and indeed frequently afterwards, a court of justice, on days when some especial trial is to take place, resembles a drawing-room where many persons recognize each other and converse if they can do so without losing their seats; or, if they are separated by too great a number of lawyers, communicate by signs.

It was one of the magnificent autumn days which make amends for a short summer; the clouds which M. de Villefort had perceived at sunrise had all disappeared as if by magic, and one of the softest and most brilliant days of September shone forth in all its splendour.

Beauchamp, one of the kings of the press, and therefore claiming the right of a throne everywhere, was eying everybody through his monocle. He perceived Château-Renaud and Debray, who had just gained the good graces of a sergeant-at-arms, and who had persuaded the latter to let them stand before, instead of behind him, as they ought to have done. The worthy sergeant had recognized the minister's secretary and the millionnaire, and, by way of paying extra attention to his noble neighbours, promised to keep their places while they paid a visit to Beauchamp.

'Well,' said Beauchamp, 'we shall see our friend!'

'Yes, indeed!' replied Debray. 'That worthy prince. Deuce take those Italian princes!'

'A man, too, who could boast of Dante for a genealogist, and could reckon back to the *Divina Comedia*.'

'A nobility of the rope!' said Château-Renaud phlegmatically.

'He will be condemned, will he not?' asked Debray of Beauchamp.

'My dear fellow, I think we should ask you that question; you know such news much better than we do. Did you see the president at the minister's last night?'

'Yes.'

'What did he say?'

'Something which will surprise you.'

'Oh, make haste and tell me, then; it is a long time since that has happened.'

'Well, he told me that Benedetto, who is considered a serpent of subtlety and a giant of cunning, is really but a very commonplace, silly rascal, and altogether unworthy of the experiments that will be made on his phrenological organs after his death.'

'Bah,' said Beauchamp, 'he played the prince very well.'

'Yes, for you who detest those unhappy princes, Beauchamp, and are always delighted to find fault with them; but not for me, who discover a gentleman by instinct, and who scent out an aristocratic family like a very bloodhound of heraldry.'

'Then you never believed in the principality?'

'Yes.—in the principality, but not in the prince.'

'Not so bad,' said Beauchamp; 'still, I assure you, he passed very well with many people; I saw him at the ministers' houses.'

'Ah, yes,' said Château-Renaud. 'The idea of thinking ministers understand anything about princes!'

'There is something in what you have just said,' said Beauchamp, laughing.

'But,' said Debray to Beauchamp, 'if I spoke to the president, *you* must have been with the procureur.'

'It was an impossibility; for the last week M. de Villefort has secluded himself. It is natural enough; this strange chain of domestic afflictions, followed by the no less strange death of his daughter— '

'Strange? What do you mean, Beauchamp?'

'Oh, yes; do you pretend that all this has been unobserved at the minister's?' said Beauchamp, placing his eye-glass in his eye, where he tried to make it remain.

'My dear sir,' said Château-Renaud, 'allow me to tell you that you do not understand that manœuvre with the eye-glass half so well as Debray. Give him a lesson, Debray.'

'Stay,' said Beauchamp, 'surely I am not deceived.'

'What is it?'

'It is she!'

'Whom do you mean?'

'They said she had left.'

'Mademoiselle Eugénie?' said Château-Renaud; 'has she returned?'

'No, but her mother.'

'Madame Danglars? Nonsense! Impossible!' said Château-Renaud; 'only ten days after the flight of her daughter, and three days from the bankruptcy of her husband?'

Debray coloured slightly, and followed with his eyes the direction of Beauchamp's glance.

'Come,' he said, 'it is only a veiled lady, some foreign princess, perhaps the mother of Cavalcanti. But you were just speaking on a very interesting topic, Beauchamp.'

'I?'

'Yes; you were telling us about the extraordinary death of Valentine.'

'Ah, yes, so I was. But how is it that Madame de Villefort is not here?'

'Poor, dear woman,' said Debray, 'she is no doubt occupied in distilling balm for the hospitals, or in making cosmetics for herself or friends. Do you know she spends two or three thousand crowns a year in this amusement? But I wonder she is not here. I should have been pleased to see her, for I like her very much.'

'And I hate her,' said Château-Renaud.

'Why?'

'I do not know. Why do we love? Why do we hate? I detest her, from antipathy.'

'Or, rather, by instinct.'

'Perhaps so. But to return to what you were saying, Beauchamp.'

'Well, do you know why they die so multitudinously at M. de Villefort's?'

'"Multitudinously" is good,' said Château-Renaud.

'My good fellow, you'll find the word in Saint-Simon.'

