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MYSTERIES OF PARIS

By EUGENE SUE

VOLUME THREE

[Illustration: THE RECITATION]

PART III.

NIGHT.

CHAPTER I.

IN THE NOTARY'S OFFICE.

Brain, or heart of the land, which you will, as large cities are, Paris may claim to have nerves, muscles, and arteries centering in it, which but few capitals, by right of size, passions, horrors, loves, charms, mysteries, in a word, can reveal. To trace its emotions, impulses, secrets, wounds, cankers, joys, the following pages are devoted.

We must begin by taking up the further ends of threads which will soon lead us deep into its labyrinths, not without events on the way, only surpassed by those we shall meet in the mazes themselves.

In the year 1819, a singular project, incited by the current stories of left-handed marriages and loving episodes, as in the case of the Prince of Capua and Miss Penelope Smith, was put into operation by one Sarah Seyton, widow of the Earl of M'Gregor. Her brother, the Honorable Tom Seyton, assisted her to the utmost, fully prepared to aid his sister in matrimonially entangling any crown-wearer whomsoever; he was perfectly willing to participate with her in all the schemes and intrigues that might be useful toward the success of her endeavor to become the wife of a sovereign, however humble in possessions and power; but he would far rather have killed the sister whom he so devotedly loved, than he would have seen her become the mistress of a prince, even with the certainty of a subsequent marriage in reparation.

The matrimonial inventory drawn up by Tom, with the aid of the *Almanach de Gotha*, had a very satisfactory aspect. The Germanic Confederation, especially, furnished a numerous contingency of young presumptive sovereigns, the first to whom the adventurers meant to pay attention being thus designated in the diplomatic and infallible *Almanac of Gotha* for the year of 1819:

Genealogy of the Sovereigns of Europe and their Families.

GEROLSTEIN.

Grand-Duke MAXIMILIAN RUDOLPH, born December 10th, 1764.
Succeeded his father, CHARLES FREDERIC RUDOLPH, April 21st 1785.
Widower January, 1808, of Louisa, daughter of Prince JOHN
AUGUSTUS of Burglen.

SON,

GUSTAVUS RUDOLPH, born April 17th, 1803.

MOTHER,

Grand-Duchess JUDITH, dowager widow of the Grand-Duke

CHARLES FREDERIC RUDOLPH, April 21st, 1785.

Tom had sense enough to inscribe first on his list the youngest of the princes whom he desired for his brother-in-law, thinking that extreme youth was more easily seduced than riper age.

The Countess M'Gregor was not only favored with the introduction of the Marquis d'Harville (a friend of the grand-duke, to whom he had rendered great services in 1815, and a little of a suitor of the lady's while she was in Paris) and of the British Ambassador in Paris, but with that of her own personal appearance. To rare beauty and a singular aptitude of acquiring various accomplishments, was added a seductiveness all the more dangerous, because she possessed a mind unbending and calculating, a disposition cunning and selfish, a deep hypocrisy, a stubborn and despotic will--all hidden under the specious gloss of a generous, warm, and impassioned nature. Physically her organization was as deceptive as it was morally. Her large black eyes--which, by turns languished and beamed with beauty beneath their ebon lashes--could feign to admiration all the kindling fires of voluptuousness. And yet, the burning impulses of love beat not in her frozen bosom; never could a surprise of either the heart or the senses disturb the stern and pitiless schemes of this intriguing, egotistical, and ambitious girl.

Fortunately for her, her plans were assisted by one Dr. Polidori, a learned but hypocritical man, who hoped to be the future Richelieu over the puppet he trusted to convert Prince Rudolph into. The lady and her brother combined with Polidori against the youthful prince, whose only ally was his true friend, an English baronet, Sir Walter Murphy.

The Countess M'Gregor drove things to the end, and, during a brief absence of the grand-duke, was secretly married to Prince Rudolph. In time, about to become a mother, the artful woman began to clamor for an acknowledgment of the union. She braved exposure, hoping to force the prince into giving her the station she sought. All was discovered, easily, therefore. But the old duke was all-powerful within his realm: the clandestine union was pronounced null and void, and the countess expelled. Her latest act of

vengeance was to inform Rudolph that their child had died. This was in 1827. But this assurance was on a par with her former falseness: the child, a girl, was handed over to Jacques Ferrand, a miserly notary in Paris, whose housekeeper got rid of it to a rogue known as Pierre Tournemine. When he at last ran to the end of his tether, and was sentenced to imprisonment in the Rochefort-hulks for forgery, he induced a woman called Gervais, but nicknamed the Screech-Owl (Chouette), to take the girl, now five or six years old, who brought the little creature up in the midst of as much cruelty as degradation.

Meanwhile the countess nursed the idea of wedding Prince Rudolph in a more secure manner. When, in time, he became grand-duke, she was more eager than ever to enjoy what she considered her own. Though he had married, she hoped; and, the second wife having died childless, the Countess M'Gregor followed Rudolph into Prance, where he traveled incognito as Count Duren. As a last resort to force the grand-duke into her ambitious aims, she sought for a girl of the age that her own would have been, to pass it off as their child. By chance, the woman to whom she applied was La Chouette, and hardly had she spoken of the likeness which the counterfeit would have to bear to the supposed suppressed child, than the woman recognized the very girl whom she had kept for years by her, or in view.

Yes, the offspring of Prince Rudolph and the countess was a common girl of the town, known as Fleur-de-Marie (the Virgin's Flower), for her touching religious beauty, as La Goualeuse (the Songstress), for her vocal ability, and La Pegriotte (Little Thief), out of La Chouette's anger that she would not be what she styled her.

She had long shunned her sad sisters in shame, and, indeed, in all her life had known but one friend. This was a sewing-girl known as Rigolette, or Miss Dimpleton, from her continual smiles; a maid with no strong ideas of virtue, but preserved from the miry path which poor Fleur-de-Marie had been forced to use, merely by being too hard-worked to have leisure to be bad.

Prince Rudolph entertained the most profound aversion for the mother of his child, yet for the latter he mourned still, fifteen or eighteen years after her reported decease. Weary of life, save for doing good, he took a deep liking for playing the part of a minor providence, be it said in all reverence.

Known to society as the grand-duke, otherwise Count Duren, he had humble lodgings in No. 7, Rue du Temple, as a fan-painter, plain M. Rudolph. To mask the large sums which on occasion he dispensed in charity, he was wont to give out that he was the agent of wealthy persons who trusted him in their alms-giving.

Events brought him into immediate contact with Fleur-de-Marie, and Rigolette (who lived in his own house in the Rue du Temple).

The former he had rescued from her wretchedness and provided with a home on a farm at Bouqueval, whence she had been abducted by Chouette and comrades of hers, by orders of Jacques Ferrand, who wanted her put out of the way.

The wretches who had undertaken to drown the girl with Ferrand's housekeeper (become dangerous to him, as one aware of too many of his secrets) murdered the latter, but the former, swept from their sight by the Seine's current, had been saved by a former prison-mate of hers, a girl of twenty, so wild in manner as to have won the nickname of Louve (Wolf).

Snatched from death, the exhausted girl now lay, but a little this side of life's confines, in the house of Dr. Griffon, at Asnières, under his care and that of the Count of St. Rømy, two gentlemen who had seen her escape.

Rudolph was seeking her all this while, yet not so busily that he forgot his avenger's course. Chief among social oppressors, whose cunning baffled the law, and verified the old saying of "what is everybody's business is nobody's business," Jacques Ferrand stood.

He withheld a large sum of money, intrusted verbally to him, from its owner, the Baroness Fermont, and impoverished her and her daughter; he had seduced his servant Louise Morel, caused her imprisonment on a charge of child-murder, driving her father, a working jeweler, insane, and menacing the destruction of the whole family--but Rudolph was at hand to support them.

His cashier, François Germain, also was in prison, thanks to him. The youth--who had saved some money, and deposited it with a banker out of town--had no sooner heard that Louise Morel's father was in debt (a means of Ferrand's triumph over the girl), than he gave her some of his employer's money, thinking to replace it with his own immediately after. But while he was away to draw the deficit from his banker's, the notary discovered the loss, and had him arrested as a thief.

The notary, whose cunning had earned him a high reputation for honesty, strictness, and parsimony, was, at this moment, therefore, at the climax of inward delight. His chief accomplice removed (his only other being the Dr. Polidori already mentioned) he believed he had nothing to fear. Louise Morel had been replaced by a new servant, much more tempting to a man of the notary's sensual cravings than that first poor victim had been.

We usher the reader, at the clerks' breakfast-time, into the notary's gloomy office.

A thing unheard-of, stupendous, marvelous! instead of the meager and unattractive stew, brought every morning to these young people by the departed housekeeper, Madame SØraphin, an enormous cold turkey, served up on an old paper box, ornamented the middle of one of the tables of the office, flanked by two loaves of bread, some Dutch cheese, and three bottles of sealed wine; an old leaden inkstand, filled with a mixture of salt and pepper, served as a salt-cellar; such was the bill of fare.

Each clerk, armed with his knife and a formidable appetite, awaited the hour of the feast with hungry impatience; some of them were raging over the absence of the head clerk, without whom they could not commence their breakfast pursuant to etiquette.

This radical change in the ordinary meals of the clerks of Jacques Ferrand announced an excessive domestic revolution.

The following conversation, eminently Boeotian (if we may be allowed to borrow this word from the witty writer who has made it popular), will throw some light upon this important question:

"Behold a turkey who never expected, when he entered into life, to appear at breakfast on the table of our governor's quill-drivers!"

"Just so; when the governor entered on the life of a notary, in like manner he never expected to give his clerks a turkey for breakfast."

"For this turkey is ours," cried Stump-in-the-Gutters, the office-boy, with greedy eyes.

"My friend you forget; this turkey must be a foreigner to you."

"And as a Frenchman, you should hate a foreigner."

"All that can be done is to give you the claws."

"Emblem of the velocity with which you run your errands."

"I think, at least, I have a right to the carcass," said the boy, murmuring.

"It might be granted; but you have no right to it, just as it was with the Charter of 1814, which was only another carcass of liberty," said the Mirabeau of the office.

"Apropos of carcass," said one of the party. "May the soul of Mother SØraphin rest in peace! for, since she was drowned, we are no longer condemned to eat her ever lasting hash!"

"And for a week past, the governor, instead of giving us a breakfast--"

"Allows us each forty sous a day."

"That is the reason I say: may her soul rest in peace."

"Exactly; for in her time, the old boy would never have given us the forty sous."

"It is enormous!"

"It is astonishing!"

"There is not an office in Paris--"

"In Europe."

"In the universe, where they give forty sous to a famishing clerk for his

breakfast."

"Apropos of Madame SØraphin, which of you fellows has seen the new servant that takes her place?"

"The Alsatian girl whom Madame Pipelet, the porter's wife of No. 17, Rue du Temple, the house where poor Louise lived, brought one evening?"

"Yes."

"I have not seen her yet."

"Nor I."

"Of course not; it is altogether impossible to see her, for the governor is more savage than ever to prevent our entering the pavilion in the courtyard."

"And since the porter cleans the office now, how can one get a glimpse at his Mary?"

"Pooh! I have seen her."

"You?"

"Where was that?"

"How does she look?"

"Large or small?"

"Young or old?"

"I am sure, beforehand, that she has not so good-looking a face as poor Louise--that good girl?"

"Come, since you have seen her, how does this new servant look?"

"When I say I saw her, I have seen her cap--a very funny cap."

"What sort?"

"It was cherry color, and of velvet, I believe; something like those worn by the little broom girls."

"Like the Alsations? it is very natural, since she is an Alsatian."

"You don't say so!"

"But I do! what is it that surprises you? The burnt child shuns the fire!"

"Chalamel! what relation between your proverb and this cap?"

"There is none."

"Why did you say it, then?"

"Because a benefit is never lost, and the dog is a friend of man!"

"Hold! If Chalamel opens his budget of proverbs, which mean nothing, we are in for it. Come, tell us what you know of this new servant."

"The day before yesterday I was out in the yard: she had her back toward one of the windows of the ground-floor."

"The yard's back?"

"What stupidity! No, the servant's. The glasses are so dirty that I could see nothing of her figure; but I could see her cherry-colored cap, and a profusion of curls, as black as jet; for she wears her hair in short curls."

"I am sure that the governor would not have seen through his spectacles as much as you did; for here you have one, as they say, who, if he remained alone with a woman on the earth, the world would soon come to an end."

"That is not astonishing. He laughs best who laughs last, and, moreover, punctuality is the politeness of kings."

"How wearisome Chalamel is when he lays himself out to it!"

"Tell me what company you keep, and I'll tell you what you are."

"Oh! how pretty!"

"As for me, I have an idea that it is superstition that stupefies the governor more and more."

"It is, perhaps, from penitence, that he gives us forty sous for our breakfast."

"The fact is, he must be crazy."

"Or sick."

"I think for the last two or three days he has been quite wild."

"Not that we see him so much. He who was, for our torment, in his cabinet from morning till night, and always at our backs, now has not, for two days, put his nose into the office."

"That is the reason the head clerk has so much to do."

"And that we are obliged to die with hunger in waiting for him."

"What a change in the office."

"Poor Germain would be much astonished if any one should say to him, 'Only fancy, my boy, the governor gives us forty sous for our breakfast;' 'Pshaw! it is impossible,' he would say. 'It is so possible that he has announced it to me, Chalamel, in my own person.' 'You are jesting.' 'I jest! This is the way it occurred: during two or three days which followed the death of Madame S raphin, we had no breakfast at all. We liked that well enough, for no breakfast at all was better than that she gave us; but, on the other hand, our luncheon cost us money. However, we were patient, and said: "The governor has got no servant, no housekeeper, and when he gets one, we shall have to live on hash again." It wasn't so, my poor Germain: the old fellow finally employed a servant, and our breakfast was still buried in the river of oblivion. I was appointed a sort of deputy, to present to the governor the complaints of the stomach; he was with the principal clerk." I do not want to feed you in the morning," said he, in a gruff, surly tone; "my servant has no time to prepare your breakfast." "But, sir, you are bound to give us our morning meal." "Well, you may send out for your breakfast, and I will pay for it. How much do you want?--forty sous each?" added he, with some other subject evidently upon his mind, and mentioning, "forty sous," in the same manner that he would have said twenty sous, or a hundred sous. "Yes, sir," I exclaimed, "forty sous, will do," catching the ball "on the fly." "Let it be so," answered the notary; "the head clerk will take charge of the expense, and I will settle with him." Thereupon the governor shut the door in my face.' You must confess, gentleman that Germain would be astonished at the extraordinary liberality of the governor."

"Germain would say: 'The governor is out of his head.'"

"And forty sous a-head out of his pocket," said Chalamel.

"Well done! the first chemist was right who said: 'Bitter as _Calomel!_'"

"Seriously, I believe that the governor is sick."

"For ten days past, he is scarcely to be recognized. His cheeks are so hollow, that you might thrust in your fist."

"And he is so absent-minded, that it is curious to see him. The other day he took off his glasses to read a deed; his eyes were red as live coals."

"He was right; short reckonings make long friends."

"For heaven's sake, don't cut me with your saws. I tell you, gentlemen, that it is very singular. It was upside down."

"Which was upside down?--the deed or the governor? It is singular, as you say. What the devil was he doing in that position? I should think it would have given him the apoplexy, unless his habits, as you say, have changed very suddenly."

"How wearisome you are, Chalamel! I mean that it was the deed which I presented wrong end foremost."

"How wild he must have been!"

"Not at all; he didn't even perceive it. He looked at it for ten minutes, with his bloodshot eyes fixed upon it, and then he gave it back to me, saying: 'Quite correct.'"

"Still upside down?"

"Still."

"How could he have read the deed?"

"He couldn't, unless he can read upside down."

"No man can do that."

"He looked so gloomy and savage, that I dared not open my lips, and I went away as if nothing had happened."

"I have got something to tell you. Four days ago I was in the office of the head clerk, and in come one client, two clients, three clients, with whom the governor had made an appointment. They waited impatiently, and requested me to go and rap at the door of the study. I rapped, and, receiving no answer, I walked in."

"Well, what did you see?"

"M. Ferrand lying upon his arms, which were placed upon the table, and his bald head uncovered. He did not stir."

"He was asleep, probably."

"I thought so. I approached him, and said: 'There are some clients outside, who wish to see you.' He did not move. 'M. Ferrand!' No reply. At length I touched his shoulder, and he started up as if the devil had bitten him. His motion was so sudden, that his big glasses fell off from his nose, and I saw--you never can believe it--"

"Out with it. What did you see?"

"Tears!"

"Nonsense!"

"Isn't he a queer bird?"

"The governor weep! Get out of the way!"

"When you see him cry, ladybirds will play on the French horn!"

"And monkeys chew tobacco!"

"Pshaw! your nonsense won't prevent me from knowing what I saw with my own

eyes. I tell you I saw him as I have described."

"What! weeping?"

"Yes, weeping. And after that, he was wroth at being caught in such a lachrymose condition, and sung out to me: 'Go away--go away!' 'But, sir--' 'Go away, I tell you!' 'There are some clients in the office, with whom you have made an appointment, sir, and--' 'I haven't the time to see them. Let them go to the devil, and you with them.' Thereupon he arose, as furious as he could be, and looked so much as if he would kick me out at the door, that I didn't wait for the compliment, but hooked it, and told the clients to leave also. They didn't look greatly pleased, I assure you; but for the reputation of the office, I told them that the governor had caught the whooping-cough."

This conversation was now interrupted by the entrance of the principal clerk, who came in as if pressed with business. His appearance was hailed by a general acclamation, and all eyes were turned toward the turkey.

"Without being uncivil, my lord, I must say that you have detained us from breakfast for a long time," said Chalamel. "You must look out, for the next time our appetites won't be under such good control."

"It is not my fault, I assure you; I was more impatient than you are--the governor must be mad!"

"That's what I have been saying."

"But the madness of the governor ought not to keep us from eating."

"It should have the opposite effect."

"We can talk just as well with our mouths full."

"A thousand times better," said the office-boy.

Chalamel was carving the turkey, and he said to the principal clerk: "What reason have you for thinking that the governor is crazy?"

"We were inclined to think that he had become perfectly stupid, when he agreed to give us forty sous per head for our daily breakfast."

"I confess that I was as much surprised as you are, gentlemen; but it is a trifle, actually a trifle, compared with what has just occurred."

"You don't say so!" said another.

"Is the notary crazy enough to invite us to dine every day, at his expense, at the Cadran-Bleu?"

"And give us tickets to the play, after dinner?"

"And after that, take us to the _caf  _, to round off with punch?"

"And after that a la--"

"Gentlemen, just as far as you please; but the scene which I have just observed is more frightful than funny."

"Give us the scene, I beg of you."

"That's right; don't trouble yourself about the breakfast--we are all ears."

"And all jaws! I see through you, my pretties! while I am speaking, your teeth will be in motion, and the turkey would be finished before my story. Be patient; I will reserve it for the dessert."

We do not know whether it was the goad of hunger or curiosity that stimulated the mastication of the young limbs of the law, but the breakfast was so rapidly completed, that the moment for the story arrived immediately.

Not to be surprised by the governor, they sent the office-boy, on whom the carcass and claws of the turkey had been most liberally bestowed, as a sentry into the neighboring room.

The head clerk said to his colleagues, "In the first place, you must know that, for some days past the porter has been alarmed about master's health. As the good man sits up very late, he has seen M. Ferrand go down to the garden in the night in spite of the cold and rain, and walk up and down rapidly. He ventured to leave his nest, and ask his master if he had need of anything. The governor sent him to bed in such a tone that, since then, the porter has kept himself quiet, and he will keep himself so always, as soon as he hears the governor descend to the garden, which happens every night, no matter what weather."

"The old boy is, perhaps, a somnambulist?"

"Not probable; but such nocturnal promenades announce great agitation. I arrive at my story: just now, I went in to get some signatures. At the moment I placed my hand on the lock, I thought I heard some one speak. I stopped, and distinguished two or three dull cries, like stifled sobs. After having hesitated to enter for a moment, fearing some misfortune, I opened the door."

"Well?"

"What did I see? The governor on his knees, on the floor."

"On his knees?"

"On the floor?"

"Yes, kneeling on the floor, his face in his hands and his elbows on the seat of one of his old arm-chairs."

"It is very plain. What fools we are! He is so bigoted, he was making an extra prayer."

"In any case, it would be a funny prayer! Nothing could be heard but stifled groans, only from time to time he murmured, between his teeth, 'Lord, lord!' like a man in a state of despair. Seeing this, I did not know whether I ought to remain or to retire."

"That would have been also my political opinion."

"I remained, therefore, very much embarrassed, when he rose and turned suddenly. He had between his teeth an old pocket-handkerchief; his spectacles remained on the chair. In all my life I have never seen such a face: he had the appearance of a lost soul. I drew back, alarmed--on my word of honor, alarmed! Then he--"

"Caught you by the throat?"

"You are out there. He looked at me, at first, with a bewildered air; then, letting his handkerchief fall, which he had, doubtless, gnawed and torn in grinding his teeth, he cried, throwing himself into my arms, 'Oh! I am very unhappy!'"

"Draw it mild!"

"Fact! Well, in spite of his death's-head look, when he pronounced these words his voice was so heart-rending--I would say, almost so soft--"

"So soft? Get out. There is not a rattle, nor Tom-cat with a cold, whose sounds would not be music alongside his voice."

"It is possible; that did not prevent it from being so plaintive at that time that I felt myself quite affected; so much the more as M. Ferrand is not habitually communicative. 'Sir,' said I, 'I believe that.' 'Leave me! leave me!' he answered, interrupting me; 'to tell your sufferings to another is a great solace.' Evidently he took me for some one else."

"So familiar? Then you owe us two bottles of Bordeaux:

"'When one's master is not proud
One must freely treat the crowd.'"

It is the proverb that speaks; it is sacred. Proverbs are the wisdom of a nation."

"Come, Chalamel, leave your proverbs alone. You comprehend, that, on hearing that, I at once understood that he was mistaken, or that he was in a high fever. I disengaged myself, saying, 'Calm yourself! it is I.' Then he looked at me with a stupid look."

"Very well! now that sounds like the truth."

"His eyes were wild. 'Eh!' he answered. 'What is it?--who is there? what do you want with me?' At each question he ran his hand over his face, as if to drive away the clouds which obscured his thoughts."

"Which obscured his thoughts! Just as if it were written! Bravo, head clerk; we will make a melodrama together:

"Who speaks so well, and so polite,
A melodrama ought to write."

"Do hold your tongue, Chalamel. I know nothing about it; but what is sure is, that, when he recovered his Senses, it was another song. He knit his brows in a terrible manner, and said to me, with quickness, without giving me time to answer, 'What did you come here for?--have you been a long time here?--can I not be alone in my own house without being surrounded by spies?--what have I said?--what have you heard? Answer, answer.' He looked so wicked that I replied, 'I have heard nothing, sir; I just came in.' 'You do not deceive me?' 'No, sir.' 'Well, what do you want?' 'To ask for some signatures, sir.' 'Give me the papers.' And he began to sign--without reading them, a half dozen notarial acts--he, who never put his flourish on an act without spelling it, letter by letter, and twice over, from end to end. I remarked that, from time to time, his hand slackened a little in the middle of his signature, as if he was absorbed by a fixed idea, and then he resumed and signed quickly, in a convulsive manner. When all were signed he told me to retire, and I heard him descend by the little staircase which leads from his cabinet to the court."

"I now come back to this: what can the matter be with him?"

"Perhaps he regrets Madame SØraphin."

"Oh, yes! he regrets any one!"

"That reminds me of what the porter said: that the curØ of Bonne-Nouvelle and his vicar had called several times, and were not received. That is surprising."

"What I want to know is, what the carpenter and locksmith have been doing in the pavilion."

"The fact is, they have worked there for three days consecutively."

"And then one evening they brought some furniture here in a covered cart."

"I give it up! as sung the swan of Cambrai."

"It is perhaps remorse for having imprisoned Germain which torments him."

"Remorse--he?_ It is too hard, and too tough, as the eagle of Meu said."

"Fie, Chalamel!"

"Speaking of Germain, he is going to have famous recruits in his prison,

poor fellow."

"How is that?"

"I read in the 'Gazette des Tribunaux' that the gang of robbers and assassins who have been arrested by the Champs Elysees in one of those little subterranean taverns--"

"They are real caverns."

"That this band of scoundrels has been confined in La Force."

"Poor Germain, good society for him."

"Louise Morel will also have her part of the recruits; for in the band they say there is a whole family, from father to son and mother to daughter."

"Then they will send the women to Saint Lazare, where Louise is."

"It is, perhaps, some of this band who have attempted the life of the countess who lives near the Observatory, one of our clients. Has not master sent me often enough to know how she is? He appears to be very much interested about her health. Only yesterday he sent me again to inquire how Lady M'Gregor had passed the night."

"Well."

"Always uncertain: one day they hope, the next despair--they never know whether she will get through the day; two days ago she was given up; but yesterday there was a ray of hope; what complicates the matter is, she has a brain fever."

"Could you go into the house, and see where the deed was committed?"

"Oh! by no means! I could go no further than the gate, and the porter did not seem disposed to walk much, not as ..."

"Here comes master," cried the boy, entering the office with the carcass. Immediately the young men seated themselves at their respective desks, over which they bent, moving their pens, while the boy deposited for a moment the turkey skeleton in a box filled with law papers.

Jacques Ferrand appeared.

Taking off his old silk cap, his red hair, mixed with gray, fell in disorder from each side of his temples; some of the veins on his forehead seemed injected with blood, while his flat face and hollow cheeks were of a livid paleness. The expression of his eyes could not be seen, concealed as they were by his large green spectacles; but the visible alteration of his features announced a consuming passion.

He crossed the office slowly, without saying a word to his clerks, without appearing to notice their presence, entered the room of the head clerk,

walked through it, as well as his own cabinet, and descended immediately by the little staircase which led to the court. Jacques Ferrand having left behind him all the doors open, the clerks could, with good reason, be astonished at the extraordinary motions of their master, who came up one staircase and descended another, without stopping in any of the chambers, which he had traversed mechanically.

The Countess M'Gregor, at least, was not his trouble. In showing La Chouette Fleur-de-Marie's picture, she had exposed her jewels, and to secure them, the hag poniarded the lady and decamped.

CHAPTER II.

THOU SHALT NOT LUST.

It was night. The profound silence which reigned in the house occupied by Jacques Ferrand was interrupted at intervals by the sighing of the wind, and by rain, which fell in torrents. These melancholy sounds seemed to render still more complete the solitude of the dwelling. In a bed-chamber on the first floor, very comfortably and newly furnished, and covered with a thick carpet, a young woman was standing before an excellent fire.

What was very strange, in the center of the door, which was strongly bolted, and opposite the bed, was placed a small wicket of about five or six inches square, which could be opened on the outside.

A reflecting lamp cast an obscure light in this room, which was hung with garnet-colored silk; the curtains of the bed, as also the covering of a large sofa, were of silk and worsted damask, of the same color.

We are minute in these details of furniture, so recently imported into the dwelling of the notary, because it announces a complete revolution in the habits of Jacques Ferrand, who, until then was of Spartan avarice and meanness (above all as respected others) in all that concerned living. It is then upon this garnet tapestry, a strong background, warm in color, on which is delineated the picture we are going to paint.

Of tall and graceful stature, she is a quadron in the flower of bloom and youth. The development of her fine shoulders, and of her luxurious person, makes her waist appear so marvelously slender, that one would believe that she might use her necklace for a girdle.

As simple as it is coquettish and provoking, her Alsatian costume is of strange taste, somewhat theatrical, and thus more calculated for the effect that it was intended to produce.

Her spencer of black cassimere, half open on her swelling bosom, very long in the body, with tight sleeves and plain back, is embroidered with purple wool on the seams, and trimmed with a row of small chased silver buttons. A

short petticoat of orange merino, which seems of exaggerated amplitude, although it fits admirably on the contours of sculptural richness, allows a glance at the charming leg of the Creole, in the scarlet stockings with blue clocks, just as it is met with among the old Flemish painters, who show so complacently the garters of their robust heroines.

Never did artist dream of an outline more pure than her limbs; strong and muscular above their full calves, they terminated in a small foot, quite at ease, and well arched in its very small shoe of black morocco with silver buckles. She is standing before the glass on the chimney-piece. The slope of her spencer displays her elegant, graceful neck, of dazzling whiteness, but without transparency.

Taking off her cherry-colored cap, to replace it by a Madras kerchief, the Creole displayed her thick and magnificent hair of bluish black, which, divided in the middle of her forehead, and naturally curled, descended no lower than the junction of the neck with the shoulders. One must know the inimitable taste with which a Creole twists around her head these handkerchiefs, to have an idea of the graceful appearance, and of the piquant contrast of this tissue, variegated purple, azure, and orange, with her black hair, which, escaping from the close folds, surrounds with its large, silky curls her pale, but plump and firm cheeks.

Her arms raised above her head, she finished, with her slender ivory fingers, arranging a large bow, placed very low on the left side, almost on the ear. Her features are of the kind it is impossible ever to forget.

A bold forehead, slightly projecting, surmounted a visage of perfect oval, her complexion of a dead white, the satin-like freshness of a camellia imperceptibly touched by a ray of the sun; her eyes of a size almost immoderate, have a singular expression, for the pupil, extremely large, black, and brilliant, hardly allows the transparent pale blue of the eye ball to be seen from the corners of her eyelids, fringed with long lashes; her chin is perfect; her nose, fine and straight, is terminated by nostrils dilating at each emotion; her lovely impudent mouth is of a lively red.

Let one imagine this pale face, with its sparkling black glances, its red, moist, and glossy lips, which shine like wet coral.

Let us say that this tall Creole, slender, fleshy, strong and active as a panther, was the type of that sensuality which is only lighted up by the fires of the tropics. Such was Cecily.

She was once the slave of a Louisiana planter, who designed her for his harem. Her lover, a slave named David, resisted that design to the only gain of being flogged, while his loved one was borne away. David was no common black; he had been educated in France, and was the plantation surgeon. The story of this high-handed and twofold outrage reached Rudolph, whose yacht was on the coast. The prince, landing in the night with a boat's crew, carried off David and Cecily from the planter's calaboose, leaving a sum of money as indemnity. The two were wedded in France, but Cecily, won away by a very bad man, had become so evil, that her new life was a series of scandals. David would have killed her, but Rudolph, whose

physician he had worthily become, induced him to prefer her life-prisonment in Germany. Out of her dungeon she was brought by Rudolph, who knew no fitter implement with which to chastise the notary.

Her detestable predilections, for some time restrained by her real attachment for David, were only developed in Europe; the civilization and climatical influence of the North had tempered the violence, modified the expression. Instead of casting herself violently on her prey, and thinking only, like her compeers, to destroy as soon as possible their life and fortune, Cecily, fixing on her victims her magnetic glances, commenced by attracting them, little by little, into the blazing whirlwind which seemed to emanate from her; then, seeing them lost, suffering every torment of a tantalized craving, she amused herself by a refinement of coquetry, prolonging their delirium; then, returning to her first instincts, she destroyed them in her homicidal embrace. This was more horrible still.

The famished tiger, who springs upon and carries off the prey which he tears with wild roars, inspires less horror than the serpent, which silently charms, attracts by degrees, twists in inextricable folds the victim, feels it palpitate under its deadly stings, and seems to feed upon its struggles with as much delight as upon its blood.

To the foregoing let there be joined an adroit, insinuating, quick mind--an intelligence so marvelous, that in a year she spoke both French and German with the most extreme facility--sometimes even with marked eloquence. Imagine, in fine, a corruption worthy of the courtesan queens of ancient Rome, and audacity and courage above all proof, propensities, diabolical wickedness, and one would have a correct idea of the new _servant_ of Jacques Ferrand--the determined creature who had dared to throw herself into the den of the wolf. And yet (singular anomaly) on learning from M. de Graun the provoking _platonic_ part which she was to play at the notary's and what avenging ends were to be produced by her artifices, Cecily had promised to perform her part with a will; or, rather, with a terrible hatred against Jacques Ferrand, being very indignant at the recital of his having drugged Louise--a recital it was found necessary to make, in order that she should be on her guard against the hypocritical attempts of the monster. Some retrospective words concerning the latter personage are indispensable.

When Cecily was presented to him by Rudolph's intermediary, Madame Pipelet, as an orphan over whom she wished to have no control, or care, the notary had, perhaps, been less struck with the beauty of the Creole than fascinated by her irresistible glances, which, at the first interview, lighted a fire which disturbed his reason.

This man, ordinarily with so much self-command, so calm, and cunning, forgot the cold calculations of his profound dissimulation when the demon of lust obscured his mind. Besides he had no reason to suspect the _protogoe_ of Madame Pipelet.

After her conversation with the latter, Madame SØraphin had proposed to Jacques Ferrand, to take the place of Louise, a young girl almost without a home, for whom she would answer. The notary had gladly accepted, in the

hope of abusing, with impunity, the precarious and isolated condition of his new servant. Finally, far from being suspicious, Jacques Ferrand found, in the progress of events, new motives of security.

All responded to his wishes. The death of Madame SØraphin rid him of a dangerous accomplice. The death of Fleur-de-Marie (he thought her dead) released him from the living proof of his crime of child-stealing. He did not fear the Countess M'Gregor now that she was wounded, while La Chouette was dead, as we have related.

We repeat, no sentiment of suspicion came to counterbalance in his mind the sudden, irresistible impression which he had experienced at the sight of Cecily. He seized, with delight, the occasion to receive into his solitary dwelling the pretended niece of Madame Pipelet.

The character, habits, antecedents of Jacques Ferrand known and stated, the provoking beauty of the Creole, such as we have endeavored to paint it, some other facts which we will now expose, will cause to be comprehended, we hope, the sudden frenzied passion of the notary for this seductive and dangerous creature.

Although Jacques Ferrand was never to obtain the object of his wishes, the Creole was very careful not to deprive him of all hope; but the vague and distant hopes which she rocked in the cradle of so many caprices were for him only increased tortures, and riveted more solidly still the burning chain he wore.

If any astonishment is felt that a man of such vigor and audacity had not had recourse to cunning or violence to triumph over the calculated resistance of Cecily, it must not be forgotten that Cecily was not a second Louise. Besides, the next day after her presentation to the notary, she had played quite another part than the simple country lass, under whose semblance she had been introduced to her master, or he would not have been the dupe of his servant for two consecutive days.

Instructed of the fate of Louise by Baron de Graun, and knowing by what abominable means the unfortunate daughter of Morel had become the prey of the notary, the Creole, entering into this solitary house, had taken excellent precautions to pass the first night in security.

The evening of her arrival, remaining alone with Jacques Ferrand, who, in order not to alarm her, affected hardly to look at her, and told her, roughly, to go to bed, she avowed innocently, that at night she was very much afraid of thieves, but that she was strong, resolute, and ready to defend herself.

"With what?" asked Jacques Ferrand.

"With this," answered the Creole, drawing from the ample woolen pelisse in which she was wrapped up a little dagger, of high finish, which made the notary reflect.

Yet, persuaded that his new servant only feared _robbers,_ he conducted her

to the room she was to occupy (the former chamber of Louise). After having examined the localities, Cecily told him, trembling, with her eyes cast down, that, from fear, she would pass her night on a chair, because she saw on the door neither lock nor bolt.

Jacques Ferrand, already completely under the charm, but not wishing to awaken the suspicions of Cecily, said to her, in a cross tone, that she was a fool to have such fears; but he promised that the next day the bolt should be arranged. The Creole did not go to bed.

In the morning the notary came to instruct her as to her duties. He intended to preserve, during the first day, a hypocritical reserve toward his new servant in order to inspire her with confidence; but, struck with her beauty, which, in the broad daylight seemed still more dazzling, blinded, and carried away by his feelings, he stammered forth some compliments on her figure and beauty.

She, with rare sagacity, had judged from her first interview with the notary, that he was completely under the charm, at the avowal which he made of his _flame,_ she thought she would at once throw off her feigned timidity, and change her mask. The Creole then assumed all at once a bold air. Jacques Ferrand went into new ecstasies, on the beauty of features, and the enchanting figure of his new maid.

"Look me full in the face," said Cecily, resolutely; "although dressed as an Alsatian peasant, do I look like a servant?"

"What do you mean to say?" cried Jacques Ferrand.

"Mark this hand--is it accustomed to rude labor?"

And she showed a white and charming hand, with slender and delicate fingers, the long nails polished like agate, but of which the slightly-shaded crown betrayed the mixed blood.

"And is this a servant's foot?"

And she advanced a ravishing little foot, which the notary had not yet remarked, and which he now only desisted from looking at to regard Cecily with amazement.

"I told Aunt Pipelet just what suited me; she is ignorant of my past life; she thought I was reduced to this position by the death of my parents, and took me for a servant; but you have, I hope, too much sagacity to partake of her error, _dear master." _

"And what are you, then?" cried Jacques Ferrand, more and more surprised at this language.

"That is my secret. For reasons best known to myself, I have been obliged to leave Germany in this disguise. I wish to remain concealed at Paris for some time. My aunt, supposing me reduced to poverty, proposed my entering your service, spoke of your solitary manner of living, and told me that I

would never be allowed to go out. I accepted quickly. Without knowing it, my aunt anticipated my most anxious desire. Who could look for and discover me here?"

"Conceal yourself! what have you done, to be obliged to conceal yourself?"

"Soft offenses, perhaps, but this is my secret."

"And what are your intentions, miss?"

"Always the same. Saving your significant compliments on my shape and beauty, I should not, perhaps, have made this avowal, which your penetration had sooner or later provoked. Listen to me, then, my dear master: I have accepted for the moment the condition, or, rather, the appearance of a servant; circumstances oblige me to do so. I shall have the courage to play this part to the end. I will submit to all the consequences. I will serve you with zeal, activity, and respect, to preserve my place; that is to say, a sure and unknown retreat. But at the least word of gallantry, at the least liberty you take with me, I leave you--not from prudery, nothing in me, I think, looks like the prude."

And she cast a glance charged with sensual electricity, which reached the very bottom of the notary's soul; he shuddered.

"No, I am not a prude," she resumed, with a provoking smile, which displayed her dazzling teeth. "When love bites me, the *_bacchantes_* are saints in comparison. But be just, and you will agree that your unworthy servant only wishes to perform honestly her duty as a servant. Now you know my secret, or at least a part of my secret, will you, perchance, act as a gentleman? Do I seem too handsome to serve you? Do you desire to change parts and become my slave? So be it! Frankly, I prefer that, but always on this condition, that I shall never go out of the house, and you shall have for me the most paternal attention--that need not hinder you from saying that you find me charming: it shall be the recompense of your devotion and your discretion."

"The sole?" stammered Jacques Ferrand.

"The sole--unless solitude makes me mad; which is impossible, for you will keep me company, and, in your quality as a holy man you shall exorcise the evil spirit. Come, decide, no mixed position; either I will serve you, or you shall serve me; otherwise I leave your house, and I beg my aunt to find me *_another place_*. All this must seem strange to you; so be it; but if you take me for an adventurer, without the means of existence, you are wrong. In order to make my aunt my accomplice without her knowledge, I allowed her to think I was too poor to buy other clothes than these. Yet I have, you see, a purse well-filled: on this side with gold, on the other with diamonds" (and she showed the notary a long red silk purse, filled with gold, through the meshes of which also shone precious stones).

"Unfortunately, all the money in the world could not give me a retreat as secure as your house, so isolated by the retirement in which you live. Accept, then, one or the other of my offers; you will render me a service. You see, I place myself at your discretion; for to tell you that I

concealed myself, is to tell you I am sought for. But I am sure you will not betray me, even if you knew how to betray."

This romantic confidence, this sudden transformation of character, troubled the brain of Jacques Ferrand.

Who was this woman? Why did she conceal herself? Had chance alone conducted her to his dwelling? If, on the contrary, she came there for some secret purpose, what was this purpose?

Among all the hypotheses which this singular adventure raised in the mind of the notary, the true motive of the Creole's presence never came to his thought. He had not, or, rather, he thought he had not, any other enemies than the victims of his licentiousness and cupidity. Now all of them were in such a condition of trouble or distress that he could not suppose them capable of spreading a snare of which Cecily was the bait.

And then, again, for what purpose was it spread? No, the sudden transformation of Cecily inspired but one fear to Jacques Ferrand: he thought that if this woman did not speak the truth she was an adventurer, who, believing him rich, introduced herself into the house to cajole him, find him out, and perhaps cause him to marry her. But, although his avarice and cupidity revolted at the idea, he perceived, shuddering, that these suspicions and reflections were too late; for, with a single word, he could put his suspicions at rest by sending this woman away. And this word he did not speak. Already he loved her, after his manner, and passionately. Already the idea of seeing this seducing creature leave his house seemed to him impossible. Already, even, feeling the pangs of a savage jealousy to think that Cecily might bestow on others favors refused to him, he experienced some consolation in saying, "As long as she is sequestered in my house no one will possess her."

The boldness of language of this woman, the fire in her eyes, the provoking liberty of her manners, sufficiently revealed that she was not, as she said, *_a prude_*. This conviction, giving vague hopes to the notary, assured still more the empire of Cecily.

