Chapter XLIV

The Vendetta

'At what point shall I begin my story, your excellency?' asked Bertuccio.

'Where you please,' returned Monte Cristo, 'since I know nothing at all of it.'

'I thought the Abbé Busoni had told your excellency.'

'Some particulars, doubtless, but that is seven or eight years ago, and I have forgotten them.'

'Then I can speak without fear of tiring your excellency.'

'Go on, M. Bertuccio; you will supply the want of the evening papers.'

'The story begins in 1815.'

'Ah,' said Monte Cristo, '1815 is not yesterday.'

'No, monsieur, and yet I recollect all things as clearly as if they had happened but then. I had a brother, an elder brother, who was in the service of the emperor; he had become lieutenant in a regiment composed entirely of Corsicans. This brother was my only friend; we became orphans—I at five, he at eighteen. He brought me up as if I had been his son, and in 1814 he married. When the emperor returned from the Island of Elba, my brother instantly joined the army, was slightly wounded at Waterloo, and retired with the army beyond the Loire.'

'But that is the history of the Hundred Days, M. Bertuccio,' said the count; 'unless I am mistaken, it has been already written.'

'Excuse me, excellency, but these details are necessary, and you promised to be patient.'

'Go on; I will keep my word.'

'One day we received a letter. I should tell you that we lived in the little village of Rogliano, at the extremity of Cap Corse. This letter was

from my brother. He told us that the army was disbanded, and that he should return by Châteauroux, Clermont-Ferrand, Le Puy, and Nîmes; and, if I had any money, he prayed me to leave it for him at Nîmes, with an innkeeper with whom I had dealings.'

'In the smuggling line?' said Monte Cristo.

'Eh, your excellency? Everyone must live.'

'Certainly; go on.'

'I loved my brother tenderly, as I told your excellency, and I resolved not to send the money, but to take it to him myself. I possessed a thousand francs. I left five hundred with Assunta, my sister-in-law, and with the other five hundred I set off for Nîmes. It was easy to do so, and as I had my boat and a lading to take in at sea, everything favoured my project. But, after we had taken in our cargo, the wind became contrary, so that we were four or five days without being able to enter the Rhône. At last, however, we succeeded, and worked up to Arles. I left the boat between Bellegarde and Beaucaire, and took the road to Nîmes.'

'We are getting to the story now?'

'Yes, your excellency; excuse me, but, as you will see, I only tell you what is absolutely necessary. Just at this time the famous massacres took place in the south of France. Three brigands, called Trestaillon, Truphemy, and Graffan, publicly assassinated everybody whom they suspected of Bonapartism. You have doubtless heard of these massacres, your excellency?'

'Vaguely; I was far from France at that period. Go on.'

'As I entered Nîmes, I literally waded in blood; at every step you encountered dead bodies and bands of murderers, who killed, plundered, and burned. At the sight of this slaughter and devastation I became terrified, not for myself—for I, a simple Corsican fisherman, had nothing to fear; on the contrary, that time was most favourable for us smugglers—but for my brother, a soldier of the empire, returning from the army of the Loire, with his uniform and his epaulets, there was everything to apprehend. I hastened to the innkeeper. My misgivings had been but too true. My brother had arrived the previous evening at Nîmes, and, at the very door of the house where he was about to demand hospitality, he had been assassinated. I did all in my power to discover the murderers, but no one durst tell me their names, so much were they dreaded. I then thought

'Your excellency knows him?'

'The former royal attorney at Nîmes?'

'Yes.'

'Who married the Marquis of Saint-Méran's daughter?'

'Yes.'

'Who enjoyed the reputation of being the most severe, the most upright, the most rigid magistrate on the bench?'

'Well, monsieur,' said Bertuccio, 'this man with this spotless reputation— '

'Well?'

'Was a villain.'

'Bah,' replied Monte Cristo, 'impossible!'

'It is as I tell you.'

'Ah, really,' said Monte Cristo. 'Have you proof of this?'

'I had it.'

'And you have lost it; how stupid!'

'Yes; but by careful search it might be recovered.'

'Really,' returned the count, 'relate it to me, for it begins to interest me.'

And the count, humming an air from *Lucia*, went to sit down on a bench, while Bertuccio followed him, collecting his thoughts. Bertuccio remained standing before him.

'Oh, it was not on him, monsieur; it was on another.'

'This is strange,' returned Monte Cristo, seeming to yield to his reflections, 'that you should find yourself without any preparation in a house where the event happened that causes you so much remorse.'

