But scarcely had he stepped out of his carriage when the porter met him with a parcel in his hand.

'Sir,' said he, 'that man has been here.'

'What man?' said Andrea carelessly, apparently forgetting him whom he but too well recollected.

'Him to whom your excellency pays that little annuity.'

'Oh,' said Andrea, 'my father's old servant. Well, you gave him the two hundred francs I had left for him?'

'Yes, your excellency.' Andrea had expressed a wish to be thus addressed. 'But,' continued the porter, 'he would not take them.'

Andrea turned pale, but as it was dark his pallor was not perceptible. 'What? he would not take them?' said he with slight emotion. 'No, he wished to speak to your excellency; I told him you were gone out, and after some dispute he believed me and gave me this letter, which he had brought with him already sealed.'

'Give it me,' said Andrea, and he read by the light of his carriage-lamp:

'"You know where I live; I expect you tomorrow morning at nine o'clock."'

Andrea examined it carefully, to ascertain if the letter had been opened, or if any indiscreet eyes had seen its contents; but it was so carefully folded, that no one could have read it, and the seal was perfect.

'Very well,' said he. 'Poor man, he is a worthy creature.' He left the porter to ponder on these words, not knowing which most to admire, the master or the servant.

'Take out the horses quickly, and come up to me,' said Andrea to his groom. In two seconds the young man had reached his room and burnt Caderousse's letter. The servant entered just as he had finished.

'You are about my height, Pierre,' said he.

'I have that honour, your excellency.'

'You had a new livery yesterday?'

'Yes, sir.'

'I have an engagement with a pretty little girl for this evening, and do not wish to be known; lend me your livery till tomorrow. I may sleep, perhaps, at an inn.'

Pierre obeyed. Five minutes after, Andrea left the hotel, completely disguised, took a cabriolet, and ordered the driver to take him to the

Cheval Rouge, at Picpus. The next morning he left that inn as he had left the Hôtel des Princes, without being noticed, walked down the Faubourg Saint-Antoine, along the boulevard to Rue Ménilmontant, and stopping at the door of the third house on the left looked for someone of whom to make inquiry in the porter's absence.

'For whom are you looking, my fine fellow?' asked the fruiteress on the opposite side.

'Monsieur Pailletin, if you please, my good woman,' replied Andrea.

'A retired baker?' asked the fruiteress.

'Exactly.'

'He lives at the end of the yard, on the left, on the third story.' Andrea went as she directed him, and on the third floor he found a hare's paw, which, by the hasty ringing of the bell, it was evident he pulled with considerable ill-temper. A moment after Caderousse's face appeared at the grating in the door.

'Ah! you are punctual,' said he, as he drew back the door.

'Confound you and your punctuality!' said Andrea, throwing himself into a chair in a manner which implied that he would rather have flung it at the head of his host.

'Come, come, my little fellow, don't be angry. See, I have thought about you—look at the good breakfast we are going to have; nothing but what you are fond of.'

Andrea, indeed, inhaled the scent of something cooking which was not unwelcome to him, hungry as he was; it was that mixture of fat and garlic peculiar to Provençal kitchens of an inferior order, added to that of dried fish, and above all, the pungent smell of musk and cloves. These odours escaped from two deep dishes which were covered and placed on a stove, and from a copper pan placed in an old iron pot. In an adjoining room Andrea saw also a tolerably clean table prepared for two, two bottles of wine sealed, the one with green, the other with yellow, a supply of brandy in a decanter, and a measure of fruit in a cabbage-leaf, cleverly arranged on an earthenware plate.

'What do you think of it, my little fellow?' said Caderousse. 'Ay, that smells good! You know I used to be a good cook; do you recollect how you used to lick your fingers? You were among the first who tasted any

of my dishes, and I think you relished them tolerably.' While speaking, Caderousse went on peeling a fresh supply of onions.

'But,' said Andrea, ill-temperedly, 'by my faith, if it was only to breakfast with you, that you disturbed me, I wish the devil had taken you!'

