'No, it was not dead.'

'And you can tell me so without fearing to make me die of joy? Where is the child?'

Villefort shrugged his shoulders.

'Do I know?' said he; 'and do you believe that if I knew I would relate to you all its trials and all its adventures as would a dramatist or a novel writer? Alas, no, I know not. A woman, about six months after, came to claim it with the other half of the napkin. This woman gave all the requisite particulars, and it was intrusted to her.'

'But you should have inquired for the woman; you should have traced her.'

'And what do you think I did? I feigned a criminal process, and employed all the most acute bloodhounds and skilful agents in search of her. They traced her to Châlons, and there they lost her.'

'They lost her?'

'Yes, forever.'

Madame Danglars had listened to this recital with a sigh, a tear, or a shriek for every detail. 'And this is all?' said she; 'and you stopped there?'

'Oh, no,' said Villefort; 'I never ceased to search and to inquire. However, the last two or three years I had allowed myself some respite. But now I will begin with more perseverance and fury than ever, since fear urges me, not my conscience.'

'But,' replied Madame Danglars, 'the Count of Monte Cristo can know nothing, or he would not seek our society as he does.'

'Oh, the wickedness of man is very great,' said Villefort, 'since it surpasses the goodness of God. Did you observe that man's eyes while he was speaking to us?'

'No.'

'But have you ever watched him carefully?'

'Doubtless he is capricious, but that is all; one thing alone struck me,—of all the exquisite things he placed before us, he touched nothing. I might have suspected he was poisoning us.'

'And you see you would have been deceived.'

'Yes, doubtless.'

'But believe me, that man has other projects. For that reason I wished to see you, to speak to you, to warn you against everyone, but especially

against him. Tell me,' cried Villefort, fixing his eyes more steadfastly on her than he had ever done before, 'did you ever reveal to anyone our connection?'

'Never, to anyone.'

'You understand me,' replied Villefort, affectionately; 'when I say anyone,—pardon my urgency,—to anyone living I mean?'

'Yes, yes, I understand very well,' ejaculated the baroness; 'never, I swear to you.'

'Were you ever in the habit of writing in the evening what had transpired in the morning? Do you keep a journal?'

'No, my life has been passed in frivolity; I wish to forget it myself.'

'Do you talk in your sleep?'

'I sleep soundly, like a child; do you not remember?'

The colour mounted to the baroness's face, and Villefort turned awfully pale.

'It is true,' said he, in so low a tone that he could hardly be heard.

'Well?' said the baroness.

'Well, I understand what I now have to do,' replied Villefort. 'In less than one week from this time I will ascertain who this M. de Monte Cristo is, whence he comes, where he goes, and why he speaks in our presence of children that have been disinterred in a garden.'

Villefort pronounced these words with an accent which would have made the count shudder had he heard him. Then he pressed the hand the baroness reluctantly gave him, and led her respectfully back to the door. Madame Danglars returned in another cab to the passage, on the other side of which she found her carriage, and her coachman sleeping peacefully on his box while waiting for her.

Madame Danglars had risen, and stood before the procureur, whose hands she wrung in her feeble grasp.

'I know not; I merely suppose so, as I might suppose anything else,' replied Villefort with a look so fixed, it indicated that his powerful mind was on the verge of despair and madness.

'Ah, my child, my poor child!' cried the baroness, falling on her chair, and stifling her sobs in her handkerchief. Villefort, becoming somewhat reassured, perceived that to avert the maternal storm gathering over his head, he must inspire Madame Danglars with the terror he felt.

'You understand, then, that if it were so,' said he, rising in his turn, and approaching the baroness, to speak to her in a lower tone, 'we are lost. This child lives, and someone knows it lives—someone is in possession of our secret; and since Monte Cristo speaks before us of a child disinterred, when that child could not be found, it is he who is in possession of our secret.'

'Just God, avenging God!' murmured Madame Danglars.

Villefort's only answer was a stifled groan.

'But the child—the child, sir?' repeated the agitated mother.

'How I have searched for him,' replied Villefort, wringing his hands; 'how I have called him in my long sleepless nights; how I have longed for royal wealth to purchase a million of secrets from a million of men, and to find mine among them! At last, one day, when for the hundredth time I took up my spade, I asked myself again and again what the Corsican could have done with the child. A child encumbers a fugitive; perhaps, on perceiving it was still alive, he had thrown it into the river.'

'Impossible!' cried Madame Danglars: 'a man may murder another out of revenge, but he would not deliberately drown a child.'