'Monsieur,' said the steward, 'it is fatality, I am sure. First, you purchase a house at Auteuil—this house is the one where I have committed an assassination; you descend to the garden by the same staircase by which he descended; you stop at the spot where he received the blow; and two paces farther is the grave in which he had just buried his child. This is not chance, for chance, in this case, is too much like Providence.'

'Well, amiable Corsican, let us suppose it is Providence. I always suppose anything people please, and, besides, you must concede something to diseased minds. Come, collect yourself, and tell me all.'

'I have related it but once, and that was to the Abbé Busoni. Such things,' continued Bertuccio, shaking his head, 'are only related under the seal of confession.'

'Then,' said the count, 'I refer you to your confessor. Turn Chartreux or Trappist, and relate your secrets, but, as for me, I do not like anyone who is alarmed by such phantasms, and I do not choose that my servants should be afraid to walk in the garden of an evening. I confess I am not very desirous of a visit from the commissary of police, for, in Italy, justice is only paid when silent—in France she is paid only when she speaks. *Peste!* I thought you somewhat Corsican, a great deal smuggler, and an excellent steward; but I see you have other strings to your bow. You are no longer in my service, Monsieur Bertuccio.'

'Oh, your excellency, your excellency!' cried the steward, struck with terror at this threat, 'if that is the only reason I cannot remain in your service, I will tell all, for if I quit you, it will only be to go to the scaffold.'

'That is different,' replied Monte Cristo; 'but if you intend to tell an untruth, reflect it were better not to speak at all.'

'No, monsieur, I swear to you, by my hopes of salvation, I will tell you all, for the Abbé Busoni himself only knew a part of my secret; but, I pray you, go away from that plane-tree. The moon is just bursting through the clouds, and there, standing where you do, and wrapped in that cloak that conceals your figure, you remind me of M. de Villefort.'

'What!' cried Monte Cristo, 'it was M. de Villefort?'

of that French justice of which I had heard so much, and which feared nothing, and I went to the king's attorney.'

'And this king's attorney was named Villefort?' asked Monte Cristo carelessly.

'Yes, your excellency; he came from Marseilles, where he had been deputy procureur. His zeal had procured him advancement, and he was said to be one of the first who had informed the government of the departure from the Island of Elba.'

'Then,' said Monte Cristo 'you went to him?'

'"Monsieur," I said, "my brother was assassinated yesterday in the streets of Nîmes, I know not by whom, but it is your duty to find out. You are the representative of justice here, and it is for justice to avenge those she has been unable to protect."

"Who was your brother?" asked he.

"A lieutenant in the Corsican battalion."

"A soldier of the usurper, then?"

"A soldier of the French army."

"Well," replied he, "he has smitten with the sword, and he has perished by the sword."

"You are mistaken, monsieur," I replied; "he has perished by the poniard."

"What do you want me to do?" asked the magistrate.

"I have already told you—avenge him."

"On whom?"

"On his murderers."

"How should I know who they are?"

"Order them to be sought for."

"Why, your brother has been involved in a quarrel, and killed in a duel. All these old soldiers commit excesses which were tolerated in the time of the emperor, but which are not suffered now, for the people here do not like soldiers of such disorderly conduct."

"Monsieur," I replied, "it is not for myself that I entreat your interference—I should grieve for him or avenge him, but my poor brother had a wife, and were anything to happen to me, the poor creature would perish from want, for my brother's pay alone kept her. Pray, try and obtain a small government pension for her."

"Every revolution has its catastrophes," returned M. de Villefort; "your brother has been the victim of this. It is a misfortune, and government owes nothing to his family. If we are to judge by all the vengeance that the followers of the usurper exercised on the partisans of the king, when, in their turn, they were in power, your brother would be today, in all probability, condemned to death. What has happened is quite natural, and in conformity with the law of reprisals."

"What," cried I, "do you, a magistrate, speak thus to me?"

"All these Corsicans are mad, on my honour," replied M. de Villefort; "they fancy that their countryman is still emperor. You have mistaken the time, you should have told me this two months ago, it is too late now. Go now, at once, or I shall have you put out."

I looked at him an instant to see if there was anything to hope from further entreaty. But he was a man of stone. I approached him, and said in a low voice, "Well, since you know the Corsicans so well, you know that they always keep their word. You think that it was a good deed to kill my brother, who was a Bonapartist, because you are a royalist. Well, I, who am a Bonapartist also, declare one thing to you, which is, that I will kill you. From this moment I declare the vendetta against you, so protect yourself as well as you can, for the next time we meet your last hour has come." And before he had recovered from his surprise, I opened the door and left the room.'