'My boy,' said Caderousse sententiously, 'one can talk while eating. And then, you ungrateful being, you are not pleased to see an old friend? I am weeping with joy.'

He was truly crying, but it would have been difficult to say whether joy or the onions produced the greatest effect on the lachrymal glands of the old innkeeper of the Pont-du-Gard.

'Hold your tongue, hypocrite,' said Andrea; 'you love me!'

'Yes, I do, or may the devil take me. I know it is a weakness,' said Caderousse, 'but it overpowers me.'

'And yet it has not prevented your sending for me to play me some trick.'

'Come,' said Caderousse, wiping his large knife on his apron, 'if I did not like you, do you think I should endure the wretched life you lead me? Think for a moment. You have your servant's clothes on—you therefore keep a servant; I have none, and am obliged to prepare my own meals. You abuse my cookery because you dine at the table d'hôte of the Hôtel des Princes, or the Café de Paris. Well, I too could keep a servant; I too could have a tilbury; I too could dine where I like; but why do I not? Because I would not annoy my little Benedetto. Come, just acknowledge that I could, eh?'

This address was accompanied by a look which was by no means difficult to understand.

'Well,' said Andrea, 'admitting your love, why do you want me to breakfast with you?'

'That I may have the pleasure of seeing you, my little fellow.'

'What is the use of seeing me after we have made all our arrangements?'

'Eh, dear friend,' said Caderousse, 'are wills ever made without codicils? But you first came to breakfast, did you not? Well, sit down, and let us begin with these pilchards, and this fresh butter; which I have put on some vine-leaves to please you, wicked one. Ah, yes; you look at my room, my four straw chairs, my images, three francs each. But what do you expect? This is not the Hôtel des Princes.'

'I am, indeed, rejoiced,' said Andrea.

'But,' said Danglars thoughtfully, 'how is it that your patron, M. de Monte Cristo, did not make his proposal for you?'

Andrea blushed imperceptibly.

'I have just left the count, sir,' said he; 'he is, doubtless, a delightful man but inconceivably peculiar in his ideas. He esteems me highly. He even told me he had not the slightest doubt that my father would give me the capital instead of the interest of my property. He has promised to use his influence to obtain it for me; but he also declared that he never had taken on himself the responsibility of making proposals for another, and he never would. I must, however, do him the justice to add that he assured me if ever he had regretted the repugnance he felt to such a step it was on this occasion, because he thought the projected union would be a happy and suitable one. Besides, if he will do nothing officially, he will answer any questions you propose to him. And now,' continued he, with one of his most charming smiles, 'having finished talking to the father-in-law, I must address myself to the banker.'

'And what may you have to say to him?' said Danglars, laughing in his turn.

'That the day after tomorrow I shall have to draw upon you for about four thousand francs; but the count, expecting my bachelor's revenue could not suffice for the coming month's outlay, has offered me a draft for twenty thousand francs. It bears his signature, as you see, which is all-sufficient.'

'Bring me a million such as that,' said Danglars, 'I shall be well pleased,' putting the draft in his pocket. 'Fix your own hour for tomorrow, and my cashier shall call on you with a check for eighty thousand francs.'

'At ten o'clock then, if you please; I should like it early, as I am going into the country tomorrow.'

'Very well, at ten o'clock; you are still at the Hôtel des Princes?'

'Yes.'

The following morning, with the banker's usual punctuality, the eighty thousand francs were placed in the young man's hands, as he was on the point of starting, after having left two hundred francs for Caderousse. He went out chiefly to avoid this dangerous enemy, and returned as late as possible in the evening.

'Sir, my father is a man of great foresight and prudence. Thinking that I might wish to settle in France, he left me at his departure, together with the papers establishing my identity, a letter promising, if he approved of my choice, 150,000 livres per annum from the day I was married. So far as I can judge, I suppose this to be a quarter of my father's revenue.'

