'Edmond, you will not kill my son!'

The count retreated a step, uttered a slight exclamation, and let fall the pistol he held.

'What name did you pronounce then, Madame de Morcerf?' said he.

'Yours!' cried she, throwing back her veil,—'yours, which I alone, perhaps, have not forgotten. Edmond, it is not Madame de Morcerf who is come to you, it is Mercédès.'

'Mercédès is dead, madame,' said Monte Cristo; 'I know no one now of that name.'

'Mercédès lives, sir, and she remembers, for she alone recognized you when she saw you, and even before she saw you, by your voice, Edmond,—by the simple sound of your voice; and from that moment she has followed your steps, watched you, feared you, and she needs not to inquire what hand has dealt the blow which now strikes M. de Morcerf.'

'Fernand, do you mean?' replied Monte Cristo, with bitter irony; 'since we are recalling names, let us remember them all.' Monte Cristo had pronounced the name of Fernand with such an expression of hatred that Mercédès felt a thrill of horror run through every vein.

'You see, Edmond, I am not mistaken, and have cause to say, "Spare my son!"'

'And who told you, madame, that I have any hostile intentions against your son?'

'No one, in truth; but a mother has twofold sight. I guessed all; I followed him this evening to the Opera, and, concealed in a parquet box, have seen all.'

'If you have seen all, madame, you know that the son of Fernand has publicly insulted me,' said Monte Cristo with awful calmness.

'Oh, for pity's sake!'

'You have seen that he would have thrown his glove in my face if Morrel, one of my friends, had not stopped him.'

'Listen to me, my son has also guessed who you are,—he attributes his father's misfortunes to you.'

'Madame, you are mistaken, they are not misfortunes,—it is a punishment. It is not I who strike M. de Morcerf; it is Providence which punishes him.'

'And why do you represent Providence?' cried Mercédès. 'Why do you remember when it forgets? What are Yanina and its vizier to you, Edmond? What injury has Fernand Mondego done you in betraying Ali Tepelini?'

'Ah, madame,' replied Monte Cristo, 'all this is an affair between the French captain and the daughter of Vasiliki. It does not concern me, you are right; and if I have sworn to revenge myself, it is not on the French captain, or the Count of Morcerf, but on the fisherman Fernand, the husband of Mercédès the Catalane.'

'Ah, sir!' cried the countess, 'how terrible a vengeance for a fault which fatality made me commit!—for I am the only culprit, Edmond, and if you owe revenge to anyone, it is to me, who had not fortitude to bear your absence and my solitude.'

'But,' exclaimed Monte Cristo, 'why was I absent? And why were you alone?'

'Because you had been arrested, Edmond, and were a prisoner.'

'And why was I arrested? Why was I a prisoner?'

'I do not know,' said Mercédès.

'You do not, madame; at least, I hope not. But I will tell you. I was arrested and became a prisoner because, under the arbour of La Réserve, the day before I was to marry you, a man named Danglars wrote this letter, which the fisherman Fernand himself posted.'

Monte Cristo went to a secretaire, opened a drawer by a spring, from which he took a paper which had lost its original colour, and the ink of which had become of a rusty hue—this he placed in the hands of Mercédès. It was Danglars' letter to the king's attorney, which the Count of Monte Cristo, disguised as a clerk from the house of Thomson & French, had taken from the file against Edmond Dantès, on the day he had paid the two hundred thousand francs to M. de Boville. Mercédès read with terror the following lines:

> The king's attorney is informed by a friend to the throne and religion that one Edmond Dantès, second in command on board the *Pharaon*, this day arrived from Smyrna, after having touched at Naples and Porto-Ferrajo, is the bearer of a letter from Murat to the usurper, and of another letter from the usurper to the Bonapartist club in Paris. Ample corroboration of this statement

> may be obtained by arresting the above-mentioned Edmond Dantès, who either carries the letter for Paris about with him, or has it at his father's abode. Should it not be found in possession of either father or son, then it will assuredly be discovered in the cabin belonging to the said Dantès on board the *Pharaon*.