'Perhaps,' continued Villefort, 'he had put it in the foundling hospital.'

'Oh, yes, yes,' cried the baroness; 'my child is there!'

'I ran to the hospital, and learned that the same night—the night of the 20th of September—a child had been brought there, wrapped in part of a fine linen napkin, purposely torn in half. This portion of the napkin was marked with half a baron's crown, and the letter H.'

'Truly, truly,' said Madame Danglars, 'all my linen is marked thus; Monsieur de Nargonne was a baron, and my name is Hermine. Thank God, my child was not then dead!'

and enlarging the hole; still I found nothing, nothing—the chest was no longer there!'

'The chest no longer there?' murmured Madame Danglars, choking with fear.

'Think not I contented myself with this one effort,' continued Villefort. 'No; I searched the whole thicket. I thought the assassin, having discovered the chest, and supposing it to be a treasure, had intended carrying it off, but, perceiving his error, had dug another hole, and deposited it there; but I could find nothing. Then the idea struck me that he had not taken these precautions, and had simply thrown it in a corner. In the last case I must wait for daylight to renew my search. I remained in the room and waited.'

'Oh, Heaven!' When daylight dawned I went down again. My first visit was to the thicket. I hoped to find some traces which had escaped me in the darkness. I had turned up the earth over a surface of more than twenty feet square, and a depth of two feet. A laborer would not have done in a day what occupied me an hour. But I could find nothing—absolutely nothing. Then I renewed the search. Supposing it had been thrown aside, it would probably be on the path which led to the little gate; but this examination was as useless as the first, and with a bursting heart I returned to the thicket, which now contained no hope for me."

'Oh,' cried Madame Danglars, 'it was enough to drive you mad!'

'I hoped for a moment that it might,' said Villefort; 'but that happiness was denied me. However, recovering my strength and my ideas, "Why," said I, "should that man have carried away the corpse?"'

'But you said,' replied Madame Danglars, 'he would require it as a proof.'

'Ah, no, madame, that could not be. Dead bodies are not kept a year; they are shown to a magistrate, and the evidence is taken. Now, nothing of the kind has happened.'

'What then?' asked Hermine, trembling violently.

'Something more terrible, more fatal, more alarming for us—the child was, perhaps, alive, and the assassin may have saved it!'

Madame Danglars uttered a piercing cry, and, seizing Villefort's hands, exclaimed, 'My child was alive?' said she; 'you buried my child alive? You were not certain my child was dead, and you buried it? Ah— '

Chapter LXVIII

A Summer Ball

THE same day during the interview between Madame Danglars and the procureur, a travelling-carriage entered the Rue du Helder, passed through the gateway of № 27, and stopped in the yard. In a moment the door was opened, and Madame de Morcerf alighted, leaning on her son's arm. Albert soon left her, ordered his horses, and having arranged his toilet, drove to the Champs-Élysées, to the house of Monte Cristo.

The count received him with his habitual smile. It was a strange thing that no one ever appeared to advance a step in that man's favour. Those who would, as it were, force a passage to his heart, found an impassable barrier. Morcerf, who ran towards him with open arms, was chilled as he drew near, in spite of the friendly smile, and simply held out his hand. Monte Cristo shook it coldly, according to his invariable practice.

'Here I am, dear count.'

'Welcome home again.'

'I arrived an hour since.'

'From Dieppe?'

'No, from Tréport.'

'Indeed?'

'And I have come at once to see you.'

'That is extremely kind of you,' said Monte Cristo with a tone of perfect indifference.

'And what is the news?'

'You should not ask a stranger, a foreigner, for news.'

'I know it, but in asking for news, I mean, have you done anything for me?'

'Had you commissioned me?' said Monte Cristo, feigning uneasiness.

'Come, come,' said Albert, 'do not assume so much indifference. It is said, sympathy travels rapidly, and when at Tréport, I felt the electric shock; you have either been working for me or thinking of me.'

'Possibly,' said Monte Cristo, 'I have indeed thought of you, but the magnetic wire I was guiding acted, indeed, without my knowledge.'

'Indeed! Pray tell me how it happened.'

'Willingly. M. Danglars dined with me.'

'I know it; to avoid meeting him, my mother and I left town.'

'But he met here M. Andrea Cavalcanti.'

'Your Italian prince?'

'Not so fast; M. Andrea only calls himself count.'

'Calls himself, do you say?'

