

‘What is your errand, then, with me, sir?’

‘I mean,’ said Albert, drawing near, and without apparently noticing Cavalcanti, who stood with his back towards the fireplace—‘I mean to propose a meeting in some retired corner where no one will interrupt us for ten minutes; that will be sufficient—where two men having met, one of them will remain on the ground.’

Danglars turned pale; Cavalcanti moved a step forward, and Albert turned towards him.

‘And you, too,’ said he, ‘come, if you like, monsieur; you have a claim, being almost one of the family, and I will give as many rendezvous of that kind as I can find persons willing to accept them.’

Cavalcanti looked at Danglars with a stupefied air, and the latter, making an effort, arose and stepped between the two young men. Albert’s attack on Andrea had placed him on a different footing, and he hoped this visit had another cause than that he had at first supposed.

‘Indeed, sir,’ said he to Albert, ‘if you are come to quarrel with this gentleman because I have preferred him to you, I shall resign the case to the king’s attorney.’

‘You mistake, sir,’ said Morcerf with a gloomy smile; ‘I am not referring in the least to matrimony, and I only addressed myself to M. Cavalcanti because he appeared disposed to interfere between us. In one respect you are right, for I am ready to quarrel with everyone today; but you have the first claim, M. Danglars.’

‘Sir,’ replied Danglars, pale with anger and fear, ‘I warn you, when I have the misfortune to meet with a mad dog, I kill it; and far from thinking myself guilty of a crime, I believe I do society a kindness. Now, if you are mad and try to bite me, I will kill you without pity. Is it my fault that your father has dishonoured himself?’

‘Yes, miserable wretch!’ cried Morcerf, ‘it is your fault.’

Danglars retreated a few steps. ‘My fault?’ said he; ‘you must be mad! What do I know of the Grecian affair? Have I travelled in that country? Did I advise your father to sell the castle of Yanina—to betray—’

‘Silence!’ said Albert, with a thundering voice. ‘No; it is not you who have directly made this exposure and brought this sorrow on us, but you hypocritically provoked it.’

‘I?’

‘Yes, you! How came it known?’

‘I suppose you read it in the paper in the account from Yanina?’

‘Who wrote to Yanina?’

‘To Yanina?’

‘Yes. Who wrote for particulars concerning my father?’

‘I imagine anyone may write to Yanina.’

‘But one person only wrote!’

‘One only?’

‘Yes; and that was you!’

‘I, doubtless, wrote. It appears to me that when about to marry your daughter to a young man, it is right to make some inquiries respecting his family; it is not only a right, but a duty.’

‘You wrote, sir, knowing what answer you would receive.’

‘I, indeed? I assure you,’ cried Danglars, with a confidence and security proceeding less from fear than from the interest he really felt for the young man, ‘I solemnly declare to you, that I should never have thought of writing to Yanina, did I know anything of Ali Pasha’s misfortunes.’

‘Who, then, urged you to write? Tell me.’

‘*Pardieu!* it was the most simple thing in the world. I was speaking of your father’s past history. I said the origin of his fortune remained obscure. The person to whom I addressed my scruples asked me where your father had acquired his property? I answered, “In Greece.”—“Then,” said he, “write to Yanina.”’

‘And who thus advised you?’

‘No other than your friend, Monte Cristo.’

‘The Count of Monte Cristo told you to write to Yanina?’

‘Yes; and I wrote, and will show you my correspondence, if you like.’

Albert and Beauchamp looked at each other.

‘Sir,’ said Beauchamp, who had not yet spoken, ‘you appear to accuse the count, who is absent from Paris at this moment, and cannot justify himself.’

‘I accuse no one, sir,’ said Danglars; ‘I relate, and I will repeat before the count what I have said to you.’

‘Does the count know what answer you received?’

‘Yes; I showed it to him.’

‘Did he know my father’s Christian name was Fernand, and his family name Mondego?’

‘Yes, I had told him that long since, and I did only what any other would have done in my circumstances, and perhaps less. When, the day after the arrival of this answer, your father came by the advice of Monte Cristo to ask my daughter’s hand for you, I decidedly refused him, but without any explanation or exposure. In short, why should I have any more to do with the affair? How did the honour or disgrace of M. de Morcerf affect me? It neither increased nor decreased my income.’

Albert felt the blood mounting to his brow; there was no doubt upon the subject. Danglars defended himself with the baseness, but at the same time with the assurance, of a man who speaks the truth, at least in part, if not wholly—not for conscience’s sake, but through fear. Besides, what was Morcerf seeking? It was not whether Danglars or Monte Cristo was more or less guilty; it was a man who would answer for the offence, whether trifling or serious; it was a man who would fight, and it was evident Danglars would not fight.