'How dreadful!' said Mercédès, passing her hand across her brow, moist with perspiration; 'and that letter— '

'I bought it for two hundred thousand francs, madame,' said Monte Cristo; 'but that is a trifle, since it enables me to justify myself to you.'

'And the result of that letter— '

'You well know, madame, was my arrest; but you do not know how long that arrest lasted. You do not know that I remained for fourteen years within a quarter of a league of you, in a dungeon in the Château d'If. You do not know that every day of those fourteen years I renewed the vow of vengeance which I had made the first day; and yet I was not aware that you had married Fernand, my calumniator, and that my father had died of hunger!'

'Can it be?' cried Mercédès, shuddering.

'That is what I heard on leaving my prison fourteen years after I had entered it; and that is why, on account of the living Mercédès and my deceased father, I have sworn to revenge myself on Fernand, and—I have revenged myself.'

'And you are sure the unhappy Fernand did that?'

'I am satisfied, madame, that he did what I have told you; besides, that is not much more odious than that a Frenchman by adoption should pass over to the English; that a Spaniard by birth should have fought against the Spaniards; that a stipendiary of Ali should have betrayed and murdered Ali. Compared with such things, what is the letter you have just read?—a lover's deception, which the woman who has married that man ought certainly to forgive; but not so the lover who was to have married her. Well, the French did not avenge themselves on the traitor, the Spaniards did not shoot the traitor, Ali in his tomb left the traitor unpunished; but I, betrayed, sacrificed, buried, have risen from my tomb, by the grace of God, to punish that man. He sends me for that purpose, and here I am.'

The poor woman's head and arms fell; her legs bent under her, and she fell on her knees.

Chapter LXXXIX

The Night

MONTE Cristo waited, according to his usual custom, until Duprez had sung his famous '*Suivez-moi!*' then he rose and went out. Morrel took leave of him at the door, renewing his promise to be with him the next morning at seven o'clock, and to bring Emmanuel. Then he stepped into his *coupé*, calm and smiling, and was at home in five minutes. No one who knew the count could mistake his expression when, on entering, he said:

'Ali, bring me my pistols with the ivory cross.'

Ali brought the box to his master, who examined the weapons with a solicitude very natural to a man who is about to intrust his life to a little powder and shot. These were pistols of an especial pattern, which Monte Cristo had had made for target practice in his own room. A cap was sufficient to drive out the bullet, and from the adjoining room no one would have suspected that the count was, as sportsmen would say, keeping his hand in.

He was just taking one up and looking for the point to aim at on a little iron plate which served him as a target, when his study door opened, and Baptistin entered. Before he had spoken a word, the count saw in the next room a veiled woman, who had followed closely after Baptistin, and now, seeing the count with a pistol in his hand and swords on the table, rushed in. Baptistin looked at his master, who made a sign to him, and he went out, closing the door after him.

'Who are you, madame?' said the count to the veiled woman. The stranger cast one look around her, to be certain that they were quite alone; then bending as if she would have knelt, and joining her hands, she said with an accent of despair:

'We will.'

'Hush, the curtain is rising. Listen! I never lose a note of this opera if I can avoid it; the music of *William Tell* is so sweet.'

'Forgive, Edmond, forgive for my sake, who love you still!'

The dignity of the wife checked the fervour of the lover and the mother. Her forehead almost touched the carpet, when the count sprang forward and raised her. Then seated on a chair, she looked at the manly countenance of Monte Cristo, on which grief and hatred still impressed a threatening expression.

'Not crush that accursed race?' murmured he; 'abandon my purpose at the moment of its accomplishment? Impossible, madame, impossible!'

'Edmond,' said the poor mother, who tried every means, 'when I call you Edmond, why do you not call me Mercédès?'