In a word, the licentiousness of Jacques Ferrand stifled the voice of cold reason; he abandoned himself blindly to the emotions which overwhelmed him.

It was agreed that Cecily should be his servant only in appearance; in this manner there would be no scandal. Besides, to assure still more the security of his guest, he would take no other domestic; he would himself serve her and himself also; a neighboring coffee-house keeper could bring his repasts. He paid in money the breakfasts of his clerks, and the porter could take care of the office. Finally, the notary ordered to be promptly furnished a chamber on the first floor, according to Cecily's taste. She offered to pay the expense. He opposed it, and expended two thousand francs.

This generosity was enormous, and proved the unheard-of violence of his passion. Then commenced for this wretch a strange life.

Shut up in the impenetrable solitude of his house, inaccessible to all, more and more under the yoke of his frenzied love, no longer attempting to discover the secrets of this strange woman, from master he became a slave; he was the footman of Cecily--he served her at her repasts--he took care of her apartment. Informed by the baron that Louise had been surprised by a narcotic, the Creole only drank very pure water, only ate meats impossible to adulterate; she chose the chamber which she occupied, and assured herself that the walls concealed no secret doors.

Besides, Jacques Ferrand soon comprehended that Cecily was a woman not to be surprised with impunity. She was vigorous, agile, and dangerously armed.

Nevertheless, not to allow his passion to flag, the Creole seemed at times touched with his attentions, and flattered by the terrible domination she exercised over him. Then, supposing that by proofs of his devotion and self-denial he could make her forget age and ugliness, she delighted to paint in glowing colors his reward when he should arrive at that success.

At these words of a woman so young and so lovely, Jacques Ferrand felt sometimes his mind wandering; a devouring imagery pursued him, waking or sleeping. The ancient fable of the Nessus' shirt was realized for him.

In the midst of these nameless tortures he lost his health, appetite, and sleep. Often at night, in spite of cold or rain, he descended to his garden, and endeavored by a rapid walk to calm his emotions.

At other times, during whole hours, he looked into the chamber where the Creole slept, for she had had the infernal kindness to allow a wicket to be placed in her door, which she often opened, in order that she might almost cause him to lose his reason, so that she could then execute the orders she had received.

The decisive moment seemed to approach. The chastisement of Ferrand became from day to day more worthy of his sins.

He suffered all the torments. By turns absorbed, lost, out of his mind, indifferent to his most serious interests, the maintenance of his reputation as an austere, grave, and pious man--a reputation usurped, but acquired by long years of dissimulation and cunning--he astonished his clerks by his aberrations, displeased his clients by his refusal to see them, and harshly kept at a distance the priests, who, deceived by his hypocrisy, had been, until then, his most fervent trumpeters.

As we were saying, Cecily was arranging her head for the night before a glass. On a slight noise coming from the corridor, she turned her face away from the door.

Notwithstanding the noise which she had just heard at the door, Cecily did not the less tranquilly continue her undressing; she drew from her corsage, where it was placed like a busk, a dirk, five or six inches long, in a case of black shagreen, with a handle of black ebony fastened with silver, a very simple handle, but perfectly handy, not a weapon of mere display.

Cecily took the dirk from its case with excessive precaution, and placed it on the marble chimney-piece; the blade, of the finest Damascus and the best temper, was triangular; its point, as sharp as a needle, had pierced a dollar without blunting it.

Impregnated with a subtle and quick poison, the least wound from this poniard was mortal.

Jacques Ferrand, having one day doubted the dangerous properties of this weapon, the Creole made before him an experiment *_in anima vita_*, that is to say, on the unfortunate house dog, who, slightly pricked in the nose, fell dead in horrible convulsions.

The dirk placed on the chimney, Cecily taking off her spencer of black cloth, exposed her shoulders, bosom, and arms, naked like a lady in ball costume.

According to the custom of most girls of color, she wore, instead of a corset, a second corsage of double linen, which was closely bound around her waist; her orange petticoat, remaining fastened under her white inner waist with short sleeves, composed thus a costume much less severe than the first, and harmonized wonderfully with the scarlet stockings, and the Madras scarf so capriciously twisted around the head of the Creole. Nothing could be more pure, more beautiful, than the contour of her arms and shoulders, to which little dimples gave a charm the more.

A profound sigh attracted the attention of Cecily. She smiled, while roiling around one of her ivory fingers some stray curls which escaped from the folds of the bandana.

"Cecily! Cecily!" murmured a voice, at once harsh and plaintive.

And at the narrow opening of the wicket appeared the pale, flat face of Jacques Ferrand; his eyes sparkled in the shade.

Cecily, silent until then, began to sing softly in Creole French, a Louisianian air. The words of this melody were soft and expressive. Although restrained, the noble contralto overpowered the noise of the torrents of rain and violent gusts of wind, which seemed to shake the old house to its foundation.

"Cecily! Cecily!" repeated Jacques Ferrand, in a supplicating tone.

The Creole suddenly stopped, turned her head quickly, and appeared to hear for the first time the voice of the notary, and approached the door. "How! dear master, you are there?" said she, with a slight foreign accent, which gave additional charm to her melodious voice.

"Oh! how handsome you are!" murmured the notary.

"You think so?" answered the Creole: "this bandana suits my hair?"

"Every day I find you still more handsome."

"And see how white my arm is."

"Monster! go away! go away!" cried Jacques Ferrand, furiously.

Cecily laughed immoderately.

"No, no, this is suffering too much! Oh! if I did not fear death!" cried the notary, in a hollow voice; "but to die--to renounce the sight of you, so handsome. I prefer to suffer, and see you--"

"See me; this wicket is made for that, and, also, that we can talk as friends, and thus charm our solitude; which, in truth, does not weigh heavily, you are so good a _master!_ See what dangerous confessions I can make through this door."

"And will you not open this door? Yet see how submissive I am! to-night I might have tried to enter with you into your chamber--I did not."

"You are submissive for two reasons. In the first place, you know that being, from necessity, in the habit of wearing a dirk, I handle with a firm hand this venomous plaything, sharper than the tooth of a viper; you know also, that on the day I complain of you, I shall leave forever this house, leaving you a thousand time more charmed, since you have been so gracious toward your unworthy servant as to be charmed with her."

"My servant? it is I who am your slave--your slave, mocked, despised."

"That is true enough."

"And does not this touch you?"

"It amuses me. The days, and, above all, the nights, are so long."

"Oh, the cursed--"

"No seriously, you appear so completely bewildered, your features change so sensibly, that I am flattered. It is a poor triumph, but you are the only man here!"

"To hear that, and only be able to consume in powerless rage!"

"How little wit you have! never, perhaps, have I said anything to you more tender."

"Scoff--scoff."

"I do not scoff; I have never seen a man of your age so much in love; and, it must be acknowledged, that a young and handsome man would be incapable of such mad passion. An Adonis admires himself as much as he admires us; he loves on the end of his teeth; and then to love him is his due, hardly is he grateful; but to love a man like you, my master, oh! that would be to raise him from earth to heaven; it would be to accomplish his wildest

dreams, his hopes the most extravagant. For, in fine, the being would say to you, 'You love Cecily madly; if I wish it, she shall be yours'--you would believe such a being endowed with supernatural powers, would you not, dear master?"

"Yes, oh! yes."

"Well! if you knew how to convince me better of your passion, I should have, perhaps, the fantasy to play myself, in your favor, this supernatural part. Do you comprehend?"

"I comprehend that you scoff at me still, always, and without pity."

"Perhaps solitude creates such strange fantasies."

Her tone, until then, had been sardonic; but she pronounced these last words with a serious expression, and accompanied them by a glance which made the notary tremble. "Hush--do not look at me thus; you will make me mad. I prefer that you should say to me _never_; at least, I could abhor you, drive you from the house," cried Jacques Ferrand, who again abandoned his vain hopes. "Yes, for I expect nothing from you. But woe is me! woe! I know you now enough. You tell me to convince you of my love; do you not see how unhappy I am! Yet I do all I can to please you. You wish to be concealed from every eye: I conceal you, perhaps at the risk of compromising myself; in fine, I do not know who you are; I respect your secret; I never speak to you about it. I have interrogated you on your past life; you have not answered me."

"Well! I was wrong; I am going to give you a mark of blind confidence. Oh! my master, listen to me."

"Once more a bitter joke!"

"No, it is very serious. You must know, you should know, the history of her to whom you give such generous hospitality."

And Cecily added, in a tone of hypocritical and tearful compunction:

"The daughter of a brave soldier, brother of my Aunt Pipelet, I have received an education above my condition; I was seduced, then abandoned, by a rich young man. Then, to escape from the rage of my old father, I fled my native country." Then, laughing heartily, Cecily added: "There, I hope is a little story very presentable, and, above all, very probable, for it has often been related. Amaze your curiosity with that, while waiting for some revelation more piquant."

"I was very sure that this was a cruel pleasantry," said the notary, with suppressed anger. "Nothing touches you, nothing; what must be done? tell me, at least. I serve you like the meanest valet; for you I neglect my dearest interests; I know no more what I do. I am a subject of laughter for my clerks; my clients hesitate to leave me their business. I have parted with some pious people who used to visit me. I dare not think what the public say of this complete change in all my habits. You do not know, no,

you do not know the fatal consequences that my mad passion may have for me. See, now, the proofs of my devotion, my sacrifices. Do you wish more? speak! Is it gold you wish? The world thinks me richer than I am, but I----"

"What would you have me to do with your gold?" said Cecily, interrupting the notary, and shrugging her shoulders. "To reside in this chamber--what good would the gold do me? You have small invention!"

"But it is not my fault if you are a prisoner. Does this room displease you? Will you have it more magnificent? speak, command."

"For what purpose; once more, for what purpose? Oh! if I expected here an adored being, I would have gold, silk, flowers, perfumes, all the wonders of luxury; nothing could be too sumptuous, too enchanting."

"Well! these wonders of luxury; say a word, and----"

"For what purpose? What should I do with the frame without the picture? The adored being, where is he, oh! my master?"

"It is true!" cried the notary, bitterly. "I am old. I am ugly. I can only inspire disgust and aversion; she loads me with contempt; she scoffs at me, and I have not the strength to drive her away. I have only strength to suffer."

"Oh! the insupportable _cry-baby_; oh! the silly, with his complaints," cried Cecily, in a sardonic and contemptuous tone; he does nothing but groan and lament, and has been for ten days shut up alone with a young woman, in a deserted house."

"But this woman despises me--is armed--is locked!" cried the notary in a rage.

"Well! overcome the disdain of this woman; cause the dagger to fall from her hand; constrain her to open this door, which separates you from her; and that not by brutal force, which would fail."

"And how then?"

"By the force of your passion."

"Passion! and how can I inspire it?"

"Stop, you are but a notary bound up with a sexton; you make me pity you. Am I to teach you your part? You are ugly; be terrible, your ugliness will be forgotten. You are old; be energetic, your age will be overlooked. You are repulsive; be threatening. Since you cannot be the noble horse, who neighs proudly in the midst of his wives, be not, at least, the stupid camel, who bends the knee and crooks the back; be a tiger. An old tiger, who roars in the midst of carnage, has also its beauty; his tigress answers him from the depths of the desert."

At this language, which was not without a sort of bold natural eloquence, Jacques Ferrard shuddered, at the savage and almost ferocious expression of the face of Cecily, who, with heaving bosom, expanded nostril, haughty mouth, fixed on him her large black and burning eyes.

Never had she appeared so lovely.

"Speak, speak again!" cried he, passionately; "you speak seriously this time. Oh! if I could----"

"One can do what one wishes," said Cecily, abruptly.

"But----"

"But I tell you that if you wish, repulsive as you are----"

"Yes, I will do it! Try me, try me!" cried Jacques Ferrand, more and more excited.

Cecily continued, approaching nearer, and fixing on the notary a penetrating look, "For a woman loving a handsome youth would know," resumed the Creole, "that she would have an exorbitant caprice to satisfy; that the boys would look at their money if they had any, or, if they had none, to a mean trick, while the old tiger----"

"Would regard nothing, do you understand? nothing. Fortune, honor, he would know how to sacrifice all he would!"

"True," said Cecily, placing her charming fingers on the bony and hairy hands of Jacques Ferrand, who, for the first time, touched the soft and velvety skin of the Creole. He became still paler, and uttered a hoarse sigh.

"How this woman would be beloved," added Cecily, "had she an enemy, whom, pointing out to her old tiger, she would say strike, and--"

"And he would strike," cried Jacques Ferrand, endeavoring to approach the ends of her fingers to his withered lips.

"True, the old tiger would strike," said the Creole, placing her hand softly on his.

"If you would love me," cried the wretch, "I believe I would commit a crime."

"Hold, master," said Cecily, suddenly withdrawing her hand; "in your turn go away, go away, I know you no more; you do not appear to me so ugly now as before; go away."

She retired quickly from the wicket. The detestable creature knew how to give to her gestures and to her last words an accent of truth so incredible--her look, at once surprised and annoyed, seemed to express so naturally her spite at having for a moment forgotten the ugliness of

Jacques Ferrand--that he, transported with frenzied hope, cried, clinging to the bars of the wicket, "Cecily, return, command, I will be your tiger!"

"No, no, master," said Cecily, retreating still further from the wicket; "and to lay the devil who tempts me--I am going to sing a song of my country. Master, do you hear? without, the wind redoubles, the tempest is unchained; what a fine night for two lovers, seated side by side near a sparkling fire!"

"Cecily, return!" cried Jacques Ferrand, in a supplicating tone.

"No, no, presently, when I can without danger; but the light from this lamp hurts my eyes, a soft languor weighs down my eyelids. I do not know what emotion agitates me; a demi-obscurity will please me more; one would say I am in the twilight of pleasure."

And Cecily went toward the chimney, put out the lamp, took a guitar suspended on the wall, and stirred the fire, whose blaze illuminated this large room.

From the narrow wicket where he remained immovable, such was the picture which Jacques Ferrand perceived. In the midst of the luminous horizon formed by the undulating light of the fire, Cecily, in a position full of languor, half reclining on a divan of pink satin, held a guitar, from whence she drew some harmonious preludes.

The blazing hearth shed its rosy light on the Creole, who appeared brilliantly illumined in the midst of the obscurity of the rest of the apartment.

To complete the effect of this picture, let the reader recall to his mind the mysterious and almost fantastic appearance of a room where the firelight struggles with the long, dark shadows which tremble on the ceiling and walls.

The storm redoubled its violence, its roaring could be heard from within.

While preluding on her guitar, Cecily fixed her magnetic glances on Jacques Ferrand, who, fascinated, could not withdraw.

"Now, master," said the Creole, "listen to a song of my country; we do not know how to make verses; we muse a simple recitative, without rhyme, and at each pause we improvise a couplet appropriate to the subject; it is very pastoral; it will please you, I am sure, master. This song is called the 'Loving Girl!' it is she who speaks."

And Cecily commenced a kind of recitative, much more accented by the expression of the voice than by the modulations of the song. A few soft and trembling chords served as an accompaniment. This was the song:

"Flowers, everywhere flowers,
My lover comes! The hope of happiness enervates and destroys.
Soften the light of day--pleasure seeks a lucid darkness.

To the fresh perfume of flowers my love prefers my warm breath,
The glare of day shall not wound his eyes, for I will keep them closed
by my kisses.
My angel, come! My heart beats; my blood burns!
Come, come, come!"

These words, chanted with as much ardor as if she had addressed an invisible lover, were, thus to speak, translated by the Creole into a theme of enchanting melody; her charming fingers drew from her guitar sounds full of delicious harmony.

The animated face of Cecily, her veiled and moistened eyes constantly fixed on those of Jacques Ferrand, expressed all the languor of the song. Words of love; intoxicating music; inflamed looks; silence; night! all conspired at this moment to disturb the reason of the notary. He cried, bewildered:

"Mercy! Cecily! mercy I I shall go wild. Hush! I die. Oh! that I were mad!"

"Listen, then, to the second couplet," said the Creole, preluding anew.

And she continued her passionate recitative:

"If my lover were there, and with his hand touched my soft neck, I should
shudder and die.
If he were there, and his hair touched my cheek, my cheek so pale would
become red.
My cheek so pale would be as fire.
Life of my soul, if you were there, my parched lips could not speak.
Life of my life, if you were there--expiring--I would ask no mercy.
Those whom I love as I love you, I kill.
My angel, come. Oh! come! My heart beats: my blood burns I
Come, come, come!"

If the Creole had accented the first stanza with a voluptuous languor, she poured into these last words all the transports of Eros of old. As if the music had been powerless to express her wild delirium, she threw the guitar aside, and half rising from the couch and extending her arms toward the door, she repeated, in an expiring, languishing voice,

"Oh! come, come, come!"

To paint the electric look with which she accompanied these words would be impossible.

Jacques Ferrand uttered a terrible cry.

"O! death--death to him you love so much, to whom you have addressed these words!" cried he, shaking the door in a transport of jealousy.

Active as a tigress, with one bound Cecily was at the wicket, and, as if she had with difficulty dispelled her feigned transports, she said to Jacques Ferrand, in a low, palpitating voice: "Well! I avow I did not wish to return to the door. I am here in spite of myself; for I fear your words

spoken just now. _If you say strike--I will strike._ You love me well, then?"

"Do you wish gold--all my gold?"

"No; I have enough."

"Have you an enemy? I'll kill him."

"I have no enemy."

"Will you be my wife? I will espouse you."

"I am married."

"But what do you wish, then! what _do_ you wish?"

"Prove to me that your passion for me is blind, furious, that you will sacrifice everything for me!"

"All! yes, all! But how?"

"I do not know; but there was a moment when the glance of your eye bewildered me. If now you give me some proof of your love, I do not know of what I should be capable! Hasten! I am capricious; to-morrow the impression of this hour will perhaps be effaced."

"But what proof can I give you on the moment?" cried the wretch. "It is an atrocious torment! What proof? speak! What proof?"

"You are only a fool!" answered Cecily, retreating from the wicket with an appearance of extreme irritation. "I am mistaken! I thought you capable of energetic devotion! Good-night. It is a pity--"

"Cecily! oh! do not go--return. But what must I do? tell me, at least. Oh! my senses wander. What must I do? what do?"

"Guess!"

"But, in fine--speak! what do you wish?" cried the notary, quite beside himself.

"Guess."

"Explain--command."

"Ah! if you love me as passionately as you say, you will find the means. Good-night."

"Cecily!"

"I am going to shut this wicket--instead of opening the door--"

"Mercy! listen--remain--I have found it," cried Jacques Ferrand, after a moment's pause, with an expression of joy impossible to describe. The wretch was seized with a vertigo. He lost all prudence, all reserve; the instinct of moral preservation abandoned him.

"Well! this proof of your love?" said the Creole: who, having approached the chimney, took hold of her knife, and returned slowly toward the wicket.

Then, without being seen by the notary, she assured herself of the action of a small chain, one end of which was fastened to the door, the other to the door-post.

"Listen," said Jacques Ferrand, in a hoarse and broken voice; "listen. If I place my honor, my fortune, my life, at your mercy--here--on the spot--will you then believe I love you? This proof of an insane passion, will it suffice?"

"Your honor, your fortune, your life? I do not comprehend."

"If I confide to you a secret which would place me on the scaffold?"

"You a criminal? You jest. And your austerity?"

"A lie."

"Your probity?"

"A lie."

"Your piety?"

"A lie."

"You pass for a saint, and you would be a demon! You are a boaster! No; there is no man quite cunning enough, bold enough, thus to insinuate himself into the confidence and respect of men. It would be a frightful defiance cast in the face of society."

"I am this man! I have thrown this taunt, this defiance, in the teeth of society!" cried the monster, in an access of frightful pride.

"Jacques! Jacques! do not speak thus," said Cecily. "You will make me mad!"

"My head for your love--do you wish it?"

"Oh! this is love, indeed!" cried Cecily. "Here--take my poniard; you disarm me."

Jacques Ferrand took, through the wicket the dangerous weapon with precaution, and threw it from him into the corridor.

"Verily--you believe me, then?" cried he, in transport.

"I believe you?" said the Creole, leaning with force her charming hands on those of Jacques Ferrand. "Yes, I believe you; for I see again your look of just now--that look which fascinated me. Your eyes sparkle with savage ardor; Jacques, I love your eyes!"

"Cecily!"

"You should speak the truth."

"I speak the truth! Oh! you shall see."

"Your countenance is lowering. Your expression formidable. Hold, you are as fearful and beautiful as a mad tiger. But you speak the truth, do you not?"

"I have committed crimes, I tell you."

"So much the better, if by their avowal you prove your love."

"And if I tell you all?"

"I grant all; for if you have this blind confidence in me--do you see, Jacques--it will no longer be the ideal lover of the song I call. It is to you, my tiger, you, that I shall say come--come--come."

"Oh, you will be mine. I shall be your tiger," cried he; "and then, if you will, you shall dishonor me--my head shall fall. My honor, my life, all is yours now,"

"Your honor?"

"My honor! Listen; ten years since an infant was confided to my care, and two hundred thousand francs for its support; I have abandoned this child. I spread the report the child was dead, and I kept the money."

"It was bold and skillful--who would have thought it of you?"

"Listen again: I hated my cashier, François Germain. One night he took from me a little gold, which he returned the next day; but to ruin him, I accused him of having robbed me of a considerable sum. I was believed, he was thrown into prison. Now my honor is at your mercy."

"Oh, you love me, Jacques, you love me. To inform me thus of your secrets--what empire I must have over you! I will not be ungrateful; let me kiss this forehead, where so many infernal thoughts were created."

"Oh!" cried the notary, stammering, "if the scaffold stood there, ready, I would not draw back. Listen again: this child, Fleur-de-Marie, once abandoned, crosses my path--she inspires me with fears; I have had her killed!"

"You? How? where?"

"A few days since--near Asnières Bridge, by Ravageurs' Island. One named

Martial drowned her in a boat. Are these details sufficient? do you believe me?"

"Oh! demon from hell: you alarm, yet attract me. You inspire me. What is, then, your power?"

"Listen again: before that a man had confided to me a hundred thousand crowns. I set a trap for him. I blew his brains out. I proved that he committed suicide, and I denied the deposit which his sister the Baroness de Fermont reclaimed. Now my life is at your mercy--open."

"Jacques, I adore you!" said the Creole, with warmth.

"Oh! come a thousand deaths, and I'd dare them!" cried the notary, in an intoxication impossible to describe. "Yes, you are right; were I young and charming, I should not experience this triumphant joy. The key! throw me the key! draw the bolt!"

The Creole took the key from the lock, and handed it to the notary through the wicket, saying, "Jacques, I am mad!"

"You are mine, at length!" cried he, with a savage roar, turning the key in the lock. But the door, fastened with a bolt, did not open.

"Come, my tiger! come," said Cecily, in an expiring voice.

"The bolt! the bolt!" cried Jacques Ferrand.

"But, if you deceive me," cried the Creole, suddenly, "if these secrets are an invention, to cajole me--"

The notary remained for a moment, struck with stupor; he thought he had succeeded: this last difficulty raised his impatient fury to its climax.

He thrust his hand quickly in his bosom, opened his waistcoat, broke with violence a small chain of steel, to which was suspended a small, thin pocket-book, took it, and showing it through the wicket to Cecily, he said, in an oppressed and breathless tone,

"Here is what would cause my head to fall! draw the bolt--the book is yours."

"Give it to me, my tiger," cried Cecily.

And hastily drawing the bolt with one hand, with the other she seized the book.

But Jacques Ferrand did not abandon it until the moment he felt the door yielding to his efforts.

But though the door yielded, it was only for about six inches, confined, as it was, by the chain above mentioned. At this unforeseen obstacle, Jacques Ferrand threw himself against the door, and shook it with a desperate

effort. Cecily, with the rapidity of thought, put the wallet between her teeth, opened the window, threw a cloak into the court, and with great dexterity making use of a cord previously fastened to the balcony, she let herself down into the court, as rapidly and lightly as an arrow falls to the ground.

Then, wrapping herself up in haste in the mantle, she ran to the porter's lodge, opened it, drew the bolt, went out into the street, and jumped into a carriage, which, since her residence at Jacques Ferrand's, was sent every night by order of Baron de Graun, stationed not twenty steps from the notary's mansion.

This carriage was quickly driven off, drawn by two stout horses. It reached the boulevard before Jacques Ferrand had perceived the flight of Cecily. Let us return to this monster.

Through the opening of the door it was impossible for him to see the window by which the Creole escaped. With one mighty effort with his broad shoulders, he burst the chain which confined the door, and rushed into the chamber, and found no one.

The cord waved in the wind, as he leaned from the balcony. Then, from the other side of the court, by the light of the moon, which burst forth at intervals from the driving clouds, he saw the gate open.

In a moment he divined everything. A last ray of hope remained.

Vigorous and determined, he sprang over the balcony, using the cord in his turn, lowered himself into the court, and rushed out of the house. The street was deserted--he was alone.

He heard no other noise than the distant rolling of the carriage which was rapidly carrying off the Creole. The notary thought it was some belated vehicle, and attached no importance to this circumstance.

Thus, for him no chance remained of finding Cecily, who carried off with her the proofs of his crimes!!!

On this frightful certainty, he fell, thunderstruck, on his own threshold.

He remained there a long time, dumb, immovable, petrified. With wan eyes, his teeth compressed, his mouth foaming, tearing mechanically with his nails his breast, he felt his reason totter, and was lost in an abyss of darkness. When he awoke from his stupor, he walked heavily, and with an ill-assured step; objects trembled in his sight; he felt as if recovering from a fit of intoxication.

He shut with violence the street door, and re-entered the court. The rain had ceased, but the wind continued to blow with violence, chasing the heavy laden clouds, which veiled, without concealing, the light of the moon.

Slightly calmed by the brisk and cold air of the night, Ferrand, hoping to combat his internal agitation by the rapidity of his walk, plunged into the

obscure walks of his garden, marching with rapid strides, and from time to time striking his forehead with his clinched fists.

Walking thus at hazard, he reached the end of a walk near a greenhouse in ruins. Suddenly he stumbled violently over a mound of earth newly raised. He stooped, and looked mechanically on some linen stained with blood.

He was near the grave where Louise Morel buried her dead child. Her child--also the child of Jacques Ferrand! Notwithstanding his obduracy, notwithstanding the frightful fears which agitated him, Jacques Ferrand shuddered with alarm.

There was something supernatural in this stumbling-block. Pursued by the avenging punishment of his _vice_, chance carried him to the grave of his child--unhappy fruit of his violence. Under any other circumstances, Jacques Ferrand would have trampled on this sepulcher with atrocious indifference; but having exhausted his savage energy in the scene we have related, he was seized with a weakness and sudden alarm. His face was covered with an icy sweat, his trembling knees shook under him, and he fell lifeless across this open grave.

CHAPTER III.

LA FORCE.

The interior of a prison is a frightful pandemonium--a sad _thermometer_ of the state of society, and an instructive study.

In a word, the varied physiognomies of all classes of prisoners, the relations of family or affection which connects them still to the world, from which the prison walls separate them, have appeared to us worthy of regard.

The reader will, then, excuse us for having grouped around several of the prisoners personages to be known in this tale, and other secondary figures, destined to place in active relief certain critical events necessary to complete this initiation into prison life. Let us enter La Force.

There is nothing gloomy, nothing sinister in the aspect of this house of detention.

In the middle of one of the first courts are to be seen some mounds of earth, planted with shrubbery, at the foot of which are already shooting forth some precocious cowslips and snowdrops; a trellised doorway leads to one of the seven or eight exercise-grounds destined for the prisoners.

The vast buildings surrounding this court resemble much a barrack or manufactory, kept with extreme neatness. They are built of limestone, with lofty windows, in order to allow a free circulation of air. The steps and

pavement of the yard are of scrupulous cleanliness. On the ground-floor, vast halls, heated during winter, and well aired during summer, serve during the day as a place for conversation, workshops, or refectories. The upper stories are used as immense sleeping apartments, ten or twelve feet in height, with shining floors; they are furnished with two rows of iron bedsteads, excellent beds, composed of a soft thick mattress, a bolster, sheets of white linen, and a warm woolen covering.

At the sight of these accommodations, uniting all the requisites of comfort and salubrity, a stranger is much surprised, accustomed as he is to suppose all prisons as sorrowful, dirty, unhealthy, and gloomy. He is mistaken.

Sad, dirty, and gloomy are the holes where so many poor and honest workmen languish exhausted, forced to abandon their beds to their infirm wives, and to leave with powerless despair their half-starving, naked children, struggling with the cold, in the infectious straw.

There is some contrast between the physiognomies of the inhabitants of these two dwellings. Incessantly occupied with the wants of his family, to whom the day is hardly long enough, seeing a mad perversity reducing his salary, the artisan will be cast down and worn out; the hour of repose will not be sound to him; a kind of sleep like lassitude alone interrupts his daily toil. Then, on awaking from this mournful drowsiness, he will find himself overwhelmed with the same racking thoughts of the present, with the same inquietudes for the morrow.

But if, hardened by vice, indifferent to the past, happy with the present, certain of the future (he can assure himself of it by an offense or crime), regretting his liberty without doubt, but finding large compensation in the personal well-being he enjoys, certain to carry away with him on his release a good sum of money, gained by moderate and easy labor, esteemed, or, may be, feared by his companions, either for his impudence or perversity, the convict, on the contrary, will be almost always careless and gay. Once more; what does he want?

Does he not find in prison good shelter, good bed, good food, good pay, easy labor, and above all and before all, a society to his taste, a society, let us repeat, which measures his merit by the magnitude of his offenses?

A hardened criminal, then, knows neither poverty, hunger, nor cold. What matters to him the horror he inspires in honest men? He does not see them--he knows none.

His crimes are his glory, influence, and strength with the bandits among whom he will henceforth pass his life. How can he fear shame?

Instead of grave and charitable remonstrances, which might force him to blush and to repent, he hears savage plaudits, which encourage him to robbery and murder, Scarcely imprisoned, he meditates new misdeeds. What is more logical?

If he is discovered, arrested anew, he will find repose, the personal care

of the prison, and his joyous and bold companions in crime and debauchery.

Is his corruption less great than that of the others? does he manifest, on the contrary, the slightest remorse that he is exposed to atrocious railings, infernal shouts, terrible threats?

In fine--a thing so rare that it has become an exception to the rule--should a condemned man come out of this frightful pandemonium with a firm resolution to reform by prodigies of labor, courage, patience, and honesty, and be able to conceal his past offenses, a meeting with one of his old prison companions would be sufficient to overturn his plan of reformation so carefully designed. In this way:

A hardened ticket-of-leave proposes a job to a repentant one; the latter, in spite of dangerous threats, refuses the criminal association; immediately an anonymous communication strips the veil from the past life of this unfortunate, who wishes, at any sacrifice, to conceal and expiate a first fault by honorable conduct.

Then, exposed to the contempt, or, at least, the suspicion of those whose interest he had obtained by force of industry and probity, reduced to distress, soured by injustice, carried away by want, yielding, in fine, to these fatal derelictions, this man, almost restored, falls back again, and forever, to the bottom of the abyss from whence he had with so much difficulty escaped.

In the following scenes we shall endeavor, then, to show the monstrous and inevitable consequences of promiscuous confinement.

After ages of barbarous proofs and pernicious doubts, it begins to be understood how unreasonable it is to plunge into an atmosphere abominably vitiated, people whom a pure and salubrious air might have saved.

How much time shall be required to find out that, to associate gangrened beings is to redouble the intensity of their corruption, which thus becomes incurable?

How long to find out that there is but one remedy to this growing leprosy, which threatens the body social, Solitary confinement?

We should esteem ourselves happy if our feeble voice could be, if not counted, at least heard, among all those which, more imposing, more eloquent than ours, demand, with so just and so impatient an importunity, the complete, absolute adoption of the _solitary system_.

Some day, also, perhaps, society will know that evil is an accidental, not organic malady; that criminals are almost always good in substance, but false and wicked through ignorance, selfishness, or negligence of those governing; and that the health of the soul, like that of the body, is invincibly subordinate to the laws of a "hygiene" at once salubrious and preservative.

God gives to all, along with healthy organs, energetic appetites, and the

desire of comfort; it is for society to modify and satisfy these wants.

The man who only has as his share strength, good-will, and health, has the right, sovereign right to a labor justly remunerated, which will assure him, not the superfluities, but the necessities of life, the means to be healthy and robust, active and industrious, therefore honest and virtuous, because his condition will be happy.

The dismal regions of misery and ignorance are peopled with beings of sorrowful hearts. Cleanse these sewers, spread there the inclination to labor, equitable salaries, just rewards, and soon these sickly faces, these broken hearts, will be brought back to virtue, which is the life and health of the soul.

We will conduct the reader to the visitors' room of the prison. It is an obscure apartment, separated down its whole length into two equal parts by a narrow, railed passage. One part communicates with the interior, destined for the prisoners.

The other communicates with the office, destined for strangers admitted to visit the prisoners.

These interviews and conversations take place through the double grating of iron, in presence of a warder, who remains inside, at the extremity of the passage. The appearance of the prisoners assembled in the visiting room on this day offered numerous contrasts: some were covered with wretched vestments; some seemed to belong to the working class; others, again, to the well-to-do class.

The same contrast of condition was observable among the persons who came to see the prisoners; they were almost all of them women. Generally the prisoners appear less sad than the visitors; for, strange as it may appear, it is proved by experience, there are few sorrows and little shame which resist three or four days of imprisonment passed in company.

Those who are most alarmed at this hideous communion are soon habituated; the contagion reaches them; surrounded by degraded beings, hearing only infamous words, a kind of ferocious emulation drags them on, and either to impose upon their companions by rivaling their obduracy or to stupefy themselves by this moral intoxication, almost always the newly-arrived show as much depravity and insolent gayety as the old hands. Let us return to the visitors' room.

Notwithstanding the humming noise of a great number of conversations carried on in a low tone, from one side of the passage to the other, prisoners and visitors succeeded, after some practice, in being able to converse among themselves--on the absolute condition not to allow themselves, for a moment, to be distracted or occupied with the conversation of their neighbors, which created a kind of secret in the midst of all this noisy exchange of words, each one being forced to hear, but not to listen, to a word of that which was spoken around him.

Among the prisoners summoned to the visitors' room, and the furthest from

the place where the guardian was seated, was one whom we still particularize.

To the sad state of dejection he was in on his arrest had succeeded impudent assurance. Already the contagious and detestable influence of imprisonment _in common_ bore its fruits. Without doubt, if he had been immediately transferred to a solitary cell, this wretch, still under the blow of his first detection, the thought of his crimes constantly before him, alarmed at the punishment which awaited him, might have experienced, if not repentance, at least a salutary alarm, from which nothing might have distracted him. And who knows what effect may be produced on a criminal by an incessant, forced meditation on the crimes which he had committed, and their punishment? Far from this, thrown into the midst of a ruffianly crowd in whose eyes the least sign of repentance is cowardice, or, rather, _treachery_, which they dearly expiate, for, in their savage obduracy and in senseless distrust, they look upon as a spy every man (if there should be such a one) who, sad and mournful, regretting his fault, does not partake of their audacious thoughtlessness, and shudders at their contact.

Thrown among the bandits, this man, knowing, for a long time and by tradition, the manners and ways of prisons, overcame his weakness, and wished to appear worthy of a name already celebrated in the annals of robbery and murder.

For it had been to him, Nicholas Martial, that Ferrand had applied when the idea struck him to be rid of his housekeeper and Fleur-de-Marie at a blow.

His family were what are called ravageurs, that is dredgers, living on what they could pick up out of the mud of the Seine. At least they were openly these, but, secretly, they were river pirates, "lumpers," "light horsemen," housebreakers, and bravoos. The father had perished on the scaffold. His widow, forty-five years old, was confirmed in crime, stern, hard, coldly cruel, and bent on training all her children up into the life which would most revenge on society the slaying of her husband. One son, Ambrose, had been sold by Bras-Rouge (Red-Arm), a tavern keeper and fence, and now languished in the Rochefort hulks. The eldest son, known as Martial, being head of the family, was a poacher, a fisherman at unlawful seasons, but not irreclaimably bad. The youngest children, François and Amandine, were not yet spoiled by evil surroundings.

To this family, who added to their evil income by keeping a thieves' resort in their house on Ravageur's Island, La Chouette had applied for the murdering of Fleur-de-Marie. Nicholas and his sister, known as Calabash (from her yellow complexion) had succeeded in drowning Ferrand's housekeeper only. But, believing they had fulfilled the twofold bargain, they had gone off rejoicing with their mother, to meet La Chouette, report their success, and join in a fresh atrocity. This new crime, the robbery and murder of a diamond-dealer in Red-Arm's public-house, was frustrated by the landlord's secret connection with the police. They had made their descent just as the jewel-broker was in the villains' hands, and arrested the whole gang. Bras-Rouge (taken to prevent his fellows suspecting his treachery), Nicholas Martial, and a scamp named Barbillon, were put in La Force, widow Martial and Calabash in Saint Lazare. Another capture, a

ruffian called the Maitre d'École (Schoolmaster), from his calligraphic abilities, who had killed La Chouette in a fit of madness, was put in the Conciergerie Prison, in a cell for the insane.

To return to Nicholas Martial in La Force. Some veteran gallows-birds had known his executed father, others, his brother, the galley-slave; he was received and immediately patronized by these revelers in crime with savage interest.

This paternal reception from murderer to murderer exhilarated the widow's son, these praises bestowed on the hereditary perversity of his family intoxicated him. Soon forgetting, in this hideous thoughtlessness, the future which menaced him, he only remembered his past misdeeds but to exaggerate them and glorify himself in the eyes of his companions. The expression, then, of his face, was as impudent as his visitor's was uneasy and concerned. This individual was one Micou, a receiver, dwelling in the Passage de la Brasserie, to whose house Madame de Fermont and her daughter, victims of the cupidity of Jacques Ferrand, had been obliged to retire. Micou knew to what punishment he was subject, for having several times acquired, at a miserable price, the fruits of Nicholas's robberies, and of several others.

He being arrested, the receiver found himself almost at the discretion of the bandit, who could point him out as his habitual fence. Although this accusation might not be sustained by flagrant proofs, it was not the less very dangerous for Micou: so he had immediately executed the orders which Nicholas had sent him by a prisoner whose time had expired.

"Well! how do you get on, Daddy Micou?" said the thief.

"To serve you, sir," answered the receiver, eagerly. "As soon as I saw the person you sent me, right away I--"

"Stop! why do you speak so loftily, Micou?" said Nicholas, interrupting him, with a sardonic air. "Do you not despise me because I am in quod?"

"No, I despise no one," said the receiver, who did not care to make public his past familiarity with this wretch.

"Well, then, speak as usual, or I shall believe you have no friendship for me, and that would break my heart."

"As you like," said Micou, sighing. "I have busied myself with all your little commissions."

"Well spoken, Micou. I knew well that you would not forget friends. The weed?"

"I have left two pounds at the office, my lad."

"Is it good?"

"None better."

"And the ham?"

"Also left there, with a quartern loaf. I have added a little surprise you did not expect--half a dozen hard-boiled eggs, and a fine Dutch cheese."

"That's what I call acting like a pal! And wine?"

"There are six bottles, sealed; but, you know, they will only give you one bottle a day."

"What would you have? One ought to be content with that."

"I hope you are satisfied with me, my friend?"

"Certainly; and shall be still, and shall be again, Daddy Micou, for this ham, cheese, eggs, and wine will only last the time to swallow them; but, when there is no more, there will come some more, thanks to Daddy Micou, who will give me some more sugar-plums, if I am a good boy."

"How? you wish--"

"In two or three days you would renew my little provision, Micou."

"May the devil burn me if I do. It is all very well for once."

"Good for once! Come, come; ham and wine are good always, you know that well enough."

"It is possible; but I am not obliged to feed you with dainties."

"Oh, Micou! it is wrong, it is unjust, to refuse ham to me, who have so often brought you fat tripe (sheet-lead)."

"Hush!" said the alarmed receiver.

"No; I'll make the beak decide; I will tell him. Imagine that, Daddy Micou--"

"Good, good!" cried the receiver, seeing, with as much fear as anger, Nicholas was disposed to abuse the position which their dealings gave him; "I consent--I will replenish your stock of provisions when they are exhausted."

"It is just--nothing but just. Neither must you forget to send some coffee to my mother and Calabash, who are at Saint Lazare; they used to take their cup every morning--they will feel the want of it."

"Still more? But do you mean to ruin me, lad?"

"As you please, old Micou; let us speak no more about it. I will ask the big-wig if--"

"Agreed, then, for the coffee," said the receiver, interrupting him. "But may the devil take you! cursed be the day I knew you!"

"My old man, as for me, it is just the contrary. At this moment, I am delighted to know you. I venerate you as my foster-father."

"I hope that you have nothing more to order?" answered Micou, with bitterness.

"Yes! tell my mother and sister that, though I trembled when I was arrested, I tremble no more, and that I am now as bold as both of them."

"I will tell them. Is that all?"

"Stop! I forgot to ask for two pair of warm woolen stockings--you do not wish me to take cold, do you?"

"I wish you were froze!"

"Thank you, Micou, that shall be later; at present, I prefer something else. I wish to pass life calmly--at least, if they do not make me a head shorter, like father, I shall have enjoyed life."

