'What?' cried the magistrate, with an accent of horror and consternation, 'are you still harping on that terrible idea?'

'Still, sir; and I shall always do so,' replied d'Avrigny, 'for it has never for one instant ceased to retain possession of my mind; and that you may be quite sure I am not mistaken this time, listen well to what I am going to say, M. de Villefort.'

The magistrate trembled convulsively.

'There is a poison which destroys life almost without leaving any perceptible traces. I know it well; I have studied it in all its forms and in the effects which it produces. I recognized the presence of this poison in the case of poor Barrois as well as in that of Madame de Saint-Méran. There is a way of detecting its presence. It restores the blue colour of litmus-paper reddened by an acid, and it turns syrup of violets green. We have no litmus-paper, but, see, here they come with the syrup of violets.'

The doctor was right; steps were heard in the passage. M. d'Avrigny opened the door, and took from the hands of the chambermaid a cup which contained two or three spoonfuls of the syrup, he then carefully closed the door.

'Look,' said he to the procureur, whose heart beat so loudly that it might almost be heard, 'here is in this cup some syrup of violets, and this decanter contains the remainder of the lemonade of which M. Noirtier and Barrois partook. If the lemonade be pure and inoffensive, the syrup will retain its colour; if, on the contrary, the lemonade be drugged with poison, the syrup will become green. Look closely!'

The doctor then slowly poured some drops of the lemonade from the decanter into the cup, and in an instant a light cloudy sediment began to form at the bottom of the cup; this sediment first took a blue shade, then from the colour of sapphire it passed to that of opal, and from opal to emerald. Arrived at this last hue, it changed no more. The result of the experiment left no doubt whatever on the mind.

'The unfortunate Barrois has been poisoned,' said d'Avrigny, 'and I will maintain this assertion before God and man.'

Villefort said nothing, but he clasped his hands, opened his haggard eyes, and, overcome with his emotion, sank into a chair.

Chapter LXXX

The Accusation

M. d'Avrigny soon restored the magistrate to consciousness, who had looked like a second corpse in that chamber of death.

'Death is in my house!' cried Villefort.

'Say, father, crime!' replied the doctor.

'M. d'Avrigny,' cried Villefort, 'I cannot tell you all I feel at this moment,—terror, grief, madness.'

'Yes,' said M. d'Avrigny, with an imposing calmness, 'but I think it is now time to act. I think it is time to stop this torrent of mortality. I can no longer bear to be in possession of these secrets without the hope of seeing the victims and society generally revenged.'

Villefort cast a gloomy look around him. 'In my house,' murmured he, 'in my house!'

'Come, magistrate,' said M. d'Avrigny, 'show yourself a man; as an interpreter of the law, do honour to your profession by sacrificing your selfish interests to it.'

'You make me shudder, doctor. Do you talk of a sacrifice?'

'I do.'

'Do you then suspect anyone?'

'I suspect no one; death raps at your door—it enters—it goes, not blindfolded, but circumspectly, from room to room. Well, I follow its course, I track its passage; I adopt the wisdom of the ancients, and feel my way, for my friendship for your family and my respect for you are as a twofold bandage over my eyes; well— '

'Oh, speak, speak, doctor; I shall have courage.'

'Well, sir, you have in your establishment, or in your family, perhaps, one of the frightful monstrosities of which each century produces only

one. Locusta and Agrippina, living at the same time, were an exception, and proved the determination of Providence to effect the entire ruin of the Roman empire, sullied by so many crimes. Brunhilda and Fredegund were the results of the painful struggle of civilization in its infancy, when man was learning to control mind, were it even by an emissary from the realms of darkness. All these women had been, or were, beautiful. The same flower of innocence had flourished, or was still flourishing, on their brow, that is seen on the brow of the culprit in your house.' Villefort shrieked, clasped his hands, and looked at the doctor with a supplicating air. But the latter went on without pity:

'"Seek whom the crime will profit," says an axiom of jurisprudence.'

'Doctor,' cried Villefort, 'alas, doctor, how often has man's justice been deceived by those fatal words. I know not why, but I feel that this crime— '

'You acknowledge, then, the existence of the crime?'

'Yes, I see too plainly that it does exist. But it seems that it is intended to affect me personally. I fear an attack myself, after all these disasters.'

