they were your murderers. Well, Edmond, I swear to you, by the head of that son for whom I entreat your pity,—Edmond, for ten years I saw every night every detail of that frightful tragedy, and for ten years I heard every night the cry which awoke me, shuddering and cold. And I, too, Edmond—oh! believe me—guilty as I was—oh, yes, I, too, have suffered much!'

'Have you known what it is to have your father starve to death in your absence?' cried Monte Cristo, thrusting his hands into his hair; 'have you seen the woman you loved giving her hand to your rival, while you were perishing at the bottom of a dungeon?'

'No,' interrupted Mercédès, 'but I have seen him whom I loved on the point of murdering my son.'

Mercédès uttered these words with such deep anguish, with an accent of such intense despair, that Monte Cristo could not restrain a sob. The lion was daunted; the avenger was conquered.

'What do you ask of me?' said he,—'your son's life? Well, he shall live!'

Mercédès uttered a cry which made the tears start from Monte Cristo's eyes; but these tears disappeared almost instantaneously, for, doubtless, God had sent some angel to collect them—far more precious were they in his eyes than the richest pearls of Guzerat and Ophir.

'Oh,' said she, seizing the count's hand and raising it to her lips; 'oh, thank you, thank you, Edmond! Now you are exactly what I dreamt you were,—the man I always loved. Oh, now I may say so!'

'So much the better,' replied Monte Cristo; 'as that poor Edmond will not have long to be loved by you. Death is about to return to the tomb, the phantom to retire in darkness.'

'What do you say, Edmond?'

'I say, since you command me, Mercédès, I must die.'

'Die? and why so? Who talks of dying? Whence have you these ideas of death?'

'You do not suppose that, publicly outraged in the face of a whole theatre, in the presence of your friends and those of your son—challenged by a boy who will glory in my forgiveness as if it were a victory—you do not suppose that I can for one moment wish to live. What I most loved after you, Mercédès, was myself, my dignity, and that strength which rendered me superior to other men; that strength was my life. With one word you have crushed it, and I die.'

'But the duel will not take place, Edmond, since you forgive?'

'It will take place,' said Monte Cristo, in a most solemn tone; 'but instead of your son's blood to stain the ground, mine will flow.'

Mercédès shrieked, and sprang towards Monte Cristo, but, suddenly stopping, 'Edmond,' said she, 'there is a God above us, since you live and since I have seen you again; I trust to him from my heart. While waiting his assistance I trust to your word; you have said that my son should live, have you not?'

'Yes, madame, he shall live,' said Monte Cristo, surprised that without more emotion Mercédès had accepted the heroic sacrifice he made for her. Mercédès extended her hand to the count.

'Edmond,' said she, and her eyes were wet with tears while looking at him to whom she spoke, 'how noble it is of you, how great the action you have just performed, how sublime to have taken pity on a poor woman who appealed to you with every chance against her, Alas, I am grown old with grief more than with years, and cannot now remind my Edmond by a smile, or by a look, of that Mercédès whom he once spent so many hours in contemplating. Ah, believe me, Edmond, as I told you, I too have suffered much; I repeat, it is melancholy to pass one's life without having one joy to recall, without preserving a single hope; but that proves that all is not yet over. No, it is not finished; I feel it by what remains in my heart. Oh, I repeat it, Edmond; what you have just done is beautiful—it is grand; it is sublime.'

'Do you say so now, Mercédès?—then what would you say if you knew the extent of the sacrifice I make to you? Suppose that the Supreme Being, after having created the world and fertilized chaos, had paused in the work to spare an angel the tears that might one day flow for mortal sins from her immortal eyes; suppose that when everything was in readiness and the moment had come for God to look upon his work and see that it was good—suppose he had snuffed out the sun and tossed the world back into eternal night—then—even then, Mercédès, you could not imagine what I lose in sacrificing my life at this moment.'