'Mercédès!' repeated Monte Cristo; 'Mercédès! Well yes, you are right; that name has still its charms, and this is the first time for a long period that I have pronounced it so distinctly. Oh, Mercédès, I have uttered your name with the sigh of melancholy, with the groan of sorrow, with the last effort of despair; I have uttered it when frozen with cold, crouched on the straw in my dungeon; I have uttered it, consumed with heat, rolling on the stone floor of my prison. Mercédès, I must revenge myself, for I suffered fourteen years,—fourteen years I wept, I cursed; now I tell you, Mercédès, I must revenge myself.'

The count, fearing to yield to the entreaties of her he had so ardently loved, called his sufferings to the assistance of his hatred.

'Revenge yourself, then, Edmond,' cried the poor mother; 'but let your vengeance fall on the culprits,—on him, on me, but not on my son!'

'It is written in the good book,' said Monte Cristo, 'that the sins of the fathers shall fall upon their children to the third and fourth generation. Since God himself dictated those words to his prophet, why should I seek to make myself better than God?'

'Edmond,' continued Mercédès, with her arms extended towards the count, 'since I first knew you, I have adored your name, have respected your memory. Edmond, my friend, do not compel me to tarnish that noble and pure image reflected incessantly on the mirror of my heart. Edmond, if you knew all the prayers I have addressed to God for you while I thought you were living and since I have thought you must be dead! Yes, dead, alas! I imagined your dead body buried at the foot of some gloomy tower, or cast to the bottom of a pit by hateful jailers, and I wept! What could I do for you, Edmond, besides pray and weep? Listen; for ten years I dreamed each night the same dream. I had been told that you had endeavoured to escape; that you had taken the place of

another prisoner; that you had slipped into the winding sheet of a dead body; that you had been thrown alive from the top of the Château d'If, and that the cry you uttered as you dashed upon the rocks first revealed to your jailers that they were your murderers. Well, Edmond, I swear to you, by the head of that son for whom I entreat your pity,—Edmond, for ten years I saw every night every detail of that frightful tragedy, and for ten years I heard every night the cry which awoke me, shuddering and cold. And I, too, Edmond—oh! believe me—guilty as I was—oh, yes, I, too, have suffered much!'

'Have you known what it is to have your father starve to death in your absence?' cried Monte Cristo, thrusting his hands into his hair; 'have you seen the woman you loved giving her hand to your rival, while you were perishing at the bottom of a dungeon?'

'No,' interrupted Mercédès, 'but I have seen him whom I loved on the point of murdering my son.'

Mercédès uttered these words with such deep anguish, with an accent of such intense despair, that Monte Cristo could not restrain a sob. The lion was daunted; the avenger was conquered.

'What do you ask of me?' said he,—'your son's life? Well, he shall live!'

Mercédès uttered a cry which made the tears start from Monte Cristo's eyes; but these tears disappeared almost instantaneously, for, doubtless, God had sent some angel to collect them—far more precious were they in his eyes than the richest pearls of Guzerat and Ophir.

'Oh,' said she, seizing the count's hand and raising it to her lips; 'oh, thank you, thank you, Edmond! Now you are exactly what I dreamt you were,—the man I always loved. Oh, now I may say so!'

'So much the better,' replied Monte Cristo; 'as that poor Edmond will not have long to be loved by you. Death is about to return to the tomb, the phantom to retire in darkness.'

'What do you say, Edmond?'

'I say, since you command me, Mercédès, I must die.'

'Die? and why so? Who talks of dying? Whence have you these ideas of death?'

'You do not suppose that, publicly outraged in the face of a whole theatre, in the presence of your friends and those of your son—challenged by a boy who will glory in my forgiveness as if it were a victory—you do not suppose

sword or pistol, in the colonies with the carbine, in Arabia with the dagger. Tell your client that, although I am the insulted party, in order to carry out my eccentricity, I leave him the choice of arms, and will accept without discussion, without dispute, anything, even combat by drawing lots, which is always stupid, but with me different from other people, as I am sure to gain.'