'Yes, calls himself.'

'Is he not a count?'

'What can I know of him? He calls himself so. I, of course, give him the same title, and everyone else does likewise.'

'What a strange man you are! What next? You say M. Danglars dined here?'

'Yes, with Count Cavalcanti, the marquis his father, Madame Danglars, M. and Madame de Villefort,—charming people,—M. Debray, Maximilian Morrel, and M. de Château-Renaud.'

'Did they speak of me?'

'Not a word.'

'So much the worse.'

'Why so? I thought you wished them to forget you?'

'If they did not speak of me, I am sure they thought about me, and I am in despair.'

'How will that affect you, since Mademoiselle Danglars was not among the number here who thought of you? Truly, she might have thought of you at home.'

'I have no fear of that; or, if she did, it was only in the same way in which I think of her.'

'Touching sympathy! So you hate each other?' said the count.

'Listen,' said Morcerf—'if Mademoiselle Danglars were disposed to take pity on my supposed martyrdom on her account, and would dispense

staircase like a spectre, I leaned against the wall, and nearly shrieked. I seemed to be going mad. At last I mastered my agitation. I descended the staircase step by step; the only thing I could not conquer was a strange trembling in my knees. I grasped the railings; if I had relaxed my hold for a moment, I should have fallen. I reached the lower door. Outside this door a spade was placed against the wall; I took it, and advanced towards the thicket. I had provided myself with a dark lantern. In the middle of the lawn I stopped to light it, then I continued my path.

It was the end of November, all the verdure of the garden had disappeared, the trees were nothing more than skeletons with their long bony arms, and the dead leaves sounded on the gravel under my feet. My terror overcame me to such a degree as I approached the thicket, that I took a pistol from my pocket and armed myself. I fancied continually that I saw the figure of the Corsican between the branches. I examined the thicket with my dark lantern; it was empty. I looked carefully around; I was indeed alone,—no noise disturbed the silence but the owl, whose piercing cry seemed to be calling up the phantoms of the night. I tied my lantern to a forked branch I had noticed a year before at the precise spot where I stopped to dig the hole.

The grass had grown very thickly there during the summer, and when autumn arrived no one had been there to mow it. Still one place where the grass was thin attracted my attention; it evidently was there I had turned up the ground. I went to work. The hour, then, for which I had been waiting during the last year had at length arrived. How I worked, how I hoped, how I struck every piece of turf, thinking to find some resistance to my spade! But no, I found nothing, though I had made a hole twice as large as the first. I thought I had been deceived—had mistaken the spot. I turned around, I looked at the trees, I tried to recall the details which had struck me at the time. A cold, sharp wind whistled through the leafless branches, and yet the drops fell from my forehead. I recollected that I was stabbed just as I was trampling the ground to fill up the hole; while doing so I had leaned against a laburnum; behind me was an artificial rockery, intended to serve as a resting-place for persons walking in the garden; in falling, my hand, relaxing its hold of the laburnum, felt the coldness of the stone. On my right I saw the tree, behind me the rock. I stood in the same attitude, and threw myself down. I rose, and again began digging

grave with menacing look and gesture. I inquired immediately on my return to Paris; the house had not been inhabited since we left it, but it had just been let for nine years. I found the tenant. I pretended that I disliked the idea that a house belonging to my wife's father and mother should pass into the hands of strangers. I offered to pay them for cancelling the lease; they demanded 6,000 francs. I would have given 10,000—I would have given 20,000. I had the money with me; I made the tenant sign the deed of resilition, and when I had obtained what I so much wanted, I galloped to Auteuil. No one had entered the house since I had left it.

It was five o'clock in the afternoon; I ascended into the red room, and waited for night. There all the thoughts which had disturbed me during my year of constant agony came back with double force. The Corsican, who had declared the vendetta against me, who had followed me from Nîmes to Paris, who had hid himself in the garden, who had struck me, had seen me dig the grave, had seen me inter the child,—he might become acquainted with your person,—nay, he might even then have known it. Would he not one day make you pay for keeping this terrible secret? Would it not be a sweet revenge for him when he found that I had not died from the blow of his dagger? It was therefore necessary, before everything else, and at all risks, that I should cause all traces of the past to disappear—that I should destroy every material vestige; too much reality would always remain in my recollection. It was for this I had annulled the lease—it was for this I had come—it was for this I was waiting.

