appear to take some interest in me, although you have only manifested it hitherto by causing me sorrow, refuse me not one final satisfaction—tell me the name of the president of the club, that I may at least know who killed my father.'

Villefort mechanically felt for the handle of the door; Valentine, who understood sooner than anyone her grandfather's answer, and who had often seen two scars upon his right arm, drew back a few steps.

'Mademoiselle,' said Franz, turning towards Valentine, 'unite your efforts with mine to find out the name of the man who made me an orphan at two years of age.' Valentine remained dumb and motionless.

'Hold, sir,' said Villefort, 'do not prolong this dreadful scene. The names have been purposely concealed; my father himself does not know who this president was, and if he knows, he cannot tell you; proper names are not in the dictionary.'

'Oh, misery,' cried Franz: 'the only hope which sustained me and enabled me to read to the end was that of knowing, at least, the name of him who killed my father! Sir, sir,' cried he, turning to Noirtier, 'do what you can—make me understand in some way!'

'Yes,' replied Noirtier.

'Oh, mademoiselle, mademoiselle!' cried Franz, 'your grandfather says he can indicate the person. Help me,—lend me your assistance!'

Noirtier looked at the dictionary. Franz took it with a nervous trembling, and repeated the letters of the alphabet successively, until he came to M. At that letter the old man signified 'Yes.'

'M,' repeated Franz. The young man's finger, glided over the words, but at each one Noirtier answered by a negative sign. Valentine hid her head between her hands. At length, Franz arrived at the word MYSELF. 'Yes!'

'You!' cried Franz, whose hair stood on end; 'you, M. Noirtier—you killed my father?'

'Yes!' replied Noirtier, fixing a majestic look on the young man. Franz fell powerless on a chair; Villefort opened the door and escaped, for the idea had entered his mind to stifle the little remaining life in the heart of this terrible old man.

Chapter LXXVI

Progress of Cavalcanti the Younger

MEANWHILE M. Cavalcanti the elder had returned to his service, not in the army of his majesty the Emperor of Austria, but at the gaming-table of the baths of Lucca, of which he was one of the most assiduous courtiers. He had spent every farthing that had been allowed for his journey as a reward for the majestic and solemn manner in which he had maintained his assumed character of father.

M. Andrea at his departure inherited all the papers which proved that he had indeed the honour of being the son of the Marquis Bartolomeo and the Marchioness Oliva Corsinari. He was now fairly launched in that Parisian society which gives such ready access to foreigners, and treats them, not as they really are, but as they wish to be considered. Besides, what is required of a young man in Paris? To speak its language tolerably, to make a good appearance, to be a good gamester, and to pay in cash. They are certainly less particular with a foreigner than with a Frenchman. Andrea had, then, in a fortnight, attained a very fair position. He was called count, he was said to possess 50,000 livres per annum; and his father's immense riches, buried in the quarries of Saravezza, were a constant theme. A learned man, before whom the last circumstance was mentioned as a fact, declared he had seen the quarries in question, which gave great weight to assertions hitherto somewhat doubtful, but which now assumed the garb of reality.

Such was the state of society in Paris at the period we bring before our readers, when Monte Cristo went one evening to pay M. Danglars

a visit. M. Danglars was out, but the count was asked to go and see the baroness, and he accepted the invitation. It was never without a nervous shudder, since the dinner at Auteuil, and the events which followed it, that Madame Danglars heard Monte Cristo's name announced. If he did not come, the painful sensation became most intense; if, on the contrary, he appeared, his noble countenance, his brilliant eyes, his amiability, his polite attention even towards Madame Danglars, soon dispelled every impression of fear. It appeared impossible to the baroness that a man of such delightfully pleasing manners should entertain evil designs against her; besides, the most corrupt minds only suspect evil when it would answer some interested end—useless injury is repugnant to every mind. When Monte Cristo entered the boudoir, to which we have already once introduced our readers, and where the baroness was examining some drawings, which her daughter passed to her after having looked at them with M. Cavalcanti, his presence soon produced its usual effect, and it was with smiles that the baroness received the count, although she had been a little disconcerted at the announcement of his name. The latter took in the whole scene at a glance.