Mercédès looked at the count in a way which expressed at the same time her astonishment, her admiration, and her gratitude. Monte Cristo pressed his forehead on his burning hands, as if his brain could no longer bear alone the weight of its thoughts.

'Edmond,' said Mercédès, 'I have but one word more to say to you.'

The count smiled bitterly.

'Edmond,' continued she, 'you will see that if my face is pale, if my eyes are dull, if my beauty is gone; if Mercédès, in short, no longer resembles her former self in her features, you will see that her heart is still the same. Adieu, then, Edmond; I have nothing more to ask of heaven—I have seen you again, and have found you as noble and as great as formerly you were. Adieu, Edmond, adieu, and thank you.'

But the count did not answer. Mercédès opened the door of the study and had disappeared before he had recovered from the painful and profound reverie into which his thwarted vengeance had plunged him.

The clock of the Invalides struck one when the carriage which conveyed Madame de Morcerf rolled away on the pavement of the Champs-Élysées, and made Monte Cristo raise his head.

'What a fool I was,' said he, 'not to tear my heart out on the day when I resolved to avenge myself!'

her. Then seated on a chair, she looked at the manly countenance of Monte Cristo, on which grief and hatred still impressed a threatening expression.

'Not crush that accursed race?' murmured he; 'abandon my purpose at the moment of its accomplishment? Impossible, madame, impossible!'

'Edmond,' said the poor mother, who tried every means, 'when I call you Edmond, why do you not call me Mercédès?'

'Mercédès!' repeated Monte Cristo; 'Mercédès! Well yes, you are right; that name has still its charms, and this is the first time for a long period that I have pronounced it so distinctly. Oh, Mercédès, I have uttered your name with the sigh of melancholy, with the groan of sorrow, with the last effort of despair; I have uttered it when frozen with cold, crouched on the straw in my dungeon; I have uttered it, consumed with heat, rolling on the stone floor of my prison. Mercédès, I must revenge myself, for I suffered fourteen years,—fourteen years I wept, I cursed; now I tell you, Mercédès, I must revenge myself.'

The count, fearing to yield to the entreaties of her he had so ardently loved, called his sufferings to the assistance of his hatred.

'Revenge yourself, then, Edmond,' cried the poor mother; 'but let your vengeance fall on the culprits,—on him, on me, but not on my son!'

'It is written in the good book,' said Monte Cristo, 'that the sins of the fathers shall fall upon their children to the third and fourth generation. Since God himself dictated those words to his prophet, why should I seek to make myself better than God?'

'Edmond,' continued Mercédès, with her arms extended towards the count, 'since I first knew you, I have adored your name, have respected your memory. Edmond, my friend, do not compel me to tarnish that noble and pure image reflected incessantly on the mirror of my heart. Edmond, if you knew all the prayers I have addressed to God for you while I thought you were living and since I have thought you must be dead! Yes, dead, alas! I imagined your dead body buried at the foot of some gloomy tower, or cast to the bottom of a pit by hateful jailers, and I wept! What could I do for you, Edmond, besides pray and weep? Listen; for ten years I dreamed each night the same dream. I had been told that you had endeavoured to escape; that you had taken the place of another prisoner; that you had slipped into the winding sheet of a dead body; that you had been thrown alive from the top of the Château d'If, and that the cry you uttered as you dashed upon the rocks first revealed to your jailers that

then it will assuredly be discovered in the cabin belonging to the said Dantès on board the *Pharaon*.'

'How dreadful!' said Mercédès, passing her hand across her brow, moist with perspiration; 'and that letter— '

'I bought it for two hundred thousand francs, madame,' said Monte Cristo; 'but that is a trifle, since it enables me to justify myself to you.'

'And the result of that letter— '

'You well know, madame, was my arrest; but you do not know how long that arrest lasted. You do not know that I remained for fourteen years within a quarter of a league of you, in a dungeon in the Château d'If. You do not know that every day of those fourteen years I renewed the vow of vengeance which I had made the first day; and yet I was not aware that you had married Fernand, my calumniator, and that my father had died of hunger!'