In addition to this, everything forgotten or unperceived before presented itself now to his recollection. Monte Cristo knew everything, as he had bought the daughter of Ali Pasha; and, knowing everything, he had advised Danglars to write to Yanina. The answer known, he had yielded to Albert’s wish to be introduced to Haydée, and allowed the conversation to turn on the death of Ali, and had not opposed Haydée’s recital (but having, doubtless, warned the young girl, in the few Romaic words he spoke to her, not to implicate Morcerf’s father). Besides, had he not begged of Morcerf not to mention his father’s name before Haydée? Lastly, he had taken Albert to Normandy when he knew the final blow was near. There could be no doubt that all had been calculated and previously arranged; Monte Cristo then was in league with his father’s enemies. Albert took Beauchamp aside, and communicated these ideas to him.

‘You are right,’ said the latter; ‘M. Danglars has only been a secondary agent in this sad affair, and it is of M. de Monte Cristo that you must demand an explanation.’

Albert turned.

‘Whose name is—’

‘Danglars.’

‘He!’ cried Albert; ‘yes, it is indeed he who has so long pursued my father with jealous hatred. He, the man who would be popular, cannot forgive the Count of Morcerf for being created a peer, and this marriage broken off without a reason being assigned—yes, it is all from the same cause.’

‘Make inquiries, Albert, but do not be angry without reason; make inquiries, and if it be true—’

‘Oh, yes, if it be true,’ cried the young man, ‘he shall pay me all I have suffered.’

‘Beware, Morcerf, he is already an old man.’

‘I will respect his age as he has respected the honour of my family; if my father had offended him, why did he not attack him personally? Oh, no, he was afraid to encounter him face to face.’

‘I do not condemn you, Albert; I only restrain you. Act prudently.’

‘Oh, do not fear; besides, you will accompany me. Beauchamp, solemn transactions should be sanctioned by a witness. Before this day closes, if M. Danglars is guilty, he shall cease to live, or I shall die. *Pardieu*, Beauchamp, mine shall be a splendid funeral!’

‘When such resolutions are made, Albert, they should be promptly executed. Do you wish to go to M. Danglars? Let us go immediately.’

They sent for a cabriolet. On entering the banker’s mansion, they perceived the phaeton and servant of M. Andrea Cavalcanti.

‘Ah! *parbleu!* that’s good,’ said Albert, with a gloomy tone. ‘If M. Danglars will not fight with me, I will kill his son-in-law; Cavalcanti will certainly fight.’

The servant announced the young man; but the banker, recollecting what had transpired the day before, did not wish him admitted. It was, however, too late; Albert had followed the footman, and, hearing the order given, forced the door open, and followed by Beauchamp found himself in the banker’s study.

‘Sir,’ cried the latter, ‘am I no longer at liberty to receive whom I choose in my house? You appear to forget yourself sadly.’

‘No, sir,’ said Albert, coldly; ‘there are circumstances in which one cannot, except through cowardice,—I offer you that refuge,—refuse to admit certain persons at least.’

‘Thank you, my dear Beauchamp, thank you for the excellent feeling which prompts your advice; but it cannot be. I have told you my wish, or rather my determination. You understand that, interested as I am in this affair, I cannot see it in the same light as you do. What appears to you to emanate from a celestial source, seems to me to proceed from one far less pure. Providence appears to me to have no share in this affair; and happily so, for instead of the invisible, impalpable agent of celestial rewards and punishments, I shall find one both palpable and visible, on whom I shall revenge myself, I assure you, for all I have suffered during the last month. Now, I repeat, Beauchamp, I wish to return to human and material existence, and if you are still the friend you profess to be, help me to discover the hand that struck the blow.’

‘Be it so,’ said Beauchamp; ‘if you must have me descend to earth, I submit; and if you will seek your enemy, I will assist you, and I will engage to find him, my honour being almost as deeply interested as yours.’

‘Well, then, you understand, Beauchamp, that we begin our search immediately. Each moment’s delay is an eternity for me. The calumniator is not yet punished, and he may hope that he will not be; but, on my honour, if he thinks so, he deceives himself.’

‘Well, listen, Morcerf.’

‘Ah, Beauchamp, I see you know something already; you will restore me to life.’

‘I do not say there is any truth in what I am going to tell you, but it is, at least, a ray of light in a dark night; by following it we may, perhaps, discover something more certain.’