'But the thing itself is at M. de Villefort's; but let's get back to the subject.'

'Talking of that,' said Debray, 'Madame was making inquiries about that house, which for the last three months has been hung with black.'

'Who is Madame?' asked Château-Renaud.

'The minister's wife, *pardieu!*'

'Oh, your pardon! I never visit ministers; I leave that to the princes.'

'Really, you were only before sparkling, but now you are brilliant; take compassion on us, or, like Jupiter, you will wither us up.'

'I will not speak again,' said Château-Renaud; 'pray have compassion upon me, and do not take up every word I say.'

Chapter CIX

The Assizes

THE Benedetto affair, as it was called at the Palais, and by people in general, had produced a tremendous sensation. Frequenting the Café de Paris, the Boulevard de Gand, and the Bois de Boulogne, during his brief career of splendour, the false Cavalcanti had formed a host of acquaintances. The papers had related his various adventures, both as the man of fashion and the galley-slave; and as everyone who had been personally acquainted with Prince Andrea Cavalcanti experienced a lively curiosity in his fate, they all determined to spare no trouble in endeavouring to witness the trial of M. Benedetto for the murder of his comrade in chains.

In the eyes of many, Benedetto appeared, if not a victim to, at least an instance of, the fallibility of the law. M. Cavalcanti, his father, had been seen in Paris, and it was expected that he would re-appear to claim the illustrious outcast. Many, also, who were not aware of the circumstances attending his withdrawal from Paris, were struck with the worthy appearance, the gentlemanly bearing, and the knowledge of the world displayed by the old patrician, who certainly played the nobleman very well, so long as he said nothing, and made no arithmetical calculations.

As for the accused himself, many remembered him as being so amiable, so handsome, and so liberal, that they chose to think him the victim of some conspiracy, since in this world large fortunes frequently excite the malevolence and jealousy of some unknown enemy.

Everyone, therefore, ran to the court; some to witness the sight, others to comment upon it. From seven o'clock in the morning a crowd was stationed at the iron gates, and an hour before the trial commenced the hall was full of the privileged. Before the entrance of the magistrates,

She listened, panting, overwhelmed, crushed; her eye alone lived, and glared horribly.

'Do you understand me?' he said. 'I am going down there to pronounce the sentence of death against a murderer. If I find you alive on my return, you shall sleep tonight in the conciergerie.'

Madame de Villefort sighed; her nerves gave way, and she sunk on the carpet. The king's attorney seemed to experience a sensation of pity; he looked upon her less severely, and, bowing to her, said slowly:

'Farewell, madame, farewell!'

That farewell struck Madame de Villefort like the executioner's knife. She fainted. The procureur went out, after having double-locked the door.

'Come, let us endeavour to get to the end of our story, Beauchamp; I told you that yesterday Madame made inquiries of me upon the subject; enlighten me, and I will then communicate my information to her.'

'Well, gentlemen, the reason people die so multitudinously (I like the word) at M. de Villefort's is that there is an assassin in the house!'

The two young men shuddered, for the same idea had more than once occurred to them.

'And who is the assassin;' they asked together.

'Young Edward!' A burst of laughter from the auditors did not in the least disconcert the speaker, who continued,—'Yes, gentlemen; Edward, the infant phenomenon, who is quite an adept in the art of killing.'

'You are jesting.'

'Not at all. I yesterday engaged a servant, who had just left M. de Villefort—I intend sending him away tomorrow, for he eats so enormously, to make up for the fast imposed upon him by his terror in that house. Well, now listen.'

'We are listening.'

'It appears the dear child has obtained possession of a bottle containing some drug, which he every now and then uses against those who have displeased him. First, M. and Madame de Saint-Méran incurred his displeasure, so he poured out three drops of his elixir—three drops were sufficient; then followed Barrois, the old servant of M. Noirtier, who sometimes rebuffed this little wretch—he therefore received the same quantity of the elixir; the same happened to Valentine, of whom he was jealous; he gave her the same dose as the others, and all was over for her as well as the rest.'

'Why, what nonsense are you telling us?' said Château-Renaud.

'Yes, it is an extraordinary story,' said Beauchamp; 'is it not?'

'It is absurd,' said Debray.

'Ah,' said Beauchamp, 'you doubt me? Well, you can ask my servant, or rather him who will no longer be my servant tomorrow, it was the talk of the house.'

'And this elixir, where is it? what is it?'

'The child conceals it.'

'But where did he find it?'

'In his mother's laboratory.'

'Does his mother then, keep poisons in her laboratory?'