"Your life is very pleasant!"

"It is superb! Since I have been here, I have amused myself like a king. If there had been lamps and guns, there would have been an illumination and a salvo in my honor, when it was known that I was the son of the famous Martial!"

"It is touching. Beautiful relationship!"

"Hold! there are many dukes and marquises; why, then, should not we of the oldest family have our nobility?" said the thief with savage irony.

"Yes, Jack Ketch gives you your letters of nobility in Palace Square!"

"Very sure that it is not the parson! So much the more reason in prison one should be of high Toby nobility, otherwise you are looked upon as a nobody. You ought to see how they treat those mere fogle-hunters, and who do their--Hold! there is one here named Germain, a young man who plays the disgusted, and seems to despise us. Let him take care of his skin. He is a sneak; he is suspected of being a spy. If this is so, they will slit his nose, by way of warning!"

"Germain! A young man called Germain?"

"Yes. Do you know him? He is, then, in the family line, notwithstanding his innocent looks?"

"I do not know him. But if it is the Germain of whom I have heard speak, his lookout is good."

"How?"

"He once escaped a snare which Velu and the Big Cripple laid for him."

"Why did they do it?"

"I don't know. They said that down among the yokels he had sold one of their band."

"I was sure of it. Germain is a spy. Well! I will tell this to my friends; that will give them an appetite. Does the Big Cripple still play tricks on your lodgers?"

"I am rid of the villain! you will see him here to-day or to-morrow."

"Bravo! we shall have a laugh! He's another who never looks glum!"

"Because he is going to meet Germain here, is why I said his account was good--if he is the same--"

"And why has the Cripple been nabbed?"

"For a robbery committed with a lagger (released convict) who wished to remain honest and labor. Oh, yes! the Big Cripple nicely fixed him; he is so wicked! I am sure it was he who forced the trunk of two women who occupy my fourth floor."

"What women? Oh! the two, the youngest of whom was so handsome, old brigand."

"Oh, yes; but it is all over with her; for, at this present moment, the mother must be dead, and the daughter not far from it. I shall be in for two weeks' lodgings; but may the devil burn me if I give a rag to bury them! I have had losses enough, without counting the presents which you beg me to give you and your family. This will nicely derange my business. I have luck this year."

"Bah, bah! you are always complaining, old Micou; you are as rich as Croesus. When you come to bring me some more provisions, you can give me news of my mother and Calabash!"

"Yes, it must be so."

"Oh! I forget, while you are out, buy me also a new cap, of plaid velvet, with a tassel; mine is no longer fit to be worn."

"Decidedly--you are joking!"

"No, Micou. I want a cap of plaid velvet; it is my notion."

"But you are determined, then, to make me sleep on straw?"

"Come, Daddy Micou, don't get vexed; it is yes or no; I do not force you."

But enough."

The receiver, reflecting that he was at the mercy of Nicholas, arose, fearing to be assailed with new demands if he prolonged his visit.

"You shall have your cap," said he; "but take care, if you ask me for anything more, I shall give nothing; happen what may, you will lose as much as I."

"Be tranquil, Micou; I shall not blackmail you any more than is necessary, for this would be a pity; you pay much heavy postage as it is."

The receiver went out, shrugging his shoulders with rage, and the warder reconducted Nicholas into the prison. At the moment Micou left, Rigolette entered.

The warder, a man of forty years, an old soldier of energetic appearance, was dressed in a jacket, cap, and trousers of blue cloth; two silver stars were embroidered on the collar and skirts of his coat.

At sight of the grisette, his face brightened up, and assumed an expression of affectionate benevolence. He had always been struck with the grace, gentility, and touching goodness with which Rigolette consoled Germain when she came to converse with him. Germain, on his part, was no ordinary prisoner. His reserve, his mildness, his sadness, inspired interest in the prison officials; an interest they were careful not to show him, for fear of exposing him to the bad treatment of his vicious companions, who, as we have shown, regarded him with suspicious hatred.

It rained in torrents, but thanks to her overshoes and umbrella, Rigolette had courageously braved the wind and rain.

"What a horrible day, my poor girl!" said the guardian to her, kindly. "You must have had a good deal of courage to come out such a time as this, at least!"

"When one is thinking all along the way of the pleasure they are going to give a poor prisoner, one does not pay much attention to the weather, sir!"

"I have no need to ask you whom you come to see?"

"Surely not. And how is my poor Germain?"

"My dear, I have seen many prisoners; they were sad, one or two days, but by degrees they fell in with the rest, and the most sorrowful at first often became the most gay. Germain is not so; he appears to grow sadder every day."

"It is this that troubles me."

"When I am on service in the yards, I watch him out of the corner of my eye; he is always alone. I have already told you, you should advise him not to act thus, but to speak to his comrades, otherwise he will become their

butt. The yards are watched, but--a blow is soon struck!"

"Oh, sir! is there still more danger for him?" cried Rigolette.

"Not precisely; but the knaves see he is not one of them, and they hate him because he appears honest and proud."

"Yet I have advised him to do what you have told me, sir; to endeavor to converse with the least wicked; but it is too much for him; he cannot overcome his repugnance."

"He is wrong--wrong; a quarrel is soon got up."

"Can he not be separated from the others?"

"Since I have noticed two or three days ago their evil intentions toward him, I have advised him to take a room by himself."

"Well?"

"I did not think of one thing. A whole range of cells are comprised in the repairs now going on in the prison, and the others are occupied."

"But these bad men are capable of killing him!" cried Rigolette, with her eyes filled with tears. "If by chance he had some persons interested in his fate, what could they do for him, sir?"

"Nothing more than to obtain what the prisoners can obtain themselves by paying money--a separate cell."

"Alas! then he is lost, if they hate him in the prison."

"Don't disturb yourself; he shall be watched closely. But I repeat, my dear, counsel him to be a little familiar with them; only the first step costs!"

"I will recommend him to do this with all my strength, sir; but for a good and honest heart it is hard to be familiar with such people."

"Of two evils, choose the least. I go to ask for Germain. But, stop," said the warder, reflecting; "there are only two visitors left; as soon as they are gone--no more will come to-day, for it is now two o'clock--I will send for Germain; you can talk more at ease. I can, even, when you are alone, let him enter into the passage, so that you will be separated by one grating instead of two; so much less."

"Oh, sir! how kind you are; how much I thank you!"

"Hush! let not any one hear you; it will cause jealousy. Seat yourself up there, at the end of the bench, and as soon as this man and woman are gone, I will send for Germain."

The warder returned to his post inside the passage. Rigolette went and

seated herself sadly at the extremity of the visitor's bench.

Thus we have a fine chance to draw the grisette's portrait.

Rigolette was hardly eighteen, of a middling size, perhaps rather small, but so gracefully shaped, so finely modeled, so voluptuously developed, that her size responded well to her bearing, fearless and yet modest; one inch more in height would have caused her to lose much of her grace; the movement of her small feet, always irreproachably confined in gaiter-boots of black cloth, with rather thick soles, recalled to mind the coquettish, light and discreet run of a quail. She did not appear to walk, she merely touched the pavement; she slid rapidly on its surface. This walk, peculiar to grisettes, ought to be attributed, without doubt, to three causes: To their desire to be thought handsome; to their fear of an admiration expressed in pantomime too expressive; to the desire that they always have to lose as little time as possible in their peregrinations.

Rigolette's two broad thick bands of shining hair, black as jet, fell very low on her forehead; her fine eyebrows seemed traced with ink, and overshadowed large black eyes, sparkling and wicked; her full, plump cheeks were like velvet of the freshest carnation, fresh to the sight, fresh to the touch, like a rosy peach impregnated with the cold dew of the morning.

Her little turned-up nose, saucy and cunning, would have made the fortune of a stage chambermaid; her mouth, somewhat large, with lips of rose well moistened, and little, white, pearly teeth, was smiling and provoking; of three charming dimples, which gave enticing grace to her face, two buried themselves in her cheeks, the other in her chin, not far from a beauty spot, a little black patch most killingly placed near the corner of her mouth.

Up to the day of Germain's arrest, Rigolette had had no sorrows but those of others; she sympathized with all her flowers--devoted herself, body and soul, to those who suffered--but thought no more about it when her back was turned. Often she ceased from laughing to weep sincerely, and then she ceased from weeping to laugh again. A true child of Paris--she preferred noise to solitude, movement to repose the resounding harmony of the orchestra at the Chartreuse or Coliseum balls, to the soft murmur of the winds, the waters, and the foliage--the deafening noise of the streets of Paris to the solitude of the country--the glare of fireworks, the glitter of a ball, the noise of rockets, to the serenity of a fine night, with stars and darkness and silence. Alas! yes; the good girl frankly preferred the black mud of the streets of the capital to the verdure of the flowery meadows--its dirty or scorching pavements to fresh and velvet moss of wood-paths perfumed with violets--the suffocating dust of the barriers or the boulevards to the waving of golden corn, enameled with the scarlet flowers of the wild poppy and the azure of the bluebells. Rigolette only left her room on Sundays--and each morning, to lay in her provision of chickweed, bread, milk, and hempseed, for herself and her two birds, but she lived in Paris for Paris' sake. She would have been in despair to have lived elsewhere than in the capital.

Another anomaly: notwithstanding this taste for Parisian pleasures;

notwithstanding the liberty, or, rather, the state of abandonment in which she found herself, being alone in the world; notwithstanding the rigid economy which she was obliged to use in her smallest expenses in order to live on thirty sous a day; notwithstanding the most mischievous and adorable little face in the world, never had Rigolette been a man's prey.

Early in life, she had lost her parents by the cholera, and, at ten years of age, strangers had taken care of her, until she left them to find her own living. At this period she had made Fleur-de-Marie's passing acquaintance, and later, as she dwelt in Rudolph's lodging-house--that of the prince whom she only thought to be a workman--she had been in the habit of going out on Sundays and other holidays with young men of her house, but they had given up the companionship when they found how virtuous she was, without knowing it. Germain, also her neighbor in the house, had, however, fallen desperately in love with Rigolette, without daring to breathe one word respecting it. Far from imitating his predecessors, who resorted to other sources of solace, without losing their regard for her, Germain had delightfully enjoyed his intimacy with the girl, and the pleasure afforded by her society on Sundays and every other evening that he was disengaged. During these long hours, Rigolette was always gay and merry, and Germain affectionate, serious, and attentive, and often slightly melancholy. This sadness was his only disadvantage, for his manners, being naturally refined, did not suffer by comparison with the ridiculous pretensions of M. Girandeaup, a traveling clerk, or with the boisterous eccentricities of Cabrion, an artist, though Girandeaup, by his excessive loquacity, and the painter, by his no less excessive hilarity, had the advantage of Germain, whose gentlemanly gravity rather awed his lively neighbor.

Rigolette had never evinced any partiality for either of her three lovers; but, with excellent judgment, she soon discovered that Germain combined all the qualities which would render any reasonable woman happy.

When the latter was imprisoned, her feeling manifested itself as love.

CHAPTER IV.

PIQUE-VINAIGRE.

The prisoner who was placed alongside of Barbillon in the visitor's room, was a man about forty years of age, and of slender make, and with a cunning, intelligent, jovial, and jeering face; he had an enormous mouth, almost entirely without teeth; when he spoke he twisted it from side to side, according to the pretty general custom of those who address the populace of market places; his nose was flat, his head immensely large, and almost entirely bald; he wore an old gray waistcoat, trousers of an indescribable color, pieced in a thousand different places; his naked feet, red from the cold, half wrapped up in old linen, were thrust into wooden shoes.

This man, named Fortune Gobert, nick-named Pique-Vinaigre (Sharp Vinegar, to prevent mistakes), formerly a juggler, and a prisoner for the crime of passing counterfeit money, was accused of breaking the terms of his ticket-of-leave, and of burglary.

Confined but for a few days at La Force, already Pique-Vinaigre filled, to the general satisfaction of his prison companions, the post of story-teller. At the present day these are rare, but formerly each ward generally had, at the expense of a light, individual contribution, its tale-teller, who, by his improvisations, made the interminable winter evenings appear less long, the prisoners retiring to rest at nightfall.

Pique-Vinaigre excelled in that kind of heroic recital where weakness, after a thousand crosses, finishes by triumphing over its persecutors. Pique-Vinaigre possessed, besides, an immense fund of irony, which had given him his nickname. He had just entered the room.

Opposite him, on the other side of the railing, was a woman of about thirty-five, with a pale, sweet, and interesting face, poorly but neatly clad; she wept bitterly, and kept her handkerchief to her eyes. Pique-Vinaigre looked at her with a mixture of impatience and affection.

"Come now, Jeanne," said he, "do not be a child; it is sixteen years since we have met; if you keep your handkerchief over your eyes, we won't know each other."

"My brother, my poor Fortune--I suffocate--I cannot speak."

"Ain't you droll! what ever is the matter with you?"

This sister--for this woman was his sister--restrained her sobs, dried her eyes, and regarding him with stupor, answered, "What is the matter? I find you again in prison, who had already been in fifteen years!"

"It is true; to-day six months I came out of Melun prison, without going to see you at Paris, because the _capital_ was forbidden to me."

"Already retaken! What have you then done? Why did you leave Beaugency, where you were sent, with orders to report yourself now and then?"

"Why? You ought to ask me why I went there?"

"You are right."

"In the first place, my poor Jeanne, since these gratings are between us both, imagine that I have embraced you, folded you in my arms, as one ought to do when he sees a sister after an age. Now, let us chat. A prisoner of Melun, called the Big Cripple, told me that there was at Beaugency an old galley-slave of his acquaintance, who employed liberated convicts in a manufactory of white-lead. Do you know what that is?"

"No, brother."

"It is a very fine trade; those who are employed in it, at the end of a month or two, have the painter's colic; of three attacked, about one dies. To be just, the two others die also, but at their ease; they take their time; take good care of themselves, and they may last a year, eighteen months at the most. After all, the trade is not so badly paid as some others, and there are some folks born already dressed, who hold out two or three years; but these are the old folks, the centenaries of the _white-leaders_. They die, it is true, but that's not fatiguing."

"And why did you choose a trade so dangerous, my poor Fortune?"

"And what would you have me do? When I entered Melun for this affair of false money, I was a juggler. As in the prison there was no work-shop for my trade, and as I was no stronger than a fly, they put me at making toys for children. It was a manufacturer of Paris who found it advantageous to have made by the prisoners his harlequins, his trumpets of wood, and his swords of ditto. Thus, I tell you, haven't I sharpened, and cut, and carved for fifteen years, these toys! I am sure that I supplied the pets of an entire quarter of Paris--it was, above all, on the trumpet I excelled; and rattles too! With these two instruments one could have put on edge the teeth of a whole battalion! I pride myself, on it. My time out, behold me with the degree of penny-trumpet manufacturer. They allowed me to choose for my residence three or four places, at forty leagues from Paris; I had for sole resource my knowledge of trumpet-making. Now, admitting that, from old men to babies, all the inhabitants of the town should have had a passion to play toot-toot on my trumpets. I should have had, even then, trouble enough to pay my expenses; but I could not seduce a whole village into blowing trumpets from morning to night. They would have taken me for a conspirator!"

"You always laugh."

"That is better than to cry. Finally, seeing that at forty leagues from Paris my trade as a juggler would be of no more resource to me than my trumpets, I demanded an exchange to Beaugency, wishing to engage myself in the white-lead factory. It is a pastry which gives you an indigestion of misery; but, until one dies from it, one has a living; it is always something gained, and I like that trade as well as that of a robber; to steal I am not brave or strong enough, and it was by pure chance I have committed the act of which I shall speak directly."

"You would have been brave and strong if you had only had the _idea_ not to steal any more."

"Ah! you believe that, do you?"

"Yes, at the bottom you are not wicked; for, in this dangerous affair of false money, you had been dragged into it in spite of yourself, almost forced--you know it well."

"Yes, my girl--but, do you see, fifteen years in a prison, that spoils a man like my old pipe which you see, whenever it comes in the jail white as a new pipe; on coming out of Melun, then, I felt myself too cowardly to

steal."

"And you had the courage to follow a deadly calling. Hold, Fortune! I tell you that you wish to make yourself worse than you are."

"Stop a moment, then; all greenhorn that I was, I had an idea, may the devil burn me if I know why! that I would not care for the colic, that the malady would find too little in me to feed on, and that it would go elsewhere; in fine, that I would become one of the old white-leaders. On leaving the prison I began by squandering my savings, augmented, understand, by what I had gained by relating stories at night in our ward."

"As you used to tell us in old times, my brother? It used to amuse our mother so much, do you remember?"

"Pardieu! good woman! And she never suspected before she died that I was at Melun?"

"Never: to her last moments she thought you had gone to the islands."

"What could I do, my girl? My escapades were the fault of my father, who brought me up to play the clown, to assist him in his juggling, to eat flax and spit fire; that was the cause that I had not the time to associate with the sons of peers of France, and that I made bad acquaintances. But, to return to Beaugency: once out of Melun, I spent my money as I had a right. After fifteen years in a cage one must have a little air, and amuse one's self so much the more, as, without being too greedy, the white lead might give me a last indigestion; then, what good would my pension money be to me? I ask you. Finally, I arrived at Beaugency almost without a sou: I asked for _Velu_, the friend of Big Cripple, the chief of the factory. Serviteur! no more manufactory of white-lead than you could put under your hand; eleven persons had died there in one year; the old galley-slave had shut up shop. Here I was in this village, with my talents for making wooden trumpets for my dinner, and my convict's passport for my sole recommendation. I asked for employment suited to my strength, and, as I had no strength, you can comprehend how I was received; robber here, gueux there, jail bird! in fine, as soon as I made my appearance anywhere, every one clapped their hands on their pockets; I could not, then, prevent myself from starving with hunger in a hole which I was not to leave for five years. Seeing this, I broke my 'parole' to come to Paris to use my talents. As I had not the means to come in a carriage and four, I came begging all along the road; avoiding the constables as a dog does a kick. I was lucky--I arrived without difficulty at Auteuil. I was worried, I was as hungry as the devil, I was dressed, as you see, without profuseness." And Pique-Vinaigre cast a merry glance at his rags. "I had not a sou; I could at any moment be arrested as a vagabond. Faith, an opportunity offered, the devil tempted me, and, in spite of my cowardice--"

"Enough, my brother, enough," said his sister, fearing that the warder, although at this moment some distance off, might hear the dangerous confession.

"You are afraid that some one will listen?" answered he: "be tranquil, I do

not conceal it; I was taken in the act; there are no means to deny it; I have confessed all; I know what I have to expect; my account is good."

"Alas!" answered the poor woman, weeping, "with what ease you speak of this."

"If I were to speak of it with uneasiness, what should I gain? Come, be reasonable, Jeanne; must I console you?" Jeanne wiped away her tears, and sighed.

"But to return to my affair," said Pique-Vinaigre; "I arrived near Auteuil in the dusk of the evening. I could go no further; I did not wish to enter Paris but at night; I seated myself behind a hedge to repose and reflect upon my plans. From the intensity of my thoughts I fell asleep; a noise of voices awoke me; it was quite dark; I listened, it was a man and a woman talking on the road, on the other side of my hedge; the man said to the woman, 'Who do you think would rob us? have we not left the house alone a hundred times?' 'Yes,' answered the woman, 'but then we did not leave a hundred francs in our chest.' 'Who knows it, fool?' said the husband. 'You are right,' replied the woman, and they passed on. The chance appeared too favorable for me to lose--there was no danger.

"I waited until they had got a little distance to come out from behind my hedge; I looked around: at twenty steps off I saw a small cottage; that must be the house with the hundred francs; there was no other hovel on the road but this one; Auteuil was five hundred yards off. I said to myself, 'Courage, my old boy, there is no one there, it is night, if there is no dog (you know I always was afraid of dogs), the affair is done.' Luckily there was no dog. To be still more sure, I knocked against the door--nothing; that encouraged me. The shutters of the ground floor were closed: I passed my stick between the two, I forced them, I entered through the window into a chamber; there was some fire in the fireplace; this served as a light; I saw a chest from whence the key had been taken; I took the tongs, I forced the drawers, and under a heap of linen I found the treasure, wrapped up in an old woolen stocking; I did not amuse myself by taking anything else; I jumped out of the window and I fell--guess where? There's luck!"

"Go on!"

"On the back of the watchman who was going to the village."

"What a misfortune!"

"The moon had risen, he saw me coming out of the window; he seized me. He was a giant who could have eaten ten such as me. Too cowardly to resist, I resigned myself to my fate. I still held the stocking in my hand; he heard the money jingle, he took it all, put it in his bag, and compelled me to follow him to Auteuil. He went to the mayor's with the usual accompaniment of boys and constables; they waited for the proprietors to return; they made their declaration. I could not deny it; I confessed all, they put on the handcuffs, and off we went!"

"And here you are in prison again, perhaps for a long time!"

"Listen, Jeanne, I do not wish to deceive you, my girl, so I will tell you at once."

"What more now?"

"Come, take courage!"

"But speak, then!"

"Well! there is no more prison for me."

"How is that?"

"On account of the burglary in an inhabited house, the lawyer told me, 'It's a safe thing.' I shall have fifteen or twenty years at the galleys and a berth in the pillory to boot."

"The galleys! but you are so weak you will die there!" cried the unhappy woman, bursting into tears.

"How if I had enrolled myself among the white-leaders?"

"But the galleys, oh! the galleys!"

"It is a prison in the open air, with a red cap instead of a brown one, and, besides, I have always been curious to see the ocean. What a starer I am!"

"But the pillory! To be exposed there to the contempt of all the world, oh! my brother." And the unfortunate woman began again to weep.

"Come, come, Jeanne, be reasonable. It is a bad quarter of an hour to pass, but I believe one is seated. And, besides, am I not accustomed to a crowd? When I played juggler I always had people around me; I will imagine that I am at my old trade, and if it has too much effect upon me I will close my eyes; it will absolutely be the same as if they did not see me."

Speaking with so much stoicism, this unfortunate man wished less to appear insensible of his criminal actions than to console and satisfy his sister by this apparent indifference. For a man accustomed to prison _manners_, and with whom all shame is necessarily dead--even the galleys were only a change of condition, a "change of caps," as Pique-Vinaigre said, with frightful truth.

Many of the prisoners of the central prisons even prefer the galleys on account of the lively, animated life which is led there, committing often attempts at murder to be sent to Brest or Toulon. This can be imagined before they enter the galleys they have almost as much work, according to their declaration. The condition of the most honest workman of the forts is not less rude than that of the convicts. They enter the workshop, and leave it, at the same hour, and the beds on which they repose their limbs,

exhausted by fatigue, are often no better than those of the galleys.

They are free, some one will say. Yes, free one day, Sunday, and this is also a day of repose for the convict. But feel they no shame and contempt? What is shame for these poor wretches, who, each day, bronze the soul in this infamy, in this mutual school of perdition, where the most criminal are the most distinguished? Such are the consequences of the present system of punishment. Incarceration is very much sought after. The galleys--often demanded.

"Twenty years in the galleys!" repeated the poor sister of Pique-Vinaigre.

"But be comforted, Jeanne; they will only pay me in my own coin; I am too feeble to be placed at hard labor. If there is not a manufactory of trumpets and wooden swords, as at Melun, they will give me easy work, and employ me in the infirmary. I am not refractory; I am good-natured. I will tell stories as I do here, I will make myself adored by the keepers, esteemed by my comrades, and I will send you some cocoanuts nicely carved, and some straw boxes for my nephews and nieces; in short. as we make our bed, so must we lie on it!"

"If you had only written that you were coming to Paris, I would have tried to conceal and lodge you while you were waiting for work."

"I reckoned to go to your house, but I prepared to come with my hands full; for, besides, from your appearance I see that you do not ride in your carriage. How about your children and husband?"

"Do not speak to me about him."

"Always a rattler, it is a pity, for he is a good workman."

"He does me much harm--I have had troubles enough of my own, without having yours added to them."

"How? your husband--"

"Left me three years ago, after having sold all our furniture, leaving me with the children, without any thing, my straw bed excepted."

"You did not tell me this!"

"For what good? It would have grieved you."

"Poor Jeanne! How have you managed, all alone with your three children?"

"Holy Virgin! I had much trouble; I worked by the job as a fringe-maker, as well as I could, my neighbors helped me a little, taking care of my children when I went out; and then I, who do not always have luck, had it for once in my life, but it did not profit me, on account of my husband."

"How is that?"

"The lace-maker had spoken of my troubles to one of his customers, informing him how my husband had left me without anything, after having sold all my furniture, and that in spite of it I worked with all my strength to bring up my children; one day, on returning home, what do I find? my room newly furnished, a good bed, linen, and so on; it was the charity of my lace-maker's customer."

"Good customer! Poor sister! Why the devil did you not write me about your poverty? Instead of spending my earnings, I would have sent you some money."

"I, free, to ask from you, a prisoner!"

"Exactly; I was fed, warmed, lodged at the expense of the government; what I earned was so much gained; knowing that my brother-in-law was a good workman, and you a good manager, I was easy, and I fiddled away my money with my eyes shut and my mouth open."

"My husband was a good workman, it is true, but he became dissipated; in fine, thanks to this unexpected succor, I took fresh courage; my eldest daughter began to earn something; we were happy, except for the sorrow of knowing that you were at Melun. Work was plenty, my children were properly dressed, they wanted scarcely anything; that made me take heart. At length I had even saved thirty-five francs, when, suddenly, my husband returned. I had not seen him for a year. Finding me comfortably fixed and well clad, he made no bones about it; he took the money, settled himself at home, got drunk every day, and beat me when I complained."

"The scoundrel!"

"This is not all: he had lodged in a room of our apartments a bad woman with whom he lived; I had to submit to that. For the second time he began to sell little by little the furniture I had. Foreseeing what would happen, I went to a lawyer who lived in the house, and asked him what I should do to prevent my husband from placing me and my children on straw again."

"It was very plain, you ought to have thrust him out of doors."

"Yes, but I had not the right. The lawyer told me that my husband could dispose of everything, and remain in the house without doing anything; that it was a shame, but that I must submit; that the circumstance of his mistress, who lived under one roof, gave me the right to demand the separation of bed and board, as it is called; so much the more as I had proofs my husband beat me; that I could plead against him, but that it would cost me at least four or five hundred francs to obtain my divorce, you may judge; it is almost all that I could earn in a year! Where could I borrow such a sum? And, besides, it is not only to borrow--but to return. And five hundred francs--all at once--it is a fortune."

"There is, however, a very simple way to amass five hundred francs," said Pique-Vinaigre, with bitterness; "it is to hang up one's appetite for a year--to live on air, but work just the same. It is astonishing that the lawyer did not give you this advice."

"You are always joking."

"Oh! this time, no!" cried Pique-Vinaigre, with indignation; "for it is infamous that the law should be too dear for poor folks. For look at you, good and worthy mother of a family, working with all your might to bring up your children honestly. Your husband is an arrant scoundrel; he beats you, abuses you, robs you, and spends at the tavern the money you earn; you apply to justice, that it may protect you, and keep from the clutches of this rascal your bread and your children's. The people of the law tell you, 'Yes, you are right, your husband is a bad fellow, justice shall be done you; but this justice will cost you five hundred francs.' Five hundred francs! that would support you and your family for a whole year! Now, do you see, Jeanne? all this proves what the proverb says, that there are only two kinds of people: those who are hung and those who deserve to be."

Rigolett, alone and pensive, having no one else to listen to, had not lost a word of this conversation, and sympathized deeply in the misfortunes of this poor woman. She promised herself to mention this to Rudolph as soon as she should see him, not doubting that he would assist her.

Rigolette, feeling a lively interest in the sad fate of the sister of Pique-Vinaigre, did not take her eyes from her, and was endeavoring to approach a little nearer, when, unfortunately, a new visitor entering asked for a prisoner, and seated himself on the bench between Jeanne and the grisette. She, at the sight of this man, could not restrain a movement of surprise, almost fear. She recognized one of the two bailiffs who had come to arrest Morel, putting in execution the judgment obtained against the jeweler by Jacques Ferrand.

This circumstance, recalling to Rigolette's mind the untiring persecutor of Germain, redoubled her sadness, from which her attention had been slightly withdrawn by the touching and painful communications of the sister of Pique-Vinaigre. Retreating as far as she could from her new neighbors, the grisette leaned against the wall, and abandoned herself to her sad thoughts.

"Hold, Jeanne," resumed Pique-Vinaigre, whose jovial face had become suddenly clouded; "I am neither strong nor brave; but if I had been there while your husband was causing you so much misery, very playful things would not have passed between us. But you did not act rightly--you--"

"What could I do? I have been obliged to suffer what I could not prevent! As long as there was anything to be sold, my husband sold it, so that he might go to the tavern with his mistress--everything, even to my little girl's Sunday frock."

"But your daily earnings, why did you give them to him? Why did you not hide them?"

"I did hide them; but he beat me so much that I was obliged to give them up. It was not on account of the blows that I yielded, but because I said to myself, in the end he will wound me so seriously that I shall not be

able to work for some time. Suppose he breaks my arm, then what will become of me--who will take care of and feed my children? If I am forced to go the hospital, they will die of hunger then. Thus you can imagine, my brother, I preferred to give my money to my husband, not on account of the beating, but that I might not be wounded, and remain _able to work_."

"Poor woman. Bah! they talk of martyrdom--it is you who are a martyr!"

"And yet I have never harmed any one; I only ask to work to take care of my children; but what would you? There are the happy and unhappy, as there are the good and the wicked."

"Yes, and it is astonishing how happy the good are! But you have finally got rid of that scoundrel of a husband?"

"I hope so, for he did not leave me until he had sold my bedstead, and the cradle of my two little children. But I think he wished to do something worse."

"What do you mean?"

"I say him, but it was rather this bad woman who urged him; it is on that account I speak of it. 'I say,' one day he said to me, 'when in a family there is a pretty girl of fifteen like ours, it is very stupid not to make use of her beauty.'"

"Oh! good! I understand. After having sold the clothes, he wished to sell the body."

"When he said that, Fortune, my blood boiled; and, to be just, I made him blush with shame at my reproaches: and as this bad woman wished to meddle in our quarrel by asserting that my husband could do with his daughter as he pleased, I treated her so badly, the wretch, that my husband beat me, and since that time I have not seen them."

"Look here, Jeanne, there are folks condemned to ten years' imprisonment, who would not have done like your husband; at least, they only despoil strangers."

"At bottom he is not wicked, look you; it is bad company at the taverns which has ruined him."

"Yes, he would not harm a child; but to a grown person it is different."

"What would you have? One must take life as it comes. At least, my husband gone, I had no longer any fear of being lamed by any blow. I took fresh courage. Not having anything to purchase a mattress with, for before all one must eat and pay rent, and my poor daughter Catherine and myself could hardly earn together forty sous a day, my two other children being too young to work--for want of a mattress we slept upon a straw bed, made with straw that we picked up at the door of a packer in our street."

"And I have squandered my earnings!"

"How could you know my trouble, since I did not tell you? Well, we doubled our work, Catherine and I. Poor child, if you knew how virtuous, and industrious, and good she is! always with her eyes on mine to know what I wish her to do; never a complaint, and yet--she has already seen so much misery, although only fifteen! Ah, it is a great consolation, Fortune to have such a child," said Jeanne, wiping her eyes.

"It is just your own picture, I see; you should have this consolation, at least."

"I assure you that it is more on her account that I complain than on my own; for, do you see, the last two months she has not stopped working for a moment; once every week she goes out to wash at the boats near the Pont-au-Change, at three sous the hour, the few clothes my husband left us: all the rest of the time at the stake like a poor dog. True, misfortune came to her too soon; I knew well enough that it must come; but at least there are some who have one or two years of tranquillity. That which has also caused me much sorrow in all this, Fortune, is, that I could give you no assistance in anything; yet I will try."

"Do you think I would accept? On the contrary, I'll ask a sou for each pair of ears that listens to my stories; I will ask two, or they will have to do without Pique-Vinaigre's romances, and that will help you a little in your housekeeping. But why don't you go into lodgings? Then your husband can't sell anything."

"In lodgings? Why, only reflect, we are four; they would ask us at least twenty sous a day; how much would remain for our living! while our room only costs us fifty francs a year."

"That is true, my girl," said Pique-Vinaigre, with bitter irony; "work, break your back to fix up your room a little; as soon as you get something, your husband will rob you again, and some fine day he will sell your daughter as he has sold your clothes."

"Oh! before that he must kill me!--my poor Catherine!"

"He will not kill you, and he will sell your poor Catherine. He is your husband, is he not? He is the head of the family, as your lawyer told you, as long as you are not separated by law, and as you have not five hundred francs to give for that, you must be resigned; your husband has the right to take his daughter from you, and where he pleases. Once he and his mistress have a hankering after this poor little child, they will have her."

"But, if this infamy was possible, would there be any justice?"

"Justice," said Pique-Vinaigre, with a burst of sardonic laughter, "is like meat; it is too dear for the poor to eat. Only, understand me, if it is in question to send them to Melun, to put them in the pillory, or throw them into the galleys, it is another affair; they give them this justice _gratis_. If they cut their throats, it is again _gratis_--always

gratis. Ta-a-a-ake your tickets!" added Pique-Vinaigre, imitating a mountebank; "it is not ten sous, two sous, one you, a centime that it will cost you. No, ladies and gentlemen, it will cost you the trifle of nothing at all; it suits every one's pockets; you have only to furnish the _head_--the cutting and curling are at the expense of the government. Here is justice _gratis_. But the justice which would prevent an honest mother of a family from being beaten and despoiled by a vagabond of a husband, who wishes to make money out of his daughter, this kind of justice costs five hundred francs; you must give it up, my poor Jeanne."

"Fortune," said the unhappy mother, bursting into tears, "you kill me!"

"And does it not kill me to think of your lot, and that of your family, and seeing that I can do nothing? I seem always gay; but do not be deceived; I have two kinds of gayety, Jeanne; my gayety gay, and my gayety sad. I have neither the strength nor the courage to be bad, angry, nor malicious, as others are, that always passes over with me in words more or less farcical. My cowardice and my weakness of body have prevented me from becoming worse than I am. It needed the chance of this lonely hut, where there was neither cat, nor, above all, a dog, to have urged me to steal. And then, again, it chanced to be a fine moonlight night; for alone, and in the dark, I am as cowardly as the devil!"

"That is what I have always said, my poor Fortune, that you are better than you think. Thus I hope the judges will have pity on you."

"Pity on me? a returned criminal? reckon on it! After that, I don't wish it; to be here, there, or elsewhere, all the same to me; and then, you are right, I am not wicked; and those who are, I hate them, after my fashion, by making fun of them; you must think that, from relating stories where, to please my audience, I make it come out that those who torment others from pure cruelty receive, in the end, their pay, I become accustomed to feel as I relate."

"Do these people like stories, my brother? I should not have thought it."

"A moment! If I tell them a story where a fellow who robs, or who kills to rob, is strung up at the end, they will not let me finish; but if it is concerning a woman or child, or, for example, a poor devil like me, who would be thrown to the ground if he was only blown upon, and let him be ill-treated by a Bluebeard, who persecutes him solely for the pleasure of persecuting him, for honor, as they say; oh! then they shout with joy when, at the end, the Bluebeard receives his pay. I have, above all, a history called Gringalet and Cut-in-half, which created the greatest sensation at the Centrale de Melun, and which I have not yet related here. I have promised it for tonight; but they must subscribe largely to my money-box, and you shall profit by it. Without extra charge, I will write it out for your children. My yarn will amuse them; very religious people would read this story; so be easy."

"In fine, poor Fortune, what consoles me a little is, to see that you are not as unhappy as others, thanks to your character."

"I am very sure that if I were like a prisoner of our ward, I should be hateful to myself. Poor fellow! I am much afraid that before the end of the day he will bleed; it grows red-hot for him; there is a bad plot formed against him for to-night."

"Oh! they wish to do him harm? you will have nothing to do with it, at least, Fortune?"

"Not such a fool! I might be spattered. As I went backward and forward among them, I heard them muttering. They spoke of a gag, to prevent him from crying out; and then, to hinder any one from seeing the execution, they mean to make a circle around him, pretending to listen to one of them who should be reading a paper or something else."

"But why do they wish to injure him thus?"

"As he is always alone, and speaks to no one, because he seems disgusted with them, they imagine he is a spy, which is very stupid; for, on the contrary, he would keep company with every one, if he wished to spy. Besides, he has the air of a gentleman, and that eclipses them. It is the _captain_ of the ward, called the Living Skeleton, who is at the head of this plot. He is like a real _bloody bones_ after this poor Germain--their intended victim is so named. Let them make their own arrangements--it is their business; I can do nothing. But you see, Jeanne, what good comes from being sad in prison; right away you are suspected. I have never been suspected, not I. But, my girl--enough talk; go and see if I am at your house; you lose too much precious time by coming here. I can only talk; with you it is different; therefore goodnight. Come here from time to time; you know I shall be glad to see you."

"My brother, still a few moments, I beg you."

"No, no; your children are expecting you. Ah, you do not tell them, I hope, that their uncle is a boarder here?"

"They think you are at the islands, as my mother did formerly. In this way, I hope, I can talk to them of you."

"Very good. Go! quickly!"

"Yes, but listen, my poor brother. I have not much, yet I will not leave you thus. You must be cold--no stockings, and this wretched waistcoat! I will fix something for you, with Catherine's aid. Fortune, you know that it is not the will to do something for you that is wanting."

"What? clothes? why, I have my trunks full. As soon as they arrive, I shall have wherewithal to dress myself like a prince. Come, laugh, then, a little. No? Well! seriously, my girl, I do not refuse, while waiting for Gringalet and Cut-in-half to fill my money-box. Then I will return it. Adieu, my good Jeanne; the next time you come, may I love my name of Pique Vinaigre, if I do not make you laugh. Go away; I have already kept you too long."

"But, brother, listen!"

"My good man! my good man!" cried Pique-Vinaigre to the warder seated at the other end, "I have finished my conversation; I wish to go in; talked enough."

"Oh! Fortune, it is not kind to send me away thus," said Jeanne.

"On the contrary, it is very right. Come, adieu; keep up your courage, and to-morrow morning say to the children that you have dreamed of their uncle, who is in the West Indies, and that he begged you to embrace them. Adieu."

"Adieu, Fortune," said the poor woman, all in tears at seeing her brother enter the prison.

Rigolette, since the bailiff had seated himself alongside of her, had not been able to hear the conversation of Pique-Vinaigre and Jeanne; but she had not taken off her eyes from them, thinking how to find out the address of this poor woman, so as to be able, according to her first idea, to recommend her to Rudolph. When Jeanne rose from the bench to leave, the grisette approached her, saying, timidly, "Madame, just now, without wishing to listen to you, I heard that you were a lace fringe-maker."

"Yes, my friend," answered Jeanne, a little surprised but prepossessed in favor of Rigolette by her pleasing manners and charming face.

"I am a dressmaker," answered the grisette. "Now that fringes and lace are in fashion, I have sometimes some customers who ask me for trimmings after their own taste; I have thought perhaps it would be cheaper to apply to the makers; and, besides, I could give you more than your employer does,"

"It is true; by buying the silk on my own account I should gain something. You are very kind to think of me. I am quite surprised."

"I will speak to you frankly. I await a person I came to see; having no one to talk with, just now, before this gentleman placed himself between us, without wishing it, I assure you, I have heard you talk to your brother of your sorrows, of your children; I said to myself, poor folks ought to assist each other. The idea struck me at the time that I might be of some use to you, since you are a fringe-maker. If, indeed, what I have proposed suits you, here is my address; give me yours, so that when I shall have a little order to give you I shall know where to find you."

And Rigolette gave one of her cards to the sister of Pique-Vinaigre. She, quite touched at the proceedings, said gratefully:

"Your face has not deceived me; and, besides, do not take it for pride, but you have a resemblance to my eldest daughter, which made me look at you twice on entering. I thank you much; if you employ me, you shall be satisfied with my work; it shall be done conscientiously. I am called Jeanne Duport. I live at No. 1, Rue de la Barillerie."

"No. 1, it is not difficult to remember. Thank you, madame."

"It is for me to thank you, my dear, it is so kind in you to have thought at once of serving me! Once more I express my surprise."

"Why, that is very plain, Madame Duport," said Rigolette, with a charming smile. "Since I look like your daughter Catherine, that which you call my kindness ought not to surprise you."

"How kind! Thanks to you, I go away from here less sad than I thought; and then, perhaps, we may meet here again, for you come, like me, to see a prisoner?"

"Yes, madame," answered Rigolette, sighing.

"Then, adieu. I shall see you again; at least, I hope so, Miss Rigolette," said Jeanne Duport, after having cast her eyes on the address of the grisette.

"At least," thought Rigolette, resuming her seat, "I know now the address of this poor woman; and certainly M. Rudolph will interest himself for her when he knows how unfortunate she is, for he has always told me, 'If you know any one much to be pitied, address yourself to me.'"

And Rigolette taking her place, awaited with impatience the end of the conversation of her neighbor, in order to be able to ask for Germain.

Now a few words on the preceding scene. Unfortunately, it must be confessed, the indignation of the brother of Jeanne Duport was legitimate. Yes: in saying the law was *_too dear_* for the poor, he said the truth. To plead before the civil tribunals is to incur enormous expenses, quite out of the reach of artisans, who barely exist on their scanty wages.