‘Tell me; satisfy my impatience.’

‘Well, I will tell you what I did not like to mention on my return from Yanina.’

‘Say on.’

‘I went, of course, to the chief banker of the town to make inquiries. At the first word, before I had even mentioned your father’s name—

“Ah,” said he. “I guess what brings you here.”

“How, and why?”

“Because a fortnight since I was questioned on the same subject.”

“By whom?”

“By a banker of Paris, my correspondent.”

‘Sir,’ said he to Danglars, ‘understand that I do not take a final leave of you; I must ascertain if your insinuations are just, and am going now to inquire of the Count of Monte Cristo.’

He bowed to the banker, and went out with Beauchamp, without appearing to notice Cavalcanti. Danglars accompanied him to the door, where he again assured Albert that no motive of personal hatred had influenced him against the Count of Morcerf.

Chapter LXXXVII

The Challenge

‘HEN,’ continued Beauchamp, ‘I took advantage of the silence and the darkness to leave the house without being seen. The usher who had introduced me was waiting for me at the door, and he conducted me through the corridors to a private entrance opening into the Rue de Vaugirard. I left with mingled feelings of sorrow and delight. Excuse me, Albert,—sorrow on your account, and delight with that noble girl, thus pursuing paternal vengeance. Yes, Albert, from whatever source the blow may have proceeded—it may be from an enemy, but that enemy is only the agent of Providence.’

Albert held his head between his hands; he raised his face, red with shame and bathed in tears, and seizing Beauchamp’s arm:

‘My friend,’ said he, ‘my life is ended. I cannot calmly say with you, “Providence has struck the blow;” but I must discover who pursues me with this hatred, and when I have found him I shall kill him, or he will kill me. I rely on your friendship to assist me, Beauchamp, if contempt has not banished it from your heart.’

‘Contempt, my friend? How does this misfortune affect you? No, happily that unjust prejudice is forgotten which made the son responsible for the father’s actions. Review your life, Albert; although it is only just beginning, did a lovely summer’s day ever dawn with greater purity than has marked the commencement of your career? No, Albert, take my advice. You are young and rich—leave Paris—all is soon forgotten in this great Babylon of excitement and changing tastes. You will return after three or four years with a Russian princess for a bride, and no one will think more of what occurred yesterday than if it had happened sixteen years ago.’

Chapter LXXXVIII

The Insult

AT the banker's door Beauchamp stopped Morcerf.

'Listen,' said he; 'just now I told you it was of M. de Monte Cristo you must demand an explanation.'

'Yes; and we are going to his house.'

'Reflect, Morcerf, one moment before you go.'

'On what shall I reflect?'

'On the importance of the step you are taking.'

'Is it more serious than going to M. Danglars?'

'Yes; M. Danglars is a money-lover, and those who love money, you know, think too much of what they risk to be easily induced to fight a duel. The other is, on the contrary, to all appearance a true nobleman; but do you not fear to find him a bully?'

'I only fear one thing; namely, to find a man who will not fight.'

'Do not be alarmed,' said Beauchamp; 'he will meet you. My only fear is that he will be too strong for you.'

'My friend,' said Morcerf, with a sweet smile, 'that is what I wish. The happiest thing that could occur to me, would be to die in my father's stead; that would save us all.'

'Your mother would die of grief.'

'My poor mother!' said Albert, passing his hand across his eyes, 'I know she would; but better so than die of shame.'

'Are you quite decided, Albert?'

'Yes; let us go.'

'But do you think we shall find the count at home?'

‘He intended returning some hours after me, and doubtless he is now at home.’

They ordered the driver to take them to N° 30 Champs-Élysées. Beauchamp wished to go in alone, but Albert observed that as this was an unusual circumstance he might be allowed to deviate from the usual etiquette of duels. The cause which the young man espoused was one so sacred that Beauchamp had only to comply with all his wishes; he yielded and contented himself with following Morcerf. Albert sprang from the porter’s lodge to the steps. He was received by Baptistin. The count had, indeed, just arrived, but he was in his bath, and had forbidden that anyone should be admitted.

‘But after his bath?’ asked Morcerf.

‘My master will go to dinner.’

‘And after dinner?’

‘He will sleep an hour.’

‘Then?’

‘He is going to the Opera.’

‘Are you sure of it?’ asked Albert.

‘Quite, sir; my master has ordered his horses at eight o’clock precisely.’

‘Very good,’ replied Albert; ‘that is all I wished to know.’