'I,' said Danglars, 'have always intended giving my daughter 500,000 francs as her dowry; she is, besides, my sole heiress.'

'All would then be easily arranged if the baroness and her daughter are willing. We should command an annuity of 175,000 livres. Supposing, also, I should persuade the marquis to give me my capital, which is not likely, but still is possible, we would place these two or three millions in your hands, whose talent might make it realize ten per cent.'

'I never give more than four per cent, and generally only three and a half; but to my son-in-law I would give five, and we would share the profits.'

'Very good, father-in-law,' said Cavalcanti, yielding to his low-born nature, which would escape sometimes through the aristocratic gloss with which he sought to conceal it. Correcting himself immediately, he said, 'Excuse me, sir; hope alone makes me almost mad,—what will not reality do?'

'But,' said Danglars, who, on his part, did not perceive how soon the conversation, which was at first disinterested, was turning to a business transaction, 'there is, doubtless, a part of your fortune your father could not refuse you?'

'Which?' asked the young man.

'That you inherit from your mother.'

'Truly, from my mother, Leonora Corsinari.'

'How much may it amount to?'

'Indeed, sir,' said Andrea, 'I assure you I have never given the subject a thought, but I suppose it must have been at least two millions.'

Danglars felt as much overcome with joy as the miser who finds a lost treasure, or as the shipwrecked mariner who feels himself on solid ground instead of in the abyss which he expected would swallow him up.

'Well, sir,' said Andrea, bowing to the banker respectfully, 'may I hope?'

'You may not only hope,' said Danglars, 'but consider it a settled thing, if no obstacle arises on your part.'

'Come, you are growing discontented, you are no longer happy; you, who only wish to live like a retired baker.'

Caderousse sighed.

'Well, what have you to say? you have seen your dream realized.'

'I can still say it is a dream; a retired baker, my poor Benedetto, is rich—he has an annuity.'

'Well, you have an annuity.'

'I have?'

'Yes, since I bring you your two hundred francs.'

Caderousse shrugged his shoulders.

'It is humiliating,' said he, 'thus to receive money given grudgingly,—an uncertain supply which may soon fail. You see I am obliged to economize, in case your prosperity should cease. Well, my friend, fortune is inconstant, as the chaplain of the regiment said. I know your prosperity is great, you rascal; you are to marry the daughter of Danglars.'

'What? of Danglars?'

'Yes, to be sure; must I say Baron Danglars? I might as well say Count Benedetto. He was an old friend of mine and if he had not so bad a memory he ought to invite me to your wedding, seeing he came to mine. Yes, yes, to mine; gad, he was not so proud then,—he was an under-clerk to the good M. Morrel. I have dined many times with him and the Count of Morcerf, so you see I have some high connections and were I to cultivate them a little, we might meet in the same drawing-rooms.'

'Come, your jealousy represents everything to you in the wrong light.'

'That is all very fine, Benedetto mio, but I know what I am saying. Perhaps I may one day put on my best coat, and presenting myself at the great gate, introduce myself. Meanwhile let us sit down and eat.'

Caderousse set the example and attacked the breakfast with good appetite, praising each dish he set before his visitor. The latter seemed to have resigned himself; he drew the corks, and partook largely of the fish with the garlic and fat.

'Ah, mate,' said Caderousse, 'you are getting on better terms with your old landlord!'

'Faith, yes,' replied Andrea, whose hunger prevailed over every other feeling.

'So you like it, you rogue?'

'So much that I wonder how a man who can cook thus can complain of hard living.'

'Do you see,' said Caderousse, 'all my happiness is marred by one thought?'

'What is that?'

'That I am dependent on another, I who have always gained my own livelihood honestly.'

'Do not let that disturb you, I have enough for two.'

'No, truly; you may believe me if you will; at the end of every month I am tormented by remorse.'

'Good Caderousse!'

'So much so, that yesterday I would not take the two hundred francs.'

'Yes, you wished to speak to me; but was it indeed remorse, tell me?'

