really satisfactory, and, for the first time since the dinner-party at Auteuil, he slept soundly.

Chapter LXX

The Ball

It was in the warmest days of July, when in due course of time the Saturday arrived upon which the ball was to take place at M. de Morcerf's. It was ten o'clock at night; the branches of the great trees in the garden of the count's house stood out boldly against the azure canopy of heaven, which was studded with golden stars, but where the last fleeting clouds of a vanishing storm yet lingered.

From the apartments 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 only occupied by about 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, studded with stars, had settled the question in favour of the lawn.

The gardens were illuminated with coloured lanterns, according to the Italian custom, and, as is usual in countries where the luxuries of the table—the rarest of all luxuries in their complete form—are well understood, the supper-table was loaded with wax-lights and flowers. At the time the Countess of 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 devices at her entertainment worthy of describing, 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 meet that of Villefort. The latter made a sign, and when the carriages had drawn close together, 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?' asked 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 splendour; she entered by one door at the time when Mercédès appeared at the door. The countess took 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 tonight?'

'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 that has asked me the same question. The count is in fashion; I congratulate him upon it.'

'And have you replied to everyone 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.'

'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 experiments. He supposes there is in the neighbourhood 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 *Badhaus*, 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 he was 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 sabre.'

'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, you see, there is a deadly feud between us.'

'But,' said the envoy, 'you do not go about it in the right way to kill him, if I understand you correctly.'

'Aw?' said the Englishman, 'I practice 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 arose, 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 wound, to resume the black hair, dark complexion, and pearly teeth of the Count of Monte Cristo.

It was M. de Villefort, and not the prefect, who returned to the house of M. de Villefort. The procureur felt more at ease, although he had learned nothing

'You know, sir, 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; '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.'

'Aw?' said Lord Wilmore, with that tone which is only known 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, 'perfectly.' 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 the petty sovereigns of India who make war on the English. It was there Wilmore had first met him and fought against him; and in that war Zaccone had been taken prisoner, sent to England, and consigned to the hulks, whence he had escaped by swimming. Then began his travels, his duels, his caprices; then the insurrection in Greece broke out, 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 everyone. 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, in Lord Wilmore's opinion, possibly amounted to one or two millions per annum,—a precarious fortune, which might be momentarily 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 as he is an expert chemist and physicist, he has invented a new system of telegraphy, which he is seeking to bring to perfection.'

'How much does he spend yearly?' asked the prefect.

'Not more than five or six hundred thousand francs,' 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?'

'He was there.'

'Ah, indeed? And did the eccentric person commit any new originality?'

'Can he be seen 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 honour 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 trying to attract 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 honour?'

'On my honour.'

'You were going to ask me if the Count of Monte Cristo had arrived, or was 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 Monsieur 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, of that you may 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 Zaccone.'

'It is possible.'

'He is a Maltese.'

'That is also possible.'

'The son of a shipowner.'

'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 establish a mineral water-cure 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 splendour, and the police have made inquiries.'

'Well, well! Nothing more is wanting than to arrest the count as a vagabond, on the pretext of his being too rich.'

'Indeed, that doubtless would have happened if his credentials had not been so favourable.'

'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 moustache, respectfully bowed to Madame de Villefort. Albert extended 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 especially the tone in which it was uttered, chilled the heart of poor Morrel. But a recompense was in store for him; turning around, he saw near the door a beautiful fair face, whose large blue eyes were, without

The visitor either understood the abbé's meaning, or had no more questions to ask; he arose, 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, sir; I am only jealous in one thing, and that is that the relief I give should be entirely from my own resources.'

'However— '

'My resolution, sir, is unchangeable, but you have only to search for yourself and you will find, alas, but 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, and the carriage conveyed 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-Saint-Georges, and stopped at № 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 as the clock struck.

The visitor was introduced into the drawing-room, which was like all other furnished drawing-rooms. A mantle-piece, with two modern Sèvres vases, a timepiece representing Cupid with his bent bow, a mirror 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 envoy's weak sight. 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 rather gray. He was dressed with all the English peculiarity, namely, in a blue coat, with gilt buttons and high collar, in the fashion of 1811, a white kerseymere waistcoat, and nankeen pantaloons, three inches too short, but which were prevented by straps from slipping up to the knee. His first remark on entering was:

'Has he any friends?'

'Yes, everyone 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 Zaccone.'

'Do you know his abode?'

'It's somewhere in the Chaussée d'Antin; but I know neither the street nor the number.'

'Are you at variance with the Englishman?'

'I love Zaccone, 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, sir, he had not, because he applied to me six months ago for the particulars he required, and as I did not know when I might again come to Paris, I recommended M. Cavalcanti to him.'

'Andrea?'

'No, Bartolomeo, his father.'

'Now, sir, I have but one question more to ask, and I charge you, in the name of honour, of humanity, and of religion, to answer me candidly.'

'What is it, sir?'

'Do you know with what design M. de Monte Cristo purchased a house at Auteuil?'

'Certainly, for he told me.'

'What is it, sir?'

'To make a lunatic asylum of it, similar to that founded by the Count of Pisani at Palermo. Do you know about that institution?'

'I have heard of it.'

'It is a magnificent charity.' Having said this, the abbé bowed to imply he wished to pursue his studies.