Then, turning towards Beauchamp, ‘If you have anything to attend to, Beauchamp, do it directly; if you have any appointment for this evening, defer it till tomorrow. I depend on you to accompany me to the Opera; and if you can, bring Château-Renaud with you.’

Beauchamp availed himself of Albert’s permission, and left him, promising to call for him at a quarter before eight. On his return home, Albert expressed his wish to Franz Debray, and Morrel, to see them at the Opera that evening. Then he went to see his mother, who since the events of the day before had refused to see anyone, and had kept her room. He found her in bed, overwhelmed with grief at this public humiliation.

The sight of Albert produced the effect which might naturally be expected on Mercédès; she pressed her son’s hand and sobbed aloud, but her tears relieved her. Albert stood one moment speechless by the side of his mother’s bed. It was evident from his pale face and knit brows that his resolution to revenge himself was growing weaker.

‘My dear mother,’ said he, ‘do you know if M. de Morcerf has any enemy?’

Haydée had remained until the close of the meeting. She heard the count’s sentence pronounced without betraying an expression of joy or pity; then drawing her veil over her face she bowed majestically to the councillors, and left with that dignified step which Virgil attributes to his goddesses.

on which he has a large wound; if you forgot his features, you would know him by that hand, into which fell, one by one, the gold pieces of the merchant El-Kobbir! I know him! Ah, let him say now if he does not recognize me!" Each word fell like a dagger on Morcerf, and deprived him of a portion of his energy; as she uttered the last, he hid his mutilated hand hastily in his bosom, and fell back on his seat, overwhelmed by wretchedness and despair. This scene completely changed the opinion of the assembly respecting the accused count.

"Count of Morcerf," said the president, "do not allow yourself to be cast down; answer. The justice of the court is supreme and impartial as that of God; it will not suffer you to be trampled on by your enemies without giving you an opportunity of defending yourself. Shall further inquiries be made? Shall two members of the House be sent to Yanina? Speak!"

Morcerf did not reply. Then all the members looked at each other with terror. They knew the count's energetic and violent temper; it must be, indeed, a dreadful blow which would deprive him of courage to defend himself. They expected that his stupefied silence would be followed by a fiery outburst.

"Well," asked the president, "what is your decision?"

"I have no reply to make," said the count in a low tone.

"Has the daughter of Ali Tepelini spoken the truth?" said the president. "Is she, then, the terrible witness to whose charge you dare not plead 'Not guilty'? Have you really committed the crimes of which you are accused?" The count looked around him with an expression which might have softened tigers, but which could not disarm his judges. Then he raised his eyes towards the ceiling, but withdrew then, immediately, as if he feared the roof would open and reveal to his distressed view that second tribunal called heaven, and that other judge named God. Then, with a hasty movement, he tore open his coat, which seemed to stifle him, and flew from the room like a madman; his footstep was heard one moment in the corridor, then the rattling of his carriage-wheels as he was driven rapidly away.

"Gentlemen," said the president, when silence was restored, "is the Count of Morcerf convicted of felony, treason, and conduct unbecoming a member of this House?"

"Yes," replied all the members of the committee of inquiry with a unanimous voice.

Mercédès started; she noticed that the young man did not say 'my father.' 'My son,' she said, 'persons in the count's situation have many secret enemies. Those who are known are not the most dangerous.'

'I know it, and appeal to your penetration. You are of so superior a mind, nothing escapes you.'

'Why do you say so?'

'Because, for instance, you noticed on the evening of the ball we gave, that M. de Monte Cristo would eat nothing in our house.'

Mercédès raised herself on her feverish arm.

'M. de Monte Cristo!' she exclaimed; 'and how is he connected with the question you asked me?'

'You know, mother, M. de Monte Cristo is almost an Oriental, and it is customary with the Orientals to secure full liberty for revenge by not eating or drinking in the houses of their enemies.'

'Do you say M. de Monte Cristo is our enemy?' replied Mercédès, becoming paler than the sheet which covered her. 'Who told you so? Why, you are mad, Albert! M. de Monte Cristo has only shown us kindness. M. de Monte Cristo saved your life; you yourself presented him to us. Oh, I entreat you, my son, if you had entertained such an idea, dispel it; and my counsel to you—nay, my prayer—is to retain his friendship.'

'Mother,' replied the young man, 'you have special reasons for telling me to conciliate that man.'

'I?' said Mercédès, blushing as rapidly as she had turned pale, and again becoming paler than ever.

'Yes, doubtless; and is it not that he may never do us any harm?'