'Well, well,' said Monte Cristo, 'such an innocent looking person as you are to do those things, M. Bertuccio, and to a king's attorney at that! But did he know what was meant by the terrible word "vendetta"?'

'He knew so well, that from that moment he shut himself in his house, and never went out unattended, seeking me high and low. Fortunately, I was so well concealed that he could not find me. Then he became alarmed, and dared not stay any longer at Nîmes, so he solicited a change of residence, and, as he was in reality very influential, he was nominated to Versailles. But, as you know, a Corsican who has sworn to avenge himself cares not for distance, so his carriage, fast as it went, was never above half a day's journey before me, who followed him on foot. The most important thing was, not to kill him only—for I had an opportunity of doing so a hundred times—but to kill him without being discovered—at

Bertuccio clasped his hands, and as, in all these evolutions, he did not let fall the lantern, the light showed his pale and altered countenance. Monte Cristo examined him with the same look that, at Rome, he had bent upon the execution of Andrea, and then, in a tone that made a shudder pass through the veins of the poor steward—

'The Abbé Busoni, then told me an untruth,' said he, 'when, after his journey in France, in 1829, he sent you to me, with a letter of recommendation, in which he enumerated all your valuable qualities. Well, I shall write to the abbé; I shall hold him responsible for his *protégé's* misconduct, and I shall soon know all about this assassination. Only I warn you, that when I reside in a country, I conform to all its code, and I have no wish to put myself within the compass of the French laws for your sake.'

'Oh, do not do that, excellency; I have always served you faithfully,' cried Bertuccio, in despair. 'I have always been an honest man, and, as far as lay in my power, I have done good.'

'I do not deny it,' returned the count; 'but why are you thus agitated. It is a bad sign; a quiet conscience does not occasion such paleness in the cheeks, and such fever in the hands of a man.'

'But, your excellency,' replied Bertuccio hesitatingly, 'did not the Abbé Busoni, who heard my confession in the prison at Nîmes, tell you that I had a heavy burden upon my conscience?'

'Yes; but as he said you would make an excellent steward, I concluded you had stolen—that was all.'

'Oh, your excellency!' returned Bertuccio in deep contempt.

'Or, as you are a Corsican, that you had been unable to resist the desire of making a "stiff," as you call it.'

'Yes, my good master,' cried Bertuccio, casting himself at the count's feet, 'it was simply vengeance—nothing else.'

'I understand that, but I do not understand what it is that galvanizes you in this manner.'

'But, monsieur, it is very natural,' returned Bertuccio, 'since it was in this house that my vengeance was accomplished.'

'What! my house?'

'Oh, your excellency, it was not yours, then.'

'Whose, then? The Marquis de Saint-Méran, I think, the concierge said. What had you to revenge on the Marquis de Saint-Méran?'

Bertuccio raised the lantern, and obeyed. The door, as it opened, disclosed a gloomy sky, in which the moon strove vainly to struggle through a sea of clouds that covered her with billows of vapor which she illumined for an instant, only to sink into obscurity. The steward wished to turn to the left.

'No, no, monsieur,' said Monte Cristo. 'What is the use of following the alleys? Here is a beautiful lawn; let us go on straight forwards.'

Bertuccio wiped the perspiration from his brow, but obeyed; however, he continued to take the left hand. Monte Cristo, on the contrary, took the right hand; arrived near a clump of trees, he stopped. The steward could not restrain himself.

'Move, monsieur—move away, I entreat you; you are exactly in the spot!'

'What spot?'

'Where he fell.'

'My dear Monsieur Bertuccio,' said Monte Cristo, laughing, 'control yourself; we are not at Sartène or at Corte. This is not a Corsican *maquis* but an English garden; badly kept, I own, but still you must not calumniate it for that.'

'Monsieur, I implore you do not stay there!'

'I think you are going mad, Bertuccio,' said the count coldly. 'If that is the case, I warn you, I shall have you put in a lunatic asylum.'

'Alas! excellency,' returned Bertuccio, joining his hands, and shaking his head in a manner that would have excited the count's laughter, had not thoughts of a superior interest occupied him, and rendered him attentive to the least revelation of this timorous conscience. 'Alas! excellency, the evil has arrived!'