'True remorse; and, besides, an idea had struck me.'

Andrea shuddered; he always did so at Caderousse's ideas.

'It is miserable—do you see?—always to wait till the end of the month.'

'Oh,' said Andrea philosophically, determined to watch his companion narrowly, 'does not life pass in waiting? Do I, for instance, fare better? Well, I wait patiently, do I not?'

'Yes; because instead of expecting two hundred wretched francs, you expect five or six thousand, perhaps ten, perhaps even twelve, for you take care not to let anyone know the utmost. Down there, you always had little presents and Christmas-boxes, which you tried to hide from your poor friend Caderousse. Fortunately he is a cunning fellow, that friend Caderousse.'

'There you are beginning again to ramble, to talk again and again of the past! But what is the use of teasing me with going all over that again?'

'Ah, you are only one-and-twenty, and can forget the past; I am fifty, and am obliged to recollect it. But let us return to business.'

'Yes.'

'I was going to say, if I were in your place— '

'Well.'

'I would realize— '

'How would you realize?'

'I would ask for six months' in advance, under pretence of being able to purchase a farm, then with my six months I would decamp.'

Chapter LXXXI

The Room of the Retired Baker

THE evening of the day on which the Count of Morcerf had left Danglars' house with feelings of shame and anger at the rejection of the projected alliance, M. Andrea Cavalcanti, with curled hair, moustaches in perfect order, and white gloves which fitted admirably, had entered the courtyard of the banker's house in Rue de la Chaussée d'Antin. He had not been more than ten minutes in the drawing-room before he drew Danglars aside into the recess of a bow-window, and, after an ingenious preamble, related to him all his anxieties and cares since his noble father's departure. He acknowledged the extreme kindness which had been shown him by the banker's family, in which he had been received as a son, and where, besides, his warmest affections had found an object on which to centre in Mademoiselle Danglars.

Danglars listened with the most profound attention; he had expected this declaration for the last two or three days, and when at last it came his eyes glistened as much as they had lowered on listening to Morcerf. He would not, however, yield immediately to the young man's request, but made a few conscientious objections.

'Are you not rather young, M. Andrea, to think of marrying?'

'I think not, sir,' replied M. Cavalcanti; 'in Italy the nobility generally marry young. Life is so uncertain, that we ought to secure happiness while it is within our reach.'

'Well, sir,' said Danglars, 'in case your proposals, which do me honour, are accepted by my wife and daughter, by whom shall the preliminary arrangements be settled? So important a negotiation should, I think, be conducted by the respective fathers of the young people.'

of increased wages, could induce them to remain; to every argument they replied, 'We must go, for death is in this house.'

They all left, in spite of prayers and entreaties, testifying their regret at leaving so good a master and mistress, and especially Mademoiselle Valentine, so good, so kind, and so gentle.

Villefort looked at Valentine as they said this. She was in tears, and, strange as it was, in spite of the emotions he felt at the sight of these tears, he looked also at Madame de Villefort, and it appeared to him as if a slight gloomy smile had passed over her thin lips, like a meteor seen passing inauspiciously between two clouds in a stormy sky.

'Well, well,' said Andrea, 'that isn't a bad idea.'

'My dear friend,' said Caderousse, 'eat of my bread, and take my advice; you will be none the worse off, physically or morally.'

'But,' said Andrea, 'why do you not act on the advice you gave me? Why do you not realize a six months', a year's advance even, and retire to Brussels? Instead of living the retired baker, you might live as a bankrupt, using his privileges; that would be very good.'

'But how the devil would you have me retire on twelve hundred francs?'

'Ah, Caderousse,' said Andrea, 'how covetous you are! Two months ago you were dying with hunger.'

'The appetite grows by what it feeds on,' said Caderousse, grinning and showing his teeth, like a monkey laughing or a tiger growling. 'And,' added he, biting off with his large white teeth an enormous mouthful of bread, 'I have formed a plan.'