'Can it be?' cried Mercédès, shuddering.

'That is what I heard on leaving my prison fourteen years after I had entered it; and that is why, on account of the living Mercédès and my deceased father, I have sworn to revenge myself on Fernand, and—I have revenged myself.'

'And you are sure the unhappy Fernand did that?'

'I am satisfied, madame, that he did what I have told you; besides, that is not much more odious than that a Frenchman by adoption should pass over to the English; that a Spaniard by birth should have fought against the Spaniards; that a stipendiary of Ali should have betrayed and murdered Ali. Compared with such things, what is the letter you have just read?—a lover's deception, which the woman who has married that man ought certainly to forgive; but not so the lover who was to have married her. Well, the French did not avenge themselves on the traitor, the Spaniards did not shoot the traitor, Ali in his tomb left the traitor unpunished; but I, betrayed, sacrificed, buried, have risen from my tomb, by the grace of God, to punish that man. He sends me for that purpose, and here I am.'

The poor woman's head and arms fell; her legs bent under her, and she fell on her knees.

'Forgive, Edmond, forgive for my sake, who love you still!'

The dignity of the wife checked the fervour of the lover and the mother. Her forehead almost touched the carpet, when the count sprang forward and raised

Chapter XC

The Meeting

AFTER Mercédès had left Monte Cristo, he fell into profound gloom. Around him and within him the flight of thought seemed to have stopped; his energetic mind slumbered, as the body does after extreme fatigue.

'What?' said he to himself, while the lamp and the wax lights were nearly burnt out, and the servants were waiting impatiently in the anteroom; "what? this edifice which I have been so long preparing, which I have reared with so much care and toil, is to be crushed by a single touch, a word, a breath! Yes, this self, of whom I thought so much, of whom I was so proud, who had appeared so worthless in the dungeons of the Château d'If, and whom I had succeeded in making so great, will be but a lump of clay tomorrow. Alas, it is not the death of the body I regret; for is not the destruction of the vital principle, the repose to which everything is tending, to which every unhappy being aspires,—is not this the repose of matter after which I so long sighed, and which I was seeking to attain by the painful process of starvation when Faria appeared in my dungeon? What is death for me? One step farther into rest,—two, perhaps, into silence. No, it is not existence, then, that I regret, but the ruin of projects so slowly carried out, so laboriously framed. Providence is now opposed to them, when I most thought it would be propitious. It is not God's will that they should be accomplished. This burden, almost as heavy as a world, which I had raised, and I had thought to bear to the end, was too great for my strength, and I was compelled to lay it down in the middle of my career. Oh, shall I then, again become a fatalist, whom fourteen years of despair and ten of hope had rendered a believer in Providence?

"And all this—all this, because my heart, which I thought dead, was only sleeping; because it has awakened and has begun to beat again, because I have yielded to the pain of the emotion excited in my breast by a woman's voice.

'Yet,' continued the count, becoming each moment more absorbed in the anticipation of the dreadful sacrifice for the morrow, which Mercédès had accepted, 'yet, it is impossible that so noble-minded a woman should thus through selfishness consent to my death when I am in the prime of life and strength; it is impossible that she can carry to such a point maternal love, or rather delirium. There are virtues which become crimes by exaggeration. No, she must have conceived some pathetic scene; she will come and throw herself between us; and what would be sublime here will there appear ridiculous.'

The blush of pride mounted to the count's forehead as this thought passed through his mind.

'Ridiculous?' repeated he; 'and the ridicule will fall on me. I ridiculous? No, I would rather die.'