The baroness was partially reclining on a sofa, Eugénie sat near her, and Cavalcanti was standing. Cavalcanti, dressed in black, like one of Goethe's heroes, with varnished shoes and white silk open-worked stockings, passed a white and tolerably nice-looking hand through his light hair, and so displayed a sparkling diamond, that in spite of Monte Cristo's advice the vain young man had been unable to resist putting on his little finger. This movement was accompanied by killing glances at Mademoiselle Danglars, and by sighs launched in the same direction.

Mademoiselle Danglars was still the same—cold, beautiful, and satirical. Not one of these glances, nor one sigh, was lost on her; they might have been said to fall on the shield of Minerva, which some philosophers assert protected sometimes the breast of Sappho. Eugénie bowed coldly to the count, and availed herself of the first moment when the conversation became earnest to escape to her study, whence very soon two cheerful and noisy voices being heard in connection with occasional notes of the piano assured Monte Cristo that Mademoiselle Danglars preferred to his society and to that of M. Cavalcanti the company of Mademoiselle Louise d'Armilly, her singing teacher.

swordsmen in the army, but he was pressed so closely in the onset that he missed his aim and fell. The witnesses thought he was dead, but his adversary, who knew he had not struck him, offered him the assistance of his hand to rise. The circumstance irritated instead of calming the general, and he rushed on his adversary. But his opponent did not allow his guard to be broken. He received him on his sword and three times the general drew back on finding himself too closely engaged, and then returned to the charge. At the third he fell again. They thought he slipped, as at first, and the witnesses, seeing he did not move, approached and endeavoured to raise him, but the one who passed his arm around the body found it was moistened with blood. The general, who had almost fainted, revived. "Ah," said he, "they have sent some fencing-master to fight with me." The president, without answering, approached the witness who held the lantern, and raising his sleeve, showed him two wounds he had received in his arm; then opening his coat, and unbuttoning his waistcoat, displayed his side, pierced with a third wound. Still he had not even uttered a sigh. General d'Épinay died five minutes after."

Franz read these last words in a voice so choked that they were hardly audible, and then stopped, passing his hand over his eyes as if to dispel a cloud; but after a moment's silence, he continued:

"'The president went up the steps, after pushing his sword into his cane; a track of blood on the snow marked his course. He had scarcely arrived at the top when he heard a heavy splash in the water—it was the general's body, which the witnesses had just thrown into the river after ascertaining that he was dead. The general fell, then, in a loyal duel, and not in ambush as it might have been reported. In proof of this we have signed this paper to establish the truth of the facts, lest the moment should arrive when either of the actors in this terrible scene should be accused of premeditated murder or of infringement of the laws of honour.

'"Signed, Beaurepaire, Duchampy, and Lecharpal."'

When Franz had finished reading this account, so dreadful for a son; when Valentine, pale with emotion, had wiped away a tear; when Villefort, trembling, and crouched in a corner, had endeavoured to lessen the storm by supplicating glances at the implacable old man,—

'Sir,' said d'Épinay to Noirtier, 'since you are well acquainted with all these details, which are attested by honourable signatures,—since you

"'"Because, sir,' said the president, 'you have insulted a man, and that man will not go one step farther without demanding honourable reparation.'

"'"Another method of assassination?' said the general, shrugging his shoulders.

"'"Make no noise, sir, unless you wish me to consider you as one of the men of whom you spoke just now as cowards, who take their weakness for a shield. You are alone, one alone shall answer you; you have a sword by your side, I have one in my cane; you have no witness, one of these gentlemen will serve you. Now, if you please, remove your bandage.' The general tore the handkerchief from his eyes. 'At last,' said he, 'I shall know with whom I have to do.' They opened the door and the four men alighted.'"

Franz again interrupted himself, and wiped the cold drops from his brow; there was something awful in hearing the son read aloud in trembling pallor these details of his father's death, which had hitherto been a mystery. Valentine clasped her hands as if in prayer. Noirtier looked at Villefort with an almost sublime expression of contempt and pride.