'How can I tell? You are questioning me like a king's attorney. I only repeat what I have been told, and like my informant I can do no more. The poor devil would eat nothing, from fear.'

'It is incredible!'

'No, my dear fellow, it is not at all incredible. You saw the child pass through the Rue Richelieu last year, who amused himself with killing his brothers and sisters by sticking pins in their ears while they slept. The generation who follow us are very precocious.'

'Come, Beauchamp,' said Château-Renaud, 'I will bet anything you do not believe a word of all you have been telling us. But I do not see the Count of Monte Cristo here.'

'He is worn out,' said Debray; 'besides, he could not well appear in public, since he has been the dupe of the Cavalcanti, who, it appears, presented themselves to him with false letters of credit, and cheated him out of 100,000 francs upon the hypothesis of this principality.'

'By the way, M. de Château-Renaud,' asked Beauchamp, 'how is Morrel?'

'*Ma foi*, I have called three times without once seeing him. Still, his sister did not seem uneasy, and told me that though she had not seen him for two or three days, she was sure he was well.'

'Ah, now I think of it, the Count of Monte Cristo cannot appear in the hall,' said Beauchamp.

'Why not?'

'Because he is an actor in the drama.'

'Has he assassinated anyone, then?'

'No, on the contrary, they wished to assassinate him. You know that it was in leaving his house that M. de Caderousse was murdered by his friend Benedetto. You know that the famous waistcoat was found in his house, containing the letter which stopped the signature of the marriage-contract. Do you see the waistcoat? There it is, all blood-stained, on the desk, as a testimony of the crime.'

'Ah, very good.'

'Hush, gentlemen, here is the court; let us go back to our places.'

'For what you have just said.'

'What did I say? Oh, my brain whirls; I no longer understand anything. Oh, my God, my God!'

And she rose, with her hair dishevelled, and her lips foaming.

'Have you answered the question I put to you on entering the room?—where do you keep the poison you generally use, madame?'

Madame de Villefort raised her arms to heaven, and convulsively struck one hand against the other.

'No, no,' she vociferated, 'no, you cannot wish that!' 'What I do not wish, madame, is that you should perish on the scaffold. Do you understand?' asked Villefort.

'Oh, mercy, mercy, monsieur!'

'What I require is, that justice be done. I am on the earth to punish, madame,' he added, with a flaming glance; 'any other woman, were it the queen herself, I would send to the executioner; but to you I shall be merciful. To you I will say, "Have you not, madame, put aside some of the surest, deadliest, most speedy poison?"' 'Oh, pardon me, sir; let me live!'

'She is cowardly,' said Villefort.

'Reflect that I am your wife!'

'You are a poisoner.'

'In the name of Heaven!'

'No!'

'In the name of the love you once bore me!'

'No, no!'

'In the name of our child! Ah, for the sake of our child, let me live!' 'No, no, no, I tell you; one day, if I allow you to live, you will perhaps kill him, as you have the others!'

'I?—I kill my boy?' cried the distracted mother, rushing toward Villefort; 'I kill my son? Ha, ha, ha!' and a frightful, demoniac laugh finished the sentence, which was lost in a hoarse rattle.

Madame de Villefort fell at her husband's feet. He approached her.

'Think of it, madame,' he said; 'if, on my return, justice has not been satisfied, I will denounce you with my own mouth, and arrest you with my own hands!'

'Can you be a coward?' continued Villefort, with increasing excitement, 'you, who could count, one by one, the minutes of four death agonies? *You*, who have arranged your infernal plans, and removed the beverages with a talent and precision almost miraculous? Have you, then, who have calculated everything with such nicety, have you forgotten to calculate one thing—I mean where the revelation of your crimes will lead you to? Oh, it is impossible—you must have saved some surer, more subtle and deadly poison than any other, that you might escape the punishment that you deserve. You have done this—I hope so, at least.'

Madame de Villefort stretched out her hands, and fell on her knees.

'I understand,' he said, 'you confess; but a confession made to the judges, a confession made at the last moment, extorted when the crime cannot be denied, diminishes not the punishment inflicted on the guilty!'

'The punishment?' exclaimed Madame de Villefort, 'the punishment, monsieur? Twice you have pronounced that word!'

'Certainly. Did you hope to escape it because you were four times guilty? Did you think the punishment would be withheld because you are the wife of him who pronounces it?—No, madame, no; the scaffold awaits the poisoner, whoever she may be, unless, as I just said, the poisoner has taken the precaution of keeping for herself a few drops of her deadliest poison.'

Madame de Villefort uttered a wild cry, and a hideous and uncontrollable terror spread over her distorted features.