By thus exaggerating to his own mind the anticipated ill-fortune of the next day, to which he had condemned himself by promising Mercédès to spare her son, the count at last exclaimed:

'Folly, folly, folly!—to carry generosity so far as to put myself up as a mark for that young man to aim at. He will never believe that my death was suicide; and yet it is important for the honour of my memory,—and this surely is not vanity, but a justifiable pride,—it is important the world should know that I have consented, by my free will, to stop my arm, already raised to strike, and that with the arm which has been so powerful against others I have struck myself. It must be; it shall be.'

Seizing a pen, he drew a paper from a secret drawer in his desk, and wrote at the bottom of the document (which was no other than his will, made since his arrival in Paris) a sort of codicil, clearly explaining the nature of his death.

'I do this, Oh, my God,' said he, with his eyes raised to heaven, 'as much for thy honour as for mine. I have during ten years considered myself the agent of thy vengeance, and other wretches, like Morcerf, Danglars, Villefort, even Morcerf himself, must not imagine that chance has freed them from their enemy. Let them know, on the contrary, that their punishment, which had been decreed by Providence, is only delayed by my present determination, and

'And why do you represent Providence?' cried Mercédès. 'Why do you remember when it forgets? What are Yanina and its vizier to you, Edmond? What injury has Fernand Mondego done you in betraying Ali Tepelini?'

'Ah, madame,' replied Monte Cristo, 'all this is an affair between the French captain and the daughter of Vasiliki. It does not concern me, you are right; and if I have sworn to revenge myself, it is not on the French captain, or the Count of Morcerf, but on the fisherman Fernand, the husband of Mercédès the Catalane.'

'Ah, sir!' cried the countess, 'how terrible a vengeance for a fault which fatality made me commit!—for I am the only culprit, Edmond, and if you owe revenge to anyone, it is to me, who had not fortitude to bear your absence and my solitude.'

'But,' exclaimed Monte Cristo, 'why was I absent? And why were you alone?' 'Because you had been arrested, Edmond, and were a prisoner.'

'And why was I arrested? Why was I a prisoner?'

'I do not know,' said Mercédès.

'You do not, madame; at least, I hope not. But I will tell you. I was arrested and became a prisoner because, under the arbour of La Réserve, the day before I was to marry you, a man named Danglars wrote this letter, which the fisherman Fernand himself posted.'

Monte Cristo went to a secretaire, opened a drawer by a spring, from which he took a paper which had lost its original colour, and the ink of which had become of a rusty hue—this he placed in the hands of Mercédès. It was Danglars' letter to the king's attorney, which the Count of Monte Cristo, disguised as a clerk from the house of Thomson & French, had taken from the file against Edmond Dantès, on the day he had paid the two hundred thousand francs to M. de Boville. Mercédès read with terror the following lines: 'p class="letter"' 'The king's attorney is informed by a friend to the throne and religion that one Edmond Dantès, second in command on board the *Pharaon*, this day arrived from Smyrna, after having touched at Naples and Porto-Ferrajo, is the bearer of a letter from Murat to the usurper, and of another letter from the usurper to the Bonapartist club in Paris. Ample corroboration of this statement may be obtained by arresting the above-mentioned Edmond Dantès, who either carries the letter for Paris about with him, or has it at his father's abode. Should it not be found in possession of either father or son,

'Edmond, you will not kill my son!'

The count retreated a step, uttered a slight exclamation, and let fall the pistol he held.

'What name did you pronounce then, Madame de Morcerf?' said he.

'Yours!' cried she, throwing back her veil,—'yours, which I alone, perhaps, have not forgotten. Edmond, it is not Madame de Morcerf who is come to you, it is Mercédès.'

'Mercédès is dead, madame,' said Monte Cristo; 'I know no one now of that name.'

'Mercédès lives, sir, and she remembers, for she alone recognized you when she saw you, and even before she saw you, by your voice, Edmond,—by the simple sound of your voice; and from that moment she has followed your steps, watched you, feared you, and she needs not to inquire what hand has dealt the blow which now strikes M. de Morcerf.'