Night arrived; I allowed it to become quite dark. I was without a light in that room; when the wind shook all the doors, behind which I continually expected to see some spy concealed, I trembled. I seemed everywhere to hear your moans behind me in the bed, and I dared not turn around. My heart beat so violently that I feared my wound would open. At length, one by one, all the noises in the neighbourhood ceased. I understood that I had nothing to fear, that I should neither be seen nor heard, so I decided upon descending to the garden.

Listen, Hermine; I consider myself as brave as most men, but when I drew from my breast the little key of the staircase, which I had found in my coat—that little key we both used to cherish so much, which you wished to have fastened to a golden ring—when I opened the door, and saw the pale moon shedding a long stream of white light on the spiral

with all matrimonial formalities between our two families, I am ready to agree to the arrangement. In a word, Mademoiselle Danglars would make a charming mistress—but a wife—*diable!*'

'And this,' said Monte Cristo, 'is your opinion of your intended spouse?'

'Yes; it is rather unkind, I acknowledge, but it is true. But as this dream cannot be realized, since Mademoiselle Danglars must become my lawful wife, live perpetually with me, sing to me, compose verses and music within ten paces of me, and that for my whole life, it frightens me. One may forsake a mistress, but a wife,—good heavens! There she must always be; and to marry Mademoiselle Danglars would be awful.'

'You are difficult to please, viscount.'

'Yes, for I often wish for what is impossible.'

'What is that?'

'To find such a wife as my father found.'

Monte Cristo turned pale, and looked at Albert, while playing with some magnificent pistols.

'Your father was fortunate, then?' said he.

'You know my opinion of my mother, count; look at her,—still beautiful, witty, more charming than ever. For any other son to have stayed with his mother for four days at Tréport, it would have been a condescension or a martyrdom, while I return, more contented, more peaceful—shall I say more poetic!—than if I had taken Queen Mab or Titania as my companion.'

'That is an overwhelming demonstration, and you would make everyone vow to live a single life.'

'Such are my reasons for not liking to marry Mademoiselle Danglars. Have you ever noticed how much a thing is heightened in value when we obtain possession of it? The diamond which glittered in the window at Marlé's or Fossin's shines with more splendour when it is our own; but if we are compelled to acknowledge the superiority of another, and still must retain the one that is inferior, do you not know what we have to endure?'

'Worldling,' murmured the count.

'Thus I shall rejoice when Mademoiselle Eugénie perceives I am but a pitiful atom, with scarcely as many hundred thousand francs as she has millions.' Monte Cristo smiled. 'One plan occurred to me,' continued

Albert; 'Franz likes all that is eccentric; I tried to make him fall in love with Mademoiselle Danglars; but in spite of four letters, written in the most alluring style, he invariably answered: "My eccentricity may be great, but it will not make me break my promise."'

'That is what I call devoted friendship, to recommend to another one whom you would not marry yourself.' Albert smiled.

'Apropos,' continued he, 'Franz is coming soon, but it will not interest you; you dislike him, I think?'

'I?' said Monte Cristo; 'my dear viscount, how have you discovered that I did not like M. Franz! I like everyone.'

'And you include me in the expression everyone—many thanks!'

'Let us not mistake,' said Monte Cristo; 'I love everyone as God commands us to love our neighbour, as Christians; but I thoroughly hate but a few. Let us return to M. Franz d'Épinay. Did you say he was coming?'

'Yes; summoned by M. de Villefort, who is apparently as anxious to get Mademoiselle Valentine married as M. Danglars is to see Mademoiselle Eugénie settled. It must be a very irksome office to be the father of a grown-up daughter; it seems to make one feverish, and to raise one's pulse to ninety beats a minute until the deed is done.'

'But M. d'Épinay, unlike you, bears his misfortune patiently.'

'Still more, he talks seriously about the matter, puts on a white tie, and speaks of his family. He entertains a very high opinion of M. and Madame de Villefort.'

'Which they deserve, do they not?'

'I believe they do. M. de Villefort has always passed for a severe but a just man.'

'There is, then, one,' said Monte Cristo, 'whom you do not condemn like poor Danglars?'

'Because I am not compelled to marry his daughter perhaps,' replied Albert, laughing.

'Indeed, my dear sir,' said Monte Cristo, 'you are revoltingly foppish.'

'I foppish? how do you mean?'

'Yes; pray take a cigar, and cease to defend yourself, and to struggle to escape marrying Mademoiselle Danglars. Let things take their course; perhaps you may not have to retract.'

'Bah!' said Albert, staring.