'M. Bertuccio,' said the count, 'I am very glad to tell you, that while you gesticulate, you wring your hands and roll your eyes like a man possessed by a devil who will not leave him; and I have always observed, that the devil most obstinate to be expelled is a secret. I knew you were a Corsican. I knew you were gloomy, and always brooding over some old history of the vendetta; and I overlooked that in Italy, because in Italy those things are thought nothing of. But in France they are considered in very bad taste; there are gendarmes who occupy themselves with such affairs, judges who condemn, and scaffolds which avenge.'

least, without being arrested. I no longer belonged to myself, for I had my sister-in-law to protect and provide for.

For three months I watched M. de Villefort, for three months he took not a step out-of-doors without my following him. At length I discovered that he went mysteriously to Auteuil. I followed him thither, and I saw him enter the house where we now are, only, instead of entering by the great door that looks into the street, he came on horseback, or in his carriage, left the one or the other at the little inn, and entered by the gate you see there.'

Monte Cristo made a sign with his head to show that he could discern in the darkness the door to which Bertuccio alluded.

'As I had nothing more to do at Versailles, I went to Auteuil, and gained all the information I could. If I wished to surprise him, it was evident this was the spot to lie in wait for him. The house belonged, as the concierge informed your excellency, to M. de Saint-Méran, Villefort's father-in-law. M. de Saint-Méran lived at Marseilles, so that this country house was useless to him, and it was reported to be let to a young widow, known only by the name of "the Baroness."

One evening, as I was looking over the wall, I saw a young and handsome woman who was walking alone in that garden, which was not overlooked by any windows, and I guessed that she was awaiting M. de Villefort. When she was sufficiently near for me to distinguish her features, I saw she was from eighteen to nineteen, tall and very fair. As she had a loose muslin dress on and as nothing concealed her figure, I saw she would ere long become a mother. A few moments after, the little door was opened and a man entered. The young woman hastened to meet him. They threw themselves into each other's arms, embraced tenderly, and returned together to the house. The man was M. de Villefort; I fully believed that when he went out in the night he would be forced to traverse the whole of the garden alone.'

'And,' asked the count, 'did you ever know the name of this woman?'

'No, excellency,' returned Bertuccio; 'you will see that I had no time to learn it.'

'Go on.'

'That evening,' continued Bertuccio, 'I could have killed the procureur, but as I was not sufficiently acquainted with the neighbourhood, I was

fearful of not killing him on the spot, and that if his cries were overheard I might be taken; so I put it off until the next occasion, and in order that nothing should escape me, I took a chamber looking into the street bordered by the wall of the garden. Three days after, about seven o'clock in the evening, I saw a servant on horseback leave the house at full gallop, and take the road to Sèvres. I concluded that he was going to Versailles, and I was not deceived. Three hours later, the man returned covered with dust, his errand was performed, and two minutes after, another man on foot, muffled in a mantle, opened the little door of the garden, which he closed after him. I descended rapidly; although I had not seen Villefort's face, I recognized him by the beating of my heart. I crossed the street, and stopped at a post placed at the angle of the wall, and by means of which I had once before looked into the garden.

This time I did not content myself with looking, but I took my knife out of my pocket, felt that the point was sharp, and sprang over the wall. My first care was to run to the door; he had left the key in it, taking the simple precaution of turning it twice in the lock. Nothing, then, preventing my escape by this means, I examined the grounds. The garden was long and narrow; a stretch of smooth turf extended down the middle, and at the corners were clumps of trees with thick and massy foliage, that made a background for the shrubs and flowers. In order to go from the door to the house, or from the house to the door, M. de Villefort would be obliged to pass by one of these clumps of trees.

It was the end of September; the wind blew violently. The faint glimpses of the pale moon, hidden momentarily by masses of dark clouds that were sweeping across the sky, whitened the gravel walks that led to the house, but were unable to pierce the obscurity of the thick shrubberies, in which a man could conceal himself without any fear of discovery. I hid myself in the one nearest to the path Villefort must take, and scarcely was I there when, amidst the gusts of wind, I fancied I heard groans; but you know, or rather you do not know, your excellency, that he who is about to commit an assassination fancies that he hears low cries perpetually ringing in his ears. Two hours passed thus, during which I imagined I heard moans repeatedly. Midnight struck. As the last stroke died away, I saw a faint light shine through the windows of the private staircase by which we have just descended. The door opened, and the man in the mantle reappeared.

'Take one of the carriage-lamps, Bertuccio,' said the count, 'and show me the apartments.'

