means royal," said the young girl, raising her head proudly, "took me by the hand, and after putting in our purse all the money we possessed, we went out, both covered with veils, to solicit alms for the prisoners, saying, 'He who giveth to the poor lendeth to the Lord.' Then when our purse was full, we returned to the palace, and without saying a word to my father, we sent it to the convent, where it was divided among the prisoners."

"And how old were you at that time ?"

"I was three years old," said Haydée.

"Then you remember all which was passing around you when you were but three years old ?" said Albert.

"All."

"Count," said Albert, in a low tone to Monte Cristo, "do allow the signora to tell me something of her history. You prohibited my mentioning my father's name to her ; but perhaps she will allude to him of her own accord in

the course of the recital, and you have no idea how delighted I should be to hear our name pronounced by such beautiful lips."

Monte Cristo turned to Haydée, and with an expression of countenance which commanded her to pay the most implicit attention to his words, he said in Greek, "Tell us the fate of your father, but neither the name of the traitor nor the treason."

Haydée sighed deeply, and a shade of sadness clouded her beautiful brow.

"What are you saying to her?" said Morcerf, in an undertone.

"I again reminded her that you were a friend, and that she need not conceal anything from you."

"Then," said Albert, "this pious pilgrimage in behalf of the prisoners was your first remembrance; what is the next?"

"Oh, then I remember as if it were but yesterday sitting under the shade of some sycamore-trees, on the borders of a lake, in the waters of which the trembling foliage was reflected as in a mirror. Under the oldest and thickest of these trees, reclining on cushions, sat my father; my mother was at his feet, and I, childlike, amused myself by playing with his long white beard, which descended upon his breast, or with the diamond-hilt of the cimeter attached to his girdle. Then from time to time there came to him an Albanian, who said something, to which I paid no attention, but which he always answered in the same tone of voice, 'Kill,' or 'Pardon.' "

"It is very strange," said Albert, "to hear such words proceed from the mouth of a young girl not on the stage, saying to one's self, 'This is not a fiction.' And how does France appear in your eyes, accustomed as they have been to gaze on such enchanted scenes?"

"I think it is a fine country," said Haydée ; "but I see France as it really is, because I look on it with the eyes of a woman. Whereas my own country, which I can judge of only from the impression produced on my childish mind, always seems enveloped in a hazy atmosphere, luminous or sombre, according as my eyes behold my beautiful native land, or the place where I have endured bitter suffering."

"So young!" said Albert, yielding, in spite of himself, to the power of the commonplace, "is it possible that you can have known what suffering is except by name?"

Haydée turned her eyes towards Monte Cristo, who, making an almost imperceptible sign, murmured, "Go on."

"Nothing is ever so firmly impressed on the mind as the memory of early childhood ; and with the exception of the two which I have mentioned to you, all the remembrances of my youth are sorrowful."

"Speak, speak, Signora!" said Albert ; "I assure you that I am listening to you with inexpressible happiness."

Haydée answered his remark with a melancholy smile. "You wish me, then, to pass to my other remembrances?" said she.

"I beg you to do so," replied Albert.

"Well! I was but four years old, when one night I was suddenly awakened by my mother. We were in the palace of Janina ; she snatched me from the cushions on which I was sleeping, and on opening my eyes I saw hers were filled with tears. She took me away without speaking. When I saw her weeping, I began to cry too. 'Silence, child!' said she. At other times, in spite of maternal endearments or threats, I had, with a child's caprice, been accustomed to indulge my feelings of sorrow or anger by crying as much as I felt inclined ; but on this

occasion there was such an intonation of terror in my mother's voice that I ceased crying instantly. She bore me rapidly away. I saw then that we were descending a large staircase ; in advance of us, all my mother's servants, carrying trunks, bags, ornaments, jewels, and purses of gold, descended precipitately the same staircase. Behind the women came a guard of twenty men, armed with long guns and pistols, and dressed in the costume with which you have become acquainted in France since Greece has become a nation. You may imagine there was something startling and ominous," said Haydée, shaking her head, and turning pale at the mere remembrance of the scene, "in this long file of slaves and women only half-aroused from sleep, — or at least, so they appeared to me, who was myself scarcely awake. Here and there, on the walls of the staircase, were reflected gigantic shadows, which trembled in the flickering light of the pine-torches, till they seemed to reach to the vaulted roof above.

" 'Quick !' said a voice at the end of the gallery. This voice made every one bow before it, as the wind, passing over a plain, bends a field of corn. As for me, it made me tremble. That voice was my father's. He marched the last, clothed in his splendid robes, and holding in his hand the carbine with which your emperor presented him. He was leaning on the shoulder of his favorite Selim, and he drove us all before him, as a shepherd would his straggling flock. My father," said Haydée, raising her head, "was that illustrious man known in Europe under the name of Ali Tebelin, Pacha of Janina, and before whom Turkey trembled."

Albert, without knowing why, started on hearing these words pronounced with an indefinable accent of pride and dignity ; it appeared to him as if there was something supernaturally gloomy and terrible in the expression which

gleamed from the brilliant eyes of Haydée at this moment, when like a Pythoness evoking a spectre, she revived the remembrance of that bloody figure to which his terrible death gave a gigantic appearance in the eyes of Europe.

“Soon,” said Haydée, “we halted on our march, and found ourselves on the borders of a lake. My mother pressed me to her throbbing heart, and at the distance of a few paces I saw my father, who was glancing anxiously around. Four marble steps led down to the water’s edge, and below them was a boat floating on the water. From where we stood I could see, in the middle of the lake, a large black mass ; it was the kiosk to which we were going. This kiosk appeared to me to be at a considerable distance, perhaps on account of the darkness of the night, which prevented any object from being more than partially discerned. We stepped into the boat. I remember well that the oars made no noise whatever in striking the water, and when I leaned over to ascertain the cause, I saw they were muffled with the sashes of our Palicares. Besides the rowers, the boat contained only the women, my father, mother, Selim, and myself. The Palicares had remained on the shore of the lake, ready to cover our retreat ; they were kneeling on the lowest of the marble steps, and in that manner intended making a rampart of the three others, in case of pursuit. Our boat flew before the wind. ‘Why does the boat go so fast ?’ asked I of my mother. ‘Silence, child ! Hush ! we are flying.’ I did not understand. Why should my father fly ? — he, the all-powerful ; he, before whom others were accustomed to fly ; he, who had taken for his device, ‘*They hate me, then they fear me !*’

“It was, indeed, a flight which my father was trying to effect. I have been told since that the garrison of the castle of Janina, fatigued with long service — ”

Here Haydée cast a significant glance at Monte Cristo, whose eyes had been riveted on her countenance during the whole course of her narrative. The young girl then continued, speaking slowly, like a person who is either inventing or suppressing some feature of the history which he is relating.

"You were saying, Signora," said Albert, who was paying close attention to the recital, "that the garrison of Janina, fatigued with long service — "

"Had treated with the Seraskier Kourchid, who had been sent by the sultan to gain possession of the person of my father; it was then that Ali Tebelin took the resolution of retiring, after having sent to the sultan a French officer in whom he reposed great confidence, to the asylum which he had long before prepared for himself, and which he called *kataphygion*, or the refuge."

"And this officer," asked Albert, "do you remember his name, Signora?"

Monte Cristo exchanged a rapid glance with the young girl, which was quite unperceived by Albert.

"No," said she, "I do not remeinder it just at this moment; but if it should occur to me presently, I will tell you."

Albert was on the point of pronouncing his father's name, when Monte Cristo gently held up his finger in token of reproach; the young man recollects his vow and was silent.

"It was towards this kiosk that we were rowing. A ground-floor, ornamented with arabesques, bathing its terraces in the water, and another floor, looking on the lake, was all which was visible to the eye. But beneath the ground-floor, stretching out into the island, was a large subterranean cavern, to which my mother, myself, and the women were conducted. In this place were sixty thousand purses and two hundred barrels; the purses

contained twenty-five millions of money in gold, and the barrels were filled with thirty thousand pounds of gunpowder.

“Near these barrels stood Selim, my father’s favorite, whom I mentioned to you just now. It was his duty to watch day and night a lance, at the end of which was a lighted match, and he had orders to blow up all, — kiosk, guards, women, gold, and Ali Tebelin himself, — at the first signal given by my father. I remember well that the slaves, convinced of the precarious tenure on which they held their lives, passed whole days and nights in praying, crying, and groaning. As for me, I can never forget the pale complexion and black eye of the young soldier ; and whenever the Angel of Death summons me to another world, I am quite sure that he will seem to me like Selim. I cannot tell you how long we remained in this state ; at that period I did not even know what time meant. Sometimes, but very rarely, my father summoned my mother and me to the terrace of the palace ; these were hours of recreation to me, who never saw anything in the dismal cavern but the gloomy countenances of the slaves and the fiery lance of Selim. My father, sitting before a large opening, searched with serious gaze the far horizon and examined attentively every black speck which appeared on the lake, while my mother, reclining by his side, rested her head on his shoulder, and I played at his feet, admiring, with that childish wonder which enlarges all objects, the heights of Pindus which stood out on the horizon, the castle of Janina rising white and angular from the blue waters of the lake, and the immense masses of dark verdure which, viewed in the distance, gave the idea of lichens clinging to the rocks, but which were in reality gigantic fir-trees and myrtles.

“One morning my father sent for us ; we found him

calm, but paler than usual. ‘Take courage, Vasiliki,’ said he ; ‘to-day arrives the firman of the master, and my fate will be decided. If my pardon be complete, we shall return triumphant to Janina ; if the news be inauspicious, we must fly this night.’ ‘But supposing our enemy should not allow us to do so ?’ said my mother. ‘Oh ! make yourself easy on that head,’ said Ali, smiling ; ‘Selim and his flaming lance will settle that matter. They would be glad to see me dead, but they would not like themselves to die with me.’