'Sure to gain!' repeated Beauchamp, looking with amazement at the count.

'Certainly,' said Monte Cristo, slightly shrugging his shoulders; 'otherwise I would not fight with M. de Morcerf. I shall kill him—I cannot help it. Only by a single line this evening at my house let me know the arms and the hour; I do not like to be kept waiting.'

'Pistols, then, at eight o'clock, in the Bois de Vincennes,' said Beauchamp, quite disconcerted, not knowing if he was dealing with an arrogant braggadocio or a supernatural being.

'Very well, sir,' said Monte Cristo. 'Now all that is settled, do let me see the performance, and tell your friend Albert not to come any more this evening; he will hurt himself with all his ill-chosen barbarisms: let him go home and go to sleep.'

Beauchamp left the box, perfectly amazed.

'Now,' said Monte Cristo, turning towards Morrel, 'I may depend upon you, may I not?'

'Certainly,' said Morrel, 'I am at your service, count; still— '

'What?'

'It is desirable I should know the real cause.'

'That is to say, you would rather not?'

'No.'

'The young man himself is acting blindfolded, and knows not the true cause, which is known only to God and to me; but I give you my word, Morrel, that God, who does know it, will be on our side.'

'Enough,' said Morrel; 'who is your second witness?'

'I know no one in Paris, Morrel, on whom I could confer that honour besides you and your brother Emmanuel. Do you think Emmanuel would oblige me?'

'I will answer for him, count.'

'Well? that is all I require. Tomorrow morning, at seven o'clock, you will be with me, will you not?'

said Monte Cristo, as if this was the first time he had seen the journalist that evening; 'be seated.'

Beauchamp bowed, and, sitting down, 'Sir,' said he, 'I just now accompanied M. de Morcerf, as you saw.'

'And that means,' replied Monte Cristo, laughing, 'that you had, probably, just dined together. I am happy to see, M. Beauchamp, that you are more sober than he was.'

'Sir,' said M. Beauchamp, 'Albert was wrong, I acknowledge, to betray so much anger, and I come, on my own account, to apologize for him. And having done so, entirely on my own account, be it understood, I would add that I believe you too gentlemanly to refuse giving him some explanation concerning your connection with Yanina. Then I will add two words about the young Greek girl.'

Monte Cristo motioned him to be silent. 'Come,' said he, laughing, 'there are all my hopes about to be destroyed.'

'How so?' asked Beauchamp.

'Doubtless you wish to make me appear a very eccentric character. I am, in your opinion, a Lara, a Manfred, a Lord Ruthven; then, just as I am arriving at the climax, you defeat your own end, and seek to make an ordinary man of me. You bring me down to your own level, and demand explanations! Indeed, M. Beauchamp, it is quite laughable.'

'Yet,' replied Beauchamp haughtily, 'there are occasions when probity commands— '

'M. Beauchamp,' interposed this strange man, 'the Count of Monte Cristo bows to none but the Count of Monte Cristo himself. Say no more, I entreat you. I do what I please, M. Beauchamp, and it is always well done.'

'Sir,' replied the young man, 'honest men are not to be paid with such coin. I require honourable guaranties.'

'I am, sir, a living guaranty,' replied Monte Cristo, motionless, but with a threatening look; 'we have both blood in our veins which we wish to shed—that is our mutual guaranty. Tell the viscount so, and that tomorrow, before ten o'clock, I shall see what colour his is.'

'Then I have only to make arrangements for the duel,' said Beauchamp.

'It is quite immaterial to me,' said Monte Cristo, 'and it was very unnecessary to disturb me at the Opera for such a trifle. In France people fight with the

that I can for one moment wish to live. What I most loved after you, Mercédès, was myself, my dignity, and that strength which rendered me superior to other men; that strength was my life. With one word you have crushed it, and I die.'

'But the duel will not take place, Edmond, since you forgive?'

'It will take place,' said Monte Cristo, in a most solemn tone; 'but instead of your son's blood to stain the ground, mine will flow.'