Franz continued:

"'It was, as we said, the fifth of February. For three days the mercury had been five or six degrees below freezing and the steps were covered with ice. The general was stout and tall, the president offered him the side of the railing to assist him in getting down. The two witnesses followed. It was a dark night. The ground from the steps to the river was covered with snow and hoarfrost, the water of the river looked black and deep. One of the seconds went for a lantern in a coal-barge near, and by its light they examined the weapons. The president's sword, which was simply, as he had said, one he carried in his cane, was five inches shorter than the general's, and had no guard. The general proposed to cast lots for the swords, but the president said it was he who had given the provocation, and when he had given it he had supposed each would use his own arms. The witnesses endeavoured to insist, but the president bade them be silent. The lantern was placed on the ground, the two adversaries took their stations, and the duel began. The light made the two swords appear like flashes of lightning; as for the men, they were scarcely perceptible, the darkness was so great. '"General d"Épinay passed for one of the best

It was then, especially while conversing with Madame Danglars, and apparently absorbed by the charm of the conversation, that the count noticed M. Andrea Cavalcanti's solicitude, his manner of listening to the music at the door he dared not pass, and of manifesting his admiration.

The banker soon returned. His first look was certainly directed towards Monte Cristo, but the second was for Andrea. As for his wife, he bowed to her, as some husbands do to their wives, but in a way that bachelors will never comprehend, until a very extensive code is published on conjugal life.

'Have not the ladies invited you to join them at the piano?' said Danglars to Andrea.

'Alas, no, sir,' replied Andrea with a sigh, still more remarkable than the former ones. Danglars immediately advanced towards the door and opened it. The two young ladies were seen seated on the same chair, at the piano, accompanying themselves, each with one hand, a fancy to which they had accustomed themselves, and performed admirably. Mademoiselle d'Armilly, whom they then perceived through the open doorway, formed with Eugénie one of the *tableaux vivants* of which the Germans are so fond. She was somewhat beautiful, and exquisitely formed—a little fairy-like figure, with large curls falling on her neck, which was rather too long, as Perugino sometimes makes his Virgins, and her eyes dull from fatigue. She was said to have a weak chest, and like Antonia in the *Cremona Violin*, she would die one day while singing.

Monte Cristo cast one rapid and curious glance round this sanctum; it was the first time he had ever seen Mademoiselle d'Armilly, of whom he had heard much.

'Well,' said the banker to his daughter, 'are we then all to be excluded?'

He then led the young man into the study, and either by chance or manœuvre the door was partially closed after Andrea, so that from the place where they sat neither the Count nor the baroness could see anything; but as the banker had accompanied Andrea, Madame Danglars appeared to take no notice of it.

The count soon heard Andrea's voice, singing a Corsican song, accompanied by the piano. While the count smiled at hearing this song, which made him lose sight of Andrea in the recollection of Benedetto, Madame Danglars was boasting to Monte Cristo of her husband's strength of mind,

who that very morning had lost three or four hundred thousand francs by a failure at Milan. The praise was well deserved, for had not the count heard it from the baroness, or by one of those means by which he knew everything, the baron's countenance would not have led him to suspect it.

'Hem,' thought Monte Cristo, 'he begins to conceal his losses; a month since he boasted of them.'

Then aloud,—'Oh, madame, M. Danglars is so skilful, he will soon regain at the Bourse what he loses elsewhere.'

'I see that you participate in a prevalent error,' said Madame Danglars.

'What is it?' said Monte Cristo.

'That M. Danglars speculates, whereas he never does.'

'Truly, madame, I recollect M. Debray told me—apropos, what has become of him? I have seen nothing of him the last three or four days.'

'Nor I,' said Madame Danglars; 'but you began a sentence, sir, and did not finish.'

'Which?'

'M. Debray had told you— '

'Ah, yes; he told me it was you who sacrificed to the demon of speculation.'

'I was once very fond of it, but I do not indulge now.'

'Then you are wrong, madame. Fortune is precarious; and if I were a woman and fate had made me a banker's wife, whatever might be my confidence in my husband's good fortune, still in speculation you know there is great risk. Well, I would secure for myself a fortune independent of him, even if I acquired it by placing my interests in hands unknown to him.' Madame Danglars blushed, in spite of all her efforts.

'Stay,' said Monte Cristo, as though he had not observed her confusion, 'I have heard of a lucky hit that was made yesterday on the Neapolitan bonds.'

'I have none—nor have I ever possessed any; but really we have talked long enough of money, count, we are like two stockbrokers; have you heard how fate is persecuting the poor Villeforts?'