“My mother answered only by sighs to these consolations, which did not come from my father’s heart. She prepared the iced water which he was constantly drinking, for since his sojourn at the kiosk, he had been parched by the most violent fever ; she anointed his white beard with perfumed oil, and lighted his chibouque, which he sometimes smoked for hours together, quietly watching the wreaths of vapor, which, ascending in spiral clouds, gradually mixed itself with the surrounding atmosphere. Presently he made such a sudden movement that it frightened me. Then, without taking his eyes from the object which had first attracted his attention, he asked for his telescope. My mother gave it him, and as she did so, looked whiter than the marble against which she leaned. I saw my father’s hand tremble. ‘A boat ! — two ! three !’ murmured my father, ‘four !’ He then rose, seizing his arms and priming his pistols. ‘Vasiliki,’ said he to my mother, trembling perceptibly, ‘the instant approaches which will decide everything. In the space of half an hour we shall know the emperor’s answer. Go into the cavern with Haydée.’ ‘I will not quit you,’ said Vasiliki ; ‘if you die, my Lord, I will die with you.’ ‘Go to Selim !’ cried my father. ‘Adieu, my Lord !’ murmured my mother, obediently, and bowed as by the approach

of death. ‘Take away Vasiliki !’ said my father to his Palicares.

“As for me, I had been forgotten in the general confusion. I ran towards Ali Tebelin ; he saw me hold out my arms to him, and he stooped down and pressed my forehead with his lips. Oh, how distinctly I remember that kiss ! it was the last he ever gave me, and I feel as if it were still warm on my forehead. On descending, we distinguished through the lattice-work several boats which were gradually becoming more distinct to our view. At first they had appeared like black specks, and now they looked like birds skimming the surface of the waves. During this time, in the kiosk, at the feet of my father, were seated twenty Palicares, concealed from view by an angle of the wall, and watching with eager eyes the arrival of the boats ; they were armed with their long guns inlaid with mother-of-pearl and silver, and cartouches in great numbers were lying scattered on the floor. My father looked at his watch, and paced up and down with a countenance expressive of the greatest anguish. This was the scene which presented itself to my view when I quitted my father after that last kiss. My mother and I traversed the gloomy passage leading to the cavern. Selim was still at his post, and smiled sadly on us as we entered. We brought our cushions from the other end of the cavern and sat down by Selim. In great dangers the devoted ones cling to each other ; and young as I was, I quite understood that some imminent danger was hanging over our heads.”

Albert had often heard, not from his father, — for he never spoke on the subject, — but from strangers, the description of the last moments of the Vizier of Janina. He had read different accounts of his death, but this history seemed to borrow new life from the voice and expression

of the young girl ; the living accent and the melancholy expression of countenance at once charmed and horrified him. As to Haydée, these terrible reminiscences seemed to have overpowered her for the moment, for she ceased speaking, her head leaning on her hand like a beautiful flower bowing beneath the violence of the storm, and her eyes, gazing on vacancy, indicated that she was mentally contemplating the green summit of the Pindus and the blue waters of the Lake of Janina, which, like a magic mirror, seemed to reflect the sombre picture which she sketched. Monte Cristo looked at her with an indescribable expression of interest and pity.

"Go on, my dear," said the count, in the Romaic language.

Haydée looked up abruptly, as if the sonorous tones of Monte Cristo's voice had awakened her from a dream, and resumed her narrative. "It was about four o'clock in the afternoon ; and although the day was brilliant out of doors, we were enveloped in the gloomy darkness of the cavern. One solitary light was burning there ; and it appeared like a star set in a heaven of blackness, — it was Selim's flaming lance. My mother was a Christian, and she prayed. Selim repeated from time to time these sacred words, 'God is great !' However, my mother had still some hope. As she was coming down, she thought she recognized the French officer who had been sent to Constantinople, and in whom my father placed so much confidence, for he knew that all the soldiers of the French emperor were naturally noble and generous. She advanced some steps towards the staircase, and listened. 'They are approaching,' said she ; 'perhaps they bring us peace and liberty !' 'What do you fear, Vasiliki ?' said Selim, in a voice at once so gentle and yet so proud. 'If they do not bring us peace, we will give them war ; if they do

not bring life, we will give them death.' And he quickened the flame of his lance with a movement which gave him a resemblance to Dionysius of ancient Crete. But I, who was only a little child, was terrified by this undaunted courage, which appeared to me both ferocious and senseless ; and I recoiled with horror from that frightful death in the air and in the flame.

" My mother experienced the same sensations, for I perceived that she trembled. ' Mamma, Mamma,' said I, ' are we going to die ? ' And at the sound of my voice the slaves redoubled their prayers and lamentations. ' My child,' said Vasiliki, ' may God preserve you from ever wishing for that death which to-day you so much dread ! ' Then, whispering to Selim, she asked what were his master's orders. ' If he send me his poniard, it will signify that the emperor's intentions are not favorable, and I am to set fire to the powder ; if on the contrary he send me his ring, it will be a sign that the emperor pardons him, and I am to extinguish the match and leave the magazine untouched.' ' My friend,' said my mother, ' when your master's order arrives, if it is the poniard which he sends, instead of despatching us by that horrible death which we both so much dread, you will mercifully kill us with this same poniard, will you not ? ' ' Yes, Vasiliki,' replied Selim, tranquilly.

" Suddenly we heard loud cries ; we listened, — they were cries of joy. The name of the French officer who had been sent to Constantinople resounded on all sides among our Palicares ; it was evident that he brought the answer of the emperor, and that it was favorable."

" And do you not remember the Frenchman's name ? " said Morcerf, quite ready to aid the memory of the narrator. Monte Cristo made a sign to him to be silent.

" I do not recollect it," said Haydée, and continued :

"The noise increased, steps were heard approaching. Some one was descending the stairs leading to the cavern. Selim made ready his lance. Soon a figure appeared in the gray twilight at the entrance of the cave, formed by the reflection of the few rays of daylight which had found their way into this gloomy retreat. 'Who are you?' cried Selim. 'But whoever you may be, I charge you not to advance another step.' 'Long live the emperor!' said the figure. 'He grants a full pardon to the Vizier Ali, and not only gives him his life, but restores to him his fortune and his possessions.' My mother uttered a cry of joy and clasped me to her bosom. 'Stop!' said Selim, seeing that she was about to go out; 'you see I have not yet received the ring.' 'True,' said my mother. And she fell on her knees, at the same time holding me up towards heaven, as if she desired, while praying to God in my behalf, to lift me nearer to him."

And for the second time Haydée stopped, overcome by such violent emotion that the perspiration stood upon her pale brow; and her stifled voice seemed hardly able to find utterance, so parched and dry were her throat and lips. Monte Cristo poured a little iced water into a glass, and presented it to her, saying with a mildness in which was also a shade of command, "Courage." Haydée dried her eyes and continued:—

"By this time our eyes, habituated to the darkness, had recognized the messenger of the pacha,—it was a friend. Selim had also recognized him; but the brave young man knew but one duty,—to obey. 'In whose name do you come?' said he to him. 'I come in the name of our master, Ali Tebelin.' 'If you come from Ali himself,' said Selim, 'you know what you were charged to remit to me?' 'Yes,' said the messenger; 'and I bring you his ring.' At these words he raised his hand above his head

to show the token ; but it was too far off, and there was not light enough to enable Selim, where he was standing, to distinguish and recognize the object presented to his view. ‘I do not see what you have in your hand,’ said Selim. ‘Approach, then,’ said the messenger, ‘or I will come nearer to you, if you prefer it.’ ‘I will agree to neither one nor the other,’ replied the young soldier ; ‘place the object which I desire to see in the ray of light which shines there, and retire while I examine it.’ ‘Be it so,’ said the envoy ; and he retired, after having first deposited the token agreed on in the place pointed out to him by Selim.

“Oh, how our hearts palpitated ! for it did indeed seem to be a ring which was placed there. But was it my father’s ring ? Selim, still holding in his hand the lighted match, walked towards the opening in the cavern, and aided by the faint light which streamed in through the mouth of the cave, picked up the token. ‘It is well !’ said he, kissing it ; ‘it is my master’s ring !’ And throwing the match on the ground, he trampled on it and extinguished it. The messsenger uttered a cry of joy, and clapped his hands. At this signal four soldiers of the Seraskier Kourchid suddenly appeared, and Selim fell, pierced by five blows. Each man had stabbed him separately ; and intoxicated by their crime, though still pale with fear, they sought all over the cavern to discover if there was any fear of fire, after which they amused themselves by rolling on the bags of gold. At this moment my mother seized me in her arms, and bounding lightly along numerous turnings and windings known only to ourselves, she arrived at a private staircase of the kiosk, where was a scene of frightful tumult and confusion. The lower rooms were entirely filled with the Tchodoars of Kourchid ; that is to say, with our enemies. Just as my mother was

on the point of pushing open a small door, we heard the voice of the pacha sounding in a loud and threatening tone. My mother applied her eye to the crack between the boards ; I luckily found a small opening, which afforded me a view of the apartment and what was passing within. ‘ What do you want ? ’ said my father to some people who were holding a paper inscribed with characters of gold. ‘ What we want,’ replied one of them, ‘ is to communicate to you the will of his Highness. Do you see this firman ? ’ ‘ I do,’ said my father. ‘ Well, read it ; he demands your head.’