'Oh, do not fear the scaffold, madame,' said the magistrate; 'I will not dishonor you, since that would be dishonor to myself; no, if you have heard me distinctly, you will understand that you are not to die on the scaffold.'

'No, I do not understand; what do you mean?' stammered the unhappy woman, completely overwhelmed.

'I mean that the wife of the first magistrate in the capital shall not, by her infamy, soil an unblemished name; that she shall not, with one blow, dishonor her husband and her child.'

'No, no—oh, no!'

'Well, madame, it will be a laudable action on your part, and I will thank you for it!'

'You will thank me—for what?'

A noise was heard in the hall; the sergeant called his two patrons with an energetic 'hem!' and the door-keeper appearing, called out with that shrill voice peculiar to his order, ever since the days of Beaumarchais:

'The court, gentlemen!'

And, in her first paroxysm of terror, she had raised herself from the sofa, in the next, stronger very likely than the other, she fell down again on the cushions.

'I asked you,' continued Villefort, in a perfectly calm tone, 'where you conceal the poison by the aid of which you have killed my father-in-law, M. de Saint-Méran, my mother-in-law, Madame de Saint-Méran, Barrois, and my daughter Valentine.'

'Ah, sir,' exclaimed Madame de Villefort, clasping her hands, 'what do you say?'

'It is not for you to interrogate, but to answer.'

'Is it to the judge or to the husband?' stammered Madame de Villefort.

'To the judge—to the judge, madame!' It was terrible to behold the frightful pallor of that woman, the anguish of her look, the trembling of her whole frame.

'Ah, sir,' she muttered, 'ah, sir,' and this was all.

'You do not answer, madame!' exclaimed the terrible interrogator. Then he added, with a smile yet more terrible than his anger, 'It is true, then; you do not deny it!' She moved forward. 'And you cannot deny it!' added Villefort, extending his hand toward her, as though to seize her in the name of justice. 'You have accomplished these different crimes with impudent address, but which could only deceive those whose affections for you blinded them. Since the death of Madame de Saint-Méran, I have known that a poisoner lived in my house. M. d'Avrigny warned me of it. After the death of Barrois my suspicions were directed towards an angel,—those suspicions which, even when there is no crime, are always alive in my heart; but after the death of Valentine, there has been no doubt in my mind, madame, and not only in mine, but in those of others; thus your crime, known by two persons, suspected by many, will soon become public, and, as I told you just now, you no longer speak to the husband, but to the judge.' The young woman hid her face in her hands.

'Oh, sir,' she stammered, 'I beseech you, do not believe appearances.'

'Are you, then, a coward?' cried Villefort, in a contemptuous voice. 'But I have always observed that poisoners were cowards. Can you be a coward, you, who have had the courage to witness the death of two old men and a young girl murdered by you?'

'Sir! sir!'

go out, her bonnet was placed beside her on a chair, and her gloves were on her hands.

'Ah, here you are, monsieur,' she said in her naturally calm voice; 'but how pale you are! Have you been working all night? Why did you not come down to breakfast? Well, will you take me, or shall I take Edward?'

Madame de Villefort had multiplied her questions in order to gain one answer, but to all her inquiries M. de Villefort remained mute and cold as a statue.

'Edward,' said Villefort, fixing an imperious glance on the child, 'go and play in the drawing-room, my dear; I wish to speak to your mamma.'

Madame de Villefort shuddered at the sight of that cold countenance, that resolute tone, and the awfully strange preliminaries. Edward raised his head, looked at his mother, and then, finding that she did not confirm the order, began cutting off the heads of his leaden soldiers.

'Edward,' cried M. de Villefort, so harshly that the child started up from the floor, 'do you hear me?—Go!'

The child, unaccustomed to such treatment, arose, pale and trembling; it would be difficult to say whether his emotion were caused by fear or passion. His father went up to him, took him in his arms, and kissed his forehead.

'Go,' he said: 'go, my child.' Edward ran out.

M. de Villefort went to the door, which he closed behind the child, and bolted.

'Dear me!' said the young woman, endeavouring to read her husband's inmost thoughts, while a smile passed over her countenance which froze the impassibility of Villefort; 'what is the matter?'

'Madame, where do you keep the poison you generally use?' said the magistrate, without any introduction, placing himself between his wife and the door.

Madame de Villefort must have experienced something of the sensation of a bird which, looking up, sees the murderous trap closing over its head.

A hoarse, broken tone, which was neither a cry nor a sigh, escaped from her, while she became deadly pale.

'Monsieur,' she said, 'I—I do not understand you.'