Caderousse's plans alarmed Andrea still more than his ideas; ideas were but the germ, the plan was reality.

'Let me see your plan; I dare say it is a pretty one.'

'Why not? Who formed the plan by which we left the establishment of M——! eh? was it not I? and it was no bad one I believe, since here we are!'

'I do not say,' replied Andrea, 'that you never make a good one; but let us see your plan.'

'Well,' pursued Caderousse, 'can you without expending one sou, put me in the way of getting fifteen thousand francs? No, fifteen thousand are not enough,—I cannot again become an honest man with less than thirty thousand francs.'

'No,' replied Andrea, dryly, 'no, I cannot.'

'I do not think you understand me,' replied Caderousse, calmly; 'I said without your laying out a sou.'

'Do you want me to commit a robbery, to spoil all my good fortune—and yours with mine—and both of us to be dragged down there again?'

'It would make very little difference to me,' said Caderousse, 'if I were retaken, I am a poor creature to live alone, and sometimes pine for my old comrades; not like you, heartless creature, who would be glad never to see them again.'

Andrea did more than tremble this time, he turned pale.

'Come, Caderousse, no nonsense!' said he.

'Don't alarm yourself, my little Benedetto, but just point out to me some means of gaining those thirty thousand francs without your assistance, and I will contrive it.'

'Well, I'll see—I'll try to contrive some way,' said Andrea.

'Meanwhile you will raise my monthly allowance to five hundred francs, my little fellow? I have a fancy, and mean to get a housekeeper.'

'Well, you shall have your five hundred francs,' said Andrea; 'but it is very hard for me, my poor Caderousse—you take advantage— '

'Bah,' said Caderousse, 'when you have access to countless stores.'

One would have said Andrea anticipated his companion's words, so did his eye flash like lightning, but it was but for a moment.

'True,' he replied, 'and my protector is very kind.'

'That dear protector,' said Caderousse; 'and how much does he give you monthly?'

'Five thousand francs.'

'As many thousands as you give me hundreds! Truly, it is only bastards who are thus fortunate. Five thousand francs per month! What the devil can you do with all that?'

'Oh, it is no trouble to spend that; and I am like you, I want capital.'

'Capital?—yes—I understand—everyone would like capital.'

'Well, and I shall get it.'

'Who will give it to you—your prince?'

'Yes, my prince. But unfortunately I must wait.'

'You must wait for what?' asked Caderousse.

'For his death.'

'The death of your prince?'

'Yes.'

'How so?'

'Because he has made his will in my favour.'

'Indeed?'

'On my honour.'

'For how much?'

'For five hundred thousand.'

'Only that? It's little enough.'

'But so it is.'

say to you, "Assassin, you have killed my child!'—hold—if that should happen, although I am a Christian, M. d"Avrigny, I should kill myself.'

'Well,' said the doctor, after a moment's silence, 'I will wait.'

Villefort looked at him as if he had doubted his words.

'Only,' continued M. d'Avrigny, with a slow and solemn tone, 'if anyone falls ill in your house, if you feel yourself attacked, do not send for me, for I will come no more. I will consent to share this dreadful secret with you, but I will not allow shame and remorse to grow and increase in my conscience, as crime and misery will in your house.'

'Then you abandon me, doctor?'

'Yes, for I can follow you no farther, and I only stop at the foot of the scaffold. Some further discovery will be made, which will bring this dreadful tragedy to a close. Adieu.'

'I entreat you, doctor!'

'All the horrors that disturb my thoughts make your house odious and fatal. Adieu, sir.'

'One word—one single word more, doctor! You go, leaving me in all the horror of my situation, after increasing it by what you have revealed to me. But what will be reported of the sudden death of the poor old servant?'

'True,' said M. d'Avrigny; 'we will return.'

The doctor went out first, followed by M. de Villefort. The terrified servants were on the stairs and in the passage where the doctor would pass.