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 handkerchief 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 anyone 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, unexceptional 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, his calm and serene expression, his dark and melancholy eye, his mouth, chiselled with such marvellous delicacy, which so easily expressed such high disdain,—these were what fixed the attention of all 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 an ease and vigour to the expression of his face, and even to the most trifling gesture, scarcely to be understood. Yet the Parisian world is so strange, that even all this might not have won attention had there not been connected with it a mysterious story gilded by an immense fortune. Meanwhile he advanced through the assemblage of guests under a battery of curious glances towards Madame de Morcerf, who, standing before a mantle-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.'

'That tall, harsh-looking man is very learned, he discovered, in the neighbourhood of Rome, a kind of lizard with a vertebra more than lizards usually have, and he immediately laid his discovery before the Institute. The thing was discussed for a long time, but finally decided in his favour. 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 honour, was made an officer.'

'Come,' said Monte Cristo, 'this cross seems to me to be wisely awarded. I suppose, had he found another 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[1] to devise 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 through the heads of rabbits, he makes fowls eat madder, and punches the spinal marrow out 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.'

[1]Jacques-Louis David, a famous French painter (1748-1825).

'That is not probable.'

'Do you know this Island of Monte Cristo?'

'Certainly, everyone who has come from Palermo, Naples, or Rome to France by sea must know it, since he has passed close to it and must have seen it.'

'I am told 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 territorial possessions 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.'

'Was he in the wars?'

'I think he entered the service.'

'In what branch?'

'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, 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 ask you what you know of him.

'He passes for a very charitable man. Our holy father, the pope, has made him a knight of Jesus Christ for the services he rendered to the Christians in the East; he has five or six rings as testimonials from Eastern monarchs of 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.'

'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. Zaccone are the same— '

'Absolutely the same.'

'Let us speak of M. Zaccone.'

'Agreed.'

'I asked you if you knew him?'

'Extremely well.'

'Who is he?'

'The son of a rich shipbuilder 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.'

'Are you sure of what you assert?'

'What do you mean by that question?'

'Understand, sir, I do not in the least suspect your veracity; I ask if you are certain of it?'

'I knew his father, M. Zaccone.'

'Ah, indeed?'

'And when a child I often played with the son in the timber-yards.'

'But whence does he derive the title of count?'

'You are aware that may be bought.'

'In Italy?'

'Everywhere.'

'And his immense riches, whence does he procure them?'

'They may not be so very great.'

'How much do you suppose he possesses?'

'From one hundred and fifty to two hundred thousand livres per annum.'

'That is reasonable,' said the visitor; 'I have heard he had three or four millions.'

'Two hundred thousand per annum would make four millions of capital.'

'But I was told he had four millions per annum.'

'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 punched out?'

Albert laughed.

'And the other one?' demanded the count.

'That one?'

'Yes, the third.'

'The one in the dark blue coat?'

'Yes.'

'He is a colleague of the count, and one of the most active opponents to the idea of providing the Chamber of Peers with a uniform. He was very successful upon that question. He stood badly with the Liberal papers, but his noble opposition to the wishes of the court is now getting him into favour with the journalists. 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 *Siècle*, and voted five or six years on the ministerial side.'

'Bravo, viscount,' said Monte Cristo, smiling; 'you are a delightful *cicerone*. And now you will do me a favour, 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 millionaires Franck & Poulmann, of Frankfurt, 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, *mon Dieu!*' exclaimed Danglars, 'they have drawn on me for 200,000 francs!'

'Well, you can throw out the draft; their signature is worth five per cent.'

'Yes, but it is too late,' said Danglars, 'I have honoured their bills.'

'Then,' said Monte Cristo, 'here are 200,000 francs 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 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 waiters 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 that he took nothing, and even noticed his gesture of refusal.

'Albert,' she asked, 'did you notice that?'

'What, mother?'

'That the count has never been willing to partake of food under the roof of M. de Morcerf.'

'Yes; but then he breakfasted with me—indeed, he made his first appearance in the world on that 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 waiter passes, insist upon his taking something.'

'But why, mother?'

'Just to please me, Albert,' said Mercédès. Albert kissed his mother's hand, and drew near the count. Another salver passed, loaded like the preceding

'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 honour of addressing the Abbé Busoni?' asked the visitor.

'Yes, sir,' 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, sir.'

'One of the agents appointed to secure the safety of Paris?'

'Yes, sir' 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, sir,' said the abbé, with a marked Italian accent.

'The mission with which I am charged, sir,' replied the visitor, speaking with hesitation, 'is a confidential one on the part of him who fulfils it, and him by whom he is employed.' 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, sir, the particulars you wish for do not interfere with my scruples or my conscience. I am a priest, sir, and the secrets of confession, for instance, must remain between me and God, and not between me and human justice.'

'Do not alarm yourself, monsieur, we will duly respect your conscience.'

At this moment the abbé pressed down his side of the shade and so raised it on the other, throwing a bright light on the stranger's face, while his own remained obscured.

'Excuse me, abbé,' said the envoy of the prefect of the police, 'but the light tries my eyes very much.' The abbé lowered the shade.

'Now, sir, I am listening—go on.'

'I will come at once to the point. Do you know the Count of Monte Cristo?'

'You mean Monsieur Zaccone, I presume?'

'Zaccone?—is not his name Monte Cristo?'