Chapter CX

The Indictment

THE judges took their places in the midst of the most profound silence; the jury took their seats; M. de Villefort, the object of unusual attention, and we had almost said of general admiration, sat in the armchair and cast a tranquil glance around him. Everyone looked with astonishment on that grave and severe face, whose calm expression personal griefs had been unable to disturb, and the aspect of a man who was a stranger to all human emotions excited something very like terror.

'Gendarmes,' said the president, 'lead in the accused.'

At these words the public attention became more intense, and all eyes were turned towards the door through which Benedetto was to enter. The door soon opened and the accused appeared.

The same impression was experienced by all present, and no one was deceived by the expression of his countenance. His features bore no sign of that deep emotion which stops the beating of the heart and blanches the cheek. His hands, gracefully placed, one upon his hat, the other in the opening of his white waistcoat, were not at all tremulous; his eye was calm and even brilliant. Scarcely had he entered the hall when he glanced at the whole body of magistrates and assistants; his eye rested longer on the president, and still more so on the king's attorney.

By the side of Andrea was stationed the lawyer who was to conduct his defence, and who had been appointed by the court, for Andrea disdained to pay any attention to those details, to which he appeared to attach no importance. The lawyer was a young man with light hair whose face expressed a hundred times more emotion than that which characterized the prisoner. The president called for the indictment, revised as we know,

by the clever and implacable pen of Villefort. During the reading of this, which was long, the public attention was continually drawn towards Andrea, who bore the inspection with Spartan unconcern. Villefort had never been so concise and eloquent. The crime was depicted in the most vivid colours; the former life of the prisoner, his transformation, a review of his life from the earliest period, were set forth with all the talent that a knowledge of human life could furnish to a mind like that of the procureur. Benedetto was thus forever condemned in public opinion before the sentence of the law could be pronounced.

Andrea paid no attention to the successive charges which were brought against him. M. de Villefort, who examined him attentively, and who no doubt practised upon him all the psychological studies he was accustomed to use, in vain endeavoured to make him lower his eyes, notwithstanding the depth and profundity of his gaze. At length the reading of the indictment was ended.

'Accused,' said the president, 'your name and surname?'

Andrea arose.

'Excuse me, Mr. President,' he said, in a clear voice, 'but I see you are going to adopt a course of questions through which I cannot follow you. I have an idea, which I will explain by and by, of making an exception to the usual form of accusation. Allow me, then, if you please, to answer in different order, or I will not do so at all.'

The astonished president looked at the jury, who in turn looked at Villefort. The whole assembly manifested great surprise, but Andrea appeared quite unmoved.

'Your age?' said the president; 'will you answer that question?'

'I will answer that question, as well as the rest, Mr. President, but in its turn.'

'Your age?' repeated the president.

'I am twenty-one years old, or rather I shall be in a few days, as I was born the night of the 27th of September, 1817.'

M. de Villefort, who was busy taking down some notes, raised his head at the mention of this date.

'Where were you born?' continued the president.

'At Auteuil, near Paris.'

then rose, and paced his room with a smile it would have been terrible to witness. The chocolate was inoffensive, for M. de Villefort felt no effects.

The breakfast-hour arrived, but M. de Villefort was not at table. The valet re-entered.

'Madame de Villefort wishes to remind you, sir,' he said, 'that eleven o'clock has just struck, and that the trial commences at twelve.'

'Well,' said Villefort, 'what then?'

'Madame de Villefort is dressed; she is quite ready, and wishes to know if she is to accompany you, sir?'

'Where to?'

'To the Palais.'

'What to do?'

'My mistress wishes much to be present at the trial.'

'Ah,' said Villefort, with a startling accent; 'does she wish that?'

The servant drew back and said, 'If you wish to go alone, sir, I will go and tell my mistress.'

Villefort remained silent for a moment, and dented his pale cheeks with his nails.

'Tell your mistress,' he at length answered, 'that I wish to speak to her, and I beg she will wait for me in her own room.'

'Yes, sir.'

'Then come to dress and shave me.'

'Directly, sir.'

The valet re-appeared almost instantly, and, having shaved his master, assisted him to dress entirely in black. When he had finished, he said:

'My mistress said she should expect you, sir, as soon as you had finished dressing.'

'I am going to her.'

And Villefort, with his papers under his arm and hat in hand, directed his steps toward the apartment of his wife.

At the door he paused for a moment to wipe his damp, pale brow. He then entered the room. Madame de Villefort was sitting on an ottoman and impatiently turning over the leaves of some newspapers and pamphlets which young Edward, by way of amusing himself, was tearing to pieces before his mother could finish reading them. She was dressed to