Mercédès shrieked, and sprang towards Monte Cristo, but, suddenly stopping, 'Edmond,' said she, 'there is a God above us, since you live and since I have seen you again; I trust to him from my heart. While waiting his assistance I trust to your word; you have said that my son should live, have you not?'

'Yes, madame, he shall live,' said Monte Cristo, surprised that without more emotion Mercédès had accepted the heroic sacrifice he made for her. Mercédès extended her hand to the count.

'Edmond,' said she, and her eyes were wet with tears while looking at him to whom she spoke, 'how noble it is of you, how great the action you have just performed, how sublime to have taken pity on a poor woman who appealed to you with every chance against her, Alas, I am grown old with grief more than with years, and cannot now remind my Edmond by a smile, or by a look, of that Mercédès whom he once spent so many hours in contemplating. Ah, believe me, Edmond, as I told you, I too have suffered much; I repeat, it is melancholy to pass one's life without having one joy to recall, without preserving a single hope; but that proves that all is not yet over. No, it is not finished; I feel it by what remains in my heart. Oh, I repeat it, Edmond; what you have just done is beautiful—it is grand; it is sublime.'

'Do you say so now, Mercédès?—then what would you say if you knew the extent of the sacrifice I make to you? Suppose that the Supreme Being, after having created the world and fertilized chaos, had paused in the work to spare an angel the tears that might one day flow for mortal sins from her immortal eyes; suppose that when everything was in readiness and the moment had come for God to look upon his work and see that it was good—suppose he had snuffed out the sun and tossed the world back into eternal night—then—even then, Mercédès, you could not imagine what I lose in sacrificing my life at this moment.'

Mercédès looked at the count in a way which expressed at the same time her astonishment, her admiration, and her gratitude. Monte Cristo pressed

his forehead on his burning hands, as if his brain could no longer bear alone the weight of its thoughts.

'Edmond,' said Mercédès, 'I have but one word more to say to you.'

The count smiled bitterly.

'Edmond,' continued she, 'you will see that if my face is pale, if my eyes are dull, if my beauty is gone; if Mercédès, in short, no longer resembles her former self in her features, you will see that her heart is still the same. Adieu, then, Edmond; I have nothing more to ask of heaven—I have seen you again, and have found you as noble and as great as formerly you were. Adieu, Edmond, adieu, and thank you.'

But the count did not answer. Mercédès opened the door of the study and had disappeared before he had recovered from the painful and profound reverie into which his thwarted vengeance had plunged him.

The clock of the Invalides struck one when the carriage which conveyed Madame de Morcerf rolled away on the pavement of the Champs-Élysées, and made Monte Cristo raise his head.

'What a fool I was,' said he, 'not to tear my heart out on the day when I resolved to avenge myself!'

'The Count of Morcerf's adventure exasperates the young man.'

'Have you anything to do with it?'

'It was through Haydée that the Chamber was informed of his father's treason.'

'Indeed?' said Morrel. 'I had been told, but would not credit it, that the Grecian slave I have seen with you here in this very box was the daughter of Ali Pasha.'

'It is true, nevertheless.'

'Then,' said Morrel, 'I understand it all, and this scene was premeditated.'

'How so?'

'Yes. Albert wrote to request me to come to the Opera, doubtless that I might be a witness to the insult he meant to offer you.'

'Probably,' said Monte Cristo with his imperturbable tranquillity.

'But what shall you do with him?'

'With whom?'

'With Albert.'

'What shall I do with Albert? As certainly, Maximilian, as I now press your hand, I shall kill him before ten o'clock tomorrow morning.' Morrel, in his turn, took Monte Cristo's hand in both of his, and he shuddered to feel how cold and steady it was.

'Ah, count,' said he, 'his father loves him so much!'

'Do not speak to me of that,' said Monte Cristo, with the first movement of anger he had betrayed; 'I will make him suffer.'

Morrel, amazed, let fall Monte Cristo's hand. 'Count, count!' said he.