'What has happened?' said the count, simulating total ignorance.

'You know the Marquis of Saint-Méran died a few days after he had set out on his journey to Paris, and the marchioness a few days after her arrival?'

of honour who will use every means to convince you before resorting to the last extremity, but as you have said, you are among conspirators, you are in possession of our secret, and you must restore it to us.' A significant silence followed these words, and as the general did not reply,—'Close the doors,' said the president to the door-keeper. "'The same deadly silence succeeded these words. Then the general advanced, and making a violent effort to control his feelings,—'I have a son,' said he, 'and I ought to think of him, finding myself among assassins.'

"'"General,' said the chief of the assembly, 'one man may insult fifty—it is the privilege of weakness. But he does wrong to use his privilege. Follow my advice, swear, and do not insult.' The general, again daunted by the superiority of the chief, hesitated a moment; then advancing to the president's desk,—"What is the form, said he.

"'"It is this:—"I swear by my honour not to reveal to anyone what I have seen and heard on the 5th of February, 1815, between nine and ten o'clock in the evening; and I plead guilty of death should I ever violate this oath."' The general appeared to be affected by a nervous tremor, which prevented his answering for some moments; then, overcoming his manifest repugnance, he pronounced the required oath, but in so low a tone as to be scarcely audible to the majority of the members, who insisted on his repeating it clearly and distinctly, which he did.

"'"Now am I at liberty to retire?' said the general. The president rose, appointed three members to accompany him, and got into the carriage with the general after bandaging his eyes. One of those three members was the coachman who had driven them there. The other members silently dispersed. 'Where do you wish to be taken?' asked the president.—'Anywhere out of your presence,' replied M. d'Épinay. 'Beware, sir,' replied the president, 'you are no longer in the assembly, and have only to do with individuals; do not insult them unless you wish to be held responsible.' But instead of listening, M. d'Épinay went on,—'You are still as brave in your carriage as in your assembly because you are still four against one.' The president stopped the coach. They were at that part of the Quai des Ormes where the steps lead down to the river. 'Why do you stop here?' asked d'Épinay.

""You would call acting generously, knowing your conspiracy and not informing against you, that is what I should call becoming your accomplice. You see I am more candid than you.""

'Ah, my father!' said Franz, interrupting himself. 'I understand now why they murdered him.' Valentine could not help casting one glance towards the young man, whose filial enthusiasm it was delightful to behold. Villefort walked to and fro behind them. Noirtier watched the expression of each one, and preserved his dignified and commanding attitude. Franz returned to the manuscript, and continued:

""'Sir,' said the president, 'you have been invited to join this assembly—you were not forced here; it was proposed to you to come blindfolded—you accepted. When you complied with this twofold request you well knew we did not wish to secure the throne of Louis XVIII., or we should not take so much care to avoid the vigilance of the police. It would be conceding too much to allow you to put on a mask to aid you in the discovery of our secret, and then to remove it that you may ruin those who have confided in you. No, no, you must first say if you declare yourself for the king of a day who now reigns, or for his majesty the emperor.'

""'I am a royalist,' replied the general; 'I have taken the oath of allegiance to Louis XVIII., and I will adhere to it.' These words were followed by a general murmur, and it was evident that several of the members were discussing the propriety of making the general repent of his rashness.

""'The president again arose, and having imposed silence, said,—'Sir, you are too serious and too sensible a man not to understand the consequences of our present situation, and your candour has already dictated to us the conditions which remain for us to offer you.' The general, putting his hand on his sword, exclaimed,—'If you talk of honour, do not begin by disavowing its laws, and impose nothing by violence.'

""'And you, sir,' continued the president, with a calmness still more terrible than the general's anger, 'I advise you not to touch your sword.' The general looked around him with slight uneasiness; however he did not yield, but calling up all his fortitude, said,—'I will not swear.'

""'Then you must die,' replied the president calmly. M. d'Épinay became very pale; he looked round him a second time, several members of the club were whispering, and getting their arms from under their cloaks. 'General,' said the president, 'do not alarm yourself; you are among men

'Yes,' said Monte Cristo, 'I have heard that; but, as Claudius said to Hamlet, "it is a law of nature; their fathers died before them, and they mourned their loss; they will die before their children, who will, in their turn, grieve for them."'