The steward obeyed in silence, but it was easy to see, from the manner in which the hand that held the light trembled, how much it cost him to obey. They went over a tolerably large ground floor; a first floor consisted of a salon, a bathroom, and two bedrooms; near one of the bedrooms they came to a winding staircase that led down to the garden.

'Ah, here is a private staircase,' said the count; 'that is convenient. Light me, M. Bertuccio, and go first; we will see where it leads to.'

'Monsieur,' replied Bertuccio, 'it leads to the garden.'

'And, pray, how do you know that?'

'It ought to do so, at least.'

'Well, let us be sure of that.'

Bertuccio sighed, and went on first; the stairs did, indeed, lead to the garden. At the outer door the steward paused.

'Go on, Monsieur Bertuccio,' said the count.

But he who was addressed stood there, stupefied, bewildered, stunned; his haggard eyes glanced around, as if in search of the traces of some terrible event, and with his clenched hands he seemed striving to shut out horrible recollections.

'Well!' insisted the Count.

'No, no,' cried Bertuccio, setting down the lantern at the angle of the interior wall. 'No, monsieur, it is impossible; I can go no farther.'

'What does this mean?' demanded the irresistible voice of Monte Cristo.

'Why, you must see, your excellency,' cried the steward, 'that this is not natural; that, having a house to purchase, you purchase it exactly at Auteuil, and that, purchasing it at Auteuil, this house should be № 28, Rue de la Fontaine. Oh, why did I not tell you all? I am sure you would not have forced me to come. I hoped your house would have been some other one than this; as if there was not another house at Auteuil than that of the assassination!'

'What, what!' cried Monte Cristo, stopping suddenly, 'what words do you utter? Devil of a man, Corsican that you are—always mysteries or superstitions. Come, take the lantern, and let us visit the garden; you are not afraid of ghosts with me, I hope?'

'It is your new master, my good fellow,' said the footman. And he held out to the concierge the notary's order.

'The house is sold, then?' demanded the concierge; 'and this gentleman is coming to live here?'

'Yes, my friend,' returned the count; 'and I will endeavour to give you no cause to regret your old master.'

'Oh, monsieur,' said the concierge, 'I shall not have much cause to regret him, for he came here but seldom; it is five years since he was here last, and he did well to sell the house, for it did not bring him in anything at all.'

'What was the name of your old master?' said Monte Cristo.

'The Marquis of Saint-Méran. Ah, I am sure he has not sold the house for what he gave for it.'

'The Marquis of Saint-Méran!' returned the count. 'The name is not unknown to me; the Marquis of Saint-Méran!' and he appeared to meditate.

'An old gentleman,' continued the concierge, 'a staunch follower of the Bourbons; he had an only daughter, who married M. de Villefort, who had been the king's attorney at Nîmes, and afterwards at Versailles.'

Monte Cristo glanced at Bertuccio, who became whiter than the wall against which he leaned to prevent himself from falling.

'And is not this daughter dead?' demanded Monte Cristo; 'I fancy I have heard so.'

'Yes, monsieur, one-and-twenty years ago; and since then we have not seen the poor marquis three times.'

'Thanks, thanks,' said Monte Cristo, judging from the steward's utter prostration that he could not stretch the cord further without danger of breaking it. 'Give me a light.'

'Shall I accompany you, monsieur?'

'No, it is unnecessary; Bertuccio will show me a light.'

And Monte Cristo accompanied these words by the gift of two gold pieces, which produced a torrent of thanks and blessings from the concierge.

'Ah, monsieur,' said he, after having vainly searched on the mantle-piece and the shelves, 'I have not got any candles.'

The terrible moment had come, but I had so long been prepared for it that my heart did not fail in the least. I drew my knife from my pocket again, opened it, and made ready to strike. The man in the mantle advanced towards me, but as he drew near I saw that he had a weapon in his hand. I was afraid, not of a struggle, but of a failure. When he was only a few paces from me, I saw that what I had taken for a weapon was only a spade. I was still unable to divine for what reason M. de Villefort had this spade in his hands, when he stopped close to the thicket where I was, glanced round, and began to dig a hole in the earth. I then perceived that he was hiding something under his mantle, which he laid on the grass in order to dig more freely. Then, I confess, curiosity mingled with hatred; I wished to see what Villefort was going to do there, and I remained motionless, holding my breath. Then an idea crossed my mind, which was confirmed when I saw the procureur lift from under his mantle a box, two feet long, and six or eight inches deep. I let him place the box in the hole he had made, then, while he stamped with his feet to remove all traces of his occupation, I rushed on him and plunged my knife into his breast, exclaiming:

"I am Giovanni Bertuccio; thy death for my brother's; thy treasure for his widow; thou seest that my vengeance is more complete than I had hoped."