“ My father answered with a loud laugh, which was more frightful than threats would have been, and he had not ceased when two reports of pistols were heard ; he had fired them himself, and had killed two men. The Palicares, who were prostrated at my father’s feet, now sprang up and fired ; and the room was filled with fire and smoke. At the same instant the firing began on the other side, and the balls penetrated the boards all round us. Oh, how noble did the grand vizier, my father, look at that moment, in the midst of the balls, his cimeter in his hand, and his face blackened with the powder of his enemies ! and how he terrified them, even then, and made them fly before him ! ‘ Selim ! Selim ! ’ cried he, ‘ guardian of the fire, do your duty ! ’ ‘ Selim is dead ! ’ replied a voice which seemed to come from the depths of the earth, ‘ and you are lost, Ali ! ’ At the same moment an explosion was heard, and the flooring of the room was broken all around my father ; the Tchodoars were firing through the floor ; three or four Palicares fell with their bodies literally ploughed with wounds.

“ My father roared ; he plunged his fingers into the holes which the balls had made, and tore up one of the planks entire. But immediately through this opening

twenty more shots were fired ; and the flame, rushing up like fire from the crater of a volcano, soon gained the tapestry, which it quickly devoured. In the midst of all this frightful tumult and these terrific cries, two reports, fearfully distinct, followed by two shrieks more heart-rending than all, froze me with terror ; these two shots had mortally wounded my father, and it was he who had given utterance to these frightful cries. However, he remained standing, clinging to a window. My mother tried to force the door, that she might go and die with him, but it was fastened on the inside. All around him were lying the Palicares, writhing in convulsive agonies ; while two or three, who were only slightly wounded, were trying to escape by springing from the windows. At this crisis the whole flooring suddenly gave way. My father fell on one knee, and at the same moment twenty hands were thrust forth, armed with sabres, pistols, and poniards, twenty blows at once were directed against one man ; and my father disappeared in a whirlwind of fire and smoke kindled by these howling demons, and which seemed like hell itself opening beneath his feet. I felt myself fall to the ground ; my mother had fainted."

Haydée's arms fell by her side, and she uttered a deep groan, at the same time looking towards the count, as if to ask if he were satisfied with her obedience to his commands. Monte Cristo rose and approached her ; he took her hand, and said to her in Romaic, "Calm yourself, my dear child, and take courage in remembering that there is a God who will punish traitors."

"It is a frightful story, Count," said Albert, terrified at the paleness of Haydée's countenance ; "and I reproach myself now for having been so cruelly indiscreet."

"Oh, it is nothing !" said Monte Cristo. Then, placing his hand on the head of the young girl, he continued,

" Haydée is very courageous ; and she sometimes even finds consolation in the recital of her misfortunes."

" Because, my Lord," said Haydée, eagerly, " my miseries recall to me the remembrance of your goodness."

Albert looked at her with curiosity, for she had not yet related what he most desired to know ; namely, how she had become the slave of the count. Haydée saw the same desire expressed in the countenances of her two auditors ; she exclaimed, " When my mother recovered her senses we were before the seraskier. ' Kill me,' said she, ' but spare the honor of the widow of Ali.'

" It is not I to whom you must address yourself," said Kourchid.

" To whom, then ?"

" To your new master."

" Who and where is he ?"

" He is here."

" And Kourchid pointed out one of those who had most contributed to the death of my father," said Haydée, in a tone of chastened anger.

" Then," said Albert, " you became the property of this man ?"

" No," replied Haydée, " he did not dare to keep us ; so we were sold to some slave-merchants who were going to Constantinople. We traversed Greece, and arrived, half dead, at the imperial gates. They were surrounded by a crowd of people, who opened a way for us to pass, when suddenly my mother, having directed her eye to the object which was attracting their attention, uttered a piercing cry and fell to the ground, pointing, as she did so, to a head which was placed over the gates, and beneath which were inscribed these words, —

' THIS IS THE HEAD OF ALI TEBELIN, PACHA OF JANINA.'

"I cried bitterly, and tried to raise my mother from the earth, but she was dead! I was taken to the slave-market, and was purchased by a rich Armenian. He caused me to be instructed, gave me masters, and when I was thirteen years of age he sold me to the Sultan Mahmoud."

"Of whom I bought her," said Monte Cristo, "as I told you, Albert, with the emerald which formed a match to the one I had made into a box for the purpose of holding my pastilles of hashish."

"Oh! you are good, you are great, my Lord!" said Haydée, kissing the count's hand; "and I am very fortunate in belonging to such a master."

Albert remained quite bewildered with all that he had seen and heard. "Come, finish your cup of coffee," said Monte Cristo; "the history is ended."

CHAPTER XXVI.

NEWS FROM JANINA.

IF Valentine could have seen the trembling step and agitated countenance of Franz when he quitted the chamber of M. Noirtier, even she would have been constrained to pity him. Villefort had given utterance to a few incoherent sentences and then retired to his study, where he received about two hours afterwards the following letter : —

“ After the revelation made this morning, M. Noirtier de Villefort must see the impossibility of an alliance between his family and that of M. Franz d’Épinay. M. Franz d’Épinay is shocked and astonished that M. de Villefort, who appeared to know the events related this morning, has not anticipated him in this announcement.”

No one who had seen the magistrate at this moment, prostrated by the blow, could have believed that he had anticipated it; in fact, he had never thought that his father would carry candor, or rather rudeness, so far as to relate such a history. And in justice to Villefort it must be understood that M. Noirtier, who never cared for the opinion of his son on any subject, had always omitted to explain the affair to Villefort, so that he had all his life entertained the belief that the General de Quesnel, or the Baron d’Épinay, as he was alternately styled, according as the speaker wished to identify him by his own family name or by the title which had been conferred on him, fell the victim of assassination, and not that he was killed

fairly in a duel. This stern letter from a man until then so polite and respectful struck a mortal blow at the pride of Villefort.

Hardly had Villefort returned to his cabinet, when his wife entered. The sudden departure of Franz, after being summoned by M. Noirtier, had so much astonished every one that the position of Madame de Villefort, left alone with the notary and the witnesses, became every moment more embarrassing. Determined to bear it no longer, she rose and left the room, saying that she would go and make inquiries. M. de Villefort's communications on the subject were limited to the statement that an explanation had taken place between M. Noirtier, M. d'Épinay, and himself, and that the marriage of Valentine and Franz would consequently be broken off. This was an awkward and unpleasant thing to have to report to those who were awaiting her return. She therefore contented herself with saying that M. Noirtier having at the commencement of the discussion been attacked by a sort of apoplectic fit, the signing of the contract would be postponed for a few days. This news, false as it was, following so singularly in the train of two calamities of the same kind, evidently astonished the auditors, and they retired without a remark. During this time Valentine, at once terrified and happy, after having embraced and thanked the feeble old man for thus breaking with a single blow the chain which she had been accustomed to consider as indissoluble, had asked leave to retire to her own room in order to recover her composure; and Noirtier had granted by a sign the permission which she solicited. But instead of going to her own room, Valentine, having once gained her liberty, entered the gallery, and opening a small door at the end of it, found herself at once in the garden. In the midst of all the strange events which had crowded one

on the other, an indefinable sentiment of dread had taken possession of Valentine's mind. She expected every moment that she should see Morrel appear, pale and trembling, to forbid the signing of the contract, like the Laird of Ravenswood in "The Bride of Lammermoor." It was high time for her to make her appearance at the gate. Maximilian had conjectured what was intended when he saw Franz leave the cemetery with M. de Villefort. He had followed M. d'Épinay, had seen him enter, afterwards go out, and then re-enter with Albert and Château-Renaud. There was no longer any room for doubt. He had hastened to his garden-lot to await the event,—very certain that Valentine would hasten to him as soon as she should be set at liberty. He was not mistaken; looking through the crevices of the wooden partition, he saw the young girl, who, throwing aside all her usual precautions, hastened to the gate. The first glance which Maximilian directed towards her entirely reassured him; and the first words she pronounced made his heart bound with delight.

"We are saved!" said Valentine.

"Saved!" repeated Morrel, not being able to believe in such happiness; "by whom?"

"By my grandfather. Oh, Morrel! love him for all his goodness to us!"

Morrel swore to love him with all his soul; and the oath cost him no effort, for at that moment it was not enough for him to love Noirtier as a friend or as a father,—he adored him as a god.

"But tell me, Valentine, how has it all been effected? What strange means has he employed?"

Valentine was on the point of relating all that had passed; but she suddenly remembered that in doing so she must reveal a terrible secret which concerned others as

well as her grandfather, and she said, "At some future time I will tell you all about it."

"But when will that be?"

"When I am your wife."

The conversation had now turned to a topic so pleasing to Morrel that he was ready to accede to anything; he felt also that he might well be content with what he knew, and that it was enough for one day. However, he would not leave without Valentine's promise that he should see her the next day in the evening. Valentine promised all that Morrel required of her; and certainly it was less difficult now for her to believe that she should marry Maximilian than it was an hour ago to assure herself that she should not marry Franz.

During the time occupied by the interview we have just detailed, Madame de Villefort had gone to visit M. Noirtier. The old man looked at her with that stern and forbidding expression with which he was accustomed to receive her.

"Monsieur," said she, "it is superfluous for me to tell you that Valentine's marriage is broken off, since it was here that the rupture took place."

Noirtier's countenance remained immovable.

"But one thing I can tell you of which I do not think you are aware; that is, that I have always been opposed to this marriage, and that the contract was entered into entirely without my consent or approbation."

Noirtier regarded his daughter-in-law with the look of a man desiring an explanation.

"Now that this marriage, which I know you so much disliked, is done away with, I come to you with a request which neither M. de Villefort nor Valentine could properly make."

Noirtier's eyes asked what the request was.