'But that is not all.'

'Not all!'

'No; they were going to marry their daughter— '

'To M. Franz d'Épinay. Is it broken off?'

'Yesterday morning, it appears, Franz declined the honour.'

'Indeed? And is the reason known?'

'No.'

'How extraordinary! And how does M. de Villefort bear it?'

'As usual. Like a philosopher.'

Danglars returned at this moment alone.

'Well,' said the baroness, 'do you leave M. Cavalcanti with your daughter?'

'And Mademoiselle d'Armilly,' said the banker; 'do you consider her no one?' Then, turning to Monte Cristo, he said, 'Prince Cavalcanti is a charming young man, is he not? But is he really a prince?'

'I will not answer for it,' said Monte Cristo. 'His father was introduced to me as a marquis, so he ought to be a count; but I do not think he has much claim to that title.'

'Why?' said the banker. 'If he is a prince, he is wrong not to maintain his rank; I do not like anyone to deny his origin.'

'Oh, you are a thorough democrat,' said Monte Cristo, smiling.

'But do you see to what you are exposing yourself?' said the baroness. 'If, perchance, M. de Morcerf came, he would find M. Cavalcanti in that room, where he, the betrothed of Eugénie, has never been admitted.'

'You may well say, perchance,' replied the banker; 'for he comes so seldom, it would seem only chance that brings him.'

'But should he come and find that young man with your daughter, he might be displeased.'

'He? You are mistaken. M. Albert would not do us the honour to be jealous; he does not like Eugénie sufficiently. Besides, I care not for his displeasure.'

'Still, situated as we are— '

'Yes, do you know how we are situated? At his mother's ball he danced once with Eugénie, and M. Cavalcanti three times, and he took no notice of it.'

The valet announced the Vicomte Albert de Morcerf. The baroness rose hastily, and was going into the study, when Danglars stopped her.

'Let her alone,' said he.

She looked at him in amazement. Monte Cristo appeared to be unconscious of what passed. Albert entered, looking very handsome and in high spirits. He bowed politely to the baroness, familiarly to Danglars, and affectionately to Monte Cristo. Then turning to the baroness: 'May I ask how Mademoiselle Danglars is?' said he.

'She is quite well,' replied Danglars quickly; 'she is at the piano with M. Cavalcanti.'

Albert retained his calm and indifferent manner; he might feel perhaps annoyed, but he knew Monte Cristo's eye was on him. 'M. Cavalcanti has a fine tenor voice,' said he, 'and Mademoiselle Eugénie a splendid soprano, and then she plays the piano like Thalberg. The concert must be a delightful one.'

'They suit each other remarkably well,' said Danglars. Albert appeared not to notice this remark, which was, however, so rude that Madame Danglars blushed.

'I, too,' said the young man, 'am a musician—at least, my masters used to tell me so; but it is strange that my voice never would suit any other, and a soprano less than any.'

Danglars smiled, and seemed to say, 'It is of no consequence.' Then, hoping doubtless to effect his purpose, he said,—'The prince and my daughter were universally admired yesterday. You were not of the party, M. de Morcerf?'

'What prince?' asked Albert.

'Prince Cavalcanti,' said Danglars, who persisted in giving the young man that title.

'Pardon me,' said Albert, 'I was not aware that he was a prince. And Prince Cavalcanti sang with Mademoiselle Eugénie yesterday? It must have been charming, indeed. I regret not having heard them. But I was unable to accept your invitation, having promised to accompany my mother to a German concert given by the Baroness of Château-Renaud.'

Franz interrupted himself by saying, 'My father was a royalist; they need not have asked his sentiments, which were well known.'

'And hence,' said Villefort, 'arose my affection for your father, my dear M. Franz. Opinions held in common are a ready bond of union.'

'Read again,' said the old man.

Franz continued:

"'The president then sought to make him speak more explicitly, but M. de Quesnel replied that he wished first to know what they wanted with him. He was then informed of the contents of the letter from the Island of Elba, in which he was recommended to the club as a man who would be likely to advance the interests of their party. One paragraph spoke of the return of Bonaparte and promised another letter and further details, on the arrival of the *Pharaon* belonging to the shipbuilder Morrel, of Marseilles, whose captain was entirely devoted to the emperor. During all this time, the general, on whom they thought to have relied as on a brother, manifested evidently signs of discontent and repugnance. When the reading was finished, he remained silent, with knitted brows.