'Fernand, do you mean?' replied Monte Cristo, with bitter irony; 'since we are recalling names, let us remember them all.' Monte Cristo had pronounced the name of Fernand with such an expression of hatred that Mercédès felt a thrill of horror run through every vein.

'You see, Edmond, I am not mistaken, and have cause to say, "Spare my son!"'

'And who told you, madame, that I have any hostile intentions against your son?'

'No one, in truth; but a mother has twofold sight. I guessed all; I followed him this evening to the Opera, and, concealed in a parquet box, have seen all.'

'If you have seen all, madame, you know that the son of Fernand has publicly insulted me,' said Monte Cristo with awful calmness.

'Oh, for pity's sake!'

'You have seen that he would have thrown his glove in my face if Morrel, one of my friends, had not stopped him.'

'Listen to me, my son has also guessed who you are,—he attributes his father's misfortunes to you.'

'Madame, you are mistaken, they are not misfortunes,—it is a punishment. It is not I who strike M. de Morcerf; it is Providence which punishes him.'

although they escape it in this world, it awaits them in another, and that they are only exchanging time for eternity.'

While he was thus agitated by gloomy uncertainties,—wretched waking dreams of grief,—the first rays of morning pierced his windows, and shone upon the pale blue paper on which he had just inscribed his justification of Providence.

It was just five o'clock in the morning when a slight noise like a stifled sigh reached his ear. He turned his head, looked around him, and saw no one; but the sound was repeated distinctly enough to convince him of its reality.

He arose, and quietly opening the door of the drawing-room, saw Haydée, who had fallen on a chair, with her arms hanging down and her beautiful head thrown back. She had been standing at the door, to prevent his going out without seeing her, until sleep, which the young cannot resist, had overpowered her frame, wearied as she was with watching. The noise of the door did not awaken her, and Monte Cristo gazed at her with affectionate regret.

'She remembered that she had a son,' said he; 'and I forgot I had a daughter.' Then, shaking his head sorrowfully, 'Poor Haydée,' said he; 'she wished to see me, to speak to me; she has feared or guessed something. Oh, I cannot go without taking leave of her; I cannot die without confiding her to someone.'

He quietly regained his seat, and wrote under the other lines: 'p class="letter"' 'I bequeath to Maximilian Morrel, captain of Spahis,—and son of my former patron, Pierre Morrel, shipowner at Marseilles,—the sum of twenty millions, a part of which may be offered to his sister Julie and brother-in-law Emmanuel, if he does not fear this increase of fortune may mar their happiness. These twenty millions are concealed in my grotto at Monte Cristo, of which Bertuccio knows the secret. If his heart is free, and he will marry Haydée, the daughter of Ali Pasha of Yanina, whom I have brought up with the love of a father, and who has shown the love and tenderness of a daughter for me, he will thus accomplish my last wish. This will has already constituted Haydée heiress of the rest of my fortune, consisting of lands, funds in England, Austria, and Holland, furniture in my different palaces and houses, and which without the twenty millions and the legacies to my servants, may still amount to sixty millions.' He was finishing the last line when a cry behind him made him start, and the pen fell from his hand.

'Haydée,' said he, 'did you read it?'

'Oh, my lord,' said she, 'why are you writing thus at such an hour? Why are you bequeathing all your fortune to me? Are you going to leave me?'

'I am going on a journey, dear child,' said Monte Cristo, with an expression of infinite tenderness and melancholy; 'and if any misfortune should happen to me— '

The count stopped.

'Well?' asked the young girl, with an authoritative tone the count had never observed before, and which startled him.

'Well, if any misfortune happen to me,' replied Monte Cristo, 'I wish my daughter to be happy.' Haydée smiled sorrowfully, and shook her head.

'Do you think of dying, my lord?' said she.

'The wise man, my child, has said, "It is good to think of death."'