'Sir,' said d'Avrigny to Villefort, so loud that all might hear, 'poor Barrois has led too sedentary a life of late; accustomed formerly to ride on horseback, or in the carriage, to the four corners of Europe, the monotonous walk around that armchair has killed him—his blood has thickened. He was stout, had a short, thick neck; he was attacked with apoplexy, and I was called in too late. By the way,' added he in a low tone, 'take care to throw away that cup of syrup of violets in the ashes.'

The doctor, without shaking hands with Villefort, without adding a word to what he had said, went out, amid the tears and lamentations of the whole household. The same evening all Villefort's servants, who had assembled in the kitchen, and had a long consultation, came to tell Madame de Villefort that they wished to leave. No entreaty, no proposition

'M. de Villefort,' replied the doctor, with increased vehemence, 'there are occasions when I dispense with all foolish human circumspection. If your daughter had committed only one crime, and I saw her meditating another, I would say "Warn her, punish her, let her pass the remainder of her life in a convent, weeping and praying." If she had committed two crimes, I would say, "Here, M. de Villefort, is a poison that the prisoner is not acquainted with,—one that has no known antidote, quick as thought, rapid as lightning, mortal as the thunderbolt; give her that poison, recommending her soul to God, and save your honour and your life, for it is yours she aims at; and I can picture her approaching your pillow with her hypocritical smiles and her sweet exhortations. Woe to you, M. de Villefort, if you do not strike first!" This is what I would say had she only killed two persons but she has seen three deaths,—has contemplated three murdered persons,—has knelt by three corpses! To the scaffold with the poisoner—to the scaffold! Do you talk of your honour? Do what I tell you, and immortality awaits you!'

Villefort fell on his knees.

'Listen,' said he; 'I have not the strength of mind you have, or rather that which you would not have, if instead of my daughter Valentine your daughter Madeleine were concerned.' The doctor turned pale. 'Doctor, every son of woman is born to suffer and to die; I am content to suffer and to await death.'

'Beware,' said M. d'Avrigny, 'it may come slowly; you will see it approach after having struck your father, your wife, perhaps your son.'

Villefort, suffocating, pressed the doctor's arm. 'Listen,' cried he; 'pity me—help me! No, my daughter is not guilty. If you drag us both before a tribunal I will still say, "No, my daughter is not guilty;—there is no crime in my house. I will not acknowledge a crime in my house; for when crime enters a dwelling, it is like death—it does not come alone." Listen. What does it signify to you if I am murdered? Are you my friend? Are you a man? Have you a heart? No, you are a physician! Well, I tell you I will not drag my daughter before a tribunal, and give her up to the executioner! The bare idea would kill me—would drive me like a madman to dig my heart out with my finger-nails! And if you were mistaken, doctor—if it were not my daughter—if I should come one day, pale as a spectre, and

'No, it cannot be!'

'Are you my friend, Caderousse?'

'Yes, in life or death.'

'Well, I will tell you a secret.'

'What is it?'

'But remember— '

'Ah! *pardieu!* mute as a carp.'

'Well, I think— '

Andrea stopped and looked around.

'You think? Do not fear; *pardieu!* we are alone.'

'I think I have discovered my father.'

'Your true father?'

'Yes.'

'Not old Cavalcanti?'

'No, for he has gone again; the true one, as you say.'

'And that father is— '

'Well, Caderousse, it is Monte Cristo.'

'Bah!'

'Yes, you understand, that explains all. He cannot acknowledge me openly, it appears, but he does it through M. Cavalcanti, and gives him fifty thousand francs for it.'

'Fifty thousand francs for being your father? I would have done it for half that, for twenty thousand, for fifteen thousand; why did you not think of me, ungrateful man?'

'Did I know anything about it, when it was all done when I was down there?'

'Ah, truly? And you say that by his will— '

'He leaves me five hundred thousand livres.'

'Are you sure of it?'

'He showed it me; but that is not all—there is a codicil, as I said just now.'

'Probably.'

'And in that codicil he acknowledges me.'