'There! But listen to me—listen—and you will pity me who has for twenty years alone borne the heavy burden of grief I am about to reveal, without casting the least portion upon you.'

'Oh, you frighten me! But speak; I will listen.'

'You recollect that sad night, when you were half-expiring on that bed in the red damask room, while I, scarcely less agitated than you, awaited your delivery. The child was born, was given to me—motionless, breathless, voiceless; we thought it dead.'

Madame Danglars moved rapidly, as though she would spring from her chair, but Villefort stopped, and clasped his hands as if to implore her attention.

'We thought it dead,' he repeated; 'I placed it in the chest, which was to take the place of a coffin; I descended to the garden, I dug a hole, and then flung it down in haste. Scarcely had I covered it with earth, when the arm of the Corsican was stretched towards me; I saw a shadow rise, and, at the same time, a flash of light. I felt pain; I wished to cry out, but an icy shiver ran through my veins and stifled my voice; I fell lifeless, and fancied myself killed. Never shall I forget your sublime courage, when, having returned to consciousness, I dragged myself to the foot of the stairs, and you, almost dying yourself, came to meet me. We were obliged to keep silent upon the dreadful catastrophe. You had the fortitude to regain the house, assisted by your nurse. A duel was the pretext for my wound. Though we scarcely expected it, our secret remained in our own keeping alone. I was taken to Versailles; for three months I struggled with death; at last, as I seemed to cling to life, I was ordered to the South. Four men carried me from Paris to Châlons, walking six leagues a day; Madame de Villefort followed the litter in her carriage. At Châlons I was put upon the Saône, thence I passed on to the Rhône, whence I descended, merely with the current, to Arles; at Arles I was again placed on my litter, and continued my journey to Marseilles. My recovery lasted six months. I never heard you mentioned, and I did not dare inquire for you. When I returned to Paris, I learned that you, the widow of M. de Nargonne, had married M. Danglars.

What was the subject of my thoughts from the time consciousness returned to me? Always the same—always the child's corpse, coming every night in my dreams, rising from the earth, and hovering over the

'You only look back to the past, and it is, indeed, bad enough. Well, picture to yourself a future more gloomy still—certainly frightful, perhaps sanguinary!'

The baroness knew how calm Villefort naturally was, and his present excitement frightened her so much that she opened her mouth to scream, but the sound died in her throat.

'How has this terrible past been recalled?' cried Villefort; 'how is it that it has escaped from the depths of the tomb and the recesses of our hearts, where it was buried, to visit us now, like a phantom, whitening our cheeks and flushing our brows with shame?'

'Alas,' said Hermine, 'doubtless it is chance.'

'Chance?' replied Villefort; 'No, no, madame, there is no such thing as chance.'

'Oh, yes; has not a fatal chance revealed all this? Was it not by chance the Count of Monte Cristo bought that house? Was it not by chance he caused the earth to be dug up? Is it not by chance that the unfortunate child was disinterred under the trees?—that poor innocent offspring of mine, which I never even kissed, but for whom I wept many, many tears. Ah, my heart clung to the count when he mentioned the dear spoil found beneath the flowers.'

'Well, no, madame,—this is the terrible news I have to tell you,' said Villefort in a hollow voice—'no, nothing was found beneath the flowers; there was no child disinterred—no. You must not weep, no, you must not groan, you must tremble!'

'What can you mean?' asked Madame Danglars, shuddering.

'I mean that M. de Monte Cristo, digging underneath these trees, found neither skeleton nor chest, because neither of them was there!'

'Neither of them there?' repeated Madame Danglars, her staring, wide-open eyes expressing her alarm. 'Neither of them there!' she again said, as though striving to impress herself with the meaning of the words which escaped her.

'No,' said Villefort, burying his face in his hands, 'no, a hundred times no!'

'Then you did not bury the poor child there, sir? Why did you deceive me? Where did you place it? tell me—where?'

'Doubtless, my dear viscount, you will not be taken by force; and seriously, do you wish to break off your engagement?'

'I would give a hundred thousand francs to be able to do so.'

'Then make yourself quite easy. M. Danglars would give double that sum to attain the same end.'

'Am I, indeed, so happy?' said Albert, who still could not prevent an almost imperceptible cloud passing across his brow. 'But, my dear count, has M. Danglars any reason?'

'Ah! there is your proud and selfish nature. You would expose the self-love of another with a hatchet, but you shrink if your own is attacked with a needle.'