'Dear Maximilian,' interrupted the count, 'listen how adorably Duprez is singing that line,—

> O Mathilde! idole de mon âme!'

'I was the first to discover Duprez at Naples, and the first to applaud him. Bravo, bravo!'

Morrel saw it was useless to say more, and refrained. The curtain, which had risen at the close of the scene with Albert, again fell, and a rap was heard at the door.

'Come in,' said Monte Cristo with a voice that betrayed not the least emotion; and immediately Beauchamp appeared. 'Good-evening, M. Beauchamp,'

In pronouncing these words Albert had raised his voice so as to be heard by those in the adjoining boxes and in the lobby. Thus the attention of many was attracted by this altercation.

'Where are you come from, sir?' said Monte Cristo 'You do not appear to be in the possession of your senses.'

'Provided I understand your perfidy, sir, and succeed in making you understand that I will be revenged, I shall be reasonable enough,' said Albert furiously.

'I do not understand you, sir,' replied Monte Cristo; 'and if I did, your tone is too high. I am at home here, and I alone have a right to raise my voice above another's. Leave the box, sir!'

Monte Cristo pointed towards the door with the most commanding dignity.

'Ah, I shall know how to make you leave your home!' replied Albert, clasping in his convulsed grasp the glove, which Monte Cristo did not lose sight of.

'Well, well,' said Monte Cristo quietly, 'I see you wish to quarrel with me; but I would give you one piece of advice, which you will do well to keep in mind. It is in poor taste to make a display of a challenge. Display is not becoming to everyone, M. de Morcerf.'

At this name a murmur of astonishment passed around the group of spectators of this scene. They had talked of no one but Morcerf the whole day. Albert understood the allusion in a moment, and was about to throw his glove at the count, when Morrel seized his hand, while Beauchamp and Château-Renaud, fearing the scene would surpass the limits of a challenge, held him back. But Monte Cristo, without rising, and leaning forward in his chair, merely stretched out his arm and, taking the damp, crushed glove from the clenched hand of the young man:

'Sir,' said he in a solemn tone, 'I consider your glove thrown, and will return it to you wrapped around a bullet. Now leave me or I will summon my servants to throw you out at the door.'

Wild, almost unconscious, and with eyes inflamed, Albert stepped back, and Morrel closed the door. Monte Cristo took up his glass again as if nothing had happened; his face was like marble, and his heart was like bronze. Morrel whispered, 'What have you done to him?'

'I? Nothing—at least personally,' said Monte Cristo.

'But there must be some cause for this strange scene.'

Chapter XC

The Meeting

AFTER Mercédès had left Monte Cristo, he fell into profound gloom. Around him and within him the flight of thought seemed to have stopped; his energetic mind slumbered, as the body does after extreme fatigue.

'What?' said he to himself, while the lamp and the wax lights were nearly burnt out, and the servants were waiting impatiently in the anteroom; 'what? this edifice which I have been so long preparing, which I have reared with so much care and toil, is to be crushed by a single touch, a word, a breath! Yes, this self, of whom I thought so much, of whom I was so proud, who had appeared so worthless in the dungeons of the Château d'If, and whom I had succeeded in making so great, will be but a lump of clay tomorrow. Alas, it is not the death of the body I regret; for is not the destruction of the vital principle, the repose to which everything is tending, to which every unhappy being aspires,—is not this the repose of matter after which I so long sighed, and which I was seeking to attain by the painful process of starvation when Faria appeared in my dungeon? What is death for me? One step farther into rest,—two, perhaps, into silence. No, it is not existence, then, that I regret, but the ruin of projects so slowly carried out, so laboriously framed. Providence is now opposed to them, when I most thought it would be propitious. It is not God's will that they should be accomplished. This burden, almost as heavy as a world, which I had raised, and I had thought to bear to the end, was too great for my strength, and I was compelled to lay it down in the middle of my career. Oh, shall I then, again become a fatalist, whom fourteen years of despair and ten of hope had rendered a believer in Providence?