Let a mother or father of a family belonging to this ever-sacrificed class wish to obtain an obliteration of the conjugal tie; let them have all right to obtain it: will they obtain it? No; for there is no workman in a condition to spend four or five hundred francs for the onerous formalities of such a judgment.

Yet the poor have no other life than a domestic one; the good or bad conduct of the head of an artisan's family is not only a question of morality; but of *_bread_*. The fate of a woman of the people, such as we have endeavored to paint, does it deserve less interest, less protection, than that of a rich woman, who suffers from the bad conduct or infidelities of her husband, think you?

Nothing is more worthy of pity, doubtless, than the griefs of the heart. But when to these griefs is added, for an unfortunate mother, the misery of her children, is it not monstrous that the poverty of this woman places her without the law, and leaves her and her family without defense against the odious treatment of a drunken and worthless husband?

Yet this monstrosity exists. [Footnote: Translator's Note.--How singular that, as this new edition of the *_sensational romancist's_* work is

issued, the Imperial Parliament should have a bill to redress this very oversight before it.]

And a liberated criminal can, in this circumstance as in others, deny, with right and reason, the impartiality of the institutions in the name of which he is condemned. Is it necessary to say what there is in this dangerous to society, to justify such attacks?

What will be the influence, the moral authority, of those laws whose application is absolutely subordinate to a question of money? Ought not civil justice, like criminal justice, to be accessible to all?

When people are too poor to be able to invoke the benefits of a law eminently preservative and tutelary, ought not society to assure the application, through respect for the honor and repose of families?

But let us leave this woman, who will remain all her life the victim of a brutal and perverted husband, because she is too poor to obtain a matrimonial separation by law. Let us speak of Jeanne Dupont's brother. This man left a den of corruption to enter the world again; he has paid the penalty of his crime by expiation. What precautions has society taken to prevent his falling back into crime? None.

Has any one, with charitable foresight, rendered possible his return to well-doing, in order to be able to punish, as one should punish, in a becoming manner, if he shows himself incorrigible? No.

The contagious influence of your jails is so well known, and so justly dreaded, that he who comes out from them is everywhere an object of scorn, aversion, and alarm. Were he twenty times an honest man, he would scarcely find occupation anywhere. And what is more: the penalty of a ticket-of-leave banishes him to small localities, where his past life must be well known; and here he will have no means of exercising the exceptionable employment often imposed on the prisoners by the contractors of the maisons centrales. If the liberated convict has the courage to resist temptation, he abandons himself to some of those murderous occupations of which we have spoken, to the preparation of certain chemical productions, by which one in ten perishes; or, if he has the strength, he goes to get out stone in the forest of Fontainebleau, an employment which he survives, average time, six years! The condition of a liberated convict is, then, much worse, more painful, more difficult, than it was before his first criminal action: he lives surrounded by shackles and dangers; he is obliged to brave repulses and disdain--often the deepest misery. And if he succumbs to all these frightful temptations to criminality, and commits a second crime, you show yourself ten times more severe toward him than for his first fault. That is unjust; for it is almost always the necessity you impose on him which conducts him to a second crime. Yes; for it is shown that, instead of correcting him, your penitentiary system depraves. Instead of ameliorating, it makes worse; instead of curing slight moral affections, it renders them incurable. Your aggravation of punishment, applied without pity to the backslider, is, then, iniquitous, barbarous, since this backsliding is, thus to express it, a forced consequence of your penal institutions. The terrible

punishment which awaits this _double guilt_ would be just and excusable if your prisons improved the morals, purified the prisoners, and if, at the expiration of the sentence, good conduct was, if not easy, at least generally possible. If any one is surprised at these contradictions of the law, what would he be when he compares certain penalties to certain crimes--either on account of their inevitable consequences, or on account of the disproportion which exists in their punishment? The conversation of the prisoner whom the bailiff came to see will offer to us one of these afflicting contrasts.

CHAPTER V.

BOULARD.

The prisoner who entered at the moment that Pique-Vinaigre left it was a man of about thirty years of age, with red hair, and a jovial, fat, and rubicund face; his middling stature rendered still more remarkable by his enormous corpulency. This prisoner, so rosy and stout, was wrapped up in a long, warm coat of gray swan's-down, with gaiter trousers of the same material. A kind of hooded cap of red velvet completed the costume of this personage, who wore excellent furred slippers. Although the fashion of wearing trinkets was over, the golden watch-chain sustained a goodly number of fine gold seals and rings. Finally, several rings, enriched with precious stones, sparkled on the fat red fingers of this prisoner, known as Boulard the Bailiff, accused of breach of trust.

[Illustration: THE REQUEST FOR A FRIENDLY SERVICE]

His visitor was Pierre Bourdin, one of the officers charged with the arrest of Morel the jeweler. Bourdin was rather shorter, but quite as fat, and attired after his patron, whose magnificence he admired. Having, like him, a partiality for jewels, he wore on this day a huge topaz pin, and a long gold chain, suspended from his neck, was entwined among the buttonholes of his waist-coat.

"Good-day! faithful Bourdin; I was quite sure you would not be missing at the roll-call," said Boulard, joyously, in a faint, cracked voice, which singularly contrasted with his fat body and blooming face.

"Missing at the roll-call!" answered the bailiff; "I am incapable of such an act, general!" It was thus that Bourdin, with a pleasantry at once familiar and respectful, called the bailiff, under whose orders he acted; this military form of speech being often used among certain classes of civil practitioners.

"I see with pleasure that friendship remains faithful to the unfortunate," said Boulard, with cordial gayety; "yet I began to be uneasy. Three days since I wrote to you, and no Bourdin till now."

"Imagine, general, quite a history. You recollect well the handsome viscount in the Rue de Chaillot?"

"Saint Rømy?"

"Exactly! you know how he laughed at our writs?"

"It was quite indecent."

"To be sure it was. Malicorne and I were quite stupefied at it, if that were possible."

"It is impossible, brave Bourdin."

"Happily, general, but here is the fact; this handsome viscount has got new titles."

"Has he become a count?"

"No! from a cheat he has become a robber."

"Ah! ah!"

"They are at his heels for some diamonds he has stolen; and, by way of parenthesis, they belong to that jeweler who employed this sneak of a Morel, the lapidary whom we went to nab in the Rue du Temple, when a tall slim jockey, with black mustaches, paid for the starved rat, and came near pitching headforemost down the stairs Malicorne and me."

"Oh! yes, yes; I recollect. You told me that, my poor Bourdin; it was very funny. The best of the farce was that the portress of the house emptied on your backs a saucepan of boiling soup."

"Saucepan included, general, which burst like a bomb at our feet. The old sorceress!"

"That will be taken into your charge. But this handsome viscount?"

"I tell you, then, that Saint Rømy was prosecuted for a robbery, after having made his ninny of a father believe that he had blown his brains out. An agent of the police, one of my friends, knowing that I had for a long time tracked this lord, asked me if I could not put him on the scent. I learned too late, at the time of our last writ, which he had escaped, that he was burrowed in a farm at Arnouville, at five leagues from Paris. But when we arrived there it was too late; the bird had flown!"

"Besides, he had the following day paid this bill of exchange, thanks to a certain great lady, they say. Yes, general; but no matter, I knew the rest. He had once been concealed there; he might well enough be concealed there a second time. That is what I said to my friend in the police. He proposed for me to lend a hand, as an amateur, and conduct him to the farm. I had nothing to do--it was a nice party to the country--I accepted."

"Well! the viscount?"

"Not to be found. After having at first wandered around the farm, and having afterward introduced ourselves there, we returned as wise as we went; and this is the reason I have not been able to render myself sooner to your orders, general."

"I was very sure there was an impossibility on your part, my good fellow."

"But, if it is not improper, tell me, how the devil did you get here?"

"Vulgar people, my dear--a herd of riff-raff, who, for the miserable sum of sixty thousand francs, of which they pretend I have despoiled them, have carried a complaint against me for an abuse of confidence, and forced me to give up my commission."

"Really! general? Ah, well! this is a misfortune! How--shall we work no more for you?"

"I am on half-pay, my good Bourdin; here I am on an allowance."

"But who is, then, so savage?"

"Just imagine that one of the most severe against me is a liberated robber, who gave me to collect a bill of seven hundred miserable francs, for which it was necessary to prosecute. I did prosecute; I was paid, and I pocketed the money; and because, in consequence of speculations which did not succeed, I have spent this money, as well as that of many others, all the rubbishing lot have made such a brawling, that a writ was issued to arrest me, and thus you see me here, my good fellow; neither more nor less than a malefactor."

"Take care that don't hurt you, general."

"Yes; but what is most curious is, this convict has written to me, some days since, that this money, being his sole resource for rainy days, and that these days had now arrived (I do not know what lie means by that), I was responsible for the crimes he might commit to escape starvation."

"It is charming, on my word!"

"Is it not? Nothing more convenient. The droll fellow is capable of giving that as an excuse. Happily, the law knows no such accomplices."

"After all, you are only accused of an abuse of confidence, is it not, my general?"

"Certainly! Do you take me for a thief, Master Bourdin?"

"Oh! general. I meant to say there was nothing serious in all this; after all, there is not enough to whip a cat."

"Have I a despairing look, my good fellow?"

"Not at all; I never saw you look more cheerful. Indeed, if you are condemned, you will only have two or three months' imprisonment, and twenty-five francs fine. I know my code."

"And these two or three months I shall be allowed, I am sure, to pass at my ease in a lunatic asylum. I have one deputy under my thumb."

"Oh! then your affair is sure."

"Hold, Bourdin, I can hardly keep from laughing; these fools who have sent me here will gain much by it! They shall never see a sou of the money they claim. They force me to sell my commission--all the same. I am aware of the duty I owe my predecessor. You see it is these muffs who will be the geese of the farce, as Robert Macaire says."

"That produces the same effect on me, general; so much the worse for them."

"My good fellow, let us come to the subject which made me beg you to come here; it is touching a delicate mission concerning a female," said Boulard, with a mysterious air.

"Ah! rogue of a general, I recognize you there! What is it? Count on me."

"I interest myself particularly in a young actress of the Folies-Dramatiques; I pay her board, and, in exchange, she pays me in return--at least, I think so; for, my good fellow, you know, the absent are often in the wrong. Now, I am the more tenacious to know if I am wrong, as Alexandrine--she is called Alexandrine--has sent for some money. I have never been stingy with the fair sex; but I do not wish to be made a fool of. Thus, before playing the generous with this dear friend, I wish to know if she deserves it by her fidelity. I know there is nothing more absurd than fidelity; but it is a weakness I have. You will render me, then, a friendly service, my dear comrade, if you can for a few days have a supervision over my love, and let me know how to act either by talking with the landlady of Alexandrine, or--"

"Sufficient, general," interrupting. "This is nothing worse than watching, spying, and following a creditor. Have confidence in me; I shall find out if Lady Alexandrine sticks a penknife in the contract, which appears to me quite improbable; for, without flattery, general, you are too handsome a man, and too generous not to be valued."

"I ought to be a handsome man; yet I am absent, my dear comrade, and it is a great wrong; in fine, I count on you to know the truth."

"You shall know it, I will answer for it."

"Ah! my dear comrade, how can I express my gratitude?"

"Come, come, now, general."

"It is understood, my good Bourdin, that in this affair your fees shall be

the same as for an arrest."

"General, I will not allow it; so long as I acted under your orders, have you not always allowed me to grind the debtors to the quick, treble the fees of arrest, costs, which you have afterward prosecuted to payment with as much activity as if they had been due to yourself?"

"But, my dear comrade, that is different; in my turn I will not allow--"

"General, you will humiliate me, if you do not allow me to offer you this as a feeble proof of my gratitude."

"Very well; I shall struggle no longer with your generosity. Besides, your devotion will be a sweet recompense for the freedom that I have always maintained in our business affairs."

"That is what I expect, my general; but can I not serve you in any other way? you must be horribly situated here, you, who like to be so much at your ease! You are in a cell by yourself, I hope?"

"Certainly, and I arrived just in time, for I have the last vacant room. I have arranged myself as well as I can in my cell; I am not very badly off; I have a stove; I sent for a good arm-chair; I make three long repasts; I digest, I walk and sleep. Saving the inquietude which Alexandrine causes me, you see I am not much to be pitied."

"But you are so much of a _gourmand_, general! the resources of the prison are so meager!"

"But the provision merchant who lives in this street has been created, as it were, for my service. I have an open account with him, and every day he sends me a nice little basket; and while on this subject, and you are ready to do me a favor, beg good Mrs. Michonneau, who, by the way, is not so bad--"

"Ah! rogue--rogue of a general!"

"Come, my dear comrade, no evil thoughts," said the bailiff, "I am only a good customer and neighbor. Pray dear Mrs. Michonneau to put into my basket to-morrow some pickled funny fish; it is now in season; it will be good for my digestion, and make me thirsty."

"Excellent idea!"

"And then, let her send a hamper of Burgundy, Champagne, and Bordeaux, just like the last--she knows what that means! and let her add two bottles of her old 1817 Cognac, and a pound of pure Mocha, fresh ground and burned."

"I will just note down the date of the brandy, so as not to forget it," said Bourdin, taking his notebook from his pocket.

"Since you are writing, my dear comrade, have the goodness to note down to ask at my house for my eiderdown coverlet."

"All this shall be executed to the letter, general. Be easy; I feel now a little more assured as to your good living. But do you take your walks pell-mell among the low prisoners?"

"Yes, and it is very gay, very animated; I come out of my room after breakfast. I go sometimes into one court, sometimes into another; and, as you say, I mix with the dregs. I assure you that, at the bottom, they appear to be very good fellows; some of them are very amusing. The most abandoned assemble in what they call the Lions' Den. Ah! my dear comrade, what hangdog faces! There is one among them named Skeleton! I have never seen his fellow."

"What a singular name!"

"He is so thin, or, rather, so fleshless, that it is no nickname; I tell you, he is frightful; and with all this, he is provost-marshal of his ward; he is by far the greatest villain of them all. He comes from the galleys, and he has again robbed and murdered; but his last murder is so horrible, that he knows very well he will be condemned to death to a certainty, but he laughs at it like fun."

"What a ruffian!"

"All the prisoners admire, and tremble before him. I put myself at once in his good graces, by giving him some cigars; he has taken me into his friendship, and teaches me slang. I make progress."

"Oh! oh! what a good lark! my general learning flash!"

"I tell you I amuse myself like anything. These jockeys adore me; some of them are even familiar as relations. I am not proud, like a little gentleman, Germain, a barefoot, who has not the means to be separate, and yet pretends to play the disdainful with them."

"But he must have been delighted to find a man so much at home as you are, to talk with, if he is so highly disgusted with the others?"

"Bah! he did not seem to remark who I was; but had he remarked it, I should have been very guarded to respond to his advances. He is the butt of the prison. They will play him, sooner or later, a bad turn, and I have not, of course, any desire to partake of the aversion of which he is the object."

"You are very right."

"That would spoil my recreation; for my promenade with the prisoners is a real promenade. Only these robbers have not a great opinion of me, mentally. You comprehend--my accusation of a simple abuse of confidence--it is a sad thing for such fellows. Thus they look upon me as no great shakes, as Arnal says."

"In fact, alongside of these matadores of crime, you are--"

"A lamb, my dear comrade. Since you are so obliging, do not forget my commissions."

"Do not be uneasy, my general."

"1st Alexandrine; 2d the fish, and the hamper of wine; 3d the old 1817 Cognac, the ground coffee, and the eiderdown coverlet."

"You shall have all. Anything more?"

"Yes, I forgot. Do you know where M. Badinot lives?"

"The broker? yes."

"Will you tell him that I reckon on his obliging disposition to find me a lawyer who is prepared for my cause--that I shall not regard a cool thousand?"

"I will see M. Badinot, be assured, general; this evening all your commissions shall be executed, and to-morrow you will receive what you have demanded. Adieu, and a good heart, general."

"Ta, ta!"

And the prisoner left on one side, and the visitor on the other.

Now compare the crime of Pique-Vinaigre, a robber, to the offense of Boulard, the bailliff. Compare the point of departure from virtue of the two, and the reasons, necessities, which have pushed them on to crime. Compare, finally, the punishment that awaits them. Coming out of prison, inspiring everywhere fear and indifference, the liberated convict could not follow, in the residence appointed him, the trade he knew; he hoped to be able to work at an occupation dangerous to his life, but suitable for his strength; this resource failed him.

Then he breaks his terms of release, returns to Paris, contriving to conceal his former life and find some work. He arrives, exhausted with fatigue, dying with hunger; by chance he discovers that a sum of money is deposited in a neighboring house; he yields to temptation, he forces a window, opens a desk, steals one hundred francs, and flies. He is arrested, is a prisoner. He will be tried, condemned. For a second crime, fifteen or twenty years of hard labor and the pillory is what awaits him. He knows it. This formidable punishment he deserves. Property is sacred. He who, at night, breaks open your doors to take your goods ought to undergo a severe penalty. In vain shall the culpable plead the want of work, poverty, his position so difficult and intolerable, the wants which this position, this condition of a liberated convict, imposes on him. So much the worse; there is but one law. Society, for its peace and safety, will and ought to be armed with boundless power, and without pity repress these audacious attacks upon others.

Yes, this wretch, ignorant and stupid, this corrupted and despised convict, has merited his fate. But what shall he then deserve who, intelligent,

rich, educated, surrounded by the esteem of all, clothed with an official character, will steal--not to eat, but to satisfy some fanciful caprice, or to try the chance of stock-jobbing? Will steal, not a hundred francs, but a hundred thousand francs--a million? Will steal, not at night, at the peril of his life, but tranquilly, quite at his ease, in the sight of all? Will steal, not from an unknown who has placed his money under the safeguard of a lock, but from a client, who has placed from necessity his money under the safeguard of the public officer, whom the law points out--imposes on his confidence? What terrible punishment will he deserve, then, who, instead of stealing a small sum almost from necessity, will steal wholesale a considerable amount? Would it not be a crying injustice not to apply to him a similar punishment to that bestowed on the poor villain pushed to extremities by misery, to theft by want? Get along! says the law. How! apply to a man well brought up the same punishment as to a vagabond? For shame! To compare an offense of good society with a vulgar burglary? Fie!

Thus, for the public defaulting officer: two months imprisonment. For the liberated prisoner: twenty years hard labor, and the pillory. What can be added to these facts? They speak for themselves.

What sad and serious reflections they give birth to. Faithful to his promise, the old warder had called for Germain. When Boulard re-entered the prison, the door opened, Germain entered, and Rigolette was no longer separated from her poor lover but by a slight wire railing.

CHAPTER VI.

FRANCOIS GERMAIN.

Germain's features were wanting in regularity, but a more interesting face could scarcely be seen; his bearing was exalted; his figure graceful; his dress plain, but neat (gray trousers and a black frock-coat closely buttoned), showed none of that slovenly carelessness so peculiar to prisoners; his white hands bore witness of a care for his person which had still more increased the aversion of the other prisoners; for moral perversity is almost always joined to personal filthiness. His brown hair, naturally curled, which he wore long and parted on the side, according to the fashion of the times, hung around his pale and dejected face; his eyes, of a beautiful blue, announced frankness and kindness; his smiles, at once sad and sweet, expressed benevolence and habitual melancholy; for, although very young, this unfortunate youth had experienced many trials.

In a word, nothing could be more touching than his appearance, suffering, affecting, resigned; as also nothing more honest, more loyal, than the heart of this young man. The cause even of his arrest (despoiling it of the calumnious aggravations due to the hatred of Jacques Ferrand) proved the kind-heartedness of Germain, and accused him only of a moment's thoughtlessness or imprudence; culpable, doubtless, but pardonable, when one reflects that he was able to replace in the desk of the notary the sum

taken to save Morel the lapidary. Germain blushed slightly when, through the grating, he perceived the fresh and charming face of Rigolette. She, according to her custom, wished to appear gay, to encourage and cheer his spirits; but she ill-concealed the sorrow and emotion that she had always felt since he had been imprisoned. Seated on a bench on the other side of the railing, she held on her lap her basket.

The old warder, instead of remaining in the passage, went and seated himself near a stove at the extremity of the room. In a few moments he fell asleep. Germain and Rigolette could talk at their ease.

"Come, M. Germain," said the grisette, approaching her face as close as she could to the grating, the better to examine the features of her friend, "let me see if I am satisfied with your face. Is it less sorrowful? Hum! hum! so, so; take care; you will make me angry."

"How kind you are to come again to-day!"

"Again! what! that is a reproach."

"Ought I not, in truth, reproach you for doing so much for me--for me, who can do nothing but thank you?"

"An error, sir; for I am also as happy from my visits as you are. So I must, in my turn, thank you. Ah! ah! there is where I have caught you, Master Unjust. I have half a mind to punish you for your wicked ideas, by not giving you what I have brought."

"Another kindness! how you spoil me!--oh! thank you. Pardon me if I repeat so often this word, which you dislike!--but you leave me nothing else to say."

"In the first place, you do not know what I have brought."

"What is that to me?"

"Well, you are polite!"

"Whatever it may be, does it not come from you? Your touching kindness, does it not fill me with gratitude, and----"

Germain could not finish, but cast down his eyes.

"And with what?" asked Rigolette, blushing.

"And with--and with devotion," stammered Germain.

"Why not add respect at once, like at the end of a letter," said Rigolette impatiently. "You deceive me; it was not that which you intended to say. You stopped short."

"I assure you----"

"You assure me!--you assure me! I see you blush through the grating. Am I not your little friend, your neighbor? Why do you conceal anything? Be frank, then, with me; tell me all," added the grisette, timidly; for she only waited for an avowal from Germain to tell him openly that she loved him. An honest and generous love, which the misfortunes of Germain had called into existence.

"I assure you," answered the prisoner, with a sigh, "that I conceal nothing from you!"

"Fie, the false man!" cried Rigolette, stamping her foot. "Well, you see this large cravat of white wool that I brought for you?" and she took it from her basket. "To punish you for your dissimulation, you shall not have it. I knit it for you. I said to myself, it must be so cold, so damp, in those large prison yards, that at least he will be protected nicely with this; he is so chilly."

"How, you?"

"Yes, you are liable to cold," said Rigolette, interrupting him. "Perhaps I recollect it well! that did not, however, prevent you hindering me (out of delicacy) from putting any more wood in my stove when you passed the evening with me. Oh, I have a good memory!"

"And I also-only too good!" said Germain, in an agitated voice, passing his hand over his eyes.

"Come, now, there you are becoming sad again, although I forbid it."

"How; do you wish me not to be touched, even to tears, when I think of all that you have done for me since my detention here? And this new attention, is it not charming? Do I not know that you encroach upon your nights to make time to come and see me? On my account you impose upon yourself extra labor."

"That is it! Pity me then, quickly, because every two or three days I take a fine walk to come and visit my friends, I, who adore a walk. It is so amusing to look at the shops along the streets!"

"And to come out on such a day; such a wind!"

"A reason the more; you have no idea what funny figures you meet! Some holding on their hats with both hands, so that the wind shall not carry them off; others, with their umbrellas turned wrong side out like a tulip, are making incredible grimaces, shutting their eyes, while the rain beats in their faces. Ah! this morning, during my whole walk, it was a real comedy! I promised myself to make you laugh by telling it you. But you will not even force a smile."

"It is not my fault; pardon me, but the kind interest you have manifested for me touches my very heart. You know it; my emotions are never gay; they are stronger than--"

Rigolette, not wishing to let him observe that, notwithstanding her prattle, she was very near partaking his agitation, hastened to change the conversation, and replied:

"You say that your feelings are stronger than you; but there is another thing that you will not master, although I have begged and supplicated you," added Rigolette.

"Of what do you speak?"

"Of your obstinacy in always keeping yourself apart from the other prisoners; in never speaking to them. The warder has just told me again that, for your own interest, you should associate with them. I am sure you will not do it. You are silent. You see well it is always the same thing! You will not be contented until these frightful men have done you some harm!"

"You do not know the horror with which they inspire me. You do not know all the personal reasons that I have to fly and execrate them and their fellows!"

"Alas! yes; I think I know them--these reasons. I have read the papers which you wrote for me, and which I went to your lodgings to get after your imprisonment. There I have learned the dangers you have incurred since your arrival in Paris, because you would not associate yourself in crime with the scoundrel who brought you up. It was on account of the trap set for you that you left the Rue du Temple, only telling me where you were going to reside. In those papers I have also read something else," added Rigolette, blushing anew, and casting down her eyes; "I have read some things--that--"

"Oh! that you should have been always ignorant of, I swear it," cried Germain, quickly, "but for the misfortune which has fallen upon me--Ah! I interest you; be generous; pardon me these follies; forget them. In happier times I allowed myself these dreams, as wild as they were."

Rigolette had a second time endeavored to extract an avowal from the lips of Germain, by making allusion to passages filled with tenderness and passion, which he had formerly written and dedicated to the recollections of the grisette; for, as we have said, he had always felt for her a lively and sincere affection; but to enjoy the cordial intimacy of his sweet neighbor, he had concealed this love under the mask of friendship. Rendered by misfortune still more suspicious and timid, he could not imagine that Rigolette loved him with love: he, a prisoner, he, withering under a terrible accusation, while before these misfortunes she had never evinced any attachment stronger than that of a sister. The grisette, seeing herself so little understood, suppressed a sigh, waiting--hoping for a better occasion to unfold to Germain the wishes of her heart. She answered, then, with embarrassment: "I can easily comprehend that the society of these bad people causes you horror, but that is no reason for you to brave useless dangers."

"I assure you that in order to follow your advice, I have several times

tried to address some of them who seemed the least criminal; but if you knew what language! what men!"

"Alas! it is true, it must be terrible."

"What is still more terrible is, to find I become more and more accustomed, habituated to the frightful conversations which, in spite of myself, I hear all the day; yes, now I listen with a sad apathy to the horrors which, during my first days here, aroused my indignation; thus, I begin to doubt myself," cried he, with bitterness.

"Oh! M. Germain, what do you say?"

"By constantly living in these horrid places, our minds become accustomed to criminal thoughts, as our hearing becomes habituated to the gross words which resound continually around us. I comprehend now that one can enter here innocent, although accused, and leave it perverted."

"Yes, but not you--not you?"

"Yes, I; and others a thousand times better than I. Alas! those who, before conviction, condemn us to this odious association, are ignorant of its mournful and fatal effects. They are ignorant that almost in all cases the air which is breathed here becomes contagious--fatal to honor!"

"I pray you do not talk thus; you cause me too much sorrow."

"You ask me the cause of my growing sadness, there you have it. I did not wish to tell you; but I have only one way of acknowledging your pity for me."

"My pity--my pity!"

"Yes, it is to conceal nothing from you. Ah, well! I acknowledge it with affright. I no longer recognize myself. I have good reason to despise, to fly these wretches. Their presence, their contact affects me, in spite of myself. One would say that they have the fatal power to vitiate the atmosphere they breathe. It seems to me that I feel the corruption entering through every pore. If they absolve me from the fault I have committed, the sight, the acquaintance of honest men will fill me with confusion and shame. I have not yet had the enjoyment of pleasant companions; but I dread the day when I shall find myself among honorable people, because I have the consciousness of my weakness."

"Of your weakness?"

"Of my cowardice!"

"Of your cowardice? but what unjust ideas you have of yourself!"

"Ah! is it not to be cowardly and culpable to compound with one's duty and probity? And that I have done!"

"You! you!"

"I! On entering here I did not extenuate the magnitude of my fault, all excusable as it was, perhaps. Well! now it appears to me less, from hearing these robbers and these murderers speak of their crimes with obscene jests or ferocious pride. I surprise myself sometimes envying them their audacious indifference, and upbraiding myself bitterly for the remorse with which I am tormented for so slight an offense compared to their misdeeds."

"But you are right; your deed, far from being blamable, is generous; you were sure of being able to return the money which you took only for a few hours, in order to save a whole family from ruin, from death, perhaps."

"No matter; in the eyes of the law, in the eyes of honest men, it is a robbery. Doubtless, it is less criminal to steal for such a purpose than for any other; but it is a fatal symptom, to be obliged, in order to excuse one's self in one's eyes, to look around for a reason. I am no longer the equal of men without a stain. Behold me already forced to compare myself with the degraded men with whom I live. Thus, in time, I well see, conscience is blunted, and becomes hardened. To-morrow, I shall commit a robbery, not with the certainty of being able to restore what I took for a laudable object, but I shall steal from cupidity, and I shall doubtless think myself innocent in comparison to those who murder to rob. And yet, at this present moment, there is as great a distance between me and an assassin, as there is between me and an irreproachable man. Thus, because there are beings a thousand times more degraded than I am, my degradation is to be excused in my eyes! Instead of being able to say, as formerly, I am as honest as the most honest men, I will console myself by saying I am the least degraded of the wretches among whom I am condemned to live!"

"Not always? Once out of this?"

"No matter; even if acquitted, these people know me; when they leave the prison, if they meet me, they will speak to me as their old jail companion. If any one is ignorant of the accusation which brought me to the assizes, these wretches will threaten to divulge it. Thus you well see, cursed and now indissoluble links unite me to them, while, shut alone in my cell until the day of my trial, unknown by them as they would have been unknown to me, I should not have been assailed by these fears, which may paralyze the best resolutions. And then, alone, in thinking of my fault, it would have been magnified instead of being diminished; the graver it appeared to me, the greater would have been my future expiation. Thus, the more I should have felt the need of my own pardon, the more in my poor sphere I should have tried to do good. For it needs a hundred good actions to atone for a single bad one. But shall I ever dream of expiating that which at this moment scarcely causes me any remorse? Hold! I feel it, I obey an irresistible influence, against which I have struggled for a long time with all my strength. I was educated for crime, I yield to my destiny; after all, isolated, without family, what matters it that my destiny should be accomplished, be it honest or criminal? And yet, my intentions were good and pure. When they wished to make me guilty, I experienced a profound satisfaction in saying to myself: I have never been wanting in honor, and that, perhaps, was more difficult for me than all the rest. And now--oh!

it is frightful--frightful!" cried the prisoner, sobbing in so heartrending a manner that Rigolette, deeply affected, could not restrain her tears.

Let us say, however, that Germain, thanks to his sterling probity, had struggled for a long time victoriously, and that he felt the approaches of the malady more than he experienced in reality. His fear of seeing his fault become of less gravity in his own eyes, proved that he still felt all its enormity; but the trouble, apprehension, and doubts which cruelly agitated his virtuous and generous mind were not the less alarming symptoms. Guided by the rectitude of her understanding, by her woman's sagacity, and by the impulses of her love, Rigolette divined that which we have just said. Although well convinced that her friend had not yet lost any of his probity, she feared that, notwithstanding the excellence of his nature, Germain might at some future period become indifferent to that which then tormented him so cruelly.

Rigolette, wiping her eyes, and addressing Germain, who was leaning against the grating, said to him with a touching, serious, almost solemn accent, and in a manner he had never seen her assume, "Listen to me, Germain; I shall express myself perhaps badly; I do not speak so well as you; but what I shall tell you will be as truly sincere. In the first place, you were wrong to complain of being isolated, abandoned."

"Oh! do not think that I ever forget that which your pity for me inspires you to do!"

"Just now, I did not interrupt you when you spoke of pity; but since you repeat this word, I must say that it is not pity at all which I feel for you. I am going to explain this as well as I can. When we were neighbors, I loved you as a brother, as a good companion; you rendered me some little services, I rendered you others; you made me partake of your Sunday amusements, I tried to be very lively, very agreeable, in order to thank you; we were quits."

"Quits? oh! no--I----"

"Let me speak in my turn. When you were forced to leave the house where we dwelt, your departure caused me more regret than that of my other neighbors."

"Can it be true?"

"Yes, because they were men without care, whom certainly I ought to miss less than you; and, besides, they did not yield themselves to be my acquaintances until I had told them a hundred times that they could be nothing else; while you----you have at once imagined what we ought to be to each other. Notwithstanding this you have passed with me all the time you had to spare: you taught me to write; you gave me good advice, a little serious, because it was good: in fine, you have been the most attentive of my neighbors, and the only one who asked nothing of me for the trouble. This is not all; on leaving the house you gave me a great proof of confidence. To see you confide a secret so important to a little girl like me, bless me! that made me proud. Thus, when I was separated from you, my

thoughts were oftener of you than of my other neighbors. What I tell you now is true; you know I never tell a falsehood."

"Can it be possible you should have made this distinction between me and the others?"

"Certainly, I have made it, otherwise I should have a bad heart. Yes, I said to myself, 'No one can be better than M. Germain; only he is a little too serious; but never mind, if I had a friend who wished to marry to be very, very happy, certainly I should advise her to marry M. Germain; for he would be the idol of a nice little housekeeper.'"

"You thought of me for another!" Germain could not prevent himself from saying mournfully.

"It is true; I should have been delighted to see you make a happy marriage, since I loved you as a valued friend. You see I am frank; I tell you everything."

"I thank you from the bottom of my heart; it is a consolation for me to learn that among your friends I was he whom you preferred."

"This was the situation of things when your troubles came. It was then that I received the good and kind letter in which you informed me of what you called your fault; fault! which I think--who am not a scholar--is a good and praiseworthy action; it was then that you asked me to go for those papers which informed me that you had always loved me, without daring to tell me so. Those papers, in which I read"--and Rigolette could not restrain her tears--"that, thinking of my future, which sickness, or the want of work might render so painful, you left me, if you should die a violent death, as you feared--you left me the little which you had acquired: by force of industry and economy--"

"Yes; for if I were alive and you found yourself without work or sick, it is to me, rather than any one else, that you would address yourself--is it not so? I count on it! speak! speak! I am not mistaken, am I?"

"It is very plain; to whom would you have me apply?"

"Oh! hold; these are words which do good, which are a balm for many sorrows!"

"I cannot express to you what I felt on reading--what a sad word--this _will_, of which each line contained a 'souvenir' of me, or a thought for my welfare; and yet I was not to know these proofs of your attachment until you were no longer in existence. Bless me! what would you? after such generous conduct one is astonished that love should come all at once! yet it is very natural, is it not, M. Germain?"

The girl said these last words with such touching frankness, fixing her large black eyes on those of Germain, that he did not understand her at first, so far was he from thinking himself beloved by Rigolette. Yet these words were so pointed, that their echo resounded from the bottom of the

prisoner's heart; he blushed, then became pale, and cried,

"What do you say! I fear--oh! I am mistaken--I----"

"I say that from the moment in which I found you were so kind to me and in which I saw you so unhappy, I have loved you otherwise than as a brother, and that if now one of my friends wished to marry," said Rigolette, smiling and blushing, "it is no longer you I should recommend to her, M. Germain."

"You love me! you love me!"

"I must then tell you myself, since you ask me."

"Can it be possible?"

"It is not, however, my fault, for having twice put you in the way to make you comprehend it. But no, my gentleman does not wish to understand a hint; he forces me to confess these things to him. It is wrong, perhaps; but as there is no one here but you to scold me for my effrontery, I have less fear; and, besides," added Rigolette, in a more serious tone, and with deep emotion, "just now you appeared to me so much afflicted, so despairing, that I did not mind it; I have had the self-love to believe that this avowal, made frankly and from the bottom of the heart, would prevent you from being so unhappy for the future. I thought, 'Until now I have had no luck in my efforts to amuse or console him; my dainties take away his appetite, my gayety makes him weep; this time at least'--oh dear me! what is the matter?" cried Rigolette, on seeing Germain conceal his face in his hands. "There, tell me now if this is not cruel!" cried she; "no matter what I say or what I do, you remain still unhappy; it is to be too wicked, and by far too egotistical also. One would say there was no one but you who suffered."

"Alas, what misery is mine!" cried Germain, with, despair. "You love me, when I am no longer worthy of you!"

"No longer worthy of me? There is no good sense in what you say now. It is as if I had said formerly, that I was not worthy of your friendship, because I had been in prison; for, after all, I have also been a prisoner; am I any less an honest girl?"

"But you were sent to prison because you were a poor abandoned child, while I--what a difference!"

"In fine, as to the prison, we have nothing to reproach ourselves for. It is rather I who am presumptuous; for in my situation I ought only to think of marrying some workman. I am a foundling: I possess nothing but my little chamber and my good courage; yet I come boldly and propose to you to take me for a wife."

"Alas! formerly this had been the dream, the happiness of my life! but now--I, under the weight of an infamous accusation, I should abuse your admirable generosity--your pity, which carries you away, perhaps! no--no!"

"But," cried Rigolette, with impatience, "I tell you, it is not pity, it is love. I only think of you! I sleep no more--I eat no more. Your sad and melancholy looks follow me everywhere. Is that pity? Now, when you speak to me, your voice, your look, go to my heart. There are a thousand things in you which now please me, and which I had not remarked. I love your face, I love your eyes, I love you, I love your mind, I love your good heart; is this still pity? Why, after having loved you as a friend, do I love you as a lover? I do not know! Why was I lively and gay when I loved you as a friend? Why am I all changed since I love you as a lover? I do not know. Why have I waited so long to find you both handsome and good? to love you at once with my eyes and my heart? I do not know; or, rather, yes, I do know: it is because I have discovered how much you loved me without ever telling it; how much you were generous and devoted. Then love mounted from my heart to my eyes, like as a soft tear mounts there when one is affected."

"Really, I think I am in a dream on hearing you talk thus."

"And I, then! I never should have thought it possible that I could dare to tell you all this; but your despair compelled me! Ah, well! now that you know that I love you as my friend, as my lover, as my husband, will you still say it is pity?"

The generous scruples of Germain were dispelled in a moment before this avowal, so artless and courageous. A joy unlooked--for tore him from his sorrowful meditations.

"You love me!" cried he. "I believe you; your voice, your look, all tell me! I do not wish to ask myself how I have deserved such happiness, I abandon myself to it blindly. My life, my whole life, will not suffice to pay my debt to you! Ah! I have already suffered much, but this moment compensates all!"

"At length you are consoled. Oh! I was very sure, very sure I should succeed!" cried Rigolette, with a burst of charming joy.

"And is it in the midst of the horrors of a prison, and is it when everything oppresses me, that such a felicity--" Germain could not finish. This thought recalling the reality of his position, his scruples, for a moment forgotten, returned more cruel than ever, and he resumed, with despair, "But I am a prisoner; I am accused of robbery; I shall be condemned perhaps; and I would accept your valorous sacrifice! I would profit by your generous exaltation! Oh, no! no! I am not infamous enough for this!"

"What do you say?"

"I may be condemned to years of imprisonment."

"Well!" answered Rigolette, with calmness and firmness, "they will see that I am a virtuous girl; they will not refuse to marry us in the prison chapel."

"But I may be confined far from Paris."

"Once your wife, I will follow you; I will live in the place where you may be; I will work there, and will come to see you every day!"

"But I shall be disgraced in the eyes of all."

"You love me more than all, don't you?"

"Can you ask me?"

"Then what matters it to you? Far from being disgraced in my eyes, I shall regard you as the martyr of your good heart."

"But the world will condemn, calumniate your choice."

"The world! we will be the world to each other, and then let them talk."

"Finally, on coming out of the prison, my living will be precarious, miserable. Repulsed on all sides, perhaps I shall find no employment; and then, it is horrible to think of: but if this corruption which I dread should, in spite of myself, gain on me, what a future for you!"

"You will not be corrupted; no, for now you know I love you, and this thought will give you strength to resist bad examples. You will think that even if every one should repulse you on your leaving the prison, your wife will receive you with love and gratitude, very certain that you are still an honest man. This language astonishes you, does it not? It astonishes me. I do not know where I find what I say to you. It is from the bottom of my heart, assuredly, and that ought to convince you; otherwise, if you disdain an offer which is made from the heart, if you do not wish the attachment of a poor girl who--"

Germain interrupted Rigolette with warmth:

"Well! I accept--I accept; yes, I feel that it is sometimes cowardly to refuse certain sacrifices; it is to acknowledge that one is unworthy of them. I accept, noble and courageous girl."

"True! very true this time!"

"I swear it to you; and, beside, you have spoken words which have struck me--which have given me the courage I wanted."

"What happiness! and what have I said?"

"That for you I ought to remain an honest man. Yes, in this thought I will find the strength to resist the detestable influences which surround me. I will brave the contagion, and will know how to preserve worthy of your love this heart, which belongs to you!"

"Oh! Germain, how happy I am! if I have done anything for you, how you recompense me!"

"And then, do you see, although you excuse my fault, I will not forget its gravity. My task, for the future, shall be doubled--to atone for the past, and deserve the happiness I owe to you. For that I will do good; for, however poor one may be, the occasion is never wanting."

"Alas! that is true; those who are more unfortunate than one's self can always be found."

"In default of money--"

"One gives tears, that which I did for the poor Morels. And it is holy alms: the charity of the heart is worth more than that which gives bread."

"In fine, you accept; you will not retract?"

"Oh! never, never, my friend, my wife; yes, my courage returns; I seem to emerge from a dream; I doubt myself no longer! I wronged myself--happily, I wronged myself. My heart would not beat as it does beat if it had lost its noble energy."