'Oh, man!' murmured d'Avrigny, 'the most selfish of all animals, the most personal of all creatures, who believes the earth turns, the sun shines, and death strikes for him alone,—an ant cursing God from the top of a blade of grass! And have those who have lost their lives lost nothing?—M. de Saint-Méran, Madame de Saint-Méran, M. Noirtier— '

'How? M. Noirtier?'

'Yes; think you it was the poor servant's life was coveted? No, no; like Shakespeare's Polonius, he died for another. It was Noirtier the lemonade was intended for—it is Noirtier, logically speaking, who drank it. The other drank it only by accident, and, although Barrois is dead, it was Noirtier whose death was wished for.'

'But why did it not kill my father?'

'I told you one evening in the garden after Madame de Saint-Méran's death—because his system is accustomed to that very poison, and the dose was trifling to him, which would be fatal to another; because no one knows, not even the assassin, that, for the last twelve months, I have given M. Noirtier brucine for his paralytic affection, while the assassin is not ignorant, for he has proved that brucine is a violent poison.'

'Oh, have pity—have pity!' murmured Villefort, wringing his hands.

'Will they never bring that emetic?' asked the doctor.

'Here is a glass with one already prepared,' said Villefort, entering the room.

'Who prepared it?'

'The chemist who came here with me.' 'Drink it,' said the doctor to Barrois.

'Impossible, doctor; it is too late; my throat is closing up. I am choking! Oh, my heart! Ah, my head!—Oh, what agony!—Shall I suffer like this long?'

'No, no, friend,' replied the doctor, 'you will soon cease to suffer.'

'Ah, I understand you,' said the unhappy man. 'My God, have mercy upon me!' and, uttering a fearful cry, Barrois fell back as if he had been struck by lightning. D'Avrigny put his hand to his heart, and placed a glass before his lips.

'Well?' said Villefort.

'Go to the kitchen and get me some syrup of violets.'

Villefort went immediately.

'Do not be alarmed, M. Noirtier,' said d'Avrigny; 'I am going to take my patient into the next room to bleed him; this sort of attack is very frightful to witness.'

And taking Barrois under the arms, he dragged him into an adjoining room; but almost immediately he returned to fetch the lemonade. Noirtier closed his right eye.

'You want Valentine, do you not? I will tell them to send her to you.'

Villefort returned, and d'Avrigny met him in the passage.

'Well, how is he now?' asked he.

'Come in here,' said d'Avrigny, and he took him into the chamber where the sick man lay.

'Is he still in a fit?' said the procureur.

'He is dead.'

Villefort drew back a few steps, and, clasping his hands, exclaimed, with real amazement and sympathy, 'Dead?—and so soon too!'

'Yes, it is very soon,' said the doctor, looking at the corpse before him; 'but that ought not to astonish you; Monsieur and Madame de Saint-Méran died as soon. People die very suddenly in your house, M. de Villefort.'

him in this paroxysm, knowing that he could do nothing to alleviate it, and, going up to Noirtier, said abruptly:

'How do you find yourself?—well?'

'Yes.'

'Have you any weight on the chest; or does your stomach feel light and comfortable—eh?'

'Yes.'

'Then you feel pretty much as you generally do after you have had the dose which I am accustomed to give you every Sunday?'

'Yes.'

'Did Barrois make your lemonade?'

'Yes.'

'Was it you who asked him to drink some of it?'

'No.'

'Was it M. de Villefort?'

'No.'

'Madame?'

'No.'

'It was your granddaughter, then, was it not?'

'Yes.'

A groan from Barrois, accompanied by a yawn which seemed to crack the very jawbones, attracted the attention of M. d'Avrigny; he left M. Noirtier, and returned to the sick man.

'Barrois,' said the doctor, 'can you speak?' Barrois muttered a few unintelligible words. 'Try and make an effort to do so, my good man.' said d'Avrigny. Barrois reopened his bloodshot eyes.

'Who made the lemonade?'

'I did.'

'Did you bring it to your master directly it was made?'

'No.'

'You left it somewhere, then, in the meantime?'

'Yes; I left it in the pantry, because I was called away.'

'Who brought it into this room, then?'

'Mademoiselle Valentine.' D'Avrigny struck his forehead with his hand.

'Gracious heaven,' exclaimed he.

'Doctor, doctor!' cried Barrois, who felt another fit coming.

'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!'