'Oh, the good father, the brave father, the very honest father!' said Caderousse, twirling a plate in the air between his two hands.

'Now, say if I conceal anything from you?'

'No, and your confidence makes you honourable in my opinion; and your princely father, is he rich, very rich?'

'Yes, he is that; he does not himself know the amount of his fortune.'

'Is it possible?'

'It is evident enough to me, who am always at his house. The other day a banker's clerk brought him fifty thousand francs in a portfolio about the size of your plate; yesterday his banker brought him a hundred thousand francs in gold.'

Caderousse was filled with wonder; the young man's words sounded to him like metal, and he thought he could hear the rushing of cascades of louis.

'And you go into that house?' cried he briskly.

'When I like.'

Caderousse was thoughtful for a moment. It was easy to perceive he was revolving some unfortunate idea in his mind. Then suddenly,—

'How I should like to see all that,' cried he; 'how beautiful it must be!'

'It is, in fact, magnificent,' said Andrea.

'And does he not live in the Champs-Élysées?'

'Yes, № 30.'

'Ah,' said Caderousse, '№ 30.'

'Yes, a fine house standing alone, between a courtyard and a garden,—you must know it.'

'Possibly; but it is not the exterior I care for, it is the interior. What beautiful furniture there must be in it!'

'Have you ever seen the Tuileries?'

'No.'

'Well, it surpasses that.'

'It must be worth one's while to stoop, Andrea, when that good M. Monte Cristo lets fall his purse.'

'It is not worthwhile to wait for that,' said Andrea; 'money is as plentiful in that house as fruit in an orchard.'

'But you should take me there one day with you.'

'How can I? On what plea?'

'You are right; but you have made my mouth water. I must absolutely see it; I shall find a way.'

'No nonsense, Caderousse!'

'Follow the culprit's steps; he first kills M. de Saint-Méran— '

'Oh, doctor!'

'I would swear to it; what I heard of his symptoms agrees too well with what I have seen in the other cases.' Villefort ceased to contend; he only groaned. 'He first kills M. de Saint-Méran,' repeated the doctor, 'then Madame de Saint-Méran,—a double fortune to inherit.' Villefort wiped the perspiration from his forehead. 'Listen attentively.'

'Alas,' stammered Villefort, 'I do not lose a single word.'

'M. Noirtier,' resumed M. d'Avrigny in the same pitiless tone,—'M. Noirtier had once made a will against you—against your family—in favour of the poor, in fact; M. Noirtier is spared, because nothing is expected from him. But he has no sooner destroyed his first will and made a second, than, for fear he should make a third, he is struck down. The will was made the day before yesterday, I believe; you see there has been no time lost.'

'Oh, mercy, M. d'Avrigny!'

'No mercy, sir! The physician has a sacred mission on earth; and to fulfil it he begins at the source of life, and goes down to the mysterious darkness of the tomb. When crime has been committed, and God, doubtless in anger, turns away his face, it is for the physician to bring the culprit to justice.'

'Have mercy on my child, sir,' murmured Villefort.

'You see it is yourself who have first named her—you, her father.'

'Have pity on Valentine! Listen, it is impossible. I would as willingly accuse myself! Valentine, whose heart is pure as a diamond or a lily!'

'No pity, procureur; the crime is fragrant. Mademoiselle herself packed all the medicines which were sent to M. de Saint-Méran; and M. de Saint-Méran is dead. Mademoiselle de Villefort prepared all the cooling draughts which Madame de Saint-Méran took, and Madame de Saint-Méran is dead. Mademoiselle de Villefort took from the hands of Barrois, who was sent out, the lemonade which M. Noirtier had every morning, and he has escaped by a miracle. Mademoiselle de Villefort is the culprit—she is the poisoner! To you, as the king's attorney, I denounce Mademoiselle de Villefort, do your duty.'

'Doctor, I resist no longer—I can no longer defend myself—I believe you; but, for pity's sake, spare my life, my honour!'