"Oh! Germain, how handsome you look while thus speaking! How you reanimate me, not for myself, but for you! Now, you promise, do you not, that, now you have my love to shield you, you will no longer fear to speak to these wicked men, in order not to excite their anger against you?"

"Be comforted. On seeing me sad and dejected, they, doubtless, accused me of being a prey to my remorse; and in seeing me joyous and gay, they will think that I have acquired their recklessness."

"It is true; they will suspect you no more, and I shall be happy. So, no imprudence; now you belong to me. I am your little wife!"

At this moment the warder stirred: he awoke. "Quick!" whispered Rigolette, with a smile full of grace and maiden tenderness; "quick, my husband, give me a sweet kiss on my forehead, through the grating; it will be our betrothal!"

And the girl leaned her face against the iron bars. Germain, profoundly affected, touched with his lips, through the grating, the pure and white forehead. A tear from the prisoner fell like a humid pearl. Oh! touching baptism, of this chaste, melancholy, and charming love!

"Ho! ho! already three o'clock!" said the warder, rising from his seat; "and visitors ought to leave at two. Come, my dear," added he, addressing the grisette; "it is a pity, but you must part."

"Oh! thank you, thank you, sir, for allowing us to talk alone. I have given Germain good courage; he will no longer look so sorrowful, and thus he will have nothing more to fear from his wicked companions. Is it not so, my friend?"

"Be tranquil," said Germain, smiling; "I shall be for the future the gayest

in the prison."

"Very good; then they will pay no more attention to you," said the warder.

"Here is a cravat which I have brought for Germain," said Rigolette; "must I leave it at the office?"

"It is the rule; but, after all, while I have already transgressed orders, in for a lamb, in for a sheep--come, make the day complete; give him quickly the present yourself." And the warder opened the door.

"The good man is right; the happiness of the day will be complete," said François Germain, on receiving the cravat from the hands of Rigolette, which he tenderly pressed. "Adieu! Now I have no longer any fear to ask you to come and see me as soon as possible."

"Nor I to promise it. Adieu, good Germain!"

"Farewell, my own darling!"

"And be sure to make use of my cravat; take care you do not catch cold; it is so damp."

"What a handsome cravat! When I think that you made it for me! Oh! I will always keep it," said Germain, carrying it to his lips.

"Now you will have some appetite, I hope. Do you wish that I should make my little dish for you?"

"Certainly, and this time I will do it honor."

"Do not be uneasy, then, Mister Glutton; you shall give me your opinion. Come, once more, adieu. Thank you, Mister Warder; today I go away very happy and gratified. Adieu, Germain."

"Adieu, my little wife: soon again!"

"Forever yours!"

Some moments after, Rigolette, having put on her pattens, left the prison with a lighter heart than when she entered it. During the conversation of Germain and the grisette, other scenes were passing in one of the courts of the prison, where we shall now conduct the reader.

CHAPTER VII.

THE LION'S DEN

If the material aspect of a vast house of detention, constructed with every

reference to comfort and salubrity claimed by humanity, presents, as we have said, nothing gloomy or sinister, the sight of the prisoners causes a contrary impression. A person is commonly touched with sadness and pity when he finds himself in the midst of a crowd of female prisoners, in thinking that these unfortunates are almost always forced to crime less from their own will than by the pernicious influence of the first who betrayed them. And then, again, women, the most criminal, preserve at the bottom of the heart two holy ties, which the violent action of passions the most detestable, the most impetuous, never breaks entirely--Love and Maternity! To speak of love and maternity, is to say that with these poor creatures a soft and pure emotion can still light up here and there the profound gloom of a wretched corruption. But with men, such as the prison makes them and casts into the world, there is nothing similar. It is crime of one cast; it is a lump of brass, which only becomes red in the fire of infernal passions. Thus, at the sight of the criminals who encumber the prisons, one is at first seized with a shudder of alarm and horror.

Reflection alone leads you to thoughts more compassionate, but of great bitterness. Yes, of great bitterness; for one reflects that the vicious population of jails and hulks, the bloody harvest of the executioner, springs up from that mire of ignorance, of misery, and of stupidity. To comprehend this alarming and horrible proposition, let the reader follow us into the Lions' Den. One of the courts of La Force is thus called. There are ordinarily placed the prisoners most dangerous, for their previous ferocity, or for the gravity of the accusations which rest upon them. Nevertheless, it had been found necessary to add to their number temporarily, in consequence of the repairs now going on in the prison, several other prisoners. These, although equally under the jurisdiction of the Court of Assizes, were almost honest people compared to the habitual inmates of the Lions' Den. The gloomy, dark, and rainy sky cast a mournful light on the scene we are going to describe. It took place in the middle of the court, which was a vast quadrangle, formed by high white walls, pierced here and there by some grated windows.

At one of the ends of this court was seen a narrow wicket door; at the other, the entrance to the sitting-room; a large paved hall, in the middle of which was a cast-iron stove, surrounded by wooden seats, on which were stretched several prisoners, talking among themselves. Others, preferring exercise to repose, were walking in the courts, in close ranks, four and five together, With locked arms.

[Illustration: THE DISCOMFITED MONKEY]

One should possess the energetic and somber pencil of Salvator or of Goya to sketch these diverse specimens of physical and moral ugliness; to describe their hideous habiliments, the variety of costume of these wretches, covered for the most part with miserable clothing; for, only being attainted, that is to say, supposed innocents, they were not dressed in the uniform of the penitentiaries; some of them, however, wore it; for, on their entrance into prison, their rags had appeared so dirty, so infectious, that, after the customary bath, they had given to them the cap and coarse gray trowsers of the convict. A phrenologist would have attentively studied these ghastly and bronzed faces, with their flat foreheads, their cruel and insidious glances, wicked mouths, and brawny

necks; almost all offered a frightful resemblance to the brute. On the cunning features of this, one would find the subtle perfidy of the fox; on another, the sanguinary rapacity of the bird of prey; on a third, the ferocity of the tiger; and on another, again, the animal stupidity of the brute. The circular walk of this band of silent beings, with bold and contemptuous looks, an insolent and cynical laugh, pressing one against the other, at the bottom of this court, offered something strangely suspicious. It caused a shudder to think that this ferocious horde would be, in a given time, again let loose among mankind, against whom they had declared an implacable warfare. How much sanguinary revenge, how many murderous projects, lurk under this appearance of brazen and jeering perversity!

Let us sketch some few of the prominent physiognomies of the Lions' Den, let us leave the others in the background. While one of the warders watched those who were walking, a kind of meeting was held in the hall, Among those who were present, we will find Barbillon and Nicholas Martial, of whom we shall speak only to remind the reader of their presence. He who appeared to preside and conduct the discussion was a prisoner nicknamed Skeleton. He was provost-marshal or captain of the hall. This man, of a good height, and about forty years of age, justified his appropriate nickname by a leanness impossible to be described, which we should call almost osteological. If the physiognomies of his companions offered more or less analogy to that of the tiger, the vulture, or the fox, the form of his retreating forehead, and his bony, lank, and protruding jaws, supported by a neck of immense length, resembled entirely the conformation of a serpent's head. Total baldness increased this resemblance still more, for, under the rough skin of this reptile-shaped forehead, could be distinguished the slightest protuberances, the smallest sutures of his skull; as to his visage, let one imagine some old parchment drawn over the face, and only slightly tightened from the cheek-bone to the angle of the lower jaw, the ligament of which was plainly visible. The eyes, small and squinting, were so deeply sunken, the eyebrows and cheek-bones so prominent, that under the yellowish forehead could be seen two sockets, literally filled with darkness, and, at a small distance, the eyes seemed to disappear in the bottom of these cavities, two black holes, which give such a horrible appearance to a skull. His long projecting teeth were almost constantly displayed by an habitual grin. Although the emaciated muscles of this man were almost reduced to the condition of tendons, he was of extraordinary strength. The most robust resisted with difficulty the grasp of his long arms and long, bony fingers. It could be called the grasp of an iron skeleton. He wore a blue smock-frock, much too short, which disclosed, and he was proud of them, his sinewy hands, and the lower part of his arms, or rather bones (the *_radius_* and the *_cubitus_* the reader will pardon the anatomical designations), wrapped in a rough, blackened skin, and separated by some hard and cord-like veins. When he placed his hands on a table, he seemed to use a just metaphor of Pique-Vinaigre to play a game of cockles.

After having passed fifteen years of his life at the galleys for robbery and attempt at murder, he had broken his ticket-of leave, and had been taken in the act of murder and robbery. This last assassination had been committed under circumstances of such ferocity, that, taking into account he was a robber, this bandit looked upon himself, with good reason, as already condemned to death. The influence which the living Skeleton

exercised over the other prisoners by his strength and his perversity, had caused him to be chosen by the director of the prison provost of the dormitory; that is to say, he was charged with the government of his ward, as far as regarded the order, arrangements, and neatness of the room and beds. He acquitted himself perfectly of these functions; and never had the prisoners dared to fail in the duties of which he had the superintendence. Strange and significant. The most intelligent directors of prisons, after having tried to invest with the functions of which we speak the prisoners who most recommended themselves by their good conduct, or whose crimes were less grave, had found themselves obliged to deviate in their choice, however logical and moral, and seek for provosts among prisoners the most corrupted, the most feared: these alone could exercise any influence over their companions.

Thus, let us repeat it again, the more a culprit shows audacity and impudence, the more he will be regarded, and, thus to speak, respected. This fact, proved by experience, sanctioned by the forced choice of which we have spoken, is an irrefragable argument against the evil of an imprisonment in common, I say.

Does it not show, even to an absolute evidence, the intensity of the contagion which mortally attacks prisoners in whom there is some hope of restoration? Yes, for what use of thinking of repentance, amendment, when, in this pandemonium, where one must pass many years--his life, perhaps--it is seen that influence is measured by the number and gravity of misdeeds? The provost of the hall was talking with several prisoners, among whom were Barbillon and Nicholas Martial, we repeat.

"Are you very sure of what you say?" asked he of Martial.

"Yes, yes, a hundred times, yes; Micou had it from Big Cripple, who already wanted to kill the muff, because he betrayed some one."

"Then let some one eat his nose, and put a stop to this!" added Barbillon.
"Just now, Skeleton was for giving a stab to this spy Germain."

The provost took his pipe for a moment from his mouth, and said, in a voice so low, so crapulously hoarse, that he could scarcely be heard, "Germain holds up his head; he is a spy; he troubles us: for the less one talks, the more one listens. We must make him clear out of the Lions' Den. Once we make him bleed, they will take him from here."

"Well, then," said Nicholas, "what change is that?"

"There is this change," replied Skeleton, "that if he has sold us, as Big Cripple says, he shall not escape with a small bleeding."

"Very good," said Barbillon.

"There must be an example," said Skeleton, becoming more animated. "Now it is no longer the grabs who find us out: it is the spies. Jacques and Gauthier guillotined the other day. Roussillon, sent to the galleys for life, sold!"

"And me, and my mother, and Calabash, and my brother at Toulon!" cried Nicholas, "have we not been sold by Bras-Rouge? That is certain now, since, instead of putting him here, they have sent him to La Roquette! They did not dare leave him with us; he knew his treachery, the sneak!"

"And," said Barbillon, "has not Bras-Rouge also sold me?"

"And me," said a young prisoner, in a shrill and reedy voice, lisping in an affected manner, "I was betrayed by Jobert, a man who proposed an affair in the Rue Saint Martin."

This last personage, with the reedy voice, a pale, fat, and effeminate face, and an insidious and cowardly expression, was dressed in a singular manner. He had on his head a red handkerchief, which allowed two locks of white hair to be seen plastered on his temples; the ends of the handkerchief formed a bow over his forehead; he wore, for a cravat, a shawl, of white merino with green palms in the corners on his bosom; his jacket, of maroon colored cloth, disappeared under the tight waistband of his ample trousers, made of gay Scotch plaid.

"If this is not an indignity! Must a man be a scoundrel?" resumed this gentleman with the pretty voice. "Nothing in the world would have made me suspect Jobert."

"I know that he informed against you," answered the Skeleton, who seemed to patronize this prisoner particularly. "The proof is, that they have done with him as they did with Bras-Rouge; they did not dare leave Jobert here; they locked him up at the Conciergerie. Well, this must be put a stop to: we must have an example. Our traitor brothers carve out work for the police. They think they are sure of their necks because they are put in a different prison from those they have betrayed."

"It is the truth."

"To prevent this, every prisoner must look upon all turncoats as deadly enemies: if they have blown on Tony, Dick, or Harry, it matters not which pounce on them. When we have done the job for four or five in the court, the others will wag their tongues twice before they blow the gaff!"

"You are right," said Nicholas; "Germain must die!"

"He shall die," answered the provost; "but let us wait until Big Cripple comes. When he shall have proved to everybody that Germain is a spy, enough said: the sheep will bleat no more; his breath shall be stopped."

"And what shall we do with the warders, who watch us!" asked the prisoner whom the Skeleton called Ja-votte.

"I have my own idea. Pique-Vinaigre shall serve us."

"He? He is too cowardly."

"And not stronger than a mouse."

"Enough. I understand. Where is he?"

"He returned from the grate, some one came for him to go and patter with his Newgate lawyer."

"And Germain. Is he still at the grate?"

"Yes; with the little mot who comes to see him."

"As soon as he descends, attention. But we must wait for Pique-Vinaigre; we can do nothing without him."

"Without Pique-Vinaigre?"

"No."

"And Germain shall be--"

"I will take charge of it."

"But with what? They have taken away our knives."

"And these hooks--will you put your neck between them?" asked Skeleton, opening his long fingers, hard as iron.

"Choke him?"

"A little."

"But if they know it is you?"

"What's the odds? Am I a calf with two heads, such as is shown in the fair?"

"That is true. One can only be made a head shorter once; and since you are sure of being--"

"Doubly sure; the lawyer told me so yesterday. I have been taken with my hand in the pocket, and my knife in the throat, of the stiff 'un; I am a second comer; it is all over with me. I will send my head to see, in the basket, if it is true that they cheat the condemned, and put sawdust in, instead of bran, which the government allows us."

"It is true; the guillotined has a right to his bran. My father was cheated, I recollect," said Nicholas Martial, with a ferocious chuckle.

This abominable pleasantry made all the prisoners laugh loudly.

"A thousand thunders!" cried Skeleton. "I wish all the nobs could hear us talk, who think to make us quake before the guillotine. They have only to come to the BarriÈre Saint Jacques the day of my benefit; they will hear me

crack jokes with the crowd, and say to Jack, in a bold voice, 'Open the door till I go down into the cellar!' Renewed laughter followed this sally.

"The fact is, that the affair lasts as long as it takes to swallow a mouthful. Draw the bolt; and he opens the devil's door for you!" said Skeleton continuing to smoke his pipe.

"Ah, bah! is there a devil?"

"Fool! I said that for a joke. There is a knife; a head is placed under, and that is all."

"Besides, is that our business?"

"As for me, now that I know my road, and that I must stop at the tree, I would as soon go today as tomorrow," said Skeleton, with savage energy. "I wish I was there now. I feel my blood in my mouth when I think of the crowd who will be there to see me. There will be four or five thousand who will fight or quarrel for places. They will hire out windows and chairs as for a procession. I hear them already cry, 'Window to let! Place to let!' And then there will be the troops, cavalry and infantry. And all this for me--for old Boulard. It is not for an honest man that they take all this trouble, hey, Sals! Here is something to make a man proud. Even he should be as cowardly as Pique-Vinaigre, it would make him resolute. All these eyes which are looking at you give you courage, and it is but a moment to pass, you die boldly; that vexes the judges and the duffers, and encourages a flash cove to die game."

"That is true," replied Barbillon, endeavoring to imitate the frightful boasting. "They think to make us afraid, and confess all, when they send Ketch to open shop on our account."

"Bah!" said Nicholas, in his turn. "One is not wrong to laugh at the scaffold; it is like the prison and the galleys; we laugh at them also; so long as we are all friends together, 'A short life and a merry one!'"

"For instance," said the prisoner with the lisping voice, "what would be tough would be to keep us in cells day and night."

"In cells!" cried Skeleton, with a kind of savage alarm. "Do not speak of it. In cells! All alone! I would rather they would cut off my arms and legs. All alone! Between four walls! All alone! No old mates to laugh with! That cannot be! I prefer a hundred times the galleys to the prisons, because at the galleys, instead of being shut up, one is out of doors, sees company, moves about. Well! I would rather a hundred times be a head shorter than be put into a cell only for one year. See here, at this moment, I am sure of being cut down, am I not? Well, let them say to me, 'Would you prefer a year in a cell?' I would stretch out my neck. A year all alone! Can this be possible? What would they have one think of when one is all alone?"

"If they were to put you there by force?"

"I would not remain. I would make such use of my feet and hands that I would escape," said Skeleton.

"But if you could not--if you were sure that you could not escape?"

"Then I would kill the first one I could, in order to be guillotined."

"But if, instead of condemning the red-handed to death, they condemned them to a solitary cell for life?"

Skeleton seemed to be staggered by this reflection. After a moment's pause he replied:

"Then I do not know what I should do. I would break my head against the walls. I would allow myself to die with hunger rather than be in a cell. How? All alone--all my life alone with myself? without the hope of escape? I tell you it is not possible. You know there is no one bolder than I am. I would bleed a man for a crown, and even for nothing, for honor. They think that I have only assassinated two persons; but if the dead could speak, there are five who could tell how I work." The brigand boasted of his crimes. These sanguinary egotisms are among the most characteristic traits of hardened criminals. A prison governor told us, "If the pretended murders of which these wretches boast were real, population would be decimated."

"So I say," replied Barbillon, boasting in his turn; "they think that I only laid out the milkwoman's husband in the city; but I have served many others out, with Big Robert, who was shortened last year."

"It was only to tell you," said Skeleton, "that I neither fear fire nor the devil. But, if I were in a cell, and very sure of not being able to escape--thunder! I believe I should be afraid."

"Of what?" asked Nicholas.

"Of being all alone," answered the cock of the walk.

"So, if you had to recommence your robberies and murders, and, instead of prisons and galleys and guillotine, there were only cells, you would hesitate?"

"Yes--perhaps" (_a fact_), answered the Skeleton.

And he spoke the truth. A noisy burst of laughter, and exclamations of joy proceeding from the prisoners who were walking in the court, interrupted the meeting. Nicholas rose precipitately, and advanced toward the door to ascertain the cause of this unaccustomed noise.

"It is the Big Cripple!" cried Nicholas, returning.

"The Big Cripple?" said the provost; "and Germain, has he descended from the talking-room?"

"Not yet," said Barbillon.

"Let him hurry, then," said Skeleton, "that I may give him an order for a new coffin."

CHAPTER VIII.

THE PLOT.

Big Cripple, whose arrival had been hailed by the prisoners in the Lions' Den with such noisy joy, and whose denunciation was to be so fatal to Germain, was a man of middle stature; notwithstanding his obesity and his infirmity, he seemed active and vigorous. His bestial physiognomy, as was the case with most of his companions, much resembled a bull-dog's; his low forehead, his little yellow eyes, his falling cheeks, his heavy jawbones, of which the lower projecting beyond the other was armed with long teeth, or rather, broken tusks, which protruded over the lips, rendered this animal resemblance still more striking; he had on his head an otter-skin cap, and wore over his coat a blue cloak with a fur collar. He entered the hall, accompanied by a man of about thirty years of age, whose brown and sunburnt face seemed less degraded than those of the other prisoners, although he affected to appear as resolute as his companion; sometimes his face became clouded, and he smiled bitterly. The Cripple found himself, to use a vulgar expression, quite at home. He could hardly reply to the felicitations and welcomes which were addressed to him from all sides.

"Here you are at last, my jolly bloke! So much the better; we shall have a laugh."

"We wanted you, old son!"

"You have stayed away a long time."

"Yet I have done all I could to return to my friends. It is not my fault if they would not have me sooner."

"Just so, my crummy mate; no one will come of his own accord to be caged; but once there, one must enjoy himself."

"You are in luck, for Pique-Vinaigre is here."

"He also? an old Melun chum! famous, famous, he will help us pass the time with his stories, and customers will not be wanting, for I announce some recruits."

"Who then?"

"Just now, at the office, while they were enrolling me, they brought in two young coves. One I do not know; but the other, who wore a blue cotton cap

and a gray blouse, struck my eye. I have seen the fellow somewhere. I think it was in the White Rabbit: a very fine-looking prig."

"Say now, Big Cripple, do you recollect at Melun, I bet you, before a year you would be nabbed?"

"That is true; you have won; but I had more chances to be a second comer than to be medaled; but what have you done?"

"On the American lay."

"Ah! good, always the same fashion!"

"Always; I go my own nice little road. This trick is common; but yokels are also common; and if it had not been for the ignorance of my _bonnet_, I should not be here."

"Never mind, the lesson will be of service."

"When I begin again, I will take my precautions; I have my plan."

"Ah, here is Cardillac," said the Cripple, seeing a man approach, miserably dressed, with a low, cunning, and wicked expression, which partook of the fox and the wolf "Good-day, old man."

"Come, come, limpy," answered Cardillac, gayly; "they said every day, 'He will come.' You do like the pretty women one must wish for."

"Yes, yes."

"Oh!" continued Cardillac, "is it for something a little uppish that you are here?"

"My dear, I went in for burglary. Before, I had done some good business; but the last failed, a superb affair; which, however, still remains to be done. Unfortunately, me and Frank, whom you see, missed our mark!" He pointed to his companion, on whom all eyes were turned.

"So it is true, here is Frank!" said Cardillac. "I would not have known him on account of his beard. Is it you? I thought that at this present moment you were at least the mayor of your district. You wished to play honest?"

"I was a fool, and I have been punished," said Frank, roughly; "but pardon for all sinners; it was good for once; now I belong to the _forty_ until I die; look out when I am released; hang 'em!"

"Very good, that is the style!"

"But what has happened to you, Frank?"

"What happens to all liberated prisoners who are fools enough, as you say, to play honest. Their fate is so just! On coming out of Melun, I had saved nine hundred and odd francs."

"It is true," said the Cripple, "all his misfortunes come from his haying saved this money instead of spending it. You will see what repentance leads to, and whether one pays his expenses by it."

"They sent me to Etampes," resumed Frank; "locksmith by trade, I went to seek employment. I said, 'I am a released convict; I know no one likes to employ them, but here are 900 francs of my savings; give me work, my money shall be your guarantee; I wish to labor and be honest.'"

"On my word, there is no one but Frank could have such ideas."

"I proposed, then, my savings as a guarantee to the master locksmith, so that he might give me work. 'I am not a banker, to take money on interest,' said he. 'I do not wish convicts in my shop; I work in houses, open the doors the keys of which are lost; my trade is a confidential one, and if it were known that I had a convict among my workmen, I should lose my customers. Goodnight, neighbor.' Did he not, Cardillac, get what he deserved?"

"Most certainly."

"Childish!" added the Cripple, addressing Frank in a paternal manner, "instead of tearing your ticket at once, and coming to Paris to fritter away your savings, so as to be without a sou in your pocket, and compelled to rob. Then one finds superb ideas."

"You tell me always the old story," said Frank, with impatience; "it is true, I was wrong not to spend my money, since I have not enjoyed it. As there were only four locksmiths at Etampes, he to whom I had first spoken had blabbed; when I addressed myself to the others, they told me the same as their fellow. Thank you; everywhere the same song. So you see, friends, where is the use? We are marked for life! Behold me on a strike in the streets of Etampes! I lived on my money for two months," said Frank; "the money went, and no work came. I broke my leave. I left Etampes."

"That's what you should have done before."

"I came to Paris; then I found some work; my master did not know who I was. I told him I came from the country. There was no better workman than myself. I placed 700 francs, which remained of my savings, with a broker, who gave me a note; when it fell due, he did not pay; I placed my note in the hands of an attorney, who sued and recovered; I left my money with him, and I said to myself, 'It is for a rainy day.' Then I met the Big Cripple."

"Yes, pals, and I was his rainy day, as you will see. Frank was a locksmith; he manufactured keys; I had an affair in which he could serve me; I proposed it to him; I had impressions; he had only to copy them. The lad refused; he wished to become honest; I said to myself, 'I must do him good in spite of himself.' I wrote a letter, without a signature, to his master, another to his companions, to inform them that Frank was a released convict. The master turned him out of doors, and his companions turned their backs upon him. He went to another master; worked there a week; same

game. If he had gone to ten more I would have served him the same."

"I did not then suspect that it was you who denounced me," said Frank, "otherwise you might have had it hot!"

"Yes; but I was no fool; I told you I was going to Longjumeau to see my uncle; but I remained at Paris; and I knew all you did through little Ledru."

"In short, they drove me away from my last master like a beggar, fit only to hang. Work then! be peaceable! so that one may say to you, not, What are you doing? but, What have you done? Once in the street, I said to myself, 'Happily I have my money left.' I went to the attorney; he had cleared out-my money was gone--I was without a you. I had not enough to pay my week's rent. You ought to have seen my rage! Thereupon Big Cripple pretended to arrive from Longjumeau; he profited by my anger. I did not know on what peg to hang myself. I saw there was no means to be honest; that, once a robber, one was in for it for life! the Cripple kept so close at my heels."

"Let Frank scold no more," said the Cripple, "he took his part boldly; he entered into the put-up thing; it promised great things. Unfortunately, the moment we opened our mouths to swallow the morsel--nabbed by the police! What would you, it is a misfortune. The trade would be too fine without this."

"I don't care. If that confounded lawyer had not robbed me, I should not be here," said Frank, with rage.

"The Skeleton is here!" said Cardillac, pointing out the provost, who had just appeared at the door, to his companion.

"Cadet, advance at the call!" said Skeleton to the Cripple.

"Here!" he answered, advancing into the hall, accompanied by Frank, whom he took by the arm. During the conversation of Cripple, Frank and Cardillac, Barbillion had gone, by orders of the provost, to recruit twelve or fifteen prisoners, picked men. These, not to excite the suspicions of the keeper, had gone separately to the hall. The other prisoners remained in the yard; some of them, following the instructions of Barbillion, spoke in a loud, quarrelsome tone, to attract the notice of the keeper, and thus call his attention away from the hall, where were soon assembled Barbillion, Nicholas, Frank, Cardillac, Big Cripple, the Skeleton, and some fifteen other prisoners, all waiting with impatient curiosity until the provost should take the chair. Barbillion, charged as spy to announce the approach of the superintendent, placed himself near the door. The Skeleton, taking his pipe from his mouth, said to the Big Cripple:

"Do you know a young man named Germain, with blue eyes, brown hair, and the air of a swell cove?"

"Germain here!" cried Cripple, whose features expressed at once surprise, hatred, anger.

"You do know him, then?"

"Don't I know him? My friend, I denounce him, he is a betrayer! he must be rolled up!"

"Yes, yes!" said the prisoners together.

"Is it very sure that he has denounced?" asked Frank. "Suppose you should be mistaken, and injure a man who does not deserve it?"

This observation displeased the Skeleton, who leaned toward the Cripple, and whispered:

"Who is this?"

"A man with whom I have worked."

"Are you sure of him?"

"Yes; only he is not made of gall--but treacle!"

"Enough; I'll keep my eye upon him."

"Let us hear how Germain is a spy," said a prisoner.

"Explain yourself, Cripple," resumed the Skeleton, who watched Frank closely.

"Here you are," said the Cripple. "A Nantes man, named Velu, an old convict, brought up this young fellow, whose parents are unknown. When he was old enough, he placed him in a banking-house at Nantes, intending to make use of him for an affair he had in view. He had two strings to his bow--a forgery, and robbery of the banker's strong box! perhaps a hundred thousand francs to gain by the two. All is ready; Velu counted on the young man as on himself; this blackguard slept in the room where the strong box was kept; Velu told him his plan; Germain neither said yes nor no, but told his master all about it, and left the same evening for Paris."

The prisoners uttered violent threats and murmurs of indignation.

"If he is a betrayer, we must settle him."

"If any one wishes it, I'll pick a quarrel, and I'll brain him."

"We must write on his face an order for the hospital."

"Silence in the gang!" cried Skeleton, in an imperious tone. "Continue!" he said to the Cripple; and he recommenced smoking.

"Believing that Germain had said yes, counting on his aid, Velu and two of his mates attempted the affair the same night; the banker was on his guard, one of Velu's pals was nabbed in climbing in at a window, and he himself

had the luck to escape. He arrived in Paris, furious at having been betrayed by Germain, and foiled in a tip-top job. One fine day he met the nice young man; it was broad day; he did not dare to touch him; but he followed him, he saw where he lived, and one night me, Velu, and little Ledru pounced upon Germain. Unfortunately he escaped us; he left his nest in the Rue du Temple, and since that time we have not been able to find him; but if he is here, I demand----"

"You have nothing to demand," said the Skeleton, with authority. The Cripple was silent. "I take your bargain; or make over to me the skin of Germain, I'll take it off. I am not called Skeleton for nothing. I am dead in advance; my grave is already dug at Clamart; I risk nothing in working for the leary coves: the spies devour us more than the police; they place the turncoats of La Force at La Roquette, and those of La Roquette at the Conciergerie, where they think themselves safe. Stop a bit, when each prison shall have killed its pet, no matter where he has denounced, that will take away the appetite from the others. I set the example--they will follow."

All the prisoners, admiring the resolution announced, crowded around him. Barbillon himself, instead of remaining at the door, joined the group, and did not perceive that a new prisoner had entered the hall. This newcomer, clothed in a gray blouse, and wearing a cap of blue cotton embroidered with red wool, pulled well over his eyes, started on hearing the name of Germain; then he went in among the Skeleton's admirers and loudly approved both with voice and gesture the determination of the provost.

"Isn't Bones a mad-cap?" said one.

"What a learned man!"

"The devil himself could not scare him."

"There's a man!"

"If all the family had his cheek, it would be they who would judge and guillotine the honest fools."

"That would be just: every one in his turn."

"Yes; but they won't agree upon that subject."

"All the same; he renders a famous service to the family by killing them; betrayers will denounce no more."

"That is certain."

"And since Skeleton is so sure of being cut down, it costs him nothing to kill beggars."

"I think it cruel to kill this young man!" said Frank.

"What: what!" cried Skeleton, in an angry tone; "one has no right to pay

off a traitor?"

"Yes, true, he is a traitor; so much the worse for him," said Frank, after a moment's reflection.

These last words, and the assurances of Cripple, calmed the suspicions which Frank for a moment had raised among the prisoners. Skeleton alone remained doubtful.

"What shall we do with the keeper?"

"Tell us, Doomed-to-Death," said Nicholas, laughing.

"Well! some will engage his attention on one side."

"No: we will hold him by force."

"Yes."

"No."

"Silence in the gang!" cried Skeleton. The most profound quiet ensued.

"Listen to me well," resumed the provost, in a hoarse voice, "there are no means to do the job while the keeper is in the ward, or the court. I have no knife; there will be some stifled cries--the sneak will struggle."

"Then what is to be done?"

"This is my plan: Pique-Vinaigre has promised to relate to us to-day, after dinner, his story of Gringalet and Cut-in-half. It rains, we will all retire here, and the beggar will come and take his seat in the corner, in his usual place. We will give some sous to Pique-Vinaigre to make him commence his story. It will be the dinner hour. The keeper, seeing us quietly occupied in listening to the nonsense, will have no suspicions; he will go and take a pull at the canteen. As soon as he has left the court, we have a quarter of an hour to ourselves--the turncoat will be done up before the warder returns. I take it upon myself. I have done the trick for stouter fellows than he. I wish no help."

"A moment," said Cardillac; "the bailiff always comes lounging here at dinner-time. If he should enter the hall to listen to Pique-Vinaigre, and should see us fixing Germain, he is likely to sing out for help; he is not fly; look out."

"That is true," said the Skeleton.

"A bailiff here!" cried Frank, the victim of Boulard, with astonishment.

"And what is his name?"

"Boulard," said Cardillac.

"It is my man," cried Frank, doubling his fists; "it is he who stole my

savings."

"The bailiff?" asked the provost.

"Yes; seven hundred and twenty francs which he collected for me."

"You know him? he has seen you?" asked the Skeleton.

"I should think I had seen him, to my sorrow. But for him I should not be here."

These regrets sounded badly in the ears of Skeleton; he fixed his squinting eyes on Frank, who answered some questions of his comrades; then leaning over toward Cripple, whispered in a low tone, "Here is a kid who is capable of informing the keepers of our plant."

"No: I answer for him: he will denounce no one, but he is still a little timid about crime, and he might be capable of defending Germain. Better get him out of the way."

"Enough," said Skeleton, and he said in a loud tone, "I say, Frank, won't you have a settlement with this rascally bailiff?"

"Let me alone; let him come, his account is made out."

"He is coming, get ready."

"I am all ready; he will bear my mark."

"That will make a scuffle; they will send the bailiff to his ell, and Frank to the dungeon," whispered Skeleton to the Cripple, "we shall get rid of both."

"What a head! Is he not a trump?" said the robber, with admiration; then he resumed aloud, "Shall Pique-Vinaigre be informed that by the assistance of his story we mean to stuff the keeper and finish the traitor?"

"No; Pique-Vinaigre has too much milk in his composition, and is too great a coward; if he knew it he would not tell his story; the blow struck, he will bear his part." The dinner-bell rang.

"To your grub, mates!" said Skeleton; "Pique-Vinaigre and Germain are going to enter the court. Attention, friends! you call me Doomed-to-Death! all right, the denouncer is in the same boat!"

CHAPTER IX.

THE PATTERER.

The new prisoner of whom we have spoken, who wore a blue cotton cap and gray blouse, had attentively listened to, and energetically approved, the plot which threatened the life of Germain. This man, of athletic form, left the sitting-room with the other prisoners, without having been remarked, and soon mingled with the different groups that pressed into the court around the persons who distributed the beef, which they brought in brass kettles, and the bread in huge baskets. Each prisoner received a piece of boiled beef, which had served to make the soup for the morning meal, with half a loaf of bread, superior in quality to that given to soldiers. The prisoners who had money could buy wine at the canteen, and go there to drink. Those who, like Nicholas, had received victuals from out of doors, got up a feast to which they invited the other prisoners. The guests of the widow's son were Barbillon, Skeleton, and, upon the latter's recommendation, Pique-Vinaigre, in order to get him in a good humor for telling stories. The ham, hard eggs, cheese, and white bread, due to the forced liberality of Micou the receiver, were spread out on one of the benches, and Skeleton prepared to do honor to this repast, without feeling any inquietude concerning the murder he was about to commit.

"Go and see if Pique-Vinaigre is never coming. While I am waiting to choke Germain, I choke with hunger and thirst; do not forget to say to the Big Cripple that Frank must pull the bailiff's hair, so that we may be rid of them both."

"Be easy, if Frank does not pitch into the tipstaff, it will not be our fault."

And Nicholas left the sitting-room. At this moment, Boulard entered the yard smoking a cigar, his hands plunged into his long surtout of gray moleskin, his cap drawn over his ears, his face smiling and gay; he spied Nicholas, who on his side looked at Frank. The latter and the Cripple were dining, seated on one of the benches in the court; they had not perceived the bailiff, on whom their backs were turned. Faithful to the Skeleton's recommendations, Nicholas, seeing with the corner of his eye Boulard coming toward him, appeared not to remark him, and drew nearer to Frank and the Cripple.

"Good-day!" said the bailiff to Nicholas.

"Ah! good-day, master, I did not see you; you come, as usual, to take a little walk?"

"Yes, my boy, and to-day I have two reasons for doing it. I am going to tell you why; but first take these cigars. Come, now, among comrades--the devil! one must not stand on ceremony."

"Thank you, my gentleman. Why have you two reasons for walking?"

"You will understand it, my boy; I do not feel any appetite to-day. I said to myself, 'Looking at these gay boys at their dinner, and seeing them make use of their jaws, perhaps hunger will come.'"

"Not so bad. But look this way if you wish to see two babies who eat lustily," said Nicholas, leading the bailiff by degrees near the bench of Frank, whose back was turned; "just look at these two; your hunger will come as if you were eating a whole bottle of pickles."

"Oh! let us see this phenomenon!" said Boulard.

"I say, Big Cripple!" cried Nicholas.

The Big Cripple and Frank quickly turned their heads. The bailiff was stupefied, and stood with his mouth open on recognizing him whom he had swindled.

Frank, throwing his bread and meat on the bench, with one bound jumped at Boulard, whom he caught by the throat, crying:

"My money!"

"How? What? You strangle me. I--"

"My money!"

"My friend, listen to me!"

"My money! And yet it is too late, for it is your fault that I am here."

"But--I--but--"

"If I go to the hulks, mark me, it is your fault; for if I had that of which you robbed me, I should not have been under the necessity of stealing. I should have remained honest, as I wished to be. And you will be acquitted perhaps--they will do nothing to you. But I will do something to you. You shall bear my marks. Ah! you wear jewels, gold chains, and you rob. There--there--have you enough? No--here, take some more!"

"Help, help!" cried the bailiff, rolling under the feet of Frank, who struck him furiously.

The other prisoners, very indifferent to this squabble, made a ring round the combatants, or, rather, round the beating and the beaten, for Boulard, panting and much alarmed, made no resistance, but endeavored to parry, as well as he could, the blows of his adversary. Happily, the overseer ran up, on hearing the cries, and released the bailiff from his peril. Boulard arose, pale and trembling, with one of his large eyes bruised, and, without giving himself time to pick up his cap, cried, as he ran toward the wicket:

"Keeper--open for me; I do not wish to remain a moment longer--help!"

"And you, for having struck the gentleman, follow me to the governor," said the keeper, taking Frank by the collar; "you will go to the blackhole two days for this."

"I don't care; he has got his gruel."

"Mum!" whispered the Cripple to Frank, pretending to adjust his clothes, "not a word of what they are going to do to the spy."

"Be easy; perhaps if I had been there, I should have defended him; for to kill a man for that is hard; but blab! never."

"Will you come?" said the keeper.

"There we are rid of the bailiff and Frank now; hot work for the spy!" said Nicholas.

As Frank left the court, Germain and Pique-Vinaigre entered. Germain was no longer recognizable; his physiognomy, formerly so sad and cast down, was radiant with joy; he carried his head erect, and cast around him a cheerful and assured glance; he was beloved!--the horrors of the prison disappeared from before his eyes. Pique-Vinaigre followed him with an embarrassed air; at length, after having hesitated two or three times to accost him, he made a great effort, and slightly touched the arm of Germain before he had approached the group of prisoners, who, at a distance, were examining him with sullen hatred. Their victim could not escape. In spite of himself, Germain shuddered at the touch of Pique-Vinaigre; for the face and rags of the ex-juggler did not speak much in his favor. But, recollecting the advice of Rigolette, and, besides, too happy not to be friendly, Germain stopped, and said kindly to Pique-Vinaigre,

"What do you wish?"

"To thank you."

"For what?"

"For what your pretty little visitor wishes to do for my sister."

"I do not understand you," said Germain, surprised.

"I am going to explain. Just now, in the office, I met the overseer, who was on guard in the visitors' room."

"Ah, yes; a very good man."

"Ordinarily, the jailers do not agree with that description. But Roussel is another bird; he deserves it. Just now he whispered in my ear, 'Pique-Vinaigre, my boy, do you know Germain well?' 'Yes; the butt of the yard,' I answered." Then, interrupting himself, Pique-Vinaigre said to Germain, "Pardon, excuse me, if I have called you a butt. Do not think of it; wait for the end. 'Yes, then,' I answered, 'I know Germain, the butt of the prison.' 'And yours also, perhaps, Pique-Vinaigre?' asked the keeper, in a severe tone. 'I am too cowardly and too good-natured to allow myself any kind of a butt black, white, or gray, and Germain still less than any other for he does not appear wicked, and they are unjust toward him.' 'Well, Pique-Vinaigre, you have reason to be on Germain's side, for he has been good to you.' 'To me? How so?' 'That is to say, not to you; but,

saving that, you owe him great gratitude,' answered old Roussel."

"Let us see; explain yourself a little more clearly," said Germain, smiling.

"That is exactly what I said to the keeper: 'Do speak more clearly.' Then he answered, 'It is not Germain, but his pretty little visitor, who has been full of kindness for your sister. She overheard her relate to you her misfortunes, and, as she was about leaving, the girl offered her any assistance she could render.'"

"Good Rigolette!" cried Germain, affected. "She took good care not to mention it."

"Oh, then,' I answered the keeper, 'I am only a gander. You are right; Germain has been good to me; for his visitor is, as may be said, himself, and my sister Jeanne is myself and much more.'"

"Poor little Rigolette!" said Germain. "This does not surprise me; she has a heart so generous and susceptible!"

"The keeper went on; 'I heard all this without pretending to listen. Now you know, if you do not try to render a service to Germain; if you do not warn him in case of any plot against him, you will be a finished scoundrel, Pique-Vinaigre.' 'Keeper, I am a scoundrel,' commenced I, 'it is true; but not a finished scoundrel. In fine, since Germain's visitor wished to do some good to my poor Jeanne, who is a good and honest girl, I will do for Germain what I can; unfortunately, that will be no great things.'"

"Never mind, do what you can; I am also going to give you some good news for Germain; I have just heard it."

"What is it, then?" asked Germain.

"To-morrow there will be a separate cell vacant,' the keeper told me to inform you."