"I come to entreat you, Monsieur," continued Madame de Villefort, "as the only one who has the right of doing so, inasmuch as I am the only one who will receive no personal benefit from the transaction,—I come to entreat you to restore, not your love, for that she has always possessed, but your fortune to your granddaughter."

There was a doubtful expression in Noirtier's eyes ; he was evidently trying to discover the motive of this proceeding, and he could not succeed in doing so.

"May I hope, Monsieur," said Madame de Villefort, "that your intentions accord with my request ?"

Noirtier made a sign that they did.

"In that case, Monsieur," rejoined Madame de Villefort, "I will withdraw, at the same time grateful and happy." She then bowed to M. Noirtier and retired.

The next day M. Noirtier sent for the notary ; the first will was torn up and a second made, in which he left the whole of his fortune to Valentine on condition that she should never be separated from him. It was then generally reported that Mademoiselle de Villefort, the heiress of the Marquis and Marquise de Saint-Méran, and restored to her grandfather's favor, would ultimately be in possession of an income of three hundred thousand livres.

While the dissolution of the marriage-contract was taking place at the house of M. de Villefort, the Comte de Morcerf had received Monte Cristo's visit ; and to show his consideration for Danglars, he put on his uniform of lieutenant-general, which he ornamented with all his crosses, and thus attired, ordered his finest horses and drove to the Rue de la Chaussée d'Antin. Danglars was balancing his monthly accounts, and it was not the most favorable moment for finding him in good humor. At the first sight of his old friend, Danglars assumed his majestic air and settled himself in his easy-chair. Morcerf,

usually so stiff and formal, accosted the banker in an affable and smiling manner ; and feeling sure that the overture he was about to make would be well received, omitting all diplomatic preliminaries, he went at once straight to the point.

" Well, Baron," said he, " here I am at last ; some time has elapsed since our plans were formed, and they are not yet executed."

Morcerf expected to see the face of the banker brighten at these words, having attributed his cold demeanor to his own silence ; but on the contrary, to his great surprise that face became still more stern and impassive.

" To what do you allude, Monsieur the Count ? " said Danglars, as if he were trying in vain to guess at the meaning of the general's words.

" Ah ! " said Morcerf ; " I see you are a stickler for forms, my dear monsieur, and you would remind me that the ceremonial rites should not be omitted. I beg your pardon, but as I have but one son, and it is the first time I have ever thought of marrying him, I am still serving my apprenticeship ; come, I will reform." And Morcerf, with a forced smile, rose, and making a low bow to M. Danglars, said, " Monsieur the Baron, I have the honor of asking of you the hand of Mademoiselle Eugénie Danglars for my son, Vicomte Albert de Morcerf."

But Danglars, instead of receiving this address in the favorable manner which Morcerf had expected, knit his brow, and without inviting the count, who was still standing, to take a seat, he said, " Monsieur the Count, it will be necessary to reflect before I give you an answer."

" To reflect ! " said M. de Morcerf, more and more astonished ; " have you not had enough time for reflection during the eight years which have elapsed since this marriage was first discussed between us ? "

"Monsieur the Count," said the banker, "things happen every day to make us revise conclusions which we had thought were settled."

"I do not understand you, Monsieur the Baron," said Morcerf.

"What I mean to say is this, Monsieur,—that during the last fortnight unforeseen circumstances have occurred—"

"Excuse me," said Morcerf; "but is it a play we are acting?"

"A play?"

"Yes, for it is like one; pray let us come more to the point, and endeavor to understand each other."

"That is quite my desire."

"You have seen M. de Monte Cristo, have you not?"

"I see him very often," said Danglars, drawing himself up; "he is a particular friend of mine."

"Well, in one of your late conversations with him you said that I appeared to be forgetful and irresolute concerning this marriage."

"I did say so."

"Well, here I am. I am neither forgetful nor irresolute, you see, since I come to remind you of your promise."

Danglars did not answer.

"Have you so soon changed your mind," added Morcerf, "or have you only provoked my request that you may have the pleasure of seeing me humiliated?"

Danglars, seeing that if he continued the conversation in the same tone in which he had begun it, the affair might take a form unfavorable to him, turned to Morcerf and said, "Monsieur the Count, you have a right to be surprised at my reserve,—I admit that,—and I assure you it costs me much to act in such a manner towards you; but believe me when I say that imperative necessity compels me."

"These are all empty words, my dear monsieur," said Morcerf. "They might satisfy a chance acquaintance, but the Comte de Morcerf is not a chance acquaintance ; and when a man like him comes to another, recalls to him his plighted word, and this man fails to redeem the pledge, he has at least a right to exact from him a good reason for so doing."

Danglars was a coward, but did not wish to appear so ; he was piqued at the tone which Morcerf had just assumed. "I am not without a good reason for my conduct," he replied.

"What do you mean to say ?"

"I mean to say that I have a good reason, but that it is difficult to explain."

"You must be aware, at all events, that I am not satisfied with your reticence ; but one thing at least is clear, — that you decline allying yourself with my family."

"No, Monsieur," said Danglars ; "I suspend my decision, that is all."

"And do you really flatter yourself that I shall yield to all your caprices, and quietly and humbly await the time when I may be restored to your favor ?"

"Then, Monsieur the Count, if you will not wait, we must look upon these projects as if they had never been entertained."

The count bit his lips till the blood started, to prevent the ebullition of anger which his proud and irritable temper scarcely allowed him to restrain. Understanding, however, that in the present state of things the laugh would decidedly be against him, he had already taken some steps towards the door of the salon, when on second thought he returned. A cloud passed over his brow, leaving there, in place of offended pride, the traces of a vague uneasiness. "My dear Danglars," said he, "we have been acquainted for

many years, and consequently we ought to make some allowance for each other's failings. You owe me an explanation ; and really it is but fair that I should know what circumstance has occurred to deprive my son of your favor."

"It is from no personal ill-feeling towards the viscount ; that is all I can say, Monsieur," replied Danglars, who resumed his insolent manner as soon as he perceived that Morcerf was a little softened and calmed down.

"And towards whom do you bear this personal ill-feeling, then ?" said Morcerf, in an altered tone, and turning pale.

The expression of the count's face had not remained unperceived by the banker ; he fixed on him a look of greater assurance than before, and said, "You may perhaps be better satisfied that I should not go farther into particulars."

A nervous trembling, caused, doubtless, by suppressed rage, shook the frame of the count ; making a violent effort over himself, he said, "I have a right to insist on your giving me an explanation. Is it Madame de Morcerf who has displeased you ? Is it my fortune which you find insufficient ? Is it because my opinions differ from yours ?"

"Nothing of the kind, Monsieur," replied Danglars ; "if such had been the case, I only should have been to blame, inasmuch as I was aware of all these things when I made the engagement. No, do not seek any longer to discover the reason. I really am quite ashamed to have been the cause of your undergoing such severe self-examination ; let us drop the subject, and adopt the middle course, — namely, delay, which implies neither a rupture nor an engagement. There is no hurry. My daughter is only seventeen years old, and your son twenty-one. While we wait, time will go on, bringing a succes-

sion of events. Things which in the evening look dark and obscure appear but too clearly in the light of morning ; and sometimes in a single day the most cruel calumnies fall to the ground."

"Calumnies, did you say, Monsieur ?" cried Morcerf, turning livid. "Does any one dare to slander me ?"

"Monsieur the Count, I told you that I considered it best to avoid all explanation."

"Then, Monsieur, I am patiently to submit to your refusal ?"

"It is especially painful to me, Monsieur, — yes, more painful to me than to you ; for I had reckoned on the honor of your alliance, and the breaking off of a marriage-contract always injures the lady more than the gentleman."

"Enough, Monsieur," said Morcerf, "we will speak no more on the subject." And clinching his gloves with passion, he left the apartment.

Danglars remarked that during the whole conversation Morcerf had never once dared to ask if it was on his own account that Danglars recalled his word.

That evening there was a long conference between several friends ; and M. Cavalcanti, who had remained in the drawing-room with the ladies, was the last to leave the house of the banker.

The next morning as soon as he awoke, Danglars asked for the newspapers. They were brought to him. He laid aside three or four, and took up "L' Impartial ;" it was the paper of which Beauchamp was the chief editor. He hastily tore off the cover, opened the journal with nervous precipitation, passed contemptuously over *le premier Paris*, and arriving at the miscellaneous intelligence, stopped with a malicious smile at a paragraph beginning, "A correspondent writes from Janina." "Very good !"

observed Danglars, after having read the paragraph ; “here is a little article on Colonel Fernand, which, if I am not mistaken, will relieve me of explanations to the Comte de Morcerf.”

At the same moment, — that is, at nine o’clock in the morning, — Albert de Morcerf, dressed in a black coat carefully buttoned, with an agitated manner and abrupt speech presented himself at Monte Cristo’s house in the Champs Elysées, and upon inquiring for the count was informed by the porter that his Excellency had gone out about half an hour previously.

“Did he take Baptistin with him ?”

“No, Monsieur the Viscount.”

“Call him, then ; I wish to speak to him.”

The concierge went to seek the *valet de chambre*, and returned with him in an instant.

“My good friend,” said Albert, “I beg pardon for my intrusion ; but I was anxious to know from your own mouth if your master was really out.”

“He is really out, Monsieur,” replied Baptistin.

“Out, even to me ?”

“I know how happy my master always is to receive Monsieur the Viscount,” said Baptistin ; “and I should therefore never think of including him in any general order.”

“You are right ; and now I wish to see him on an affair of great importance. Do you think it will be long before he returns ?”

“No, I think not, for he ordered his breakfast at ten o’clock.”

“Well, I will go and take a turn in the Champs Elysées, and at ten o’clock I will return here ; meanwhile, if Monsieur the Count should come in, will you beg him not to go out again without seeing me ?”