I know not if he heard these words; I think he did not, for he fell without a cry. I felt his blood gush over my face, but I was intoxicated, I was delirious, and the blood refreshed, instead of burning me. In a second I had disinterred the box; then, that it might not be known I had done so, I filled up the hole, threw the spade over the wall, and rushed through the door, which I double-locked, carrying off the key.'

'Ah,' said Monte Cristo 'it seems to me this was nothing but murder and robbery.'

'No, your excellency,' returned Bertuccio; 'it was a vendetta followed by restitution.'

'And was the sum a large one?'

'It was not money.'

'Ah, I recollect,' replied the count; 'did you not say something of an infant?'

'Yes, excellency; I hastened to the river, sat down on the bank, and with my knife forced open the lock of the box. In a fine linen cloth was wrapped a new-born child. Its purple visage, and its violet-coloured hands showed that it had perished from suffocation, but as it was not yet cold, I hesitated to throw it into the water that ran at my feet. After a moment I fancied that I felt a slight pulsation of the heart, and as I had been assistant at the hospital at Bastia, I did what a doctor would have done—I inflated the lungs by blowing air into them, and at the expiration of a quarter of an hour, it began to breathe, and cried feebly. In my turn I uttered a cry, but a cry of joy.

"God has not cursed me then," I cried, "since he permits me to save the life of a human creature, in exchange for the life I have taken away."'

'And what did you do with the child?' asked Monte Cristo. 'It was an embarrassing load for a man seeking to escape.'

'I had not for a moment the idea of keeping it, but I knew that at Paris there was an asylum where they receive such creatures. As I passed the city gates I declared that I had found the child on the road, and I inquired where the asylum was; the box confirmed my statement, the linen proved that the infant belonged to wealthy parents, the blood with which I was covered might have proceeded from the child as well as from anyone else. No objection was raised, but they pointed out the asylum, which was situated at the upper end of the Rue d'Enfer, and after having taken the precaution of cutting the linen in two pieces, so that one of the two letters which marked it was on the piece wrapped around the child, while the other remained in my possession, I rang the bell, and fled with all speed. A fortnight after I was at Rogliano, and I said to Assunta:

"Console thyself, sister; Israel is dead, but he is avenged."

"She demanded what I meant, and when I had told her all,—'Giovanni,' said she, 'you should have brought this child with you; we would have replaced the parents it has lost, have called it Benedetto, and then, in consequence of this good action, God would have blessed us.' In reply I gave her the half of the linen I had kept in order to reclaim him if we became rich."

"What letters were marked on the linen?" said Monte Cristo.

"An H and an N, surmounted by a baron's coronet."

Chapter XLIII

The House at Auteuil

Monte Cristo noticed, as they descended the staircase, that Bertuccio signed himself in the Corsican manner; that is, had formed the sign of the cross in the air with his thumb, and as he seated himself in the carriage, muttered a short prayer. Anyone but a man of exhaustless thirst for knowledge would have had pity on seeing the steward's extraordinary repugnance for the count's projected drive without the walls; but the count was too curious to let Bertuccio off from this little journey. In twenty minutes they were at Auteuil; the steward's emotion had continued to augment as they entered the village. Bertuccio, crouched in the corner of the carriage, began to examine with a feverish anxiety every house they passed.

'Tell them to stop at Rue de la Fontaine, № 28,' said the count, fixing his eyes on the steward, to whom he gave this order.

Bertuccio's forehead was covered with perspiration; however, he obeyed, and, leaning out of the window, he cried to the coachman,—'Rue de la Fontaine, № 28.' № 28 was situated at the extremity of the village; during the drive night had set in, and darkness gave the surroundings the artificial appearance of a scene on the stage. The carriage stopped, the footman sprang off the box and opened the door.

'Well,' said the count, 'you do not get out, M. Bertuccio—you are going to stay in the carriage, then? What are you thinking of this evening?'

Bertuccio sprang out, and offered his shoulder to the count, who, this time, leaned upon it as he descended the three steps of the carriage.

'Knock,' said the count, 'and announce me.'

Bertuccio knocked, the door opened, and the concierge appeared.

'What is it?' asked he.