"Can it be true? Oh, what happiness!" cried Germain. "The good man was right; it is good news you tell me."

"I think so; for your place is not with rough-scuff like us, Germain." Then he added hastily, and in a low tone, as he pretended to stoop for something, "Germain, look at the prisoners, how they stare at us; they are astonished to see us talking together. I leave you; be on your guard. If they pick a quarrel, do not answer; they only want a pretext to engage you in a dispute, and beat you. Barbillon is to begin the dispute--look out for him; I will try to turn them from this notion." And Pique-Vinaigre lifted up his head as if he had found what he pretended to look for. Only informed of the conspiracy of the morning, which was to provoke a quarrel in which Germain would be roughly handled, in order to force the governor to change his ward, not only was Pique-Vinaigre ignorant of the murderous project, but he was also ignorant that they counted on his story of Gringalet to deceive and distract the attention of the keeper.

"Come along, lazybones!" said Nicholas to Pique-Vinaigre, going to meet him; "leave your ration of flesh there; we have a merry-making and feasting. I invite you."

"Whereabouts? To the Panier-Fleuri? to the Petit Ramponneau?"

"No, in the hall; the table is set on a bench. We have some ham, eggs, and cheese--my treat."

"That suits me; but it is a pity to lose my ration, and still more that my sister cannot profit by it. Neither she nor her children often see meat, except at the butcher's door."

"Come, come quick, Skeleton is making a beast of himself; he is capable of devouring the whole with Barbillon."

Nicholas and Pique-Vinaigre entered the hall; seated astride on the end of the bench where the feast was spread, Skeleton swore and cursed while waiting for the giver of the banquet.

"Here you are at last, snail, laggard!" cried the bandit, at the sight of Pique-Vinaigre; "what have you been doing then?"

"He was chatting with Germain," said Nicholas, carving the ham.

"Oh! talking with Germain?" said Skeleton, looking attentively at Pique-Vinaigre, without pausing in his mastication.

"Yes!" answered the patterer. "Oh! here is another who never invented bootjacks and hard eggs (I say eggs, because I adore them). Isn't he a fool! this Germain! I used to think that he was a spy, but he is too much of a flat for that!"

"Oh! you think so?" said Skeleton, exchanging a rapid and significant glance with Nicholas and Barbillon.

"I am as sure of it as that I see ham! And, then, how the devil would you have him spy?--he is always alone; he speaks to no one, and no one speaks to him; he runs away from us as if we had the cholera. Besides, he will not spy for a long time; he is going to be boxed up alone."

"He!" cried Skeleton; "when?"

"To-morrow morning there will be a cell vacant."

"You see we must kill him at once. He does not sleep in my ward; to-morrow will be too late. To-day we have only until four o'clock, and now it is almost three," whispered Skeleton to Nicholas, while Pique-Vinaigre talked with Barbillon.

"All the same," answered Nicholas aloud, pretending to answer an observation of Skeleton, "Germain looks as if he despises us."

"On the contrary, my children," answered Pique-Vinaigre, "you intimidate this young man. He looks upon himself, in comparison with you, as the least of the least. Just now, what do you think he said?"

"How should I know?"

"He said to me, 'You are very happy, Pique-Vinaigre, to dare to speak with the famous Skeleton (he used the word famous) as an equal and a companion.' I am dying to speak to him; but he produces an effect upon me so respectful--so respectful--that, should I see the chief of police in flesh, and bones, and uniform, I could not be more overcome."

"He told you that?" replied Skeleton, feigning to believe him, and to be flattered at the admiration he excited in Germain.

"As true as that you are the greatest magsman on the earth, he told me so."

"Then it is different," answered Skeleton; "I must make it up with him. Barbillon had a mind to pick a quarrel, but he, too, will do well to let him alone."

"He will do better," cried Pique-Vinaigre, persuaded that he had turned away the danger with which Germain was threatened. "He will do better, for this poor fellow won't dispute; he is one of my kind, bold as a hare."

"Yes, it is a pity," said Skeleton; "we reckoned on this quarrel to amuse us after dinner, the time appears so long."

"Yes. What shall we do then?" asked Nicholas.

"Since it is so, let Pique-Vinaigre tell us a story. I will not seek a quarrel with Germain," said Barbillon.

"Agreed, agreed!" cried the story-teller. "That is one condition; but there is another, and without both I tell no stories."

"Come, what is your other condition?"

"It is, that the honorable society which is poisoned with capitalists," said Pique-Vinaigre, assuming his mountebank twang, "will make for me the trifle of a contribution of twenty sous. Twenty sous, ladies and gents, to hear the famous Pique-Vinaigre, who has had the honor to perform before the most renowned robbers, before the most famous rogues, of France and Navarre, and who is immediately expected at Brest and at Toulon, where he goes by order of the government. Twenty sous! A mere nothing, gents."

"Come, you shall have twenty sous when you have told your story."

"After? No; before!" cried Pique-Vinaigre.

"I say, do you think us capable of cheating you out of twenty sous?" said Skeleton, with a displeased air.

"Not at all," answered Pique-Vinaigre; "I honor the family with my confidence, and it is to spare its purse that I ask twenty sous in advance."

"On your word of honor?"

"Yes, gents; for after my tale is finished, you will be so satisfied that it is no longer twenty sous, but twenty francs--a hundred francs that you will force me to take! I know, myself, I should have the meanness to accept the offering; so, you see, that for economy's sake, you will do better to give me twenty sous in advance."

"Oh! you are not wanting in soft-sawder."

"I have nothing but my tongue; I must use it; and, then, the point of the matter is that my sister and her children are in Queer Street, and twenty sous is an out-and-out friendly call."

"Why does she not toddle out on the prigging lay; and her kids also, if they are old enough?" said Nicholas.

"Do not speak of it; it wounds me, it dishonors me. I am too good."

"You had better say too stupid, since you encourage her."

"It is true, I encourage her in the vice of honesty. But she is only good for that trade--she makes me pity her. Come, is it agreed? I will relate to you my famous history of 'Gringalet', but I must have my twenty sous; and Barbillon will not seek a quarrel with that softy, Germain."

"You shall have your twenty sous, and Barbillon will not pick a quarrel with Germain," said Skeleton.

"Then open your ears, for you are going to hear something choice. But here is the rain, which sends in the audience; there will be no need to go after them."

In fact, the rain began to fall, the prisoners left the court, and came to take refuge in the hall, accompanied by a keeper. We have already said this hall was a long paved room, lighted by windows looking out on the court; in the center was placed the stove, near which were Skeleton, Barbillon, Nicholas, and Pique-Vinaigre. At a nod from the provost, Big Cripple joined the group. Germain entered among the last, absorbed in delightful thoughts. He went mechanically to seat himself on the ledge of the farthest window in the room, a place he habitually occupied, which no one disputed; for it was far from the stove, around which the prisoners clustered. We have said that only a dozen of the prisoners had been informed at first of the intended murder of Germain. But, once divulged, this project counted as many adherents as there were prisoners; these wretches, in their blind cruelty, regarded this frightful plot as a legitimate vengeance, and saw in it a certain guarantee against future denunciations.

Germain, Pique-Vinaigre, and the keeper were alone ignorant of what was about to take place. The general attention was divided between the executioner, the victim, and the patterer, who was about innocently to deprive Germain of the only succor which he had to depend upon; for it was almost certain that the keeper, seeing the prisoners attentive to the story of Pique-Vinaigre, would believe his presence useless, and profit by this moment of calm to go and take his repast. When all the prisoners had entered, Skeleton said to the keeper:

"I say, old man, Pique-Vinaigre has a good idea; he is going to tell us his story of 'Gringalet.' The weather is so bad it is not fit to turn a constable out of doors; we are going to wait here quietly for the time to turn in."

"True enough, when he talks, you keep yourselves quiet. At least, there is no need of being behind your backs."

"Yes," replied Skeleton; "but Pique-Vinaigre charges high for telling a story; he wants twenty sous."

"Yes, the trifle of twenty sous; and then it is for nothing," cried Pique-Vinaigre. "Yes, nothing; for one should not keep a red in his pocket, and thus deprive himself of the pleasure of hearing the adventures of poor little Gringalet, of the terrible Cut-in-half, and the wicked Gargousse; it is enough to break one's heart, to make your hair stand on end. Now, gents, who is it that cannot spare the bagatelle of four coppers, to have his heart broken and his hair stand on end?"

"I give two sous!" said Skeleton; and he threw his penny toward Pique-Vinaigre. "Shall the gang be stingy for such an entertainment?" he added, looking at his accomplices with a significant air. Several sous were thrown, from one side and the other, to the great joy of Pique-Vinaigre, who thought of his sister as he made his collection. "Eight, nine, eleven, twelve, thirteen!" he cried, picking up his money. "Come, rich folks, capitalists and other bankers, one more little effort; you cannot remain at thirteen, it is an unlucky number. Only seven sous wanting--a paltry seven sous. How! shall it be said the Lions' Den cannot raise seven sous more--seven miserable sous! O! you will lead me to think that you have been placed here unjustly, or that you have been very unlucky."

The piercing voice and the witticisms of Pique-Vinaigre had roused Germain from his reverie; as much to follow the advice of Rigolette, to make himself popular, as to make a slight donation to this poor fellow, who had shown some desire to be useful to him, he arose and threw a piece of ten sous at the speaker's feet, who cried, showing to the crowd the generous donor: "Ten sous, gents! you see I spoke of capitalists; honor to the banker, who tries to be agreeable to the society. Yes, gents! for it is to him you will owe the greater part of Gringalet, and you will thank him for it. As to the three sous surplus caused by his donation, I will deserve them by imitating the voices of my personages, instead of speaking in my ordinary manner! This shall be another delight that you will owe to this rich capitalist whom you must adore."

"Come, don't gammon so much, but begin," said Skeleton.

"A moment," said Pique-Vinaigre; "it is but just that this capitalist, who has given me ten sous, should have the best place, except our provost, who must choose first." This proposition answered the purpose of Skeleton so well that he cried:

"It is true, after me he should be the best seated." And the bandit again cast a look of intelligence at the prisoners.

"Yes, yes, let him approach," they cried.

"Let him take the front seat."

"You see, young man, your liberality is recompensed; the honorable society recognizes that you have the right to the first seat," said Pique-Vinaigre to Germain.

Believing that his liberality had really disposed his odious companions in his favor, enchanted thus to follow the advice of Rigolette, Germain, in spite of his repugnance, left his seat, and approached.

Pique-Vinaigre, aided by Nicholas and Barbillon, having arranged around the stove the four or five benches, said with emphasis,

"Here are orchestra stalls! honor to whom honor is due; in the first place the capitalist. Now let those who have paid seat themselves on the benches," added Pique-Vinaigre, gayly, firmly believing that Germain had, thanks to him, no more danger to apprehend. "And those who have not cashed up," he added, "will sit on the ground or stand up, as they choose."

Let us glance at the arrangements as now completed.

Pique-Vinaigre, standing near the stove, was getting ready to commence his story. Near him, Skeleton is also standing, ready to spring on Germain the moment the keeper should leave the hall. Some distance from Germain, Nicholas, Barbillon, Cardillac, and some other prisoners, among whom was seen the man in the blue cotton cap and gray blouse, occupied the back benches. The larger number of the prisoners grouped here and there, some seated on the ground, others standing, and leaning against the walls, composed the background of this picture, lighted, after the manner of Rembrandt, by the three lateral windows, which cast a vivid light and deep shade on these figures, so differently characterized and so strongly marked.

The keeper who, without knowing it, was, by his departure, to give the signal for the murder of Germain, stood near the half-opened door.

"All ready!" said Pique-Vinaigre to Skeleton.

"Silence in the band" answered the latter, half-turning round; then, addressing Pique-Vinaigre, "Now fire away! we listen." A profound silence reigned in the sitting-room.

CHAPTER X.

GRINGALET AND CUT-IN-HALF.

Before we commence the recital of Pique-Vinaigre, we will recall to our readers that, by a strange contrast, the majority of the prisoners, notwithstanding their cynical perversity, almost always preferred artless stories (we will not say puerile), in which the oppressed, by the laws of an inexorable fatality, is revenged on his tyrant, after trials and difficulties without number. The thought is far from us, to establish the slightest parallel between corrupted beings and the honest and poor masses; but is it not known with what frenzied applause the audience of minor theaters behold the deliverance of the victim, and with what curses they pursue the traitorous and the wicked? One ordinarily laughs at these rough evidences of sympathy for that which is good, weak, and persecuted; of aversion for that which is powerful, unjust, and cruel. It seems to us that to laugh at this is wrong. Nothing is more consoling than these feelings innately of the multitude. Is it not evident that these salutary instincts may become fixed principles in those unfortunate beings whom ignorance and poverty expose to the subversive attacks of evil? Why not have every hope of a people whose good moral sense is so invariably manifested? of a people who, in spite of the fascinations of art, will never permit a dramatic work to arrive at its denouement by the triumph of the wicked and the punishment of the just? This fact, scorned and laughed at though it be, appears to us of considerable importance on account of the tendencies which it proves, and which are even often found (we repeat it) among beings the most corrupt, when they are, so to speak, in repose, and sheltered from criminal temptations or necessities. In a word, since men hardened in crime still sometimes sympathize with the recital and expression of elevated sentiments, ought we not to believe that all men have more or less in them of the good, the well doing, the just, but that poverty and ignorance, in falsifying, in stifling these Divine instincts, are the first causes of human depravity?

Is it not evident that generally ones does not become wicked except through misfortune, and that to snatch man from the terrible temptations of warn by the equitable melioration of his material condition, is to make him capable of the virtues of which he is conscious? The impression caused by the story of Pique-Vinaigre will demonstrate, or rather display, we hope, some of the ideas we have just set forth. Pique-Yinaigre then commenced his story in these terms, in the midst of the profound silence of his audience. "It is not very long since the events occurred which I am going to relate to this honorable society. Little Poland was not then destroyed. Does the honorable society know what was called Little Poland?"

"I remember," said the prisoner in the blue cap and gray blouse, "it was some small houses near the Rue du Rocher, and the Rue de la Pepiniere."

"Exactly, pal," replied Vinaigre; "the city streets, which, however, are not full of palaces, would be lovely alongside of Little Poland, but, otherwise, a famous resort for our lot; there were no streets, but lanes; no houses, but hovels; no pavement, but a carpet of mud, so that the noise of carriages would not have incommoded you if any passed; but none passed. From morning to night, and, above all, from night till morning, what one did not cease to hear, were cries, of '_watch_!' '_help_!' '_murder_!' but the watch did not disturb himself. The more with their brains dashed out in Little Poland--so many the less to be arrested!

"The swarming population, therein, you should have seen; very few jewelers, goldsmiths, or bankers lodged there! but to make amends, there were heaps of organ-players, rope-dancers, Punch-and-Judy-men, or keepers of curious beasts. Among the latter was one named Cut-'em-in-half, so cruel was he; above all, cruel toward children. They called him so, because, with a hatchet, he had cut in two a little Savoyard!"

At this part of the story the prison clock struck a quarter past three. The prisoners entering their sleeping apartments at four o'clock, the crime was to be consummated before that hour.

"Thousand thunders! the keeper does not go," whispered the Skeleton to the Big Cripple.

"Be quiet; once the story started, he will leave." Pique-Vinaigre continued his recital.

"No one knew whence Cut-in-half came; some said he was an Italian, others a gipsy, others a Turk, others an African; the old women called him a magician, although a magician in these days may appear fishy; as for me, I should be quite tempted to say the same as the old women. What makes this likely is, that he always had with him a great red ape called Gargousse, which was so cunning, and wicked, that one would have said he had Old Nick in him. By and by I shall speak again of Gargousse. As to Cut-'em-in-half, I am going to show him up; he had skin the color of a bootlining, hair as red as the hide of his ape, green eyes, and what makes me think with the old women that he was a magician, is, that he had a black tongue."

"Black tongue?" said Barbillon.

"Black as ink!" answered Pique-Vinaigre.

"And how is that?"

"Because, before he was born, his mother had probably spoken of a negro," answered Pique-Vinaigre, with modest assurance. "To this ornament, Cut-in-half joined the trade of having I do not know how many tortoises, apes, guinea-pigs, white mice, foxes and marmots, with an equal number of little Savoyards.

"Every morning, the padrone distributed to each one his beast and a piece of black bread, and started them off, to beg for a sou or dance a Catalina. Those who, at night, brought back less than fifteen sous were beaten, oh!

how they were beaten! so that they were heard to cry from one end of Little Poland to the other.

"I must tell you also that there was in Little Poland a man who was called the Alderman, because he was the longest resident of this quarter, and also the mayor, justice of the peace, or rather, of war, for it was in his court (he was a wine dealer) that they went to comb one another's heads when there was no other way to settle their disputes. Although quite old, the Alderman was strong as a Hercules, and very much feared; they swore only by him in Little Poland; when he said, 'It is good,' every one said, 'It is very good;' when he said, 'It is bad,' every one said, 'It is awful bad,' he was a good man at the bottom, but terrible; when, for example, strong people caused misery to the weaker, then, stand from under! As the Alderman was the neighbor of Cut-in-half, he had in the commencement heard the children cry, on account of the blows which the owner of the beasts gave them; so he said to him, 'If I hear the kids squeal again, I'll make you cry in your turn, and, as you have a stronger voice, I'll strike harder.'"

"Comic of the Alderman! I quite tumble to the old boy," said the prisoner in a blue cap.

"And so do I," added the keeper, approaching the group. Skeleton could not restrain a movement of angry impatience.

Pique-Vinaigre continued:

"Thanks to the Alderman threatening Cut-in-half, the children were no more heard to cry at night; but the poor little unfortunates did not suffer the less, for if they did not cry when their master beat them, it was because they feared to be beaten still more. As for going and complaining to the Alderman, they never had such an idea. For the fifteen sous which each of the little boys was obliged to bring him, Cut-in-half fed them, lodged them, and clothed them. At night, a piece of black bread, the same for breakfast--that was the way he fed them; he never gave them any clothes--that was the way he clothed them; and he shut them up at night pell-mell with their beasts, on the same straw, in a garret, to which they clambered by a ladder and through a trap-door--and that was the way he lodged them. Once the beasts and children were all housed, he took away the ladder and locked the trap-door with a key. You may imagine the noise and uproar which these apes, guinea-pigs, foxes, mice, tortoises, marmosets, and children made, without any light, in this garret, which was as large as a thimble. Cut-in-half slept in a room underneath, having his large ape Gargousse tied to the foot of the bed. When the noise was too loud in the garret, the owner of the beasts arose, took a large whip, mounted the ladder without a light, opened the trap, and lashed away at random. As he always had about a dozen boys, and some of the innocents brought sometimes as much as twenty sous a day, Cut-in-half, his expenses paid, and they were not heavy, had for himself about four or five francs each day; with that he frolicked, for note well that he was the greatest drinker on the earth, and was regularly dead drunk once every day. It was his rule, he said; except for that he would have a headache all day long; it must be said, also, that from his gains he bought sheep's hearts for Gargousse, the big ape eating raw meat like a very cannibal. But I see that the honorable assembly asks

for Gringalet (Walking Rushlight); here he is, gents!"

"Ay! let us see Gringalet, and then I'll go and eat my soup," said the keeper. Skeleton exchanged a look of ferocious satisfaction with the Cripple.

"Among the children to whom Cut-in-half distributed his beasts," resumed Pique-Vinaigre, "there was a poor little devil nicknamed Gringalet. Without father or mother, without sister or brother, without a home, he found himself alone--all alone in the world, where he never asked to come, and whence he could have gone, without anybody caring at all about it. He was not called Gringalet in mere sport; he was dwarfish and puny, and reedy; no one would have given him over seven or eight years, yet he was thirteen; but if he did not look more than half his age, it was not his fault, for he had not on the average eaten more than every other day, and then so little, and so bad, that he really did very well to appear to be seven."

"Poor babby, I think I see him," said the prisoner in the blue cap; "there are so many like him on the streets of Paris, little starved-to-deaths."

"They ought to begin to learn that trade young," replied Pique-Vinaigre, bitterly; "so that they can become used to it."

"Come, go on then, make haste," said Skeleton, gruffly; "the keeper is impatient, his soup is growing cold."

"Oh, bah! never mind," answered the keeper; "I wish to make a little more acquaintance with Gringalet. It is amusing."

"Really, it is very interesting," added Germain, attentive to the story.

"Oh, thank you for what you say, my capitalist; that gives me more pleasure than your ten sous."

"Thunder! you sluggard!" cried the Skeleton. "Will you have done keeping us waiting?"

"Here goes!" answered Pique-Vinaigre.

"One day Cut-in-half had picked up Gringalet in the street, dying with cold and hunger; he would have done just as well to let him alone to die. As Gringalet was feeble, he was afraid; and as he was cowardly, he became the laughing-stock and scapegoat of his companions, who beat him, and caused him so much misery, that he would have been very wicked if strength and courage had not failed him. But no; when they beat him, he cried, saying, 'I have done no harm to any one, yet every one harms me--it is unjust. Oh! if I were strong and bold!' You think, perhaps, that Gringalet was going to add, 'I would return to others the evil they did me.' Well, no! not at all: he said, 'Oh! if I were strong and bold, I would defend the weak against the strong; for I am weak, and the strong make me suffer.' In the mean time, as he was too much of a pigmy to prevent the strong from molesting the weak, he prevented the larger beasts from injuring the smaller ones.

"There's a funny idea!" said the prisoner in the blue cap.

"And what is still more funny," replied the patterer, "is that, with this idea, one would have said that Gringalet consoled himself for being beaten; and that proves that, at bottom, he had not a bad heart."

"I think so--on the contrary," said the keeper, "Pique-Vinaigre is jolly amusing."

At this moment the clock struck half-past three. The Skeleton and Big Cripple exchanged significant glances. The hour advanced, the keeper did not retire, and some of the least hardened prisoners seemed almost to forget the sinister projects against Germain, who listened with eagerness to the recital. "When I say," Pique-Vinaigre resumed, "that Gringalet prevented the larger beasts from eating the smaller ones, you will please understand that Gringalet did not go and interfere in the affairs of the tigers, lions, wolves, or even the foxes and apes of the menagerie; he was too cowardly for that. But as soon as he saw, for example, a spider concealed in his web, to catch a poor foolish fly that was buzzing about gayly in the sun, without harming any one, crack! Gringalet gave a sweep into the web, delivered the fly, and crushed the spider, like a real ~~Cæsar~~! Yes, like a real ~~Cæsar~~! for he became as white as chalk at even touching these villainous creatures; he needed, then, resolution. He was afraid of a lady-bug, and had taken a very long time to become familiar with the turtle which Cut-in-half handed over to him every morning. Thus Gringalet, overcoming the alarm which spiders caused him, to prevent the flies from being eaten, showed himself--"

"Showed himself as bold, in his way, as a man who would have attacked a wolf, to take from him a lamb of the fold," said Blue Cap.

"Or as a man who would have attacked Cut-in-half, to drag Gringalet from his claws," added Barbillon, also much interested.

"As you say," replied Pique-Yinaigre. "Accordingly, after these doings, Gringalet did not feel so very unfortunate. He who never laughed, smiled, looked wise, put on his cap sideways, when he had a cap, and sung the Marseillaise with a trumpet air. At such times, there was not a spider that dared to look him in the face! Another time it was a cricket that was drowning and struggling in a gutter; quickly Gringalet bravely plunged two of his fingers into the waves and caught the cricket, which he afterward placed on a blade of grass; a champion swimmer with a medal, who should have fished up his tenth drowned person, at fifty francs the head, could not have been more proud than Gringalet, when he saw his cricket kick and run away. And yet the cricket gave him neither money nor a medal, and did not even say thank you, nor did the fly. 'But then, Pique-Vinaigre, my friend,' will the honorable society say, 'what kind of pleasure could Gringalet, whom every one beats, find in being the deliverer of crickets and the executioner of spiders? Since others injured him, why did he not revenge himself in doing harm according to his strength; for instance, by causing the flies to be eaten by spiders, or in letting the crickets drown themselves, or even drowning them himself.'"

"Yes; exactly; why did he not revenge himself in that way?" said Nicholas.

"What good would that have done him?" said another.

"Why, to do harm because others harmed him!"

"No! I can comprehend why the poor little kid liked to save the flies," answered Blue Cap. "He thought, perhaps, 'Who knows that some one will not save me in the same way?'"

"Pal, you're right," cried Pique-Vinaigre; "you have read in your heart what I was about to explain to the honorable company. Gringalet was not malicious; he saw no further than the end of his nose; but he said to himself, 'Cut-in-half is my spider; perhaps one day somebody will do for me what I do for the flies; they will break up his web, and snatch me from his claws.' For until then, on no account would he have dared to run away from his master; he would have thought himself stone dead. Yet, one day, when neither he nor his turtle had had any luck, and they had only earned two or three sous, Cut-in-half began to whip the child so hard, so hard, that, hang it! Gringalet could stand it no longer. Tired of being the butt and martyr of everybody, he watched the moment when the trap-door of the garret was open, and while the padrone was feeding his beasts, he slipped down the ladder."

"Hooray! so much the better!" said a prisoner.

"But why did he not go and complain to the Alderman?" said Blue Cap; "he would have given Cut-in-half his token!"

"Yes, but he did not dare; he was too much afraid, he preferred to run away. Unfortunately, Cut-in-half had seen him; he caught him by the throat, and carried him back to the garret; this time Gringalet, thinking of what he had to expect, shuddered from head to foot, for he was not at the end of his troubles. Speaking of the troubles of Gringalet, it is necessary that I should tell you of Gargousse, the favorite ape. This wicked animal was larger than Gringalet; judge what a size for an ape! Now I am going to tell you why they did not lead him as a show through the streets, like the other beasts of the menagerie; it was because Gargousse was so wicked and so strong that, among all the children, there was only one, Auvergnat, fourteen years old, a resolute fellow, who, after having several times collared and fought with Gargousse, had succeeded in mastering him, and leading him by a chain; and even then, there were often battles between them, and bloody ones too, you may bet! Tired of this, the little Auvergnat said one day, 'Well, well, I will revenge myself on you, you lubberly baboon!' So one morning he set off with his beast as usual; to decoy him he bought a sheep's heart. While Gargousse was eating, he passed a cord through the end of his chain, and fastened it to a tree; and when he had the scoundrel of an ape once tied fast, he poured on him such a torrent of blows! a torrent that fire could not have extinguished."

"Good boy!"

"Bravo! Auvergnat!"

"Hit him again, he's got no friends."

"Break his back for him, the rascally Gargousse," said the prisoners.

"And he did lay it on with a good heart," answered Pique-Vinaigre. "You should have heard how Gargousse yelled, seen how he gnashed his teeth, jumped, danced here and there; but Auvergnat trimmed him up with his club, saying, 'Do you like it? then here is some more!' Unfortunately, apes are like cats, they have nine lives. Gargousse was as cunning as he was wicked. When he saw, as I may say, what kind of wood was burning for him, at the very thickest moment of the torrent, he cut a last caper, fell flat down at the foot of the tree, kicked a moment, and then shammed dead, not budging any more than a log. The Auvergnat wished nothing more; believing the ape done for, he cleared out, never to put his feet in Cut-in-half's drum again. But the vagabond Gargousse watched him out of the corner of his eye, all wounded as he was, and as soon as he saw himself alone and Auvergnat at a distance, he gnawed the cord with his teeth. The Boulevard Monceau, where he had had his dance, was very near Little Poland; the ape knew the road as well as he did his prayers. He slowly went off then, crawling along, and arrived at his master's, who swore and foamed to see his pet ape thus served out. But this is not all; from that moment Gargousse had preserved such furious spite against all children in general, that Cut-in-half, though not very tender-hearted, had not dared to let any of them lead him out, for fear of an accident; for Gargousse would have been capable of strangling or devouring a child, and the little fellows would rather have allowed themselves to be slashed by their master than approach the ape."

"I must most decidedly go and eat my soup," said the keeper, making a movement toward the door; "Pique-Vinaigre would make the birds come down from the trees to hear him. I do not know wherever he has fished up this story."

"At length the keeper is off," whispered Skeleton to the Cripple; "I am in a fever, so much do I burn. Only attend to making the ring around the spy, I'll take care of the rest."

"Be good boys," said the keeper, going toward the door.

"Good as pictures," answered Skeleton, drawing near Germain, while the Big Cripple and Nicholas, at a concerted signal, made two steps in the same direction.

"Oh! respectable warder, you are going away at the finest moment," said Pique-Vinaigre, with an air of reproach.

Except for the Cripple, who prevented his movement by seizing his arm, Skeleton would have sprung upon Pique-Vinaigre.

"How at the finest moment?" answered the keeper, turning.

"I think so," said Pique-Vinaigre; "you do not know all you are going to lose; the most charming part of my story is about to commence."

"Do not listen to it, then," said Skeleton, with difficulty restraining his rage; "he is not in the vein to-day: I find his story abominably stupid."

"My story stupid?" cried Pique-Vinaigre, his vanity wounded; "well, keeper, I beg you, I supplicate you, to remain to the end. I have only enough to fill a good quarter of an hour; besides, your soup is cold. Now what do you risk? I will hasten on with my story, so that you may still have the time to go and eat before we go to our beds."

"Well, then, I remain, but make haste," said the keeper, drawing near.

"And you are right to remain, for, without boasting, you have never heard anything like it--above all, the conclusion; there is the triumph of the ape and of Gringalet, escorted by all the little beast conductors and inhabitants of Little Poland. My word of honor I do not say it from vanity, but it is first-class."

"Then go on, my boy," said the keeper, coming close to the stove.

The Skeleton trembled with rage. He almost despaired of accomplishing his crime. Once the hour of repose arrived, Germain was saved; for he did not sleep in the same ward with his implacable enemy, and the next day, as we have said, he was to occupy one of the vacant cells. And, moreover, Skeleton saw, from the interruptions of several of the prisoners, that they found themselves, thanks to the story of Pique-Vinaigre, filled with ideas that softened their hearts; perhaps, then, they would not assist, with savage indifference, the accomplishment of a frightful murder, of which their presence would make them accomplices. He could prevent the patterer from finishing his story, but then his last hope vanished of seeing the keeper retire before the hour in which Germain would be in safety.

"Oh! stupid, is it?" said Pique-Vinaigre. "Well, the honorable society shall be the judge."

"There was not then an animal more wicked than the large ape Gargousse, which was, above all, as savage as his master toward children. What did Cut-in-half do to punish Gringalet for wishing to run away? That you shall know directly; in the mean time, he caught the child, shut him up in the garret, saying to him, 'To-morrow morning, when all your comrades are gone, I will take hold of you, and you shall see what I do to those who wish to run away from here.'

"I leave you to imagine what a horrible night Gringalet passed. He hardly closed his eyes; he wondered what Cut-in-half would do. At length he fell asleep. But what a sleep! Then there was a dream, a frightful dream--that is to say, the beginning--you will see. He dreamed that he was one of those poor flies which he had so often saved from the spider's web, and that he, in his turn, fell into a large and strong web, where he struggled with all his strength without being able to escape; then he saw coming toward him softly, cautiously, a kind of monster, which had the face of his master, on a spider's body. My poor Gringalet began again to struggle, as you may imagine; but the more efforts he made, the more he was entangled in the

toils, just like the poor flies. At length the spider approached--touched him--and he felt the large, cold, and hairy paws of the monster encircle him. He thought himself dead, but suddenly he heard a kind of humming noise, clear and acute, and saw a little golden gnat, which had a kind of sting as fine and brilliant as a diamond needle, flying round the spider in a furious manner, and a voice (when I say voice, just imagine the voice of a gnat!)-a voice said to him, 'Poor little fly! you have saved flies; the spider shall not---'

"Unfortunately, Gringalet awoke with a start, and he saw not the end of the dream; nevertheless, he was a little comforted, saying to himself, 'Perhaps the golden gnat with the diamond sting would have killed the spider if I had seen the end of the dream.'

"But Gringalet had need of all this to console himself, for, as the night advanced, his fear returned so strongly that in the end he forgot his dream, or rather, he only remembered the frightful part of it; the great web where he had been entangled, and the spider with the padrone's face. You can judge what shiverings of alarm he must have had. Bless me! judge then, alone--all alone--with no one to take his part!

"In the morning, when he saw the light appear little by little through the garret-window, his alarm redoubled; the moment was drawing near when he would be left all alone with Cut-in-half. Then he threw himself on his knees in the middle of the garret, and weeping hot tears, he begged his companions to ask his pardon from Cut-in-half, or to assist him to escape if there was any way. Oh, yes! some from fear of the master, others from caring nothing about it, others from cruelty, refused the service which poor Gringalet demanded."

"Wicked scrubs," said the prisoner in the blue cap, "they had neither body nor soul."

"It is true," said another; "it is vexing to see this want of feeling."

"And, alone, and without defense," resumed Blue Cap; "for one who cannot stretch out his neck without wincing, it is always a pity. When one has teeth to bite, then it is different. You have tusks? Well, show them, and look for tail, my cadet."

"That is true!" said several of the prisoners.

"Come!" cried Skeleton, no longer able to restrain his rage, and addressing Blue Cap, "will you shut up? Have I not already said, 'Silence in the band'? Am I, or am I not, the ruler here?"

For sole answer, Blue Cap looked him in the face, and then made a gesture, perfectly well known to street arabs, which consists in placing on the tip of the nose the thumb of the right hand, opened, and touching with the little finger the thumb of the left, also spread out like a fan. Blue Cap accompanied this mute answer with an expression so grotesque that several of the prisoners shouted with laughter, while some of the others, on the contrary, remained stupefied at the audacity of the new prisoner. Skeleton

shook his fist at Blue Cap, and said, grinding his teeth, "We'll settle this to-morrow."

"And I will make the addition on your hide. I'll set down seventeen and carry naught."

For fear the keeper should find a new reason for remaining in order to prevent a possible quarrel, Skeleton answered calmly:

"That is not the question. I have the ruling of the hall, and I must be obeyed; is it not so, keeper?"

"It is true," said the officer. "Do not interrupt. And you, Pique-Vinaigre, go on; but make haste, my boy."

"Then," resumed Pique-Vinaigre, continuing his story, "Gringalet, seeing himself abandoned, gave himself up to his unhappy fate. Broad daylight came, and all the children prepared to depart with their beasts. Cut-in-half opened the trap and called the roll, in order to give each one his piece of bread; all descended the ladder, and Gringalet, more dead than alive, crouching in a corner of the garret, moved no more than it did; he saw his companions going off one after the other; he would have given anything to do as they did. Finally, they were all gone. The heart of the poor child beat strongly; he hoped that, perhaps, his master would forget him. Ah, well, he heard Cut-in-half at the foot of the ladder, cry in a harsh voice: 'Gringalet! Gringalet!' 'Here I am, master.'

"'Come down at once, or I'll fetch you,' answered Cut-in-half. Gringalet thought his last day was come.

"'I must,' he said to himself, trembling in every limb, and remembering his dream, 'now you _are_ in for it, little fly: the spider is going to eat you.'

"After having placed his turtle softly on the ground, he bade him good-bye, for he had become attached to the creature, and approached the trap-door. He placed his foot on the ladder to descend, when Cut-in-half, taking him by his poor little leg, as slender as a spindle, drew him so strongly, so harshly, that Gringalet tumbled down, and polished his face against the whole length of the ladder."

"What a pity that the Alderman had not been there--what a fine dance for Cut-in-half," said Blue Cap; "it is in such times as these that it is good to be strong."

"Yes, my son; but, unfortunately, the Alderman was not there! Cut-in-half took the child by the seat of his trousers, and carried him into his den, where he kept his big ape tied to the foot of his bed. On seeing the child, the beast began to leap and grind his teeth like a mad thing, and to spring the whole length of his chain, as if he wished to devour him."

"Poor Gringalet, how did he ever get out of this?"

"Why, if he had fallen into the clutches of the ape, he would have been strangled at once."

"Thunder! it makes me half dead," said Blue Cap: "as for me at this moment, I could not harm a mouse--what do you say, mate?"

"Nor I either."

"Nor I."

At this moment the clock struck three-quarters past three. Skeleton, fearing more and more that time would be wanting, cried, furious at these interruptions, which seemed to indicate that several of the prisoners were becoming softened, "Silence in the crowd! He will never finish, if you jabber as much as he does."

Pique-Vinaigre continued: "When one reflects that Gringalet had had all the trouble in the world to become accustomed to his turtle, and that the most courageous of his comrades trembled at the name alone of Gargousse, let him imagine his terror when he saw himself carried by his master near to this fiend of an ape. 'Pardon, master,' he cried, his teeth chattering as if he had an ague,--'pardon, master! I'll never do it again, I promise you.'

"The poor little fellow cried, 'I will never do it again,' without knowing why he said so, for he had nothing to reproach himself with; but Cut-in-half laughed at that. In spite of the cries of the child, who struggled hard, he placed him within reach of Gargousse, and the beast sprung upon him and clutched him!"

A shudder passed through the audience, who were more and more attentive.

"How stupid I should have been to go away," said the keeper, approaching still nearer.

"And this is nothing yet; the finest has to come," answered Pique-Vinaigre. "As soon as Gringalet felt the cold and hairy paws of the great ape, which seized him by the throat and by the head, he thought himself devoured, became, as it were, off his nut, and began to cry with groans which would have softened a tiger.

"The spider of my dream, good Lord! the spider of my dream--little golden gnat, help, help!"

"Will you hush? will you hush?" said Cut-in-half, giving him heavy kicks, for he was afraid that his cries would be heard; but at the end of a moment there was no more danger: poor Gringalet cried no more, struggled no more; on his knees, as white as a sheet, he shut his eyes and shivered as if it had been January. Meantime the ape beat him, pulled his hair, and scratched him; and from time to time, the wicked beast stopped to look at his master, absolutely as if they understood each other. As for Cut-in-half, he laughed so loud, that if Gringalet had cried, the shouts of his master would have drowned his cries. It would seem as if this encouraged Gargousse, for he was more and more cruel to the child."

"Oh! you sanguinary ape," cried Blue Cap. "If I had hold of you by the tail, I would spin you round like a mill--just like a sling, and I would crack your conk on the pavement."

"Rascally ape! he was as wicked as a man!"

"There are no men so wicked as that!"

"Not so wicked?" answered Pique-Vinaigre. "You forget old Cut-in-half! Judge of it--this is what he did afterward: he unfastened the chain (which was very long) from the bed, took the child, more dead than alive, from the paws of Gargousse, and fastened him at one end of it, with Gargousse at the other. There was an idea!"

"It is true, there are men more cruel than the most cruel beasts."

"When Cut-in-half had done this, he said to his ape, which appeared to understand him,

"Attention, Gargousse! they have led and shown you, now in your turn you shall show Gringalet; he shall be your ape. Come, hop, stand up, Gringalet, or I say to Gargousse, 'Speak to him, fellow!'"

"The poor child had fallen on his knees, his hands clasped, but not able to speak; his teeth chattered in his head.

"There! make him walk, Gargousse,' said Cut-in-half to his ape; 'and if he is sulky, do as I do.'

"And at the same time he gave the child a torrent of blows with a switch, and afterward handed it to the ape. You know how these animals imitate by nature, but Gargousse in this respect excelled; so he took the rod in his hand and fell upon Gringalet, who was obliged to get up. Once on his legs he was about the same size as the ape; then Cut-in-half went out of his room and descended the staircase, calling Gargousse, and Gargousse followed him, driving Gringalet before him with blows from the rod. They reached thus the little court of the building. There Cut-in-half counted on amusing himself; he shut the door leading into the lane, and signed to Gargousse to make the child run before him around the court, by striking him with the switch. The ape obeyed, and began to chase Gringalet in this manner, while Cut-in-half held his sides with laughter. You think that this wickedness was enough? Oh! yes, but it was nothing as yet. Up to this time, Gringalet would have escaped with a few scratches, lashes, and horrible fear. Now this is what Cut-in-half did: to make the ape furious against the child, who, panting and out of breath, was more dead than alive, he took Gringalet by the hair, pretending to belabor him with blows, and then he handed him back to Gargousse, crying, 'Speak to him, speak to him!' and then he showed him a piece of sheep's heart, as much as to say to him, 'This shall be your reward!' Oh! then, my friends, truly it was a dreadful sight. Imagine a great red ape with a black snout, grinding his teeth like a madman, and throwing himself furiously on this poor little unfortunate, who, not being able to defend himself, had been thrown down at the first blow, and lay

with his face to the ground, in order to protect it. Seeing this, Gargousse, his master setting him at the child continually, mounted on his back, took him by the neck, and fell to biting him, until he made the blood come. 'Oh! the spider of my dream--the spider!' cried Gringalet in a stifled voice, believing now that he was going to be killed. Suddenly there was a knock at the door!"

"Ah! the Alderman!" cried the prisoners with joy.

"Yes, this time it was he, my friends; he called through the door, 'Will you open, Cut-in-half? will you open? Do not sham deaf; for I see you through the keyhole!"

"Cut-in-half, forced to reply, went grumbling to open the door for the Alderman, who was a rough, as solid as a bridge, in spite of his fifty years, and with whom it was worth no one's while to joke when he was angry.