" You may depend on my doing so, Monsieur," said Baptistin.

Albert left the *fiacre* in which he had come standing at the door of the count, intending to take a turn on foot. As he was passing the Allée des Veuves, he thought he saw the count's horses standing at Gosset's shooting-gallery ; he approached, and recognized the coachman. " Is Monsieur the Count shooting in the gallery ? " said Morcerf.

" Yes, Monsieur," replied the coachman.

While he was speaking, Albert had heard the report of two or three pistol-shots. He entered, and on his way met the waiter. " Excuse me, Monsieur the Viscount," said the lad ; " but will you have the kindness to wait a moment ? "

" What for, Philippe ? " asked Albert, who, being a constant visitor there, did not understand this opposition to his entrance.

" Because the person who is now in the gallery prefers being alone, and never practises in the presence of any one."

" Not even before you, Philippe ? Then who loads his pistol ? "

" His servant."

" A Nubian ? "

" A negro."

" It is he, then."

" Do you know this gentleman ? "

" Yes, and I am come to look for him ; he is a friend of mine."

" Oh ! that is quite another thing, then. I will go immediately and inform him of your arrival." And Philippe, urged by his own curiosity, entered the gallery ; a second afterwards Monte Cristo appeared on the threshold.

" I ask your pardon, my dear count," said Albert, " for following you here ; and I must first tell you that it was not the fault of your servants that I did so, I alone am

to blame for the indiscretion. I went to your house, and they told me you were out, but that you would return at ten o'clock for breakfast. I was walking about to pass away the time till ten o'clock, when I caught sight of your carriage and horses."

"What you have just said induces me to hope that you intend breakfasting with me."

"No, thank you, I am thinking of other things besides breakfast just now; perhaps we may take that meal at a later hour and in worse company."

"What on earth are you talking of?"

"I am to fight to-day."

"You? and what for?"

"I am going to fight —"

"Yes, I understand that; but what is the quarrel? People fight for all sorts of reasons, you know."

"I fight in the cause of honor."

"Ah! that is something serious."

"So serious that I come to beg you to render me a service."

"What is it?"

"To be my second."

"That is a serious matter, and we will not discuss it here; let us speak of nothing till we get home. Ali, bring me some water."

The count turned up his sleeves, and passed into the little vestibule where the gentlemen were accustomed to wash their hands after shooting.

"Come in, Monsieur the Viscount," said Philippe, in a low tone, "and I will show you something droll." Morcerf entered, and instead of the usual mark, he perceived some playing-cards fixed against the wall. At a distance Albert thought it was a complete suit, for he counted from the ace to the ten.

"Ah ! ah !" said Albert, "I see you were preparing for a game of cards."

"No," said the count, "I was making a suit of cards."

"How is that ?" said Albert.

"Those are really aces and twos which you see, but my balls have turned them into threes, fives, sevens, eights, nines, and tens."

Albert approached. In fact, the balls had actually pierced the cards in the exact places which the painted signs would otherwise have occupied, the lines and distances being as exact as if they had been ruled. On his way to the target Morcerf picked up, besides, two or three swallows which had been so imprudent as to fly within pistol-shot of the count, and which the count had killed.

"The devil !" said Morcerf.

"What would you have, my dear viscount ?" said Monte Cristo, wiping his hands on the towel which Ali had brought him ; "I must occupy my leisure moments. But come, I am waiting for you."

Both then entered Monte Cristo's chariot, which in the course of a few minutes deposited them at No. 30. Monte Cristo took Albert into his study, and pointing to a seat, placed another for himself. "Now let us talk the matter over calmly," said he.

"You see that I am quite calm," said Albert.

"With whom are you going to fight ?"

"With Beauchamp."

"Is he one of your friends ?"

"Of course ; it is always with friends that one fights."

"I suppose you have some cause of quarrel ?"

"I have !"

"What has he done to you ?"

"There appeared in his journal last night — but wait,

read for yourself." And Albert handed over the paper to the count, who read as follows : —

" A correspondent writes from Janina : ' A fact hitherto unknown, or at least not published, has come to our knowledge. The castle which formed the protection of the town was given up to the Turks by a French officer named Fernand, in whom the grand vizier, Ali Tebelin, had reposed the greatest confidence.' "

" Well ! " said Monte Cristo ; " what do you see in that to annoy you ? "

" What do I see in it ? "

" Yes ; what does it signify to you if the castle of Janina was given up by a French officer ? "

" It signifies that my father, the Comte de Morcerf, is Fernand by his baptismal name."

" Did your father serve Ali Pacha ? "

" Yes ; that is to say, he fought for the independence of the Greeks, and hence arises the calumny."

" Oh, my dear viscount, do talk reason ! "

" I do not desire to do otherwise."

" Now, just tell me who the devil should know in France that the officer Fernand and the Comte de Morcerf are one and the same person ; and who cares now about Janina, which was taken as long ago as the year 1822 or 1823 ? "

" That shows the blackness of the perfidy ; they have allowed all this time to elapse, and then all of a sudden rake up events which have been forgotten, to furnish materials for scandal, in order to tarnish the lustre of our high position. I inherit my father's name, and I do not choose that the shadow of disgrace should darken it. I am going to Beauchamp, in whose journal this paragraph appears, and I shall insist on his retracting the assertion before two witnesses."

"Beauchamp will never retract."

"Then we will fight."

"No, you will not; for he will tell you, what is very true, that perhaps there were fifty officers in the Greek army who were named Fernand."

"We will fight, nevertheless. I will efface that blot on my father's character. My father, who was such a brave soldier, whose career was so brilliant — "

"Oh, well, he will add, 'We are warranted in believing that this Fernand is not the illustrious Comte de Morcerf, who also bears the same Christian name.'"

"I am determined not to be content with anything short of an entire retraction."

"And you intend to make him do it in the presence of two witnesses, do you ?"

"Yes."

"You do wrong."

"Which means, I suppose, that you refuse the service which I asked of you ?"

"You know my theory regarding duels; I told you my opinion on that subject, if you remember, when we were at Rome."

"Nevertheless, my dear count, I found you this morning engaged in an occupation but little consistent with the notions you profess to entertain."

"Because, my dear fellow, you understand one must never be eccentric. If one's lot is cast among fools, it is necessary to study folly. I shall perhaps find myself one day called out by some hare-brained scamp who has no more real cause of quarrel with me than you have with Beauchamp. He may take me to task for some foolish trifles or other; he will send me his seconds, or will insult me in some public place, — well, I shall have to kill that hot-headed fellow."

“ You admit that you would fight, then ? ”

“ Of course.”

“ Well, if so, why do you object to my fighting ? ”

“ I do not say that you ought not to fight ; I only say that a duel is a serious thing, and ought not to be undertaken without due reflection.”

“ Did he reflect before he insulted my father ? ”

“ If he acted hastily, and owns that he did so, you ought to be satisfied.”

“ Ah, my dear count, you are far too indulgent.”

“ And you far too exacting. Supposing, for instance, and do not be angry at what I am going to say — ”

“ Well ! ”

“ Supposing the assertion to be really true ? ”

“ A son ought not to admit such a supposition against his father’s honor.”

“ Eh ! good heavens ! we live in an age when one has to admit so many things ! ”

“ That is precisely the fault of the age.”

“ And do you undertake to reform it ? ”

“ Yes, as far as I am personally concerned.”

“ Well ! you are indeed rigid, my dear fellow ! ”

“ I know I am.”

“ Are you quite impervious to good advice ? ”

“ Not when it comes from a friend.”

“ And do you accord me that title ? ”

“ Certainly I do.”

“ Well, then, before going to Beauchamp with your witnesses, seek further information on the subject.”

“ From whom ? ”

“ From Haydée, for example.”

“ Why, what can be the use of mixing a woman up in the affair ; what can she do in it ? ”

“ She can declare to you, for example, that your father

had no hand whatever in the defeat and death of the vizier ; or if by chance he had, indeed, the misfortune to — ”

“ I have already told you, my dear count, that I would not for one moment admit such a supposition.”

“ You reject this means of information, then ? ”

“ I do, most decidedly.”

“ Then let me offer one more word of advice.”

“ Do so, then, but let it be the last.”

“ You do not wish to hear it, perhaps ? ”

“ On the contrary, I request it.”

“ Do not take any witnesses with you when you go to Beauchamp ; visit him alone.”

“ That would be contrary to all custom.”

“ Your case is not an ordinary one.”

“ And what is your reason for advising me to go alone ? ”

“ Because then the affair will rest between you and Beauchamp.”

“ Explain yourself.”

“ I will do so. If Beauchamp be disposed to retract, you ought at least to give him the opportunity of doing it of his own free will, — the satisfaction to you will be the same ; if on the contrary he refuses to do so, it will then be quite time enough to admit two strangers into your secret.”

“ They will not be strangers ; they will be friends.”

“ Ah, but the friends of to-day are the enemies of to-morrow, — Beauchamp, for instance.”

“ So you recommend — ”

“ I recommend you to be prudent.”

“ Then you advise me to go alone to Beauchamp ? ”

“ I do, and I will tell you why. When you wish to obtain some concession from a man’s self-love, you must avoid even the appearance of wishing to wound it.”

“I believe you are right.”

“Ah ! that is very fortunate.”

“Then I will go alone.”

“Go ; but you would do better still by not going at all.”

“That is impossible.”

“Do so, then ; it will be better, at any rate, than what you first proposed.”

“But if in spite of all my precautions, I am at last obliged to fight, will you not be my second ?”

“My dear viscount,” said Monte Cristo, gravely, “you must have seen before to-day that at all times and in all places I have been at your disposal ; but the service which you have just demanded of me is one which it is out of my power to render you.”

“Why ?”