Mercédès shuddered, and, fixing on her son a scrutinizing gaze, 'You speak strangely,' said she to Albert, 'and you appear to have some singular prejudices. What has the count done? Three days since you were with him in Normandy; only three days since we looked on him as our best friend.'

An ironical smile passed over Albert's lips. Mercédès saw it and with the double instinct of woman and mother guessed all; but as she was prudent and strong-minded she concealed both her sorrows and her fears. Albert was silent; an instant after, the countess resumed:

‘You came to inquire after my health; I will candidly acknowledge that I am not well. You should install yourself here, and cheer my solitude. I do not wish to be left alone.’

‘Mother,’ said the young man, ‘you know how gladly I would obey your wish, but an urgent and important affair obliges me to leave you for the whole evening.’

‘Well,’ replied Mercédès, sighing, ‘go, Albert; I will not make you a slave to your filial piety.’

Albert pretended he did not hear, bowed to his mother, and quitted her. Scarcely had he shut her door, when Mercédès called a confidential servant, and ordered him to follow Albert wherever he should go that evening, and to come and tell her immediately what he observed. Then she rang for her lady’s maid, and, weak as she was, she dressed, in order to be ready for whatever might happen. The footman’s mission was an easy one. Albert went to his room, and dressed with unusual care. At ten minutes to eight Beauchamp arrived; he had seen Château-Renaud, who had promised to be in the orchestra before the curtain was raised. Both got into Albert’s *coffré*; and, as the young man had no reason to conceal where he was going, he called aloud, ‘To the Opera.’ In his impatience he arrived before the beginning of the performance. Château-Renaud was at his post; apprised by Beauchamp of the circumstances, he required no explanation from Albert. The conduct of the son in seeking to avenge his father was so natural that Château-Renaud did not seek to dissuade him, and was content with renewing his assurances of devotion. Debray was not yet come, but Albert knew that he seldom lost a scene at the Opera.

Albert wandered about the theatre until the curtain was drawn up. He hoped to meet with M. de Monte Cristo either in the lobby or on the stairs. The bell summoned him to his seat, and he entered the orchestra with Château-Renaud and Beauchamp. But his eyes scarcely quitted the box between the columns, which remained obstinately closed during the whole of the first act. At last, as Albert was looking at his watch for about the hundredth time, at the beginning of the second act the door opened, and Monte Cristo entered, dressed in black, and, leaning over the front of the box, looked around the pit. Morrel followed him, and looked also for his sister and brother-in-law; he soon discovered them in another box, and kissed his hand to them.

I learned what had transpired this morning in the House of Peers, and what was to take place this evening; then I wrote.”

“Then,” remarked the president, “the Count of Monte Cristo knows nothing of your present proceedings?”

“He is quite unaware of them, and I have but one fear, which is that he should disapprove of what I have done. But it is a glorious day for me,” continued the young girl, raising her ardent gaze to heaven, “that on which I find at last an opportunity of avenging my father!”

The count had not uttered one word the whole of this time. His colleagues looked at him, and doubtless pitied his prospects, blighted under the perfumed breath of a woman. His misery was depicted in sinister lines on his countenance.

“M. de Morcerf,” said the president, “do you recognize this lady as the daughter of Ali Tepelini, pasha of Yanina?”

“No,” said Morcerf, attempting to rise, “it is a base plot, contrived by my enemies.”

Haydée, whose eyes had been fixed on the door, as if expecting someone, turned hastily, and, seeing the count standing, shrieked, “You do not know me?” said she. “Well, I fortunately recognize you! You are Fernand Mondego, the French officer who led the troops of my noble father! It is you who surrendered the castle of Yanina! It is you who, sent by him to Constantinople, to treat with the emperor for the life or death of your benefactor, brought back a false mandate granting full pardon! It is you who, with that mandate, obtained the pasha’s ring, which gave you authority over Selim, the fire-keeper! It is you who stabbed Selim. It is you who sold us, my mother and me, to the merchant, El-Kobbir! Assassin, assassin, you have still on your brow your master’s blood! Look, gentlemen, all!”

These words had been pronounced with such enthusiasm and evident truth, that every eye was fixed on the count’s forehead, and he himself passed his hand across it, as if he felt Ali’s blood still lingering there.

“You positively recognize M. de Morcerf as the officer, Fernand Mondego?”

“Indeed I do!” cried Haydée. “Oh, my mother, it was you who said, ‘You were free, you had a beloved father, you were destined to be almost a queen. Look well at that man; it is he who raised your father’s head on the point of a spear; it is he who sold us; it is he who forsook us! Look well at his right hand,