"'Well,' asked the president, 'what do you say to this letter, general?'

"'I say that it is too soon after declaring myself for Louis XVIII. to break my vow in behalf of the ex-emperor.' This answer was too clear to permit of any mistake as to his sentiments. 'General,' said the president, 'we acknowledge no King Louis XVIII., or an ex-emperor, but his majesty the emperor and king, driven from France, which is his kingdom, by violence and treason.'

"'Excuse me, gentlemen,' said the general; 'you may not acknowledge Louis XVIII., but I do, as he has made me a baron and a field-marshal, and I shall never forget that for these two titles I am indebted to his happy return to France.'

"'Sir,' said the president, rising with gravity, 'be careful what you say; your words clearly show us that they are deceived concerning you in the Island of Elba, and have deceived us! The communication has been made to you in consequence of the confidence placed in you, and which does you honour. Now we discover our error; a title and promotion attach you to the government we wish to overturn. We will not constrain you to help us; we enroll no one against his conscience, but we will compel you to act generously, even if you are not disposed to do so.'

call for him if he would be ready at nine o'clock. The meetings were always held from that time till midnight. At nine o'clock the president of the club presented himself; the general was ready, the president informed him that one of the conditions of his introduction was that he should be eternally ignorant of the place of meeting, and that he would allow his eyes to be bandaged, swearing that he would not endeavour to take off the bandage. General de Quesnel accepted the condition, and promised on his honour not to seek to discover the road they took. The general's carriage was ready, but the president told him it was impossible for him to use it, since it was useless to blindfold the master if the coachman knew through what streets he went. 'What must be done then?' asked the general.—'I have my carriage here,' said the president.

"'"Have you, then, so much confidence in your servant that you can intrust him with a secret you will not allow me to know?'

"'"Our coachman is a member of the club,' said the president; 'we shall be driven by a State-Councillor.'

"'"Then we run another risk,' said the general, laughing, 'that of being upset.' We insert this joke to prove that the general was not in the least compelled to attend the meeting, but that he came willingly. When they were seated in the carriage the president reminded the general of his promise to allow his eyes to be bandaged, to which he made no opposition. On the road the president thought he saw the general make an attempt to remove the handkerchief, and reminded him of his oath. 'Sure enough,' said the general. The carriage stopped at an alley leading out of the Rue Saint-Jacques. The general alighted, leaning on the arm of the president, of whose dignity he was not aware, considering him simply as a member of the club; they went through the alley, mounted a flight of stairs, and entered the assembly-room.

'"The deliberations had already begun. The members, apprised of the sort of presentation which was to be made that evening, were all in attendance. When in the middle of the room the general was invited to remove his bandage, he did so immediately, and was surprised to see so many well-known faces in a society of whose existence he had till then been ignorant. They questioned him as to his sentiments, but he contented himself with answering, that the letters from the Island of Elba ought to have informed them— "'

This was followed by rather an awkward silence.

'May I also be allowed,' said Morcerf, 'to pay my respects to Mademoiselle Danglars?'

'Wait a moment,' said the banker, stopping the young man; 'do you hear that delightful cavatina? Ta, ta, ta, ti, ta, ti, ta, ta; it is charming, let them finish—one moment. Bravo, bravi, brava!' The banker was enthusiastic in his applause. 'Indeed,' said Albert, 'it is exquisite; it is impossible to understand the music of his country better than Prince Cavalcanti does. You said prince, did you not? But he can easily become one, if he is not already; it is no uncommon thing in Italy. But to return to the charming musicians—you should give us a treat, Danglars, without telling them there is a stranger. Ask them to sing one more song; it is so delightful to hear music in the distance, when the musicians are unrestrained by observation.'

Danglars was quite annoyed by the young man's indifference. He took Monte Cristo aside.

'What do you think of our lover?' said he.

'He appears cool. But, then your word is given.'