"'What do you want with me?' said Cut-in-half to him, half opening the door. 'I want to speak to you,' said the Alderman, who entered almost by force into the little yard; then, seeing the ape still savage after Gringalet, he ran, caught Gargousse by the nape of his neck, and tried to take the child away from under him; but he only then saw that the child was chained to the ape. Seeing this, he looked at Cut-in-half in a terrible manner, and cried, 'Come, then, at once, and unchain this poor boy!' You can judge of the joy and surprise of Gringalet, who, half dead with fright, found himself saved as it were by a miracle. Then he could not but think of the golden gnat of his dream, although the Alderman did not look much like a gnat, the big buffer."

"Ah," said the keeper, making a step toward the door; "now Gringalet is saved, I'll go to eat my soup."

"Saved?" cried Pique-Vinaigre, "oh yes, saved! but not yet at the end of his troubles, poor Gringalet."

"Really?" said several of the prisoners, with interest.

"But what is going to happen to him now?" asked the keeper, drawing near.

"Remain, and you shall know," answered the patterer.

"Cunning Pique-Vinaigre, he does with one just as he pleases," said the keeper; "I will remain a little longer."

Skeleton, mute, foamed with rage. Pique-Vinaigre continued:

"Cut-in-half, who feared the Alderman as he did fire, had grumblingly loosened the child from the chain; when that was done, the Alderman threw Gargousse into the air, received him on the end of a most magnificent kick, and sent him sprawling ten feet off. The ape cried like a burned child, gnashed his teeth, but fled quickly, and went to take refuge on the top of a shed, where he shook his fist at the Alderman. 'Why do you beat my ape?' said Cut-in-half to the Alderman. 'You ought rather to ask me, why I do not

beat you, to cause this child such suffering! You are drunk pretty early this morning!' 'I am no more drunk than you are; I was teaching a trick to my ape; I wish to give a representation where he and Gringalet will appear together; I am following my business--why do you meddle with it?' 'I meddle with what concerns me. This morning, not seeing Gringalet pass before my door with the other children, I asked them where he was; they did not answer--they looked embarrassed. I know you. I thought you were after no good, and I was not wrong. Listen to me: every time I do not see Gringalet pass before my door with the others in the morning, I will be here at once, and you must show him to me, or I'll knock you down.' 'I will do as I please; I have no orders to receive from you,' answered Cut-in-half, riled at this threat. You shall not knock me down; and if you do not take yourself off from this, or if you return, I---' Flip flap! went the Alderman, interrupting Cut-in-half by a duet of blows enough to silence a rhinoceros: 'There is what you get for answering to the Alderman of Little Poland.'

"Two blows! it was too little," said Blue Cap; "in his place, I should have given him a bigger dose."

"And he should not have had it too hastily," added a prisoner.

"The Alderman," replied Pique-Vinaigre, "could have eaten ten like Cut-in-half. So he was obliged to put these blows in his pocket; but he was none the less furious at being struck, and above all, before Gringalet. So at this very moment he promised to avenge himself, and an idea occurred to him which could only have occurred to a demon of wickedness like himself. While he was ruminating on this diabolical idea, the Alderman said: 'Remember, that if you attempt to injure this child again, I will force you to clear out from Little Poland, you and your beasts; otherwise I will stir up the neighborhood against you; you know they hate you here, so you will have a passport which your back will remember, I promise you.' Traitor as he was, in order to be able to execute his wicked idea, instead of continuing to be angry against the Alderman, Cut-in-half cringed like a dog, and said: 'Faith of a man! you were wrong to strike me, Alderman, and to think that I wished any harm to Gringalet; on the contrary, I repeat to you that I was teaching a new trick to my ape; he is not sweet-tempered when he is angry, and if, in the scuffle, the little one was bitten, I am sorry for it. 'Hum!' said the Alderman, looking at him out of the corner of his eye, 'is this really true, what you tell me? If you wish to teach a trick to your ape, why did you fasten him to Gringalet?' 'Because Gringalet must also know it. This is what I wish to do; I will dress Gargousse in a red coat and a cap with feathers; I will seat Gringalet in a child's chair; then I will put a towel around his neck, and the ape, with a large wooden razor will pretend to shave him.'

"The Alderman could not keep from laughing at this idea. 'Is it not comical?' said Cut-in-half, with a smirking look. 'In truth, it is,' said the Alderman, 'so much the more as they say your ape is sufficiently cunning and knowing to play such a part.

"I think so. When he has seen me five or six times pretend to shave Gringalet, he will imitate me with his large wooden razor; but on that

account, as the child must become used to him, I have tied them together.'

"But why have you chosen Gringalet rather than any other?"

"Because he is the smallest of all, and, being seated, Gargousse will be larger than he is; besides, I intended to give half the profits to Gringalet.'

"If this is so,' said the Alderman, reassured by the hypocrisy of the owner of the beasts, 'I regret the dose I gave you; consider it as an advance against the next time you do wrong.'

"While his master spoke with the Alderman, Gringalet dared not breathe; he trembled like a leaf, and longed to throw himself at the Alderman's feet, and beg to be taken away; but his courage failed him, and he began again to despair, saying to himself, 'I shall be like the poor fly of my dream--the spider will devour me; I was wrong to believe that the golden gnat would save me!'

"Look here, my boy; since Daddy Cut-'em-in-half gives you half of the money, that ought to encourage you to accustom yourself to the ape. Bah! bah! you will do it; and if the profits are large, you will have no cause to complain.'

"He complain! Have you any reason to complain?' asked his master, giving him a side look so terrible that the child wished he was a hundred feet under ground.

"No, no, master!' he stammered.

"You see, Alderman,' said Cut-in-half, 'he never has complained. I only wish for his welfare, after all. If Gargousse scratched him the first time, it shall not happen again, I promise you. I will watch.'

"Very well! Thus every one will be content.'

"Gringalet the most,' said Cut-in-half; 'is it not so?'

"Yes, yes, master,' said the trembling child.

"And to console you for your scratches, I will give you part of a good breakfast; for the Alderman is going to send a plate of cutlets and pickles, four bottles of wine, and a gallon of brandy.'

"At your service, Cut-in-half, my cellar and my kitchen are open for the whole world.'

"At heart the Alderman was a good man, but he was not very wise, and he liked to sell his wine, and cutlets also. The rascal knew it well; you see that he sent him off contented at having sold some eatables and drinkables, and reassured as to the fate of Gringalet. So now, here is the poor little fellow fallen again into the power of his master. The moment the Alderman had turned on his heels, Cut-in-half showed the staircase to his victim,

and ordered him to mount at once to his garret; the child did not allow him to say it twice, but went, very much alarmed.

"Oh, Lord! I am lost,' he cried, throwing himself upon the straw beside his turtle, and weeping bitterly. He was there for a good hour sobbing, when he heard Cut-in-half's coarse voice calling him. What increased the fear of Gringalet was, that it seemed to him the voice of his master had a strange sound.

"Will you come down at once?' said the owner of the beasts, with a horrid oath.

"The child quickly descended the stairs. Hardly had he put his foot on the ground, when his master seized him, and carried him to his chamber, staggering at each step, for Cut-in-half had drunk so much that he was as tipsy as a sow, and could hardly keep his legs; his body swayed backward and forward, and he looked at Gringalet, rolling his eyes in a most ferocious manner, but without speaking. He had too thick a tongue. Never had the child been more afraid of him.

"Gargousse was chained to the foot of the bed. In the middle of the room was a chair with a cord hanging on the back.

"Si--(hic!)--sit down there,'" continued Pique-Vinaigre, imitating, to the end of his story, the stammering of a drunken man, whenever he related what Cut-in-half said.

"Gringalet seated himself trembling. Then Cut-in-half, without saying a word, wound the cord around him, and tied him to the chair, and that not easily; for although the owner of the beasts could still see a little, and knew what he was about, you may imagine he made granny's knots. At length Gringalet is firmly fastened in the chair. 'Oh, dear,' he murmured, 'this time no one will come to deliver me.'

"Poor little fellow, he was right; no one could--no one did come, as you will see. The Alderman had gone, and Cut-in-half had double-locked the door of the court on the inside, and drawn the bolt; no one could come there to the aid of Gringalet."

"Oh! this time," said several of the prisoners, much interested in the story, "Gringalet, you are lost!"

"Poor little fellow!"---"What a pity!"

"If twenty sous would save him, I would give them."

"I also."

"Rascal of a Cut-in-half! Whatever is he going to do?"

Pique-Vinaigre continued: "When Gringalet was tied to the chair, his master said to him, 'You young rascal, it is you who have been the cause that--I have been beaten by the Alderman--you--are--go-o-o-ing to die!' And he drew

from his pocket a large razor, newly sharpened, opened it, and took with one hand Gringalet by the hair."

A murmur of indignation and horror circulated among the prisoners, and interrupted for a moment Pique-Vinaigre, who resumed:

"At sight of the razor the child began to cry, 'Pardon! master, pardon! do not kill me! 'C-r-r-r-y, c-r-r-y, b-o-o-y--you will not (hic!) cry long,' answered Cut-in-half.

"Golden gnat! golden gnat! help!' cried poor Gringalet, almost delirious, recalling to his mind his dream; 'here is the spider going to kill me!'

"Ah! you call--me--a-a-a (hic!) spider!' said Cut-in-half; 'on account--o-of--that--and other things you--are--go-o-o-ing to (hic!) die--do you hear-r-r?--but--not by my (hic!) hand--because, besides, they will guillotine me-e-e. I will say--and--prove--that it was--the a-a-pe--I have prepared--but no matter!' said Cut-in-half, hardly able to stand; then, calling his ape, which, at the end of his chain, ground his teeth, and looked alternately at his master and the child:

"Look here, Gargousse,' he said showing him the razor and Gringalet, whom he held by the hair, 'you must do so to him; do you (hic!) see?'

"And passing the back of the razor several times over the throat of Gringalet, he pretended to cut it. The confounded ape was such a good imitator, so wicked, and so malicious, that he comprehended what his master wished; and, to prove it to him, shook his chain with the left paw, threw his head back, and pretended to cut his throat. 'That's it, Gargousse--that's it,' said Cut-in-half stammering, shutting his eyes, and reeling so much that he came near, falling with Gringalet and the chair. 'Yes, that's it; I'll unfasten your chain--cut his whistle--that's it; hey, Gargousse?'

"The ape cried and chattered, as if to say yes, and put out his paw to take the razor, which was held toward him.

"Golden gnat, help!' murmured Gringalet, in a crying tone, certain now that his hour was come. For, alas! he called the golden gnat to his assistance, without any hope that he would come; but he said that as one says 'Oh, Lord!' when one is drowning. Just at this moment, Gringalet saw come in at the window one of those small flies, green and gold, which are so common; one would have called it a spark of fire which flew, and just at the moment Cut-in-half gave the razor to Gargousse, the golden gnat flew straight into the eye of the wicked wretch. A fly in the eye is no great thing; but, for a moment, it stings like a prick with a needle; so Cut-in-half, who could hardly stand, fell on the floor and rolled like a log to the foot of the bed where Gargousse was chained.

"Golden gnat, I thank you; you have saved me!' cried Gringalet; for, still seated, and tied on the chair, he had seen everything."

"It is true enough, the golden gnat prevented his throat from being cut," cried the prisoners, transported with joy.

"Hooray for the golden gnat!" cried Blue Cap.

"Yes, long live the golden gnat!" repeated several voices.

"Bravo, Pique-Vinaigre and his stories!" said another.

"Stop, then," resumed the patterer, "here's the finest and most terrible part of the story that I had promised you. Cut-in-half had fallen on the ground like lead; he was so drunk that he stirred no more than a log; he was dead drunk, and knew nothing; but, in falling, he came near crushing Gargousse, and had almost broken one of his hind paws. You know how wicked this villainous beast was--rancorous and malicious. He held on to the razor which his master had given him to cut the throat of Gringalet. What does my lovely ape do when he sees his master stretched on his back, immovable as a fried carp, and much at his ease? He sprung upon him, crouched on his breast, with one of his paws stretched the skin of his throat, and with the other--click! he cut his windpipe in a moment, exactly as Cut-in-half had shown him how to operate on Gringalet."

"Bravo!"

"Well done!"

"Long live Gargousse!"

"The little golden gnat forever!"

"Bravo, Gringalet!"

"Hooray, Gargousse!" cried the prisoners with enthusiasm.

"Well, my friends!" cried Pique-Vinaigre, enchanted at the success of his story, "what you have just cried, all Little Poland cried an hour later."

"How is that--how?"

"I told you that, to do this bloody deed quite at his ease, Cut-in-half had locked his door on the inside. In the evening, the children returned, one after the other, with their beasts; the first knocked--no answer; at length, when they were all assembled, they knocked again--no reply; one of them went after the Alderman, and told him that they had knocked, and that their master did not open the door. 'The fellow is as drunk as a Dutchman,' said he. 'I sent him some wine just now; we must break open the door; the children cannot remain all night out of doors.'

"They break open the doors, they enter, they mount the stairs, they reach the chamber, and what do they see? Gargousse, chained and crouching on the body of his master, and playing with the razor; poor Gringalet, happily out of his reach, still seated, and tied on the chair, not daring to cast his eyes on the dead body, and looking at--guess what? The little golden fly, which, after having fluttered around the child, as if to felicitate him, had finally come and seated itself on his little hand. Gringalet related

all to the Alderman, and the crowd who followed him; this appeared truly, as they said, an act of Providence; then the Alderman said, 'A triumph to Gringalet; a triumph to Gargousse, who has killed this bad Cut-in-half. He cut others; it was his turn to be cut!'

"Yes, yes!" said the crowd, for the defunct was detested by everybody, 'a triumph for Gargousse! a triumph for Gringalet.'

"It was night; they lighted wisps of straw, they tied Gargousse on a bench, which four boys carried on their shoulders; the sweet pet of an ape did not appear to dislike this, and assumed the airs of a conqueror, showing his teeth to the crowd. After the ape came the Alderman, carrying Gringalet in his arms: all the little boys, each with his beast, surrounded the Alderman; one carrying his fox, another his marmoset, another his guinea-pig: those who played on the hurdygurdy, played on the hurdygurdy; there were chimney-sweeps, with their bagpipes, who also played; it was an uproar of joy, which cannot be imagined! Behind the musicians came all the inhabitants of Little Poland, men, women, and children; they all held torches, and shouted like madmen, 'Hooray, Gringalet!' 'Gargousse forever!' The cortege in this order marched round the house of Cut-in-half. It was a droll spectacle; the old buildings and all the figures illuminated by the red light of the straw fires, which flickered, and sparkled, and blazed up! As to Gringalet, the first thing he did, once at liberty, was to place the little golden fly in a paper box; and he kept repeating, during his triumph, 'Little golden gnat, I did well to hinder the spiders from eating you, for---'"

The recital of Pique-Vinaigre was interrupted.

"Roussel, ahoy!" cried a voice from without; "come then, and eat your soup; four o'clock will strike in ten minutes."

"All right! the story is about finished. I'll go. Thank you, my boy, you have amused me finely; you may be proud of it," said the keeper to Pique-Vinaigre, going toward the door. Then, stopping, "Be good boys!" he added, to the prisoners, turning around.

"We are going to hear the end of the story," said Skeleton, almost bursting with restrained rage. Then he whispered to the Big Cripple, "Go to the door, look after the keeper, and when you have seen him go out of the court, cry 'Gargousse!' and the spy is dead."

"Just so," said the Cripple, who accompanied the keeper, and remained standing near the door, watching him.

"I told you, then," said Pique-Vinaigre, "that Gringalet, all the time of his triumph, said to himself, 'Little gnat, I have---'"

"Gargousse!" cried the cripple.

"Mine! Gringalet, I will be your spider!" shouted Skeleton, throwing himself on Germain so that he could neither make a movement nor utter a cry. His voice died under the formidable grasp of the long iron fingers.

CHAPTER XI.

AN UNEXPECTED FRIEND.

"If you are the spider, I will be the golden gnat, Skeleton of evil!" cried a voice, at the moment when Germain, surprised by the violence and sudden attack of his implacable enemy, fell backward on his bench, at the mercy of the ruffian, who, with one knee on his breast, held him by the throat.

"Yes, I will be the gnat, and, what is more, a famous gnat!" repeated the man in the blue cap, of whom we have spoken; then, with a furious bound, overturning three or four prisoners who separated him from Germain, he sprung upon Skeleton, and struck him on his head, between the eyes, such a torrent of blows with his fists that the sound was like a hammer upon an anvil.

The man in the blue cap (who was no other than the Chourineur) added, as he redoubled the rapidity of his hammering on the head of the Skeleton, "It is the hail-storm of fisticuffs which M. Rudolph planted on my skull. I have learned the trick."

At this unexpected assault, the prisoners were struck with surprise, taking no part for or against the Chourineur. Many of them, still under the salutary impression of the story of Pique-Vinaigre, were even satisfied at this incident, which might save Germain. Skeleton, at first stunned, staggered like an ox under the butcher's ax, extended his hand mechanically to ward off the blows of his enemy. Germain was enabled to disengage himself from the mortal grip, and half arose.

"But what is all this? who is this bruiser?" cried the Cripple; and springing upon the Chourineur, he tried to seize his arms from behind, while the latter endeavored to hold down Skeleton on the bench.

The defender of Germain answered the attack by a kick so violent, that he sent the Cripple rolling to the extremity of the circle formed by the prisoners. Germain, of a livid paleness, half suffocated, kneeling beside the bench, did not appear to have any consciousness of what was passing around him. The strangulation had been so violent and painful he hardly breathed. After he had recovered a little, Skeleton, by a desperate effort, succeeded in shaking off the Chourineur, and getting upon his feet. Panting, drunk with rage and hatred, he was frightful. His cadaverous face streamed with blood, his upper lip, drawn back like a mad wolf's, displayed his teeth closely set against each other. At length he cried, in a voice breathless with anger and fatigue, for his struggle with the Chourineur had been violent, "Cut him down, the turncoat, cowards! who let me be attacked traitorously, or the spy will escape."

During this kind of truce, the Chourineur, raising up the half-fainting Germain, had skillfully managed to approach by degrees an angle of the

wall, where he placed him. Profiting by this excellent position of defense, the Chourineur could then, without fear of being attacked from behind, hold out a long time against the prisoners, on whom the courage and Herculean strength which he had just displayed made a powerful impression. Pique-Vinaigre, alarmed, had disappeared during the tumult, without any one remarking his absence.

Seeing the hesitation of the greater part of the prisoners, Skeleton said, "Come on, then, let us do the job for both of them, the big 'un and the little spy."

"Not too fast!" answered the Chourineur, preparing for the combat; "look out for yourself, Bones! If you wish to play Cut-in-half, I will play Gargousse--I'll cut your weasand."

"Why don't you jump on him?" cried the Cripple. "Why does this madman defend the spy? Death to the spy, and him also! If he defends Germain, he is a traitor."

"Yes! yes!"

"Death to the betrayers!"

"Death!"

"Yes; death to the traitor who defends him!"

Such were the cries of several of the prisoners. A part of them, more merciful, cried, "Not before he speaks!"

"Yes, let him explain!"

"A man must not be killed without a hearing!"

"And without defense!"

"One would be a regular Cut-in-half!"

"So much the better!" answered the Cripple and the partisans of Skeleton.

"One cannot do too much to a spy!"

"Death to him!"

"Fall upon him!"

"Let us support Skeleton!"

"Yes, yes! down with the Blue Cap!"

"No; let us sustain the Blue Cap! hang the Skeleton!" answered the party of the Chourineur.

"No; down with the Blue Cap!"

"Down with Skeleton!"

"That's the ticket, pals!" cried the Chourineur, addressing those prisoners who ranged themselves on his side; "you have hearts; you will not see a man murdered who is half dead; only cowards are capable of such conduct. Skeleton is no bad joker; he is condemned in advance; that is the reason why he urges you on. But if you aid him to kill Germain, you will be roughly treated. Besides, I have a proposition to make. Skeleton wants to finish this young man. Well! let him come and take him, if he can: it will be a match between ourselves; we will walk into each other, and you will see; but he dares not--he is like Cut-in-half, strong among the kids."

The vigor, energy, and hardy aspect of the Chourineur had a powerful effect on the prisoners; a considerable number ranged themselves on his side, and surrounded Germain; Skeleton's party were grouped around that ruffian. A bloody affray was about to take place, when the quick and measured step of a guard of infantry was heard in the court. Pique-Vinaigre, profiting by the noise and general commotion, had gained the court and knocked at the wicket, in order to inform the keepers of what was going on in the hall. The arrival of the soldiers put an end to the scene. Germain, Skeleton, and the Chourineur were conducted to the governor's presence; the first to lodge his complaint, the others to answer the charge of a fight in the prison.

The alarm and sufferings of Germain were so intense, his weakness so great, that he was obliged to lean on two of the keepers to reach the governor's room. There he became quite faint; his excoriated throat bore the livid and bloody marks of the Skeleton's iron fingers. A few seconds more, and the betrothed of Rigolette would have been strangled. The keeper charged with the hall watch, who, as we have said, was much interested for Germain, gave him every assistance. When he came to himself, when reflection succeeded the rapid and terrible emotions that had hardly left him the exercise of his reason, his first thought was for his deliverer.

"Thank you for your attentions, sir," he said to the keeper; "but for that courageous man, I was lost."

"How are you now?"

"Better. Ah! all that has passed seems to me like a horrid dream!"

"Recover yourself."

"And my savior, where is he?"

"In the governor's room. He is telling how the affray occurred. It appears that without him----"

"I should have been murdered, sir. Oh! tell me his name--who is he?"

"His name I do not know; he is nicknamed the Slasher; he was once in the

galleys."

"And the crime which brought him here, perhaps, is not serious?"

"Very serious--burglary," said the keeper. "He will probably have the same dose as Pique-Vinaigre; fifteen or twenty years of hard labor, and the pillory, as he is an old offender."

Germain shuddered; he would have preferred to be bound by the ties of gratitude to one less criminal.

"Oh! it is frightful," he said; "and yet this man, without knowing me, took my part. So much courage, so much generosity."

"What would you have, sir? Sometimes there is some good left in these people. The most important fact is, that you are saved; to-morrow you will have your own cell, and for to-night you will sleep in the infirmary, according to orders. Come, courage, sir! The worst is over; when your pretty little visitor comes to see you, you can reassure her; for, once in your own cell, you will have nothing more to fear."

"Oh! no, I will not speak to her about it; but I wish to thank my defender. However culpable he may be in the eyes of the law, he has none the less saved my life."

"I hear him leaving the governor's room. Skeleton is now to be examined; I will take them back together, Skeleton to the dungeon, and the Slasher to the Lions' Den. He will, besides, be a little recompensed for what he has done for you; for as he is a bold and determined fellow, such as one should be to lead others, it is probable that he will take the place of Skeleton as provost."

The Slasher having crossed a little lobby, on which opened the governor's room, entered the apartment where Germain was seated.

"Wait for me here," said the keeper to the Slasher; "I am going to learn what the governor decides to do with the Skeleton, and I will return directly for you. There is our young man quite recovered; he wishes to thank you, and he has reason too, for without you all had been finished for him." The keeper retired. Slasher's features were radiant with delight. He advanced joyfully, saying:

"Thunder! how happy I am at saving you!" And he extended his hand to Germain.

He, from a feeling of involuntary repulsion, at first drew back slightly, instead of taking the hand offered by the Slasher; then, recollecting that, after all, he owed his life to this man, he wished to make amends for this first movement of repugnance. But the Slasher had perceived it; a gloom spread over his face, and drawing back in his turn, he said, with much bitterness, "Ah! it is right. Pardon me, sir."

"No, it is I who should ask your pardon. Am I not a prisoner like you? I

should only think of the service you have rendered me--you have saved my life. Your hand, friend, I entreat you. I pray you, your hand."

"Thank you; now it is useless. The first movement is everything. If you had at first given me your hand, that would have given me pleasure; but, on reflection, it is I who do not wish it. Not because I am a prisoner, like you, but," he added, in a hesitating and gloomy manner, "because, before I was here, I was--"

"The keeper has told me all," replied Germain, interrupting him; "but you have none the less saved my life."

"I have done but my duty and pleasure, for I know who you are, M. Germain."

"You know me?"

"A little, my boy; I talk to you like a father," said the Slasher, resuming his tone of habitual carelessness; "and you would be very wrong to place my arrival at La Force on the back of chance. If I had not known you, I should not have been here."

Germain looked at the Slasher with the utmost surprise.

"How, because you knew me---"

"I am here a prisoner in La Force."

"I wish to believe you, but---"

"But you do not believe me."

"I wish to say that it is impossible for me to comprehend how it can be that I have anything to do with your imprisonment."

"Have anything to do? You have everything."

"I have this misfortune!"

"A misfortune! On the contrary, it is I who am indebted to you; and very much, that is more."

"To me--you indebted to me!"

"Yes, for having procured me the advantage of making a call at La Force."

"Truly," said Germain, passing his hand over his face, "I do not know whether the terrible shock I received has impaired my reason, but it is impossible for me to understand you. The keeper has just told me that you were accused of--of--" And Germain hesitated.

"Of robbery, I dare say? Yes, burglary, and at night, into the bargain! Everything under full sail," cried the Slasher, shouting with laughter.

"Nothing was wanting--my robbery had all the modern improvements to make it

a bang-up work."

Germain, painfully affected by the audacious boldness of the Slasher, could not help saying, "How, you, so brave, so generous, talk thus? Do you not know the terrible punishment that awaits you?"

"Twenty years in the galleys, and the pillory! I am a headstrong scoundrel, to take it so coolly? But what would you have when one is in for it? And yet to think that it is you, M. Germain," added the Slasher, uttering a heavy sigh, in a manner jokingly contrite, "who are the cause of my misfortune!"

"When you explain yourself more clearly, I shall understand you. Joke as much as you please, my gratitude for the service you have rendered me will be none the less," said Germain, sadly.

"I ask your pardon, M. Germain," answered the Slasher, becoming more serious; "you do not like to see me laugh at this; let us speak no more about it. I must have a little explanation with you, and force you, perhaps, once more to offer me your hand."

"I do not doubt it; for, notwithstanding the crime of which you are accused, and of which you accuse yourself, everything in you announces courage and frankness. I am sure you are unjustly suspected; appearances, perhaps, compromise you."

"Oh! as to that, you are wrong, M. Germain," said the Slasher, so seriously this time, and with such an accent of sincerity, that Germain was forced to believe him. "As true as that I have a protector" (the Slasher took off his cap), "who is for me what the Judge above is for the good priests, I robbed at night, by breaking in at a window; I was caught in the fact, and secured, with the stolen goods in my possession."

"But want, hunger, drove you, then, to this extremity?"

"Hunger? I had a hundred and twenty francs when they arrested me--the change of a thousand-franc note, without counting that the protector of whom I have spoken, who does not know that I am here, will never let me want anything. But since I have spoken to you of my protector, you ought to believe that I am speaking the truth, because before him it is like going down on your knees. The torrent of blows I rained down on Bones is a fashion of his, which I copied after nature. The idea of the robbery, on account of him, came into my head. In fine, if you are here, instead of being strangled by Skeleton, thanks to him."

"But this protector?"

"Is yours also."

"Mine?"

"Yes! M. Rudolph protects you; when I say Monsieur, it is his highness that I ought to say, for he is a prince; but I am accustomed to call him M.

Rudolph, and he allows it."

"You mistake," said Germain, more and more surprised; "I do not know any prince."

"Yes, but he knows you; you do not doubt it? It is possible--it is his way. He hears there is a good man in trouble--slap! the good man is relieved, and he is neither seen nor known. I perplex you; for him happiness falls from the clouds like a tile on the head. Thus, patience! some day or other you will receive your tile."

"Truly, what you say confounds me."

"You will have a great deal more of the same! To return to my protector: some time since, after a service which he pretended I had rendered him, he procured me a slap-up situation. I have no need to tell you what--it would be too long; in a word, he sent me to Marseilles, to embark for my place. I left Paris contented as a beggar! Good! But soon that changed. A supposition: let us say that I left on a fine sunny day. Well! the next day is cloudy; the day after very cloudy, and every succeeding day more and more so, until, at length, it became as black as the devil. Do you comprehend?"

"Not exactly."

"Well, let us see. Did you ever keep a pup?"

"What a singular question!"

"Have you had a dog that loved you well, and that was lost?"

"No."

"Then I will tell you at once, that when at a distance from M. Rudolph, I was restless, uneasy, alarmed, like a dog that had lost his master. It was brutish, but the dogs also are brutes, and this does not prevent them from being attached to their masters, and remembering quite as much the good mouthfuls as the kickings they are accustomed to receive; and M. Rudolph had given me better than good mouthfuls, for, do you see, for me M. Rudolph is all in all. From a wicked, brutal, savage, and riotous rascal, he made me a kind of honest man, by saying only two words to me; but those words were like magic."

"And those words, what are they? What did he say to you?"

"He told me that I had still a 'heart' and 'honor,' although I had been to the hulks--not for having robbed, it is true. Oh! that, never, but for what is worse, perhaps--for having killed. Yes," said the Slasher, in a sad tone, "yes, killed in a moment of anger, because from my childhood, brought up like a brute, without father or mother, abandoned in the streets of Paris, I knew neither God nor the devil, nor good nor evil, nor strong nor weak. Sometimes the blood rushed to my eyes, I saw red, and if I had a knife in my hand, I stabbed--I stabbed! I was like a wolf; I could not

frequent any other places than those where I met beggars and ruffians; I did not put crape on my hat for that. I was obliged to live in the mire; I did not even know I was there. But, when M. Rudolph told me that since in spite of the contempt of the world and misery, instead of stealing, as others did, I had preferred to work as much as I could, and at what I could, that showed I had a heart and honor. Thunder! those two words had the same effect upon me as if some one had caught me by the hair, and raised me a thousand feet in the air above the beggars with whom I lived, and showed me in what mire I wallowed. Then, of course, I said, 'Thank you, I have enough.' Then my heart beat with something besides anger, and I swore to myself always to preserve this honor of which M. Rudolph had spoken. You see, M. Germain, by telling me with kindness that I was not as bad as I thought, M. Rudolph encouraged me, and, thanks to him, I have become better than I was."

On hearing this language, Germain comprehended still less how the Slasher could have committed the robbery of which he accused himself.

"No," thought Germain, "it is impossible; this man, who suffers himself to be thus carried away by the simple words honor and heart, cannot have committed this robbery of which he speaks with such ease."

The Slasher continued, without remarking the astonishment of Germain: "Finally, the reason why I am to M. Rudolph like a dog to his master, is that he has raised me in my own estimation. Before I knew him, I was only sensible to the touch; but he made me feel within, and deep down, I bet you. Once separated from him and the place where he dwelt, I found myself like a body without a soul. As I traveled on, I said to myself, 'He leads such a queer life! he mingles with such great scoundrels (I know something about it), that he will risk his bones twenty times a day,' and it is under these circumstances that I could play the dog for him, and defend my master; for I have good teeth. But, on the other hand, he had told me, 'You must, my friend, make yourself useful to others; go, then, where you may be of some good.' I had a great desire to answer him, 'For me, there is no one to serve, but you, M. Rudolph.' But I did not dare. He had told me to 'Go.' I went; and I have obeyed him as well as I was able. But, thunder! when the time came to get into the tub, leave France, and place the sea between M. Rudolph and me, without the hope of ever seeing him again, in truth, I had not the courage. He told his correspondent to give me a heap of money as heavy as I am when I should embark. I went to see the gentleman. I told him, 'It is impossible just now; I prefer the solid ground. Give me enough to get back to Paris on foot. I have good legs. I cannot embark. M. Rudolph may say what he pleases; he will be angry, he will not see me any more. Possibly I shall see him; I shall be where he is; and if he continues the life he leads, sooner or later, I shall arrive in time, perhaps, to put myself between a knife and him.' And, besides, I cannot live so far away from him. At length they gave me enough for my journey. I arrived at Paris. I do not fear trifles: but once back fear seized me. What could I say to M. Rudolph to excuse myself for having returned without his permission? Bah! after all, he will not eat me. What is to be will be. I will go to find his friend a bald man--another trump, this one. Thunder! when M. Murphy came in, I said, 'My fate will be decided.' I felt my throat dry--my heart beat a tattoo. I expected to be scolded soundly. The worthy man received me as

as if he had left me the evening previous. He told me that M. Rudolph, far from being angry, wished to see me at once. In short, he took me to my protector. Thunder! when I found myself again face to face with him, who has such an open hand and so good a heart, terrible as a lion, and gentle as a child, a prince, who has worn a blouse like me--to have the opportunity (which I bless) of punching my eye. Faith, M. Germain, on thinking of all these fascinations which he possesses, I felt myself done up. I wept like a doe. Well! instead of laughing--for imagine my mug when I weep--M. Rudolph said to me, seriously:

"So you are back again, my good fellow?"

"Yes, M. Rudolph, pardon me if I am wrong, but I could not go. Make me a little nest in the corner of your court, give me my food, or let me earn it here; that is all I ask from you; and, above all, do not be angry because I have returned.'

"I am so far from that, my good friend, that you have returned just in time to render me a service.'

"I, M. Rudolph! Can it be possible! Well, do you see, it must be, as you told me, that there is Something upstairs; otherwise, how explain that I arrive here just at the moment when you have need of me? What is it, then, I can, do for you, M. Rudolph--jump from the top of the towers of Notre-Dame?"

"Less than that, my man. An honest, excellent young man, in whom I am as much interested as if he were my son, is unjustly accused of robbery, and confined in La Force; he is called Germain, and is of a mild and gentle disposition; the scoundrels with whom he is imprisoned have taken an aversion to him; he may be in great danger; you, who have unfortunately the experience of a prison life, and know a great number of prisoners, could you not, in case some of your old comrades should be at La Force, could you not go and see them, and, by promises of money which shall be faithfully kept, engage them to protect this unhappy young man?"

"But who, then, is this generous and unknown man, who takes so much interest in my fate?" said Germain, more and more surprised.

"You will know, perhaps; as for me, I am ignorant. To return to my conversation with M. Rudolph: while he was talking an idea struck me, but an idea so laughable, that I could not keep from laughing before him. 'What is the matter?' said he.

"M. Rudolph, I laugh, because I am content, and I am content because I have the means of placing your M. Germain out of all dangers, by giving him a protector who will defend him bravely; for, once the young man is under the wing of the fellow of whom I speak, there is not one of them will dare to come and look under his nose.'

"Very well, my friend; it is doubtless one of your old companions?"

"Exactly, M. Rudolph; he entered La Force some days ago; I learned this

on my arrival; but we must have some money.'

"How much?'

"A thousand francs.'

"Here they are.'

"Thank you, M. Rudolph; in two days you shall hear from me; your servant, sirs.' Thunder! the king was not my master: I could render a service to M. Rudolph by joining you; it was that which was famous."

"I begin to understand, or rather, I tremble to understand," cried Germain; "such fidelity cannot be possible! to come to protect me, defend me in this prison, you have, perhaps, committed a robbery? oh! this would be the sorrow of my whole life."

"Stop a bit! M. Rudolph had told me that I had a heart and honor; these words are my law, do you see; and he can tell me so yet; for if I am no better than formerly, at least I am no worse."

"But this robbery? this robbery? If you have not committed it, how are you here?"

"Stop a moment. Here is the plant; with my thousand francs I went and bought a black wig; I shaved off my whiskers; I put on blue spectacles; I stuck a pillow on my back, and made up a hump. I began at once to look for one or two rooms on a ground floor in a retired street. I found my affair in the Rue du Provence; I paid my rent in advance under the name of Grøgoire. The next day I went to the Temple to buy furniture for my two rooms, always wearing my black wig, hump, and blue barnacles, so that I might be well known. I sent the things to the Rue du Provence, and six silver spoons and forks which I bought on the Boulevard Saint Denis, still in my disguise as a hunchback. I returned to put all these in order in my domicile, I said to the porter that I should not sleep there for two days, and I carried away my key. The windows of the two rooms were fastened by strong shutters. Before I went away, I left one unfastened on the inside. At night I took off my wig, goggles, and hump, with which I had been to make my purchases and hired my rooms. I put this disguise in a trunk, which I sent to the address of M. Murphy, the friend of M. Rudolph, begging him to take care of it. I bought this blouse and blue cap, and a jimmy, and at one o'clock in the morning I came to the Rue du Provence to hang about my lodgings waiting until the patrol should pass, to commence my robbery, my burglary, in order to be copped!"

The Slasher was unable to suppress a hearty fit of laughter. "Oh! I comprehend," cried Germain.

"But you will see if I had not ill-luck: no police passed. I could have robbed myself twenty times at my ease. At length, about two o'clock, I heard the snails at the end of the street; I opened my window, and broke two or three panes of glass to make a devil of a noise; I dashed in the window, jumped into the room, and seized the money box and some clothes.

Happily, the patrol had heard the jingling of the glass just as I got out of the window. I was nabbed by the guard, who, at the noise of breaking glass, had come to see what was the matter. They knocked at the door; the porter opened it; they sent for the commissary; he came; the porter said that the rooms had been taken the evening previous by a gentleman with a hunchback, with black hair and blue spectacles, and who was named Grøgoire. I had the flaxen wool which you see; I had my eyes open like a hare in her form; I was as straight as a Russian at the command, 'Carry arms!' They could never take me for the hunchback, with blue spectacles and black locks. I confessed every thing; I was arrested; they took me to the station--from there, here; and I arrived at a good moment, just in time to snatch from the claws of the Skeleton the young man of whom M. Rudolph had said, 'I am as much interested for him as for my own son.'

"Oh! what do I not owe you for such services!" cried Germain.

"It is not me--it is to M. Rudolph you owe it.'

"But the cause of his interest for me."

"He will tell you, unless he does not choose to do so; for often he is pleased to do good, and if you take it into your head to ask him why, he will not mind answering, 'Mind your own business!'"

"And does M. Rudolph know that you are here?"

"Not so stupid as to tell him my idea; he would not, perhaps, have allowed me the fun, and without bragging, it is rich."

"But the risks you have run and still run?"

"What did I risk? not to be conducted to La Force, where you were, that is true. But I counted on the protection of M. Rudolph, to have my prison changed and join you; a lord like him can do everything. And when I was once shut up, he would have wished me to be of service to you."

"But when your trial comes on?"

"Well! I will beg M. Murphy to send me my trunk; I will put on before the big wig, _my_ big wig, the blue spectacles, and the hump, and I will become M. Grøgoire again, send for the porter who let me the chamber, and for the shopkeepers who sold me the furniture; so much for the robbed. If they wish to see the robber again, I will throw off my disguise, and it will be as clear as day that the robbed and the robber make the sum total of the Slasher, neither more nor less. Then, what the devil would you have them do to me, when it shall be proved that I have robbed myself?"

"That's true!" said Germain, more assured; "but since you felt so much interest for me, why did you not speak to me on entering the prison?"

"I knew at once the plot which was formed against you; I could have exposed it before Pique-Vinaigre had commenced his story: but to denounce even such ruffians does not go down with me. I preferred to depend upon my fists to

drag you from the paws of Skeleton. And, besides, when I saw this brigand, I said to myself, 'Here is a fine occasion to practice the boxing of M. Rudolph, to which I am indebted for the honor of his acquaintance.'

"But if all the prisoners had taken part against you, what could you have done?"

"Then I should have screamed like an eagle, and called for help! But it suited me to do my own cooking myself; to be able to say to M. Rudolph, 'No one but I meddled in the affair. I have defended, and will defend, your young man; be tranquil!'"

At this moment the keeper entered quickly.

"M. Germain, come, make haste, to the governor's room. He wishes to speak to you at once. And you, Slasher, my boy, descend to the hall. You shall be provost if it suits you, for you have every requisite to fill the office, and the prisoners will not joke with a big un of your caliber."

"All the same to me-as well be captain as soldier while one is here."

"Will you still refuse my hand?" said Germain, cordially, to the Slasher.

"No, M. Germain, no; I believe that now I can allow myself this pleasure, and I do it with all my heart."

"We shall see each other again, for I am now under your protection. I shall have nothing more to fear, and from my cell I shall descend each day to the court."

"Be assured, if I wish it, they shall not speak to you except on all fours. But, now I think of it, you know how to write; put down on paper what I have just related to you, and send it to M. Rudolph; he will know that he need have no more uneasiness about you, and that I am here for a good motive; for if he should learn elsewhere that the Slasher had stolen, and he did not know the game--thunder! that would not suit me."

"Rest satisfied: this very night I will write to my unknown protector; to-morrow you will give me his address, and the letter shall be sent. Adieu, once more, thank you, my good fellow."

"Adieu, M. Germain; I go to return among this band of rascals, of whom I am provost; they will have to march pretty straight, or stand from under!"

"When I think that on my account you go to live for some time among these wretches--"

"What is that to me, now that there is no risk of their contaminating me. M. Rudolph has washed me too well. I am insured against fire."

And the Slasher followed the keeper. Germain entered the apartment of the governor. What was his surprise--he found Rigolette there.

Rigolette, pale, with deep emotion, her eyes bathed in tears, and yet smiling through these tears, her face expressed a sentiment of joy, of happiness indescribable.

"I have good news to tell you, sir," said the governor. "The judges have just declared that no action lies against you, and I have the order to set you immediately at liberty."