“Perhaps you may know at some future period, and in the mean time, I ask your indulgence for my secret.”

“Well, I will have Franz and Château-Renaud ; they will be the very men for it.”

“Do so, then.”

“But if I do fight, you will surely not object to giving me a lesson or two in shooting and fencing ?”

“That, too, is impossible.”

“What a singular being you are ! — you will not interfere in anything.”

“You are right, — that is the principle on which I wish to act.”

“We will say no more about it, then. Good-by, Count.”

Morcerf took his hat, and left the room. He found his chariot at the door, and doing his utmost to restrain his anger, he drove at once to Beauchamp’s house. Beauchamp was in his office. It was one of those gloomy dusty-looking apartments, such as journalists’ offices have always been from time immemorial. The servant an-

nounced M. Albert de Morcerf. Beauchamp made him repeat the name, and still hardly convinced, he called out, "Come in!" Albert entered. Beauchamp uttered an exclamation of surprise on seeing his friend leap over and trample under foot the newspapers which were strewed about the room. "Here! here! my dear Albert!" said he, holding out his hand to the young man. "What in the devil is the matter with you? Are you out of your senses, or do you come simply to take breakfast with me? Try to find a seat; there is one by that geranium, which is the only thing in the room to remind me that there are other leaves in the world besides leaves of paper."

"Beauchamp," said Albert, "it is of your journal that I come to speak."

"You, Morcerf? what do you wish to say about it?"

"I desire that a statement contained in it should be rectified."

"To what do you allude? But sit down."

"Thank you," said Albert, with a cold and formal bow.

"Will you now have the kindness to explain the nature of the statement which has displeased you?"

"An announcement has been made which touches the honor of a member of my family."

"What is it?" said Beauchamp, much surprised.
"Surely you must be mistaken."

"The statement written to you from Janina."

"From Janina?"

"Yes; really you appear totally ignorant of the occasion which brings me here."

"Upon my honor! Baptiste, give me yesterday's paper," cried Beauchamp.

"Here, I have brought mine with me," replied Albert. Beauchamp took the paper, and read in an undertone, "A correspondent writes from Janina," etc.

" You see it is a serious annoyance," said Morcerf, when Beauchamp had finished.

" Is the officer alluded to a relation of yours, then ? " demanded the journalist.

" Yes," said Albert, blushing.

" Well, what do you wish me to do for you ? " said Beauchamp, mildly.

" My dear Beauchamp, I wish you to contradict this statement."

Beauchamp looked at Albert with an expression full of kindness. " Come," said he, " this matter will want a good deal of talking over ; a retraction is always a serious thing, you know. Sit down, and I will read it again."

Albert resumed his seat, and Beauchamp read, with more attention than at first, the lines denounced by his friend.

" Well," said Albert, in a determined tone, " you see that your paper has insulted a member of my family ; and I insist on a retraction."

" You — insist ? "

" Yes, I insist."

" Permit me to remind you that you are not parliamentary, my dear viscount."

" Nor do I wish to be," replied the young man, rising. " I repeat that I am determined to have the announcement of yesterday contradicted. You have known me long enough," continued Albert, with pressed lips, for he saw that Beauchamp raised his head disdainfully, — " you have been my friend, and are therefore sufficiently intimate with me to be aware that I am likely to maintain my resolution on this point."

" If I have been your friend, Morcerf, your present manner of speaking would almost lead me to forget that I ever bore that title. But wait a moment, do not let

us get angry, or at least not yet. You are irritated and vexed ; tell me how this Fernand is related to you ? ”

“ He is my father,” said Albert,— “ M. Fernand Mondégo, Comte de Morcerf, an old soldier, who has fought in twenty battles, and whose honorable scars they would cover with mud from the gutter.”

“ Is it your father ? ” said Beauchamp ; “ that is quite another thing. I can well understand your indignation, my dear Albert. I will read it again ; ” and he read the paragraph for the third time, weighing every word. “ But the paper nowhere identifies this Fernand with your father.”

“ No ; but the connection will be seen by others, and therefore I will have the statement contradicted.”

At the words “ I will,” Beauchamp steadily raised his eyes to Albert’s countenance, and then as gradually lowering them, he remained thoughtful for a moment.

“ You will retract this assertion, will you not, Beauchamp ? ” said Albert, with increased though stifled anger.

“ Yes,” replied Beauchamp.

“ Immediately ? ” said Albert.

“ When I am convinced that the statement is false.”

“ What ? ”

“ The matter is worth investigating, and I will investigate it.”

“ But what is there to investigate, Monsieur ? ” said Albert, enraged beyond measure. “ If you do not believe that it is my father, say so immediately ; if you believe it is he, state your reasons for doing so.”

Beauchamp looked at Albert with the smile which was peculiar to him, and which in its numerous modifications served to express every varied feeling of his mind. “ Monsieur,” replied he, “ if you came to me with the idea of

demanding satisfaction, you should have gone at once to the point and not have entertained me with the idle conversation to which I have been patiently listening for the last half-hour. Am I to put this construction on your visit ? ”

“ Yes, if you will not consent to retract that infamous calumny.”

“ Wait a moment ; no threats, if you please, M. Fernand de Mondego, Vicomte de Morcerf ! I never allow them from my enemies, and am less likely to put up with them from my friends. You insist on my contradicting the item relating to Colonel Fernand, — an item with which, I assure you on my word of honor, I have had nothing to do ? ”

“ Yes, I insist on it ! ” said Albert, whose mind was beginning to get bewildered with the excitement of his feelings.

“ And if I refuse to retract, you wish to fight, do you ? ” said Beauchamp, in a calm tone.

“ Yes ! ” replied Albert, raising his voice.

“ Well,” said Beauchamp, “ here is my answer, my dear monsieur. The statement was not inserted by me, — I was not even aware of it ; but you have, by the step you have taken, called my attention to the paragraph in question, and it will remain until it shall be either contradicted or confirmed by sufficient authority.”

“ Monsieur,” said Albert, rising, “ I will do myself the honor of sending my seconds to you, and you will be kind enough to arrange with them the place of meeting and the arms which we are to use. Do you understand me ? ”

“ Certainly, my dear monsieur.”

“ And this evening, if you please, or to-morrow at the latest, we will meet.”

“ No, no ! I will be on the ground at the proper time ;

but in my opinion (and I have a right to dictate the preliminaries, as it is I who have received the provocation), — in my opinion the time has not yet come. I know you to be well skilled in the management of the sword, while I am only moderately so; I know too that you are a good marksman, — there we are about equal. I know that a duel between us two would be a serious affair, because you are brave, and I am brave also. I do not wish either to kill you, or to be killed myself, without a cause. Now, I am going to put a question to you, in my turn. Do you insist on this retraction so far as to kill me if I do not make it, although I have repeated more than once, and affirmed on my honor, that I was ignorant of the thing with which you charge me, and although I still declare that it is impossible for any one but you to recognize the Comte de Morcerf under the name of Fernand?"

"I maintain my original resolution."

"Very well, my dear monsieur; then I consent to cut throats with you. But I require three weeks' preparation; at the end of that time I shall come and say to you, 'The assertion is false, and I retract it,' or 'The assertion is true,' when I shall immediately draw the sword from its sheath, or the pistols from the case, whichever you please."

"Three weeks!" cried Albert; "they will be as three centuries while I suffer dishonor."

"Had you continued to be my friend, I should have said, 'Patience, my friend; ' but you have constituted yourself my enemy, therefore I say, 'What does that signify to me, Monsieur?'"

"Well, let it be three weeks, then," said Morcerf; "but remember, at the expiration of that time no further delay or subterfuge will enable you to avoid —"

"M. Albert de Morcerf," said Beauchamp, rising in his turn, "I cannot throw you out of the window for three

weeks to come,—that is to say, for twenty-four days,—nor have you any right to split my skull open till that time has elapsed. To-day is the 29th of August; the 21st of September will therefore be the conclusion of the term agreed on, and till that time arrives— and it is the advice of a gentleman which I am about to give you— till then we will refrain from growling and barking like two dogs chained within sight of each other."

When he had concluded this speech, Beauchamp bowed coldly to Albert, turned his back upon him, and retired to his printing-office. Albert vented his anger on a pile of newspapers, which he sent flying all over the room by switching them violently with his stick; after which ebullition he departed,—not, however, without walking several times to the door of the printing-office, as if he had half a mind to enter it.

While Albert was lashing the front of his chariot as he had lashed the newspapers which were the innocent agents of his discomfiture, while crossing the boulevard, he perceived Morrel, who was walking with a quick step and a bright eye. He was passing the Chinese Baths, and appeared to have come from the direction of the Porte St. Martin, and to be going towards the Magdalen. "Ah," said Morcerf, "there goes a happy man!" And Albert was not mistaken in his opinion.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE LEMONADE.

MORREL was, in fact, very happy. M. Noirtier had just sent for him; and he was in such haste to know the reason of his doing so that he had not stopped to take a *fiacre*, placing more dependence on his own two legs than on the four legs of a cab-horse. He had therefore set off at a furious rate from the Rue Meslay, in the direction of the Faubourg St. Honoré. Morrel advanced at the pace of an athlete, and poor Barrois followed him as he best might. Morrel was thirty-one, Barrois was sixty years of age; Morrel was intoxicated with love, and Barrois was enfeebled by the great heat. These two men, thus divided in age and interests, resembled two sides of a triangle, — separated at the base they met at the apex. The apex was Noirtier, who had just sent for Morrel with the request that he would lose no time in coming to him, — a command which Morrel obeyed to the letter, to the great discomfiture of Barrois. On arriving at the house, Morrel was not even out of breath, — for love lends wings; but Barrois, who had long forgotten what it was to love, was covered with perspiration.