'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

herself going down to the kitchen. She cried out, but d'Avrigny paid no attention to her; possessed with but one idea, he cleared the last four steps with a bound, and rushed into the kitchen, where he saw the decanter about three parts empty still standing on the waiter, where it had been left. He darted upon it as an eagle would seize upon its prey. Panting with loss of breath, he returned to the room he had just left. Madame de Villefort was slowly ascending the steps which led to her room.

'Is this the decanter you spoke of?' asked d'Avrigny.

'Yes, doctor.'

'Is this the same lemonade of which you partook?'

'I believe so.'

'What did it taste like?'

'It had a bitter taste.'

The doctor poured some drops of the lemonade into the palm of his hand, put his lips to it, and after having rinsed his mouth as a man does when he is tasting wine, he spat the liquor into the fireplace.

'It is no doubt the same,' said he. 'Did you drink some too, M. Noirtier?'

'Yes.'

'And did you also discover a bitter taste?'

'Yes.'

'Oh, doctor,' cried Barrois, 'the fit is coming on again. Oh, do something for me.' The doctor flew to his patient.

'That emetic, Villefort—see if it is coming.'

Villefort sprang into the passage, exclaiming, 'The emetic! the emetic!—is it come yet?' No one answered. The most profound terror reigned throughout the house.

'If I had anything by means of which I could inflate the lungs,' said d'Avrigny, looking around him, 'perhaps I might prevent suffocation. But there is nothing which would do!—nothing!' 'Oh, sir,' cried Barrois, 'are you going to let me die without help? Oh, I am dying! Oh, save me!'

'A pen, a pen!' said the doctor. There was one lying on the table; he endeavoured to introduce it into the mouth of the patient, who, in the midst of his convulsions, was making vain attempts to vomit; but the jaws were so clenched that the pen could not pass them. This second attack was much more violent than the first, and he had slipped from the couch to the ground, where he was writhing in agony. The doctor left

'A little better, sir.'

'Will you drink some of this ether and water?'

'I will try; but don't touch me.'

'Why not?'

'Because I feel that if you were only to touch me with the tip of your finger the fit would return.'

'Drink.'

Barrois took the glass, and, raising it to his purple lips, took about half of the liquid offered him.

'Where do you suffer?' asked the doctor.

'Everywhere. I feel cramps over my whole body.'

'Do you find any dazzling sensation before the eyes?'

'Yes.'

'Any noise in the ears?'

'Frightful.' 'When did you first feel that?'

'Just now.'

'Suddenly?'

'Yes, like a clap of thunder.'

'Did you feel nothing of it yesterday or the day before?'

'Nothing.'

'No drowsiness?'

'None.'

'What have you eaten today?'

'I have eaten nothing; I only drank a glass of my master's lemonade—that's all.' And Barrois turned towards Noirtier, who, immovably fixed in his armchair, was contemplating this terrible scene without allowing a word or a movement to escape him.

'Where is this lemonade?' asked the doctor eagerly.

'Downstairs in the decanter.'

'Whereabouts downstairs?'

'In the kitchen.'

'Shall I go and fetch it, doctor?' inquired Villefort.

'No, stay here and try to make Barrois drink the rest of this glass of ether and water. I will go myself and fetch the lemonade.'

D'Avrigny bounded towards the door, flew down the back staircase, and almost knocked down Madame de Villefort, in his haste, who was

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

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.

'Madame,' said Villefort, 'I ask where is M. d'Avrigny? In God's name answer me!'

'He is with Edward, who is not quite well,' replied Madame de Villefort, no longer being able to avoid answering.

Villefort rushed upstairs to fetch him.

'Take this,' said Madame de Villefort, giving her smelling-bottle to Valentine. 'They will, no doubt, bleed him; therefore I will retire, for I cannot endure the sight of blood;' and she followed her husband upstairs. Morrel now emerged from his hiding-place, where he had remained quite unperceived, so great had been the general confusion.

'Go away as quick as you can, Maximilian,' said Valentine, 'and stay till I send for you. Go.'

Morrel looked towards Noirtier for permission to retire. The old man, who had preserved all his usual coolness, made a sign to him to do so. The young man pressed Valentine's hand to his lips, and then left the house by a back staircase.

At the same moment that he quitted the room, Villefort and the doctor entered by an opposite door. Barrois was now showing signs of returning consciousness. The crisis seemed past, a low moaning was heard, and he raised himself on one knee. D'Avrigny and Villefort laid him on a couch.

'What do you prescribe, doctor?' demanded Villefort.