'Yes, doubtless I have promised to give my daughter to a man who loves her, but not to one who does not. See him there, cold as marble and proud like his father. If he were rich, if he had Cavalcanti's fortune, that might be pardoned. *Ma foi*, I haven't consulted my daughter; but if she has good taste— '

'Oh,' said Monte Cristo, 'my fondness may blind me, but I assure you I consider Morcerf a charming young man who will render your daughter happy and will sooner or later attain a certain amount of distinction, and his father's position is good.'

'Hem,' said Danglars.

'Why do you doubt?'

'The past—that obscurity on the past.'

'But that does not affect the son.'

'Very true.'

'Now, I beg of you, don't go off your head. It's a month now that you have been thinking of this marriage, and you must see that it throws some responsibility on me, for it was at my house you met this young Cavalcanti, whom I do not really know at all.'

'But I do.'

'Have you made inquiry?'

'Is there any need of that! Does not his appearance speak for him? And he is very rich.'

'I am not so sure of that.'

'And yet you said he had money.'

'Fifty thousand livres—a mere trifle.'

'He is well educated.'

'Hem,' said Monte Cristo in his turn.

'He is a musician.'

'So are all Italians.'

'Come, count, you do not do that young man justice.'

'Well, I acknowledge it annoys me, knowing your connection with the Morcerf family, to see him throw himself in the way.' Danglars burst out laughing.

'What a Puritan you are!' said he; 'that happens every day.'

'But you cannot break it off in this way; the Morcerfs are depending on this union.'

'Indeed.'

'Positively.'

'Then let them explain themselves; you should give the father a hint, you are so intimate with the family.'

'I?—where the devil did you find out that?'

'At their ball; it was apparent enough. Why, did not the countess, the proud Mercédès, the disdainful Catalane, who will scarcely open her lips to her oldest acquaintances, take your arm, lead you into the garden, into the private walks, and remain there for half an hour?'

'Ah, baron, baron,' said Albert, 'you are not listening—what barbarism in a megalomaniac like you!'

'Oh, don't worry about me, Sir Mocker,' said Danglars; then turning to Monte Cristo he said:

'But will you undertake to speak to the father?'

'Willingly, if you wish it.'

'But let it be done explicitly and positively. If he demands my daughter let him fix the day—declare his conditions; in short, let us either understand each other, or quarrel. You understand—no more delay.'

Franz took them from Barrois and casting a glance at the cover, read:

"'To be given, after my death, to General Durand, who shall bequeath the packet to his son, with an injunction to preserve it as containing an important document.'

'Well, sir,' asked Franz, 'what do you wish me to do with this paper?'

'To preserve it, sealed up as it is, doubtless,' said the procureur.

'No,' replied Noirtier eagerly.

'Do you wish him to read it?' said Valentine.

'Yes,' replied the old man.

'You understand, baron, my grandfather wishes you to read this paper,' said Valentine.

'Then let us sit down,' said Villefort impatiently, 'for it will take some time.'

'Sit down,' said the old man. Villefort took a chair, but Valentine remained standing by her father's side, and Franz before him, holding the mysterious paper in his hand. 'Read,' said the old man. Franz untied it, and in the midst of the most profound silence read: '"*Extract of the report of a meeting of the Bonapartist Club in the Rue Saint-Jacques, held February 5th, 1815.*"'

Franz stopped. 'February 5th, 1815!' said he; 'it is the day my father was murdered.' Valentine and Villefort were dumb; the eye of the old man alone seemed to say clearly, 'Go on.'

'But it was on leaving this club,' said he, 'my father disappeared.'

Noirtier's eye continued to say, 'Read.' He resumed:—

"'The undersigned Louis-Jacques Beaurepaire, lieutenant-colonel of artillery, Étienne Duchampy, general of brigade, and Claude Lecharpal, keeper of woods and forests, declare, that on the 4th of February, a letter arrived from the Island of Elba, recommending to the kindness and the confidence of the Bonapartist Club, General Flavien de Quesnel, who having served the emperor from 1804 to 1814 was supposed to be devoted to the interests of the Napoleon dynasty, notwithstanding the title of baron which Louis XVIII. had just granted to him with his estate of Épinay. "'A note was in consequence addressed to General de Quesnel, begging him to be present at the meeting next day, the 5th. The note indicated neither the street nor the number of the house where the meeting was to be held; it bore no signature, but it announced to the general that someone would