'Well, if you die,' said she, 'bequeath your fortune to others, for if you die I shall require nothing;' and, taking the paper, she tore it in four pieces, and threw it into the middle of the room. Then, the effort having exhausted her strength, she fell, not asleep this time, but fainting on the floor.

The count leaned over her and raised her in his arms; and seeing that sweet pale face, those lovely eyes closed, that beautiful form motionless and to all appearance lifeless, the idea occurred to him for the first time, that perhaps she loved him otherwise than as a daughter loves a father.

'Alas,' murmured he, with intense suffering, 'I might, then, have been happy yet.'

Then he carried Haydée to her room, resigned her to the care of her attendants, and returning to his study, which he shut quickly this time, he again copied the destroyed will. As he was finishing, the sound of a cabriolet entering the yard was heard. Monte Cristo approached the window, and saw Maximilian and Emmanuel alight. 'Good,' said he; 'it was time,'—and he sealed his will with three seals.

A moment afterwards he heard a noise in the drawing-room, and went to open the door himself. Morrel was there; he had come twenty minutes before the time appointed.

'I am perhaps come too soon, count,' said he, 'but I frankly acknowledge that I have not closed my eyes all night, nor has anyone in my house. I need to see you strong in your courageous assurance, to recover myself.'

Chapter LXXXIX

The Night

MONTE Cristo waited, according to his usual custom, until Duprez had sung his famous '*Suivez-moi!*' then he rose and went out. Morrel took leave of him at the door, renewing his promise to be with him the next morning at seven o'clock, and to bring Emmanuel. Then he stepped into his *coupé*, calm and smiling, and was at home in five minutes. No one who knew the count could mistake his expression when, on entering, he said:

'Ali, bring me my pistols with the ivory cross.'

Ali brought the box to his master, who examined the weapons with a solicitude very natural to a man who is about to intrust his life to a little powder and shot. These were pistols of an especial pattern, which Monte Cristo had had made for target practice in his own room. A cap was sufficient to drive out the bullet, and from the adjoining room no one would have suspected that the count was, as sportsmen would say, keeping his hand in.

He was just taking one up and looking for the point to aim at on a little iron plate which served him as a target, when his study door opened, and Baptistin entered. Before he had spoken a word, the count saw in the next room a veiled woman, who had followed closely after Baptistin, and now, seeing the count with a pistol in his hand and swords on the table, rushed in. Baptistin looked at his master, who made a sign to him, and he went out, closing the door after him.

'Who are you, madame?' said the count to the veiled woman. The stranger cast one look around her, to be certain that they were quite alone; then bending as if she would have knelt, and joining her hands, she said with an accent of despair:

Monte Cristo could not resist this proof of affection; he not only extended his hand to the young man, but flew to him with open arms.

'Morrel,' said he, 'it is a happy day for me, to feel that I am beloved by such a man as you. Good-morning, Emmanuel; you will come with me then, Maximilian?'

'Did you doubt it?' said the young captain.

'But if I were wrong— '

'I watched you during the whole scene of that challenge yesterday; I have been thinking of your firmness all night, and I said to myself that justice must be on your side, or man's countenance is no longer to be relied on.'

'But, Morrel, Albert is your friend?'

'Simply an acquaintance, sir.'

'You met on the same day you first saw me?'

'Yes, that is true; but I should not have recollected it if you had not reminded me.'

'Thank you, Morrel.' Then ringing the bell once, 'Look.' said he to Ali, who came immediately, 'take that to my solicitor. It is my will, Morrel. When I am dead, you will go and examine it.'

'What?' said Morrel, 'you dead?'

'Yes; must I not be prepared for everything, dear friend? But what did you do yesterday after you left me?'

'I went to Tortoni's, where, as I expected, I found Beauchamp and Château-Renaud. I own I was seeking them.'

'Why, when all was arranged?'

'Listen, count; the affair is serious and unavoidable.'

'Did you doubt it!'

'No; the offence was public, and everyone is already talking of it.'