And all this—all this, because my heart, which I thought dead, was only sleeping; because it has awakened and has begun to beat again, because I have yielded to the pain of the emotion excited in my breast by a woman's voice.

Yet,' continued the count, becoming each moment more absorbed in the anticipation of the dreadful sacrifice for the morrow, which Mercédès had accepted, 'yet, it is impossible that so noble-minded a woman should thus through selfishness consent to my death when I am in the prime of life and strength; it is impossible that she can carry to such a point maternal love, or rather delirium. There are virtues which become crimes by exaggeration. No, she must have conceived some pathetic scene; she will come and throw herself between us; and what would be sublime here will there appear ridiculous.'

The blush of pride mounted to the count's forehead as this thought passed through his mind.

'Ridiculous?' repeated he; 'and the ridicule will fall on me. I ridiculous? No, I would rather die.'

By thus exaggerating to his own mind the anticipated ill-fortune of the next day, to which he had condemned himself by promising Mercédès to spare her son, the count at last exclaimed:

'Folly, folly, folly!—to carry generosity so far as to put myself up as a mark for that young man to aim at. He will never believe that my death was suicide; and yet it is important for the honour of my memory,—and this surely is not vanity, but a justifiable pride,—it is important the world should know that I have consented, by my free will, to stop my arm, already raised to strike, and that with the arm which has been so powerful against others I have struck myself. It must be; it shall be.'

Seizing a pen, he drew a paper from a secret drawer in his desk, and wrote at the bottom of the document (which was no other than his will, made since his arrival in Paris) a sort of codicil, clearly explaining the nature of his death.

'I do this, Oh, my God,' said he, with his eyes raised to heaven, 'as much for thy honour as for mine. I have during ten years considered myself the agent of thy vengeance, and other wretches, like Morcerf, Danglars, Villefort, even Morcerf himself, must not imagine that chance has freed them from their enemy. Let them know, on the contrary, that their punishment, which had been decreed by Providence, is only delayed by my present determination, and

The count, in his survey of the pit, encountered a pale face and threatening eyes, which evidently sought to gain his attention. He recognized Albert, but thought it better not to notice him, as he looked so angry and discomposed. Without communicating his thoughts to his companion, he sat down, drew out his opera-glass, and looked another way. Although apparently not noticing Albert, he did not, however, lose sight of him, and when the curtain fell at the end of the second act, he saw him leave the orchestra with his two friends. Then his head was seen passing at the back of the boxes, and the count knew that the approaching storm was intended to fall on him. He was at the moment conversing cheerfully with Morrel, but he was well prepared for what might happen.

The door opened, and Monte Cristo, turning round, saw Albert, pale and trembling, followed by Beauchamp and Château-Renaud.

'Well,' cried he, with that benevolent politeness which distinguished his salutation from the common civilities of the world, 'my cavalier has attained his object. Good-evening, M. de Morcerf.'

The countenance of this man, who possessed such extraordinary control over his feelings, expressed the most perfect cordiality. Morrel only then recollected the letter he had received from the viscount, in which, without assigning any reason, he begged him to go to the Opera, but he understood that something terrible was brooding.

'We are not come here, sir, to exchange hypocritical expressions of politeness, or false professions of friendship,' said Albert, 'but to demand an explanation.'

The young man's trembling voice was scarcely audible.

'An explanation at the Opera?' said the count, with that calm tone and penetrating eye which characterize the man who knows his cause is good. 'Little acquainted as I am with the habits of Parisians, I should not have thought this the place for such a demand.'

'Still, if people will shut themselves up,' said Albert, 'and cannot be seen because they are bathing, dining, or asleep, we must avail ourselves of the opportunity whenever they are to be seen.'

'I am not difficult of access, sir; for yesterday, if my memory does not deceive me, you were at my house.'

'Yesterday I was at your house, sir,' said the young man; 'because then I knew not who you were.'