The old servant introduced Morrel by a private entrance, closed the door of the cabinet, and soon the rustling of a dress announced the arrival of Valentine. She was marvellously beautiful in her deep mourning dress, and Morrel experienced such delight in gazing upon her that he could almost have dispensed with the conversation of her grand-

father. But the easy-chair of the old man was heard rolling along the floor, and he soon made his appearance in the room. Noirtier acknowledged by a look of kindness the thanks which Morrel lavished on him for his timely intervention on behalf of Valentine and himself,—an intervention which had saved them from despair. Morrel then cast on the young girl an interrogative look as to the new favor which was accorded to him. Valentine was sitting at a little distance from them, timidly awaiting the moment when she should be obliged to speak. Noirtier fixed his eyes on her. “Am I to say what you told me?” asked Valentine. Noirtier in his turn looked at her.

“You wish me, then, to say what you have told me to?” she asked.

“Yes,” intimated Noirtier.

“M. Morrel,” said Valentine to the young man, who was regarding her with intense interest, “my grandfather, M. Noirtier, had a thousand things to say, which he told me three days ago; and now he has sent for you, that I may repeat them to you. I will repeat them, then; and since he has chosen me as his interpreter, I will be faithful to the trust, and will not alter a word of his intentions.”

“Oh, I am listening with the greatest impatience,” replied the young man: “speak, I beg of you!”

Valentine cast down her eyes; this was a good omen for Morrel, for he knew that nothing but happiness could have the power of thus overcoming Valentine. “My grandfather intends leaving this house,” said she; “and Barrois is looking out suitable apartments for him in another.”

“But you, Mademoiselle,” said Morrel,—“you who are so necessary to M. Noirtier’s happiness—”

“I?” interrupted Valentine; “I shall not leave my grandfather, that is an understood thing between us. My

apartment will be close to his. Now, M. de Villefort must give either his consent to this plan or his refusal. In the first case, I shall leave directly ; and in the second, I shall await my majority, which will arrive in about ten months. Then I shall be free ; I shall have an independent fortune, and — ”

“ And — ? ” demanded Morrel.

“ And with my grandfather’s consent I shall fulfil the promise which I have made you.” Valentine pronounced these few last words in such a low tone that nothing but Morrel’s intense interest in what she was saying could have enabled him to hear them.

“ Have I not explained your wishes, Grandpapa ? ” said Valentine, addressing Noirtier.

“ Yes,” signified the old man.

“ Once under my grandfather’s roof, M. Morrel can visit me in the presence of my good and worthy protector, if we still feel that the union we contemplated will be likely to insure our future comfort and happiness ; in that case I shall expect M. Morrel to come and claim me at my own hands. But, alas ! I have heard it said that hearts inflamed by obstacles to their desire grow cold in time of security.”

“ Oh ! ” cried Morrel, tempted to throw himself on his knees before Noirtier as before God, before Valentine as before an angel, “ what have I ever done in my life to merit so much happiness ? ”

“ Until that time,” continued the young girl, in a calm and self-possessed tone of voice, “ we will respect the proprieties, and be guided by the wishes of our friends, so long as those wishes do not tend finally to separate us ; in one word, and I repeat it because it expresses everything, — we will wait.”

“ And I swear to make all the sacrifices which this word

imposes, Monsieur," said Morrel, "not only with resignation but with cheerfulness."

"Therefore," continued Valentine, looking playfully at Maximilian, "no more inconsiderate actions, no more rash projects; for you surely would not wish to compromise her who from this day regards herself as destined honorably and happily to bear your name?"

Morrel placed his hand upon his heart. Noirtier regarded the lovers with a look of ineffable tenderness, while Barrois, who had remained in the room in the character of a man privileged to know everything that passed, smiled on the youthful couple as he wiped the perspiration from his bald forehead.

"How hot you look, my good Barrois!" observed Valentine.

"Ah! I have been running very fast, Mademoiselle; but I must do M. Morrel the justice to say that he ran still faster."

Noirtier directed their attention to a tray, on which was placed a decanter containing lemonade, and a glass. The decanter was nearly full, lacking only a small quantity which had been already drunk by M. Noirtier.

"Come, Barrois," said the young girl, "take some of this lemonade; I see you are coveting a good draught of it."

"The fact is, Mademoiselle," said Barrois, "I am dying with thirst; and since you are so kind as to offer it to me, I cannot say I should at all object to drinking your health in a glass of it."

"Take some, then, and come back immediately."

Barrois took away the tray, and hardly was he outside the door, which, in his haste, he forgot to shut, when they saw him throw back his head and empty the glass which Valentine had filled.

Valentine and Morrel were exchanging their adieux in the presence of Noirtier when a ring was heard at the doorbell. It was the signal of a visit. Valentine looked at her watch.

"It is past noon," said she, "and to-day is Saturday; I dare say it is the doctor, Grandpapa."

Noirtier indicated his conviction that she was right in her supposition.

"He will come in here, and M. Morrel had better go; do you not think so, Grandpapa?"

"Yes," signed the old man.

"Barrois!" cried Valentine, "Barrois!"

"I am coming, Mademoiselle," replied he.

"Barrois will open the door for you," said Valentine, addressing Morrel. "And now remember one thing, Monsieur the Officer, that my grandfather commands you not to take any rash or ill-advised step which might compromise our happiness."

"I promised him to wait," replied Morrel; "and I will wait."

At this moment Barrois entered.

"Who rang?" asked Valentine.

"Dr. d'Avrigny," said Barrois, staggering as if he would fall.

"What is the matter, Barrois?" said Valentine.

The old man did not answer, but looked at his master with wild staring eyes, while with his cramped hand he grasped a piece of furniture to enable him to stand upright.

"Why, he is going to fall!" cried Morrel.

The trembling which had attacked Barrois gradually increased, the features of the face became quite altered, and the convulsive movement of the muscles indicated the approach of a most serious nervous disorder. Noirtier,

seeing Barrois in this pitiable condition, showed by his looks all the various emotions of sorrow and sympathy which can animate the heart of man. Barrois made some steps towards his master.

"Ah, my God! my God! what is the matter with me?" he said. "I suffer! I cannot see! A thousand fiery darts are piercing my brain! Oh, don't touch me, don't touch me!"

By this time his eyes had become haggard and protruding; his head fell back, and the rest of the body began to stiffen.

Valentine uttered a cry of horror; Morrel took her in his arms, as if to defend her from some unknown danger. "M. d'Avrigny! M. d'Avrigny!" cried she, in a stifled voice. "Help! help!"

Barrois turned round, and with a great effort stumbled a few steps, then fell at the feet of Noirtier, and resting his hand on the knee of the invalid, exclaimed, "My master! my good master!"

At this moment M. de Villefort, attracted by the noise, appeared on the threshold. Morrel relaxed his hold of Valentine, almost fainting, and retreating to a distant corner of the room, he remained half-hidden behind a curtain. Pale as if he had seen a serpent spring up before him, he fixed his astonished gaze on the unhappy sufferer.

Noirtier, burning with impatience and terror, was in despair at his utter inability to help his old domestic, whom he regarded more in the light of a friend than a servant. One might trace the terrible conflict which was going on between the living, energetic mind and the inanimate and helpless body, by the fearful swelling of the veins of his forehead and the contraction of the muscles around the eye. Barrois, his features convulsed, his eyes suffused with blood, and his head thrown back, was lying

at full length, beating the floor with his hands, while his legs were become so stiff that they looked as if they would break rather than bend. A slight appearance of foam was visible round the mouth, and he breathed painfully.

Villefort, stupefied, remained a moment gazing intently on the scene before him. He had not seen Morrel. After a moment of dumb contemplation, during which his face became pale, and his hair seemed to stand on end, he sprang towards the door, crying out, "Doctor! Doctor! come! come!"

"Madame! Madame!" cried Valentine, calling her step-mother, and running upstairs to meet her; "come quick, quick! and bring your bottle of smelling-salts with you."

"What is the matter?" said Madame de Villefort, in a hard and constrained tone.

"Oh! come! come!"

"But where is the doctor?" exclaimed Villefort; "where is he?"

Madame de Villefort now deliberately descended the staircase. In one hand she held her handkerchief, with which she appeared to be wiping her face, and in the other a bottle of English smelling-salts. Her first look on entering the room was at Noirtier, whose face, independently of the emotion which such a scene could not fail of producing, proclaimed him to be in possession of his usual health; her second glance was at the dying man. She turned pale, and her glance rebounded, so to speak, from the servant to the master.

"In the name of Heaven, Madame," said Villefort, "where is the doctor? He was with you just now. You see this is a fit of apoplexy, and he might be saved if he could but be bled!"

"Has he eaten anything lately?" asked Madame de Villefort, evading the question.

"Madame," replied Valentine, "he has not even break-fasted. He has been running very fast on an errand with which my grandfather charged him, and when he returned he took nothing but a glass of lemonade."

"Ah!" said Madame de Villefort; "why did he not take wine? Lemonade was a very bad thing for him."

"Grandpapa's bottle of lemonade was standing just by his side; poor Barrois was very thirsty, and was thankful to drink anything he could find."

Madame de Villefort started. Noirtier looked at her with a glance of searching scrutiny. "He has such a short neck," said she.

"Madame," said M. de Villefort, "I ask where is M. d'Avrigny? In God's name, answer me!"

"He is with Édouard, who is not quite well," replied Madame de Villefort, no longer able to avoid answering.

Villefort rushed upstairs to summon him himself.

"Take this," said Madame de Villefort, giving her smelling-bottle to Valentine. "They will, no doubt, bleed him; therefore I will retire, for I cannot endure the sight of blood;" and she followed her husband upstairs.