'But yet, M. Danglars appeared— '

'Delighted with you, was he not? Well, he is a man of bad taste, and is still more enchanted with another. I know not whom; look and judge for yourself.'

'Thank you, I understand. But my mother—no, not my mother; I mistake—my father intends giving a ball.'

'A ball at this season?'

'Summer balls are fashionable.'

'If they were not, the countess has only to wish it, and they would become so.'

'You are right; You know they are select affairs; those who remain in Paris in July must be true Parisians. Will you take charge of our invitation to Messieurs Cavalcanti?'

'When will it take place?'

'On Saturday.'

'M. Cavalcanti's father will be gone.'

'But the son will be here; will you invite young M. Cavalcanti?'

'I do not know him, viscount.'

'You do not know him?'

'No, I never saw him until a few days since, and am not responsible for him.'

'But you receive him at your house?'

'That is another thing: he was recommended to me by a good abbé, who may be deceived. Give him a direct invitation, but do not ask me to present him. If he were afterwards to marry Mademoiselle Danglars, you

would accuse me of intrigue, and would be challenging me,—besides, I may not be there myself.'

'Where?'

'At your ball.'

'Why should you not be there?'

'Because you have not yet invited me.'

'But I come expressly for that purpose.'

'You are very kind, but I may be prevented.'

'If I tell you one thing, you will be so amiable as to set aside all impediments.'

'Tell me what it is.'

'My mother begs you to come.'

'The Comtesse de Morcerf?' said Monte Cristo, starting.

'Ah, count,' said Albert, 'I assure you Madame de Morcerf speaks freely to me, and if you have not felt those sympathetic fibres of which I spoke just now thrill within you, you must be entirely devoid of them, for during the last four days we have spoken of no one else.'

'You have talked of me?'

'Yes, that is the penalty of being a living puzzle!'

'Then I am also a puzzle to your mother? I should have thought her too reasonable to be led by imagination.'

'A problem, my dear count, for everyone—for my mother as well as others; much studied, but not solved, you still remain an enigma, do not fear. My mother is only astonished that you remain so long unsolved. I believe, while the Countess G—— takes you for Lord Ruthven, my mother imagines you to be Cagliostro or the Count Saint-Germain. The first opportunity you have, confirm her in her opinion; it will be easy for you, as you have the philosophy of the one and the wit of the other.'

'I thank you for the warning,' said the count; 'I shall endeavour to be prepared for all suppositions.'

'You will, then, come on Saturday?'

'Yes, since Madame de Morcerf invites me.'

'You are very kind.'

'Will M. Danglars be there?'

'I think, sir, you exaggerate your situation,' said Madame Danglars, whose beautiful eyes sparkled for a moment. 'The paths of which you were just speaking have been traced by all young men of ardent imaginations. Besides the pleasure, there is always remorse from the indulgence of our passions, and, after all, what have you men to fear from all this? the world excuses, and notoriety ennobles you.'

'Madame,' replied Villefort, 'you know that I am no hypocrite, or, at least, that I never deceive without a reason. If my brow be severe, it is because many misfortunes have clouded it; if my heart be petrified, it is that it might sustain the blows it has received. I was not so in my youth, I was not so on the night of the betrothal, when we were all seated around a table in the Rue du Cours at Marseilles. But since then everything has changed in and about me; I am accustomed to brave difficulties, and, in the conflict to crush those who, by their own free will, or by chance, voluntarily or involuntarily, interfere with me in my career. It is generally the case that what we most ardently desire is as ardently withheld from us by those who wish to obtain it, or from whom we attempt to snatch it. Thus, the greater number of a man's errors come before him disguised under the specious form of necessity; then, after error has been committed in a moment of excitement, of delirium, or of fear, we see that we might have avoided and escaped it. The means we might have used, which we in our blindness could not see, then seem simple and easy, and we say, "Why did I not do this, instead of that?' Women, on the contrary, are rarely tormented with remorse; for the decision does not come from you,—your misfortunes are generally imposed upon you, and your faults the results of others" crimes.'

'In any case, sir, you will allow,' replied Madame Danglars, 'that, even if the fault were alone mine, I last night received a severe punishment for it.'

'Poor thing,' said Villefort, pressing her hand, 'it was too severe for your strength, for you were twice overwhelmed, and yet— '

'Well?'

'Well, I must tell you. Collect all your courage, for you have not yet heard all.'

'Ah,' exclaimed Madame Danglars, alarmed, 'what is there more to hear?'