'Well?'

'Well, I hoped to get an exchange of arms,—to substitute the sword for the pistol; the pistol is blind.'

'Have you succeeded?' asked Monte Cristo quickly, with an imperceptible gleam of hope.

'No; for your skill with the sword is so well known.'

'Ah?—who has betrayed me?'

'The skilful swordsman whom you have conquered.'

'And you failed?'

'They positively refused.'

'Morrel,' said the count, 'have you ever seen me fire a pistol?'

'Never.'

'Well, we have time; look.' Monte Cristo took the pistols he held in his hand when Mercédès entered, and fixing an ace of clubs against the iron plate, with four shots he successively shot off the four sides of the club. At each shot Morrel turned pale. He examined the bullets with which Monte Cristo performed this dexterous feat, and saw that they were no larger than buckshot.

'It is astonishing,' said he. 'Look, Emmanuel.' Then turning towards Monte Cristo, 'Count,' said he, 'in the name of all that is dear to you, I entreat you not to kill Albert!—the unhappy youth has a mother.'

'You are right,' said Monte Cristo; 'and I have none.' These words were uttered in a tone which made Morrel shudder.

'You are the offended party, count.'

'Doubtless; what does that imply?'

'That you will fire first.'

'I fire first?'

'Oh, I obtained, or rather claimed that; we had conceded enough for them to yield us that.'

'And at what distance?'

'Twenty paces.' A smile of terrible import passed over the count's lips.

'Morrel,' said he, 'do not forget what you have just seen.'

'The only chance for Albert's safety, then, will arise from your emotion.'

'I suffer from emotion?' said Monte Cristo.

'Or from your generosity, my friend; to so good a marksman as you are, I may say what would appear absurd to another.'

'What is that?'

'Break his arm—wound him—but do not kill him.'

'I will tell you, Morrel,' said the count, 'that I do not need entreating to spare the life of M. de Morcerf; he shall be so well spared, that he will return quietly with his two friends, while I— '

'And you?'

'That will be another thing; I shall be brought home.'

'No, no,' cried Maximilian, quite unable to restrain his feelings.

without dispute, anything, even combat by drawing lots, which is always stupid, but with me different from other people, as I am sure to gain.'

'Sure to gain!' repeated Beauchamp, looking with amazement at the count.

'Certainly,' said Monte Cristo, slightly shrugging his shoulders; 'otherwise I would not fight with M. de Morcerf. I shall kill him—I cannot help it. Only by a single line this evening at my house let me know the arms and the hour; I do not like to be kept waiting.'

'Pistols, then, at eight o'clock, in the Bois de Vincennes,' said Beauchamp, quite disconcerted, not knowing if he was dealing with an arrogant braggadocio or a supernatural being.

'Very well, sir,' said Monte Cristo. 'Now all that is settled, do let me see the performance, and tell your friend Albert not to come any more this evening; he will hurt himself with all his ill-chosen barbarisms: let him go home and go to sleep.'

Beauchamp left the box, perfectly amazed.

'Now,' said Monte Cristo, turning towards Morrel, 'I may depend upon you, may I not?'

'Certainly,' said Morrel, 'I am at your service, count; still— '

'What?'

'It is desirable I should know the real cause.'

'That is to say, you would rather not?'

'No.'

'The young man himself is acting blindfolded, and knows not the true cause, which is known only to God and to me; but I give you my word, Morrel, that God, who does know it, will be on our side.'

'Enough,' said Morrel; 'who is your second witness?'

'I know no one in Paris, Morrel, on whom I could confer that honour besides you and your brother Emmanuel. Do you think Emmanuel would oblige me?'

'I will answer for him, count.'

'Well? that is all I require. Tomorrow morning, at seven o'clock, you will be with me, will you not?'

'We will.'

'Hush, the curtain is rising. Listen! I never lose a note of this opera if I can avoid it; the music of *William Tell* is so sweet.'