'Give me some water and ether. You have some in the house, have you not?'

'Yes.'

'Send for some oil of turpentine and tartar emetic.'

Villefort immediately despatched a messenger. 'And now let everyone retire.'

'Must I go too?' asked Valentine timidly.

'Yes, mademoiselle, you especially,' replied the doctor abruptly.

Valentine looked at M. d'Avrigny with astonishment, kissed her grandfather on the forehead, and left the room. The doctor closed the door after her with a gloomy air.

'Look, look, doctor,' said Villefort, 'he is quite coming round again; I really do not think, after all, it is anything of consequence.'

M. d'Avrigny answered by a melancholy smile.

'How do you feel, Barrois?' asked he.

seen Morrel. After a moment of dumb contemplation, during which his face became pale and his hair seemed to stand on end, he sprang towards the door, crying out:

'Doctor, doctor! come instantly, pray come!'

'Madame, madame!' cried Valentine, calling her step-mother, and running upstairs to meet her; 'come quick, quick!—and bring your bottle of smelling-salts with you.'

'What is the matter?' said Madame de Villefort in a harsh and constrained tone.

'Oh! come! come!'

'But where is the doctor?' exclaimed Villefort; 'where is he?'

Madame de Villefort now deliberately descended the staircase. In one hand she held her handkerchief, with which she appeared to be wiping her face, and in the other a bottle of English smelling-salts. Her first look on entering the room was at Noirtier, whose face, independent of the emotion which such a scene could not fail of producing, proclaimed him to be in possession of his usual health; her second glance was at the dying man. She turned pale, and her eye passed quickly from the servant and rested on the master.

'In the name of heaven, madame,' said Villefort, 'where is the doctor? He was with you just now. You see this is a fit of apoplexy, and he might be saved if he could but be bled!'

'Has he eaten anything lately?' asked Madame de Villefort, eluding her husband's question.

'Madame,' replied Valentine, 'he has not even breakfasted. He has been running very fast on an errand with which my grandfather charged him, and when he returned, took nothing but a glass of lemonade.'

'Ah,' said Madame de Villefort, 'why did he not take wine? Lemonade was a very bad thing for him.'

'Grandpapa's bottle of lemonade was standing just by his side; poor Barrois was very thirsty, and was thankful to drink anything he could find.'

Madame de Villefort started. Noirtier looked at her with a glance of the most profound scrutiny.

'He has such a short neck,' said she.

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.'

'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.'

The rigors which had attacked Barrois gradually increased, the features of the face became quite altered, and the convulsive movement of the muscles appeared to indicate the approach of a most serious nervous disorder. Noirtier, seeing Barrois in this pitiable condition, showed by his looks all the various emotions of sorrow and sympathy which can animate the heart of man. Barrois made some steps towards his master.

'Ah, sir,' said he, 'tell me what is the matter with me. I am suffering—I cannot see. A thousand fiery darts are piercing my brain. Ah, don't touch me, pray don't.'

By this time his haggard eyes had the appearance of being ready to start from their sockets; his head fell back, and the lower extremities of the body began to stiffen. Valentine uttered a cry of horror; Morrel took her in his arms, as if to defend her from some unknown danger.

'M. d'Avrigny, M. d'Avrigny,' cried she, in a stifled voice. 'Help, help!'

Barrois turned round and with a great effort stumbled a few steps, then fell at the feet of Noirtier, and resting his hand on the knee of the invalid, exclaimed:

'My master, my good master!'

At this moment M. de Villefort, attracted by the noise, appeared on the threshold. Morrel relaxed his hold of Valentine, and retreating to a distant corner of the room remained half hidden behind a curtain. Pale as if he had been gazing on a serpent, he fixed his terrified eye on the agonized sufferer.

Noirtier, burning with impatience and terror, was in despair at his utter inability to help his old domestic, whom he regarded more in the light of a friend than a servant. One might by the fearful swelling of the veins of his forehead and the contraction of the muscles round the eye, trace the terrible conflict which was going on between the living energetic mind and the inanimate and helpless body.

Barrois, his features convulsed, his eyes suffused with blood, and his head thrown back, was lying at full length, beating the floor with his hands, while his legs had become so stiff, that they looked as if they would break rather than bend. A slight appearance of foam was visible around the mouth, and he breathed painfully, and with extreme difficulty.

Villefort seemed stupefied with astonishment, and remained gazing intently on the scene before him without uttering a word. He had not