Morrel now emerged from his hiding-place, where he had remained quite unperceived, so great had been the general confusion.

"Go away as quick as you can, Maximilian," said Valentine, "and stay till I send for you. Go."

Morrel looked towards Noirtier for permission to retire. The old man, who had preserved all his self-possession, made a sign to him to do so. The young man pressed Valentine's hand to his lips, and then left the house by a back staircase. At the same moment that he quitted the room Villefort and the doctor came in by an opposite entrance. Barrois was now showing signs of returning con-

sciousness ; the crisis seemed past ; a low moaning was heard, and he raised himself on one knee. D'Avrigny and Villefort laid him on a couch.

" What do you prescribe, Doctor ? " demanded Villefort.

" Give me some water and ether. You have some in the house, have you not ? "

" Yes."

" Send for some oil of turpentine and tartar emetic."

Villefort immediately despatched a messenger.

" And now let every one retire."

" Must I go too ? " asked Valentine, timidly.

" Yes, Mademoiselle, you especially," replied the doctor, abruptly.

Valentine looked at M. d'Avrigny with astonishment, kissed her grandfather on the forehead, and left the room. The doctor closed the door after her with a gloomy air.

" Look ! look ! Doctor," said Villefort, " he is coming round again ; after all, it is nothing of consequence."

M. d'Avrigny answered by a melancholy smile. " How do you find yourself, Barrois ? " asked he.

" A little better, Monsieur."

" Will you drink some of this ether and water ? "

" I will try ; but don't touch me."

" Why not ? "

" Because I feel that if you were only to touch me with the tip of your finger the fit would return."

" Drink."

Barrois took the glass, and raising it to his purple lips, took about half of the liquid offered him.

" Where do you suffer ? " asked the doctor.

" Everywhere ; I feel cramp over my whole body."

" Do you find any dazzling sensation before the eyes ? "

" Yes."

" Any noise in the ears ? "

"Frightful."

"When did you first feel that?"

"Just now."

"Suddenly?"

"Yes, like a clap of thunder."

"Did you feel nothing of it yesterday or the day before?"

"Nothing."

"No drowsiness?"

"None."

"What have you eaten to-day.

"I have eaten nothing; I only drank a glass of my master's lemonade;" and Barrois turned towards Noirtier, who, immovably fixed in his armchair, was contemplating this terrible scene without allowing a word or a movement to escape him.

"Where is this lemonade?" asked the doctor, eagerly.

"Downstairs in the decanter."

"Whereabouts downstairs?"

"In the kitchen."

"Shall I go and fetch it, Doctor?" inquired Villefort.

"No, stay here, and try to make Barrois drink the rest of this glass of ether and water. I will go myself and fetch the lemonade."

D'Avrigny bounded towards the door, flew down the back staircase, and almost knocked down Madame de Villefort in his haste, who was herself going down to the kitchen. She uttered a cry; D'Avrigny paid no attention to her. Possessed with but one idea, he cleared the last four steps with a bound, and rushed into the kitchen, where he saw the decanter about three parts empty still standing on the tray where it had been left. He darted upon it as an eagle would seize upon its prey. Panting with loss of breath, he returned to the room he had just left. Madame

de Villefort was slowly ascending the steps which led to her room.

"Is this the decanter you spoke of?" asked D'Avrigny.

"Yes, Doctor."

"Is this the same lemonade of which you partook?"

"I believe so."

"What did it taste like?"

"It had a bitter taste."

The doctor poured some drops of the lemonade into the palm of his hand, put his lips to it, and after having rinsed his mouth as a man does when he is tasting wine, he spit the liquor into the fireplace.

"It is no doubt the same," said he; "did you drink some too, M. Noirtier?"

"Yes."

"And did you also discover a bitter taste?"

"Yes."

"Oh, Doctor!" cried Barrois, "the fit is coming on again! My God! Lord, have pity on me!"

The doctor flew to his patient. "That emetic, Villefort; see if it is coming."

Villefort sprang into the passage, exclaiming, "The emetic! the emetic! is it come yet?"

No one answered. The most profound terror reigned throughout the house.

"If I had anything by means of which I could inflate the lungs," said D'Avrigny, looking around him, "perhaps I might prevent suffocation. But there is nothing which would do! — nothing!"

"Oh, Monsieur," cried Barrois, "are you going to let me die without help? Oh, I am dying! My God! I am dying!"

"A quill! a quill!" said the doctor. There was one lying on the table; he endeavored to introduce it into the

mouth of the patient, who in the midst of his convulsions was making vain attempts to vomit ; but the jaws were so clinched that the quill could not pass them. This second attack was much more violent than the first, and he had slipped from the couch to the ground, where he was writhing in agony. The doctor left him in this paroxysm, knowing that he could do nothing to alleviate it, and going up to Noirtier, said abruptly, in a low voice, "How do you find yourself ? well ?"

"Yes."

"Have you any weight on the chest, or does your stomach feel light and comfortable, eh ?"

"Yes."

"Then you feel pretty much as you generally do after you have had the dose which I am accustomed to give you every Sunday ?"

"Yes."

"Did Barrois make your lemonade ?"

"Yes."

"Was it you who asked him to drink some of it ?"

"No."

"Was it M. de Villefort ?"

"No."

"Madame ?"

"No."

"It was your granddaughter, then, was it not ?"

"Yes."

A groan from Barrois, accompanied by a yawn which seemed to crack the very jawbones, attracted the attention of M. d'Avrigny ; he left M. Noirtier and returned to the sick man. "Barrois," said he, "can you speak ?" Barrois muttered a few unintelligible words. "Try and make an effort to do so, my good man," said D'Avrigny. Barrois reopened his bloodshot eyes.

"Who made the lemonade?"

"I did."

"Did you bring it to your master as soon as it was made?"

"No."

"You left it somewhere, then, in the mean time?"

"Yes; I left it in the pantry because I was called away."

"Who brought it into this room, then?"

"Mademoiselle Valentine."

D'Avrigny struck his forehead with his hand. "Gracious Heaven!" he murmured.

"Doctor! Doctor!" cried Barrois, who felt another fit coming.

"Will they never bring that emetic?" asked the doctor.

"Here is a glass with one already prepared," said Villefort, entering the room.

"Who prepared it?"

"The chemist who came here with me."

"Drink it," said the doctor to Barrois.

"Impossible, Doctor; it is too late. My throat is closing up! I am choking! Oh, my heart! Oh, my head! Oh, what agony! Shall I suffer like this long?"

"No, no, friend," replied the doctor, "you will soon cease to suffer."

"Ah, I understand you," said the unhappy man. "My God, have mercy upon me!" and uttering a fearful cry, Barrois fell back as if he had been struck by lightning. D'Avrigny put his hand to his heart, and placed a glass before his lips.

"Well?" said Villefort.

"Go to the kitchen and get me some syrup of violets."

Villefort went immediately.

"Do not be alarmed, M. Noirtier," said D'Avrigny; "I

am going to take my patient into the next room to bleed him ; this sort of attack is very frightful to witness."

And taking Barrois under the arms, he dragged him into an adjoining room ; but almost immediately he returned for the remainder of the lemonade. Noirtier closed his right eye. " You want Valentine, do you not ? I will tell them to send her to you."

Villefort returned, and D'Avrigny met him in the passage. " Well ! how is he now ?" asked he.

" Come in here," said D'Avrigny ; and he took him into the chamber where Barrois lay.

" Is he still in a fit ?" said the *procureur du roi*.

" He is dead."

Villefort drew back a few steps, and clasping his hands, exclaimed with unfeigned commiseration, " Dead ! and so suddenly ! "

" Yes, it is very sudden, is it not ?" said the doctor. " But that ought not to astonish you ; Monsieur and Madame de Saint-Méran died as suddenly. People die very suddenly in your house, M. de Villefort."

" What !" cried the magistrate, with an accent of horror and consternation, " you return to that terrible idea ? "

" Always, Monsieur, always," said D'Avrigny, with solemnity, " for it has never for one instant ceased to retain possession of my mind ; and that you may be quite sure I am not mistaken this time, listen well to what I am going to say, M. de Villefort." The magistrate trembled convulsively. " There is a poison which destroys life almost without leaving any perceptible traces. I know it well ; I have studied it in all its qualities and in the effects which it produces. I recognized the presence of this poison in the case of poor Barrois as well as in that of Madame de Saint-Méran. There is a way of detecting its presence. It restores the blue color of litmus-paper red-

dened by an acid, and it turns syrup of violets green. We have no litmus-paper, but, hark ! here they come with the syrup of violets."

The doctor was right ; steps were heard in the passage. M. d'Avrigny opened the door and took from the hands of the *femme de chambre* a cup which contained two or three spoonfuls of the syrup ; he then carefully closed the door. "Look !" said he to the *procureur du roi*, whose heart beat so loudly that it might almost be heard ; "here is in this cup some syrup of violets, and this decanter contains the remainder of the lemonade of which M. Noirtier and Barrois partook. If the lemonade be pure and inoffensive, the syrup will keep its color ; if on the contrary the lemonade be drugged with poison, the syrup will become green. Look !"

The doctor then slowly poured some drops of the lemonade from the decanter into the cup, and immediately a light, cloudy sediment began to form at the bottom of the cup ; this sediment first took a blue shade, then from the color of sapphire it passed to that of opal, and from opal to emerald. Arrived at this last hue, it changed no more. The result of the experiment left no room for doubt.

"The unfortunate Barrois has been poisoned by false angustura and Ignatius beans ;" said D'Avrigny ; "and I will maintain this assertion before God and man."

Villefort said nothing, but he clasped his hands, opened his haggard eyes, and overcome with his emotion sank into a chair.

END OF VOL. III.





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