"What do you say, sir? Can it be possible?"

Rigolette wished to speak; her too lively emotion prevented her; she could only make to Germain an affirmative sign with her head.

"This young lady arrived here a few moments after I had received the order to set you at liberty," added the governor. "A letter of all-powerful recommendation which she brought me has informed me of the touching devotion she has shown you during your stay in prison, sir. It is, then, with great pleasure that I have sent for you, certain that you would be very happy to give your arm to the lady on leaving the place."

"A dream! surely it is a dream!" said Germain. "Oh, sir, what kindness! Pardon me if surprise--joy--prevents me from thanking you as I ought."

"And I, too, M. Germain, cannot find a word to say," added Rigolette. "Judge of my happiness: on leaving you, I found the friend of M. Rudolph waiting for me."

"M. Rudolph again!" said the astonished Germain.

"Yes; now I can tell you all. M. Murphy said to me then, 'Germain is free; here is a letter for the governor of the prison; before you arrive, he will have received the order to set Germain at liberty, and you can bring him away.' I could not believe what I heard, and yet it was true. Quick--quick--I took a cab--I arrived--and it is now below waiting for us."

We renounce the attempt to describe the delight of the two lovers when they left La Force; of the evening they passed in the little chamber of Rigolette, which Germain left at eleven o'clock for a modest furnished apartment. Let us sum up in a few words the practical or theoretical ideas we have endeavored to place in relief in this episode of a prison life. We shall esteem ourselves very happy if we have shown the insufficiency, the impotency, and the danger of imprisonment in common. The disproportion which exists between the appreciation and punishment of certain crimes, and those of certain other offenses. And, finally, the material impossibility for the poorer classes to enjoy the benefits of the civil laws.

CHAPTER XII.

PUNISHMENT.

We will conduct the reader again to the office of the notary, Jacques Ferrand. Thanks to the habitual loquacity of the clerks, almost constantly occupied with the increasing caprices of their patron, we can learn the events that occurred since the disappearance of Cecily.

"A hundred to ten, if the present state of his health continues, before a month the governor will be as dead as a doornail."

"The fact is, that since the servant who had the air of an Alsatian has left the house, he has had nothing but skin on his bones."

"And what skin!"

"I'll wager he was in love with this Alsatian, for it is since her departure that he has shriveled up so!"

"He in love? what nonsense! on the contrary, he sees the priests more than ever; and the parish curø, a very respectable man (one must be just), went away yesterday, saying (I overheard him) to another priest who accompanied him, 'This is admirable! M. Ferrand is the personification of Charity and Generosity.'"

"The curø said that? of himself? without prompting?"

"Yes! I heard him."

"Then, I can't understand it at all. The curø has the reputation, and deserves it, of being what is called a right good pastor."

"It is true; and of him we must speak seriously and with respect; he is as good and charitable as 'Little Blue Mantle,' [Footnote: We must be allowed to mention here, with veneration, the name of that excellent man, M. Champion, with whom we have not the honor of a personal acquaintance, but of whom all the poor of Paris speak with as much respect as gratitude.] and when one says that of a man he is judged."

"Ay, that is not a little to say."

"No. For 'Little Blue Mantle,' as well as for the good priest, the poor have only one word, and a good word it is, from the heart."

"Then I return to my idea; when the curø affirms a thing, he must be believed, as he is incapable of telling a falsehood; and yet to think as he does, that our master is charitable and generous--that sticks in my throat."

"Oh! how pretty that is, Chalamel! how pretty."

"Seriously, I would just as soon believe that as I would a miracle. It would not be more difficult."

"M. Ferrand generous! he would skin an egg!"

"And yet the forty sous for our breakfast?"

"Beautiful proof! It is like a pimple on the end of a man's nose--it is an accident."

"Yes, but, on the other hand, the head clerk told me that three days ago he sold out an enormous amount of treasury bonds, and that--"

"Well! speak then."

"It is a secret."

"So much the more reason for telling it."

"Your word and honor that you won't mention it?"

"On the heads of our children, we give it."

"And besides, let us remember what the great king Louis XIV. majestically said to the Doge of Venice before his assembled court:

"When a secret's told a clerk,
Its exposure he'll not burk!"

"Good! there is Chalamel with his proverbs!"

"I demand the head of Chalamel!"

"Proverbs are the wisdom of nations; it is on that account I require your secret."

"Come, none of your nonsense. I tell you the head clerk made me a promise to speak of it to no one."

"Yes; but he did not say that you should not tell it to every one?"

"It shall not go out of the office. Go on."

"He is dying with desire to tell us the secret."

"Well! the governor is about selling his notary's business. At this present moment, perhaps, it is done."

"Nonsense!"

"Here is news!"

"Let us see, without charge, who charges himself with the charge which he discharges?"

"Tush! how insupportable Chalamel is with his riddles."

"Do you think I know to whom he sells it?"

"If he sells it, it is because, perhaps, he wishes to come out, give balls, routs, in the gay world. After all, there is something in it."

"I think so, indeed! The head clerk spoke of more than a million, including the value of the business."

"More than a million!"

"It is said that he has been gambling in stocks secretly with Commandant Robert, and that he has made much money."

"Not to speak of his living like a curmudgeon."

"But these misers, when once they begin to spend money, become as prodigal as they were once mean."

"Well, I agree with Chalamel; I think that now the governor is coming out."

"And he would be most stupendously in the wrong not to bury himself in voluptuousness, and not to plunge into the delights of Golconda, if he has the means; for, as the misty Ossian says, in the grotto of Fingal,

"All-Ariel is it, yet not-arial, too,
That he should still be right,
Who roseate tapestry has in open view,
And of his gold makes light."

"I demand the head of Chalamel!"

"It is absurd!"

"Yes, and the governor looks very much like a man who thinks of amusing himself. He has a face that might cause the devil to appear on earth."

"And then the cure, who boasts of his charity!"

"Well-ordered charity begins at home."

"You do not know your ten commandments, heathen! If the governor asks from himself the alms of great pleasures, it is his duty to grant them."

"What astonishes me is, that this intimate friend, who seems to have dropped from the clouds, never leaves him."

"Not to mention his ugly face."

"He is as red as a carrot."

"I am rather inclined to believe that this intruder is the fruit of a first false step which M. Ferrand has committed in the springtime of life, for, as the Eagle of Meaux said concerning the taking of the veil by the tender

La Vallière,

"Young or old, whichever you love,
Crows may have an offspring dove!"

"I demand the head of Chalame!"

"In truth, with him it is impossible to talk reason a moment."

"What stupidity! To say that this stranger is the son of the governor, when he is the oldest, as is easy to be seen--"

"Well, what of that?"

"How? what of that? The son older than the father?"

"It is very plain; in that case, the intruder must have made the false step, and be the father of M. Ferrand, instead of being his son."

"I demand the head of Chalame!"

"Do not listen to him; you know, when once he is in the way of saying stupid things, there is no end to it."

"What is certain is, that this intruder has a bad face, and does not leave M. Ferrand for a moment."

"He is always with him in his cabinet; they eat together; one does not move without the other."

"I think I have seen the man before."

"I think not."

"Tell me, gents, have you not also remarked that for some days past, there comes regularly almost every two hours a man with great light mustaches and a military air, who asks the porter for the intruder? The intruder comes down, talks for a moment with the man with mustaches, after which the latter makes a half turn like an automaton, to come again in two hours after."

"It is true; I have remarked him. It seems to me, also, that I meet some men when I go into the street who appear to be watching the house."

"Seriously, there is something extraordinary going on here."

"Who lives long enough will see."

"On this subject the head clerk, perhaps, knows more than we do. But he plays the diplomatist."

"Exactly; and where is he, then, for so long a time?"

"He has gone to the house of the countess who was stabbed; it appears that she is now out of danger."

"The Countess M'Gregor?"

"Yes; this morning she sent for the governor to come at once, but he sent the head clerk in his place."

"It is, perhaps, for a will."

"No, because she is better."

"Hasn't he work enough now, the head clerk, since he has taken Germain's place also?"

"Speaking of Germain, here is another strange thing."

"What is it?"

"In order to have him set at liberty, the governor has declared it was he himself who made an error in his accounts, and that he had found the money which he accused Germain of stealing."

"I do not find this strange, but just; you recollect I always said that Germain was incapable of theft."

"It must, nevertheless, have been very disagreeable for him to be arrested and confined as a thief."

"If I were in his place I would sue Jacques Ferrand for damages."

"The least he could do would be to reinstate him as cashier, in order to prove that Germain was not culpable."

"Yes, but perhaps Germain would not be willing."

"Is he still at the farm, where he went on coming out of prison, and from which he wrote us to announce M. Ferrand's discontinuance of the suit?"

"Probably, for yesterday I went to the place where he directed us to go; they told me that he was still in the country, and that I could write to him at Bouqueval, near Ecoeu, at Madame George's."

"Oh! a carriage!" said Chalamel, leaning over toward the window.

"Nothing but a hackney-coach."

"And who gets out?"

"Stop a moment! Oh! a black-gown!"

"A woman! a woman! Oh! let us see."

"This gutter-jumper is indecently sensitive at his age; he only thinks of women. We shall have to chain him up, or he will carry off the Sabines from the streets; for, as said the Swan of Cambray in his Treatise on Education for the Dauphin,

"Of Gutter-jumper have a care,
Who assaults the lovely fair."

"I demand the head of Chalamel!"

"M. Chalamel, you said a black robe, I thought."

"It is the curø, goose! Let him be an example for you."

"The curø of the parish? The good pastor?"

"Himself."

"He is a worthy man!"

"He is no Jesuit, not he."

"I think not; and if all the priests were like him everybody would be devout."

"Silence! some one opens the door."

And all the clerks, bending over their desks, began to scratch away with apparent industry, making their pens pass rapidly over the paper. The pale face of this priest was at once mild and grave, intelligent and venerable, its expression full of benevolence and serenity. A small black cap concealed his tonsure, and his long gray hair floated on the collar of his maroon-colored coat. Let us add that, from his simple credulity, this excellent priest had always been, and was still, the dupe of Jacques Ferrand's deep and cunning hypocrisy.

"Your worthy master is in his cabinet, my son?" asked the curø.

"Yes, M. l'Abbø," said Chalamel, rising respectfully. And he opened for the priest the door leading into a room adjoining the office.

Hearing some one speaking with vehemence in the cabinet of the notary, the abbø, not wishing to hear, walked rapidly toward the door, and knocked.

"Come in," said a voice with an Italian accent, and the priest found himself face to face with Jacques Ferrand and Polidori.

[Illustration: THE STORY IS TOLD]

It would seem that the clerks were not wrong when they prophesied the death of their employer at no distant day. Since the flight of Cecily, the notary was hardly to be recognized. Although his visage was of a frightful thinness, and of a cadaverous hue, a hectic flush colored his hollow

cheeks; a nervous shivering, except when interrupted by convulsive spasms, agitated his frame continually; his bony hands were dry and burning; his large green spectacles concealed his bloodshot eyes, which sparkled with the fire of a consuming fever; in a word, this sinister face betrayed the ravages of a rapid consumption. The physiognomy of Polidori formed a contrast with that of the notary; nothing could be more bitterly, more coldly ironical than the expression of this scoundrel; a forest of fiery red hair, interspersed with some silvered locks, crowned his high and wrinkled forehead; his penetrating eyes, green as the ocean wave, were close to his hooked nose; his mouth, with its thin lips, expressed wickedness and sarcasm. Polidori, completely dressed in black, was seated beside the desk of Jacques Ferrand. At the sight of the priest they both arose.

"Well! how do you get on, my worthy M. Ferrand?" said the abbø, with solicitude; "are you a little better?"

"I am always in the same state, M. l'Abbø; the fever does not leave me," answered the notary; "the want of sleep is killing me. But the will of heaven be done!"

"See, M. l'Abbø," added Polidori, with emphasis, "what pious resignation! My poor friend is always the same; he only finds a solace for his sufferings in doing good."

"I do not deserve these praises, have the goodness to dispense with them," said the notary, dryly, with difficulty concealing his anger. "To the Lord alone belongs the appreciation of good and evil; I am only a miserable sinner."

"We are all sinners," answered the abbø gently; "but we have not all the charity which distinguishes you, my respected friend. There are very few who, like you, dispossess themselves of so much of their earthly wealth to employ it during their lifetime in a manner so Christian-like. Do you still persist in selling your business, in order to devote yourself more entirely to the practice of religion?"

"Since yesterday, my business is sold, M. l'Abbø; some concessions have enabled me to realize (a rare thing) the cash down: this sum, added to others, will enable me to found the institution of which I have spoken, and of which I have definitively arranged the plan that I am about to submit to you."

"Ah! my worthy friend," said the abbø, with deep and reverential admiration, "to do so much good--so unostentatiously--and, I may say, so naturally! I repeat to you, people like you are rare; they will receive their reward."

"It is true that very few persons unite, like Jacques Ferrand, riches to piety, intelligence to charity," said Polidori, with an ironical smile which escaped the notice of the good abbø.

At this new and sarcastic eulogium the hand of the notary was clinched; he

cast from under his spectacles a look of deadly hatred on Polidori.

"You see, M. l'AbbØ," the bosom friend of Jacques Ferrand hastened to say, "he has continually these nervous spasms, and he will do nothing for them. He worries me, he is his own executioner, my poor friend!"

At these words of Polidori, the notary shuddered still more convulsively, but he composed himself again. A man less simple than the abbØ would have remarked, during this conversation, and, above all, during what is about to follow, the notary's constrained manner of speaking; for it is hardly necessary to say that a will superior to his own, the will of Rudolph, in a word, imposed on this man words and acts diametrically opposed to his true character. Thus sometimes, pushed to extremities, the notary appeared reluctant to obey this all powerful and invisible authority; but a look from Polidori put an end to his indecision. Then, constraining with a sigh of rage his most violent feelings, Jacques Ferrand submitted to the yoke which he could not break.

"Alas! M. l'AbbØ," said Polidori, who seemed to take delight in torturing his victim, as is said vulgarly, by pricks of a pin, "my poor friend neglects his health too much. Tell him to be more careful of himself, if not for his own sake, for his friends', or, at least, for the unfortunates of whom he is the hope and support."

"Enough! enough!" murmured the notary.

"No, it is not enough," said the priest, with emotion; "we cannot repeat to you too often that you do not belong to yourself, and that it is wrong thus to neglect your health. In ten years that I have known you, I have never seen you ill; but for a month past you are no longer recognizable. I am so much the more struck with this alteration of your features, as I was for some time without seeing you. Thus, at our first interview, I could not conceal my surprise; but the change I have remarked in you for the last few days is much more serious: you sink every hour, you give us much uneasiness. I implore you, my worthy friend, take care of your health."

"I am very sensible of your solicitude, M. l'AbbØ; but I assure you that my condition is not so alarming as you think."

"Since you are so obstinate," said Polidori, "I will tell everything to the abbØ; he loves you--he esteems you--he honors you much; how much the more will he honor you when he shall know your new merits--when he shall know the true cause of your wasting away?"

"What is this?" asked the abbØ.

"M. l'AbbØ," said the notary, with impatience, "I begged you to come here to communicate to you projects of high importance, and not to hear me ridiculously praised by _my friend_."

"You know, Jacques, that from me you must be resigned to here everything," said Polidori, looking fixedly at the notary, who cast down his eyes, and remained silent. Polidori continued: "You perhaps remarked, M. l'AbbØ, that

the first symptoms of his nervous complaint appeared a short time after the abominable scandal which Louise Morel caused in this house."

The notary shuddered.

"You know of the crime of this unhappy girl, sir?" demanded the astonished priest; "I thought you had arrived but a few days since at Paris?"

"Without doubt, M. l'Abbø; but Jacques has related everything to me, as his friend--as his physician; for he attributes these nervous attacks almost entirely to the indignation which the crime of Louise Morel caused him. This is nothing, as yet; my poor friend, alas! had new trials to endure, which, you see, have ruined his health. An old servant, who for many years was attached to him by the ties of gratitude--"

"Madame Søraphin?" said the curø, interrupting Polidori. "I have heard of the death of this unfortunate, drowned by her own imprudence, and I comprehend the grief of M. Ferrand. It is not easy to forget ten years of faithful services; such regrets do credit to the master as well as to the servant."

"M. l'Abbø," said the notary, "I entreat you, do not speak of my virtues--you confuse me--it is painful."

"And who will speak of them, then--will it be yourself?" answered Polidori affectionately; "but you will be obliged to praise him still more, M. l'Abbø: you perhaps do not know who is the servant that took the place of Louise Morel and Madame Søraphin. You do not know what he has done for this poor Cecily, M. l'Abbø, for so she is named."

The notary started from his seat, his eyes sparkling under his spectacles, a burning red diffused over his livid face.

"Hush! be silent!" he cried; "not a word more. I forbid it!"

"Come, come, calm yourself," said the abbø, smiling benevolently; "another good action to reveal? As for myself, I strongly approve of the generous indiscretion of your friend. I did not know this servant, for it was just after her arrival that my worthy friend, overwhelmed with business, was obliged momentarily, to my great regret, to interrupt our relations."

"It was to conceal from you this new good action he meditated, M. l'Abbø; thus, although his modesty revolts at the mention of it, he must hear me, and you shall know all," said Polidori, smiling.

Jacques Ferrand was silent; he leaned on his desk, and concealed his face in his hands.

THE BANK FOR THE POOR.

"Imagine then, M. l'AbbØ," resumed Polidori, addressing the curØ, but emphasizing, as it were, each phrase by an ironical glance at Jacques Ferrand--"imagine that my friend found in his new servant, who, as I have already told you, was called Cecily, the best qualities, great modesty, angelic sweetness, and above all, much piety. This is not all; Jacques, you know, owes to his long practice in business affairs an extreme penetration; he soon saw that this young woman, for she was young and very pretty, M. l'AbbØ--that this young and pretty woman was not made for a servant, and that, to principles most virtuously austere, she added solid accomplishments very diversified."

"Ah, indeed, this is strange," said the abbØ, much interested. "I was entirely ignorant of these circumstances; but what is the matter, my good M. Ferrand? You seem to be suffering."

"In truth," said the notary, wiping the cold sweat from his brow, "I have a slight headache, but it will soon pass away."

Polidori shrugged his shoulders and smiled. "Observe, M. l'AbbØ," he added, "that Jacques is always thus when any one unveils his hidden charities; he is so hypocritical on the subject of the good he does! Happily, I am here, and justice shall be done him. Let us return to Cecily. In her turn she had soon found out the excellence of his heart, and, when he interrogated her as to the past, she confessed to him that, a stranger, without resources, and reduced by the misconduct of her husband to the most humble condition, she regarded it as a boon from heaven that she had been enabled to enter the house of a man so venerable as M. Ferrand. At the sight of so much misfortune, resignation, virtue, Jacques did not hesitate; he wrote to the native country of this unfortunate, to ascertain the truth of her story: the answer confirmed it in every particular; then, sure of not misplacing his benefactions, Jacques blessed Cecily as a father, sent her back to her own country with a sum of money which will enable her to wait for better days, and the chance of improving her condition. I will not add a word of praise for Jacques; the facts are more eloquent than my words."

"Good, very good," cried the curØ, much affected. "M. l'AbbØ," said Jacques Ferrand, in a hollow voice, "I do not wish to trespass upon your precious moments; speak no more of me, I implore you, but of the project for which I have begged you to come here and favor me with your advice."

"I perceive that the praises of your friend wound your modesty; let us occupy ourselves, then, with your new good deeds, and forget that you are the author; but, first, let us speak of the business you intrusted to my care. I have, according to your wishes, deposited in the Bank of France, and in my name, the sum of one hundred thousand crowns, destined to the restitution of which you are the intermediate agent and which was to pass through my hands. You have preferred that this deposit should not remain in your possession, although it seems to me it had been quite as secure there as in the bank."

"In that respect, M. l'AbbØ, I have conformed to the intentions of the unknown author of this restitution. It is an affair of conscience. At his request I have placed this sum in your hands, and begged you to remit it to madame the widow Fermont, whose maiden name was Renneville" (the voice of the notary trembled slightly in uttering these names), "when she should present herself to you, and prove herself to be entitled to the same."

"I will accomplish the mission which you confided to me," said the priest.

"It is not the last, M. l'AbbØ."

"So much the better, if the others resemble this; for without wishing to seek for the motives which impel it, I am always touched by a voluntary restitution. These lofty acts, which conscience alone dictates, are always the indications of sincere repentance, and it is no barren expiation."

"In truth, M. l'AbbØ, to restore a hundred thousand francs at once is rare; as for me, I have been more curious than you; but what availed my curiosity against the unshaken discretion of Jacques! Thus, I am still ignorant of the person's name who has made this noble restitution."

"Whoever he may be," said the abbØ, "I am certain that he stands very high in the esteem of M. Ferrand."

"This honest man is indeed, M. l'AbbØ, placed very high in my esteem," answered the notary, with a bitterness badly disguised.

"And this is not all, M. l'AbbØ," said Polidori, looking at Jacques Ferrand in a significant manner; "you will see how far these generous scruples of this unknown extend; and, if I must speak plainly, I suspect our friend of having contributed not a little to awaken these scruples, and of having found the names to calm them."

"How is that?" asked the priest.

"What do you mean to say?" added the notary.

"And the Morels? this good and virtuous family."

"Ah! yes, yes; in truth, I forgot," said Jacques Ferrand, in a hollow voice.

"Imagine, M. l'AbbØ," resumed Polidori, "that the author of this restitution, without doubt advised by Jacques Ferrand, not content with restoring this considerable sum, wishes still--but I will leave my worthy friend to explain; it is a pleasure of which I will not deprive him."

"I listen to you, my dear M. Ferrand," said the priest.

"You know," said Jacques Ferrand, with involuntary emotions of revolt against the part which was imposed on him--feelings which were betrayed by the alteration of his voice and the hesitancy of his speech; "you know, M. l'AbbØ, that the misconduct of Louise Morel was such a terrible blow for

her father, that he has become mad. The numerous family of the artisan ran the risk of dying from want, deprived of their sole support. Happily, Providence has come to their succor; and the person who has made the voluntary restitution of which you are the agent, M. l'Abbø, has not thought this a sufficient expiation for a great abuse of confidence. He asked me if I did not know any deserving family in want of assistance. I mentioned the Morels, and he begged me, at the same time giving me the necessary funds, which I will hand to you presently, to request you to settle an annuity of two thousand francs on Morel, revertible to his wife and children."

"But, in truth," said the abbø, "in accepting this new charge, doubtless very responsible, I am astonished that it was not bestowed on you."

"The unknown person has thought, and I coincide with him, that his good works would acquire an additional value, would be, thus to speak, sanctified by passing through hands as pious as yours, M. l'Abbø."

"To that I have nothing to answer; I will purchase an annuity of two thousand francs for Morel, the worthy and unfortunate father of Louise. But I think with your friend here that you have not been a stranger to the resolution which has dictated this new expiatory gift."

"I have pointed out the Morel family, nothing more; I beg you to believe me, M. l'Abbø," answered Jacques Ferrand.

"Now," said Polidori, "you are going to see, M. l'Abbø, what noble philanthropic views my friend Jacques has concerning the charitable establishment of which we have already had some conversation; he is going to read to you the plan which he has definitively arranged; the money necessary for the capital is there in the chest; but, since yesterday, he has had some scruples, and if he does not mention them to you, I will do it for him."

"It is useless," replied Jacques Ferrand, who sometimes chose rather to wound his feelings by his own words than to submit in silence to the ironical praises of his tormentor. "Here is the fact, M. l'Abbø. I have thought that it would be more modest--more Christian-like, that this establishment should not be instituted in my name."

"But this humility is overstrained," cried the abbø. "You can--you ought to pride yourself on your charitable investment. It is right, almost a duty, for you to attach your name to it."

"I prefer, M. l'Abbø, to preserve the incognito: I am resolved on it; and I count on your kindness to make all the necessary arrangements, and select the inferior officers of the establishment; I reserve alone for myself the nomination of the director and porter."

"Even if it were not a real pleasure for me to assist you in your good works, it would be my duty to accept the office."

"Now, M. l'Abbø, if you will allow it, my friend will read you the plan

decided upon."

"Since you are so obliging, _my friend_, " said Jacques Ferrand, with bitterness, "read it yourself. Spare me this trouble, I pray you."

"No, no," answered Polidori, casting a look at the notary which he well understood, "it gives me great pleasure to hear from your own lips the noble sentiments which have guided you in this work of philanthropy."

"So be it--I will read," said the notary, hastily, taking up a paper which lay upon his desk.

Polidori, for a long time the accomplice of Jacques Ferrand, knew the crimes and secret thoughts of the scoundrel; hence he could not suppress a malicious smile on seeing him forced to read this paper, dictated by Rudolph. As will be seen, the prince showed himself inexorable in the logical manner with which he punished the notary.

Lustful--he tortured him by lust. Covetous--by covetousness. Hypocritical--by hypocrisy. For Rudolph had chosen this venerable abbØ to be the agent for the restitutions and expiations imposed upon Jacques Ferrand, because he wished doubly to punish him for having, by his detestable hypocrisy, obtained the esteem and affection of the good priest. Was it not, in effect, a great punishment for this hideous impostor--this hardened criminal, to be constrained to practice, at length, the Christian virtues which he had so often feigned to possess, and this time _really_ to deserve the just eulogiums of a respectable priest who had been his dupe?

Jacques Ferrand read the following note with feelings imagined.

"Establishment of the Bank for Workmen out of Work."

'Love ye one another.'

"These divine words contain the germ of all duties, all virtues, all charities. They have inspired the humble founder of this Institution. To God alone belong the benefits it may confer. Limited, as to the means of action, the founder has wished that the greatest number possible of his brothers should participate in the succor offered. He addresses himself, in the first place, to honest, industrious workmen, with families, whom the want of work often reduces to the most cruel extremities. It is not a degrading alms which he gives to his brothers but a gratuitous loan which he offers. May this loan, as he hopes, prevent them often from resorting to those cruel pledges which they are forced to make (while awaiting the return of work), for the purpose of sustaining a family of which they are the sole support. The only guarantee for this loan which he demands from his brothers is their oath and honor. It has a revenue of twelve thousand francs, which will be loaned without interest to workmen with families and out of work, in sums of twenty to forty francs. These loans shall only be made to working men or women who shall bring a certificate of good conduct from their last employer, stating the cause and date of the suspension of employment. These loans will be repaid monthly by sixths or twelfths, at the choice of the borrower, commencing from the day on which he finds

employment. He will subscribe a simple engagement of honor to reimburse the loan at stated periods. To this will be added, as indorsers, the names of two of his companions. The workman who shall not reimburse the amount borrowed by him, cannot, he or his indorsers, have any claims for a new loan; or he will have forfeited a sacred engagement, and, above all, deprived several of his brothers of the advantages which he has enjoyed. The sums loaned, on the contrary, being scrupulously repaid, the same benefit can be bestowed on others. Not to degrade man by alms. Not to encourage idleness by a fruitless charity. To stimulate sentiments of honor and innate probity among the laboring classes. To come in a brotherly manner to the aid of the workman, who, living already with difficulty from day to day, cannot, when no work can be procured, _suspend_ his wants or those of his family, because his work is suspended. Such are the thoughts which have given rise to this institution. May He who has said, 'Love ye one another,' be glorified."

"Oh! sir," cried the abbø, with religious admiration, "what a charitable idea! how easily I can comprehend your emotion on reading these lines of such touching simplicity."

In truth, while finishing this reading, the voice of Jacques Ferrand was broken, his impatience and temper were at an end; but, watched by Polidori, he dared not, could not transgress the least orders of Rudolph. Let his rage be imagined at being forced to dispose so liberally of his fortune in favor of a class whom he had so unmercifully persecuted in the person of Morel the lapidary.

"Is not the idea excellent, M. l'Abbø?" asked Polidori.

"Oh, sir, I, who am acquainted with all kinds of poverty, can comprehend, better than any one, of what importance this loan would be to poor and honest workmen without employ. Indigence without employment never finds credit, or, if obtainable, it is at a most usurious rate; they will lend thirty sous at eight days, and then forty must be returned; and even these loans are very difficult to be obtained; those from the pawnbrokers cost often near three hundred per cent. The artisan without work often pledges for forty sous the only covering which, during the nights of winter, defends him and his from the rigor of the cold. But," added the abbø, with enthusiasm, "a loan of thirty or forty francs without interest, and reimbursable by twelfths, when work returns-for honest workmen, it is their safety, it is hope, it is life. And with what fidelity they would pay it back! It is a sacred debt, which they have contracted to give bread to their wives and children!"

"How precious the eulogiums of M. l'Abbø must be to you, Jacques," said Polidori; "and how many more will he pronounce when he hears of your establishment of a Feeless Pawnbroker's."

"How?"

"Certainly, M. l'Abbø, Jacques has not forgotten this; it is a kind of appendage to his Bank for the Poor."

"Can it be true?" cried the priest, clasping his hands with admiration.

"Continue, Jacques," said Polidori.

The notary proceeded to read with a rapid voice, for the whole scene was odious and hateful to him.

"These loans have for their object the remedy for one of the gravest incidents in the life of a laborer--intermission of work. They shall therefore be granted only to those out of employment. But it remains to provide for the other cruel embarrassments which reach even those with employment. Often, the loss of one or two days, caused sometimes by fatigue, by the attention necessary to bestow on a wife or sick child, deprives the workman of his daily resources. Then he has recourse to the pawnbroker's, or to unlawful lenders of money, at an enormous rate of interest. Wishing, as much as possible, to lighten the burden of his brothers, the founder of the Bank of the Poor sets apart an income of twenty-five thousand francs a year, for the purpose of lending on pledges, not to exceed the amount of ten francs for each loan. The borrowers will pay neither cost nor interest, but they must prove that they follow an honorable profession, and produce a declaration from their employers which will prove their morality. At the end of two years, the articles which have not been redeemed will be sold, without costs; the proceeds arising from the surplus of this sale shall be placed, at five per cent. interest, to the profit of the owners. At the end of five years, if this sum shall not be reclaimed, it shall be added to the Bank of the Poor. The administration and the office of said bank shall be placed in the Rue du Temple, No. 17, in a house bought for this purpose, in the center of that most populous quarter. A revenue of ten thousand francs shall be appropriated to the expenses and to the administration of the Bank of the Poor, of which the director for life shall be---"

Polidori interrupted the notary, and said to the priest, "You will see, M. l'Abbø, by the choice of the director of this establishment, whether Jacques knows how to repair the wrong which he has involuntarily done. You know that by an error which he deplores, he had falsely accused his cashier of taking a sum which he afterward discovered."

"Doubtless."

"Well! it is to this honest young man, François Germain, that Jacques assigns the life governorship of this bank, with a salary of four thousand francs. Is it not admirable, M. l'Abbø?"

"Nothing astonishes me now, or, rather, nothing has astonished me," said the priest. "The fervent piety, the virtues of our worthy friend, could hardly fail of such a result. To consecrate all his fortune to such an institution--ah! it is admirable!"

"More than a million, M. l'Abbø," said Polidori, "more than a million, amassed by dint of order, economy, and probity; and yet there are those who accuse Jacques of avarice! How, said they, his office brings him in fifty or sixty thousand francs a year, and he lives like a miser!"

"To such as these," replied the abbø, with enthusiasm, "I would answer: During fifteen years he has lived like a poor man, in order to be able at the present time magnificently to solace the poor."

"Be, then, at least proud and joyous at the good you have done," cried Polidori, addressing Jacques Ferrand, who, gloomy and cast down, seemed absorbed in profound meditation.

"Alas!" said the abbø, sadly, "it is not in this world that one receives the recompense of so many virtues; he has a more exalted ambition."

"Jacques," said Polidori, touching the notary lightly on the shoulder, "finish your reading." The notary started, passed his hand over his face, and said to the priest:

"Pardon, M. l'Abbø, but I was thinking--I was thinking of the immense extension that this bank for the poor might have from the returned loans. If the loans of each year were regularly repaid at the end of four years, it would have already loaned about fifty thousand crowns on pledge or gratuitously. It is enormous--enormous; and I felicitate myself on it," he added, thinking of the value of the sacrifice imposed upon him. He resumed: "I was, I believe, at--"

"At the nomination of François Germain for director of the bank," said Polidori. Jacques Ferrand continued.

"A revenue often thousand francs shall be set aside for the expenses and administration of the Bank of the Poor without work, of which the perpetual director shall be François Germain, and the porter and keeper shall be the present porter of the house, named Pipelet.

"M. l'Abbø Dumont, with whom the funds necessary for this undertaking shall be deposited, will form a superior council of supervision, composed of the mayor and the justice of the peace of the ward, who will add to their number the persons whose assistance they shall consider useful to the extension of the Bank for the Poor; for the founder will esteem himself a thousand times paid for the little that he has done if some charitable person will aid in the work.

"The opening of this bank will be announced by every means of publicity possible. The founder repeats, in conclusion, that he takes no credit for what he has done for his brothers. His sole thought is but the echo of this Divine command: 'Love ye one another.'"

"And your place above shall be assigned to you beside Him who hath pronounced th immortal words," cried the abbø, pressing with much warmth the hands of Jacques Ferrand in his own.

The notary was overpowered. Without replying to the encomiums of the abbø he hastened to give him in treasury bonds the considerable sum necessary for the establishment of this institution and for the annuity of Morel the lapidary.

"I dare hope, M. l'AbbØ," at length said Jacques Ferrand, "that you will not refuse this new mission confided to your charitable care. Besides, a stranger, called Sir Walter Murphy, who has given me some advice about the drawing up of this project, will partake of your labor, and will visit you today to converse with you on the practicability of the plan, and to place himself at your service, if he can be of any use. Except with him, I pray you to preserve the most profound secrecy, M. l'AbbØ."

"You are right. God knows what you are doing for your poor brothers. What matters the rest? All my regret is that I have nothing but my zeal to contribute in aid of this most noble institution; it will be, at least, as ardent as your charity is untiring. But what is the matter? You turn pale. Do you suffer?"

"A little, M. l'AbbØ. This long reading, the emotions caused by your kind words, the indisposition from which I am suffering. Pardon my weakness," said Jacques Ferrand, seating himself as if in pain; "there is nothing serious in it, but I am exhausted."

"Perhaps you had better go to bed," said the priest, with an air of lively interest, "and send for your physician?"

"I am a physician, M. l'AbbØ," said Polidori. "The situation of Ferrand demands great care; I will give him all my attention."

The notary shuddered.

"A little repose will relieve you, I hope," said the cure. "I leave you; but before I go, I wish to give you a receipt for this money. Come, take courage, be of good cheer!" said the priest, handing the receipt, which he wrote at the desk, to Jacques Ferrand. "Farewell; tomorrow I will call and see you again. Adieu, sir--adieu, my friend, my worthy, pious friend!"

The priest went out, and Jacques Ferrand and Polidori remained alone. Hardly had the abbØ gone than Jacques Ferrand uttered a terrible imprecation. His despair and rage, so long restrained, burst forth with fury; breathless, his face convulsed, his eyes rolling in their sockets, he walked up and down in the cabinet like a wild beast confined by a chain. Polidori, presenting the greatest composure, observed the notary attentively.

"Thunder and blood!" cried Jacques, in a voice choked with rage; "my fortune entirely swallowed up in these stupid good works! I, who despise and execrate men; I, who have only lived to deceive and despoil them; I found philanthropic establishments--to be forced to do it by infernal means! But is it the devil, then, who is your master?" he cried, with fury, stopping abruptly before Polidori.

"I have no master," he answered, coldly. "Like you, I have a judge!"

"To obey like a fool the orders of this man!" said Jacques Ferrand, with renewed rage. "And this priest, whom I have so often laughed at, because he

was the dupe of my hypocrisy; every one of the praises he gave me was like a thrust with a dagger. And to be compelled--"

"Or the scaffold, as an alternative."

"Oh! not to be able to escape this fatal power! There is more than a million that I have given up. If I have left, with this house a hundred thousand francs, it is the very outside. What more do they want?"

"You are not at the end yet. The prince knows, through Badinot, that your man of straw, Petit Jean, was only a name borrowed by you for the purpose of making the usurious loans to the Viscount de Saint Rømy. The sums which Saint Rømy repaid you were loaned to him by a great lady; probably another restitution awaits you: but it stands adjourned. Doubtless because it is a more delicate affair."

"Chained, chained here!"

"As securely as with an iron cable."

"You--my jailer--wretch!"

"What would you have? According to the system of the prince, nothing more logical; he punishes crime by crime, accomplice by accomplice."

"Oh! rage! madness!"

"Oh! unfortunately, powerless rage, for, as long as I am not told, 'Jacques Ferrand is free to quit this house,' I will remain like your shadow. Listen, then: as well as you, I merit the scaffold. If I fail to execute the orders given to me, my head falls. You cannot, then, have a more incorruptible guardian. As for flying, both of us--impossible: we could not take a step outside of this house without falling into the hands of those who are watching it night and day."

"Death and fury, I know it!"

"Be resigned, then, for this flight is impossible; even should we succeed in escaping, it would only make our situation more precarious, for they would send the police in search of us. On the contrary, you in obeying, and I, in watching the accuracy of your obedience, we are certain of not having our throats cut. Once more, I say, let us be resigned."

"Do not exasperate me by this indifference, or---"

"Or what? I do not fear you: I am on my guard, I am armed; and even if you were to find the poisoned dagger of Cecily to kill me---"--"Be quiet!"

"It would be of no use; you know that every two hours I am obliged to give a bulletin of your precious health, an indirect way of hearing from us both. On not seeing me appear, they will suspect you of the murder; you will be arrested. And--But hold. I do you an injury in supposing you capable of this crime. You have sacrificed a million to save your life, and

you would not risk your head for the foolish and fruitless vengeance of killing me! Come, come, you are not fool enough for that."

"It is because you know I cannot kill you that you increase my torments by your sarcasms."

"Your position is so original, you do not see it yourself; but, on my honor, it is enjoyable!"

"Oh, misfortune! misfortune irretrievable! On whatever side I turn, it is death! And what I most dread now is destruction! Curses on myself, on you, on the whole world!"

"Your misanthropy is more extensive than your philanthropy! The former embraces the whole world; the latter but one of the wards of Paris."

"Go on--rail, monster!"

"Would you prefer that I should crush you with reproaches?"

"Whose fault is it that we are reduced to this position?"

"Yours. Why preserve around your neck, suspended as a relic, that letter of mine relative to the murder which was worth a hundred thousand crowns to you--the murder which we had so adroitly passed off as a suicide?"

"Why? wretch! Did I not give you fifty thousand francs for your co-operation in the crime, and for this letter, which I required that I might have a guarantee against your denouncing me? My life and fortune were, then, dependent on its possession; that is the reason why I always wore it around my neck."

"It is true, it was cunning on your part, for I would gain nothing by denouncing you except the pleasure of going to the scaffold side by side with you. And yet your cunning has ruined us, while mine would have assured impunity for the crime to the present moment."

"Impunity?"

"Who could foresee what has come to pass? But, in the ordinary march of events, our crime would have been unpunished, thanks to me."

"Thanks to you?"

"Yes; when we had blown this man's brains out, you wished simply to counterfeit his signature, and to write his sister that, ruined completely, he had killed himself from despair. You thought that you would make a great stroke of policy by not speaking in this letter of the deposit he had confided to you. It was absurd. This deposit being known to his sister, she would have unquestionably reclaimed it. It was necessary, then, on the contrary, to mention it as we did, in order that, if there were any suspicions of the reality of the suicide, you might be the last person to be suspected. Then what happened? The suicide was believed; from your

reputation for probity, you were enabled to deny the deposit, and it was thought that the brother killed himself after having dissipated the fortune of his sister."

"But what matters all this at present? The crime is discovered."

"And thanks to whom? Was it my fault if my letter was a double-edged sword, cutting both ways? How could you be so weak, so stupid, as to deliver such a terrible weapon to this infernal Cecily?"

"Hush--do not pronounce that name!" cried Jacques Ferrand, with a frightful expression.

"So be it; I do not wish to make you epileptic. You will see that, in guarding against ordinary justice, our mutual precautions were sufficient; but the extraordinary justice of him who holds us both in his power defied all calculations."

"Oh! I know it but too well."

"He believes that to cut off the head of a criminal does not sufficiently repair the evil he has done. With the proofs which he holds, if he were to deliver us to the tribunals, what would be the result? Two corpses, at the most only good to fatten the graveyard."

"Oh! yes--it is tears, and anguish, and tortures which this prince demands--this demon. But I do not know him, I have never done him any harm. Why does he pursue me thus?"

"In the first place he pretends to reward the good, and punish the evil done to others; and, besides, he knows those whom you have injured, and he punishes you in his own way."

"But by what right?"

"Come, come, Jacques, between us, do not speak of right; he had the power to have your head taken off in a judicial manner. What would have been the result? Your relations are all dead--the state would have profited by your fortune instead of those whom you have despoiled. On the contrary, in redeeming your life at the price of your money all your victims will be remunerated for their sufferings, in the manner already decided upon. So in this point of view, we can confess to each other that if society should have gained nothing by your death, it gains much by your living."

"And it is this which causes my rage--and this is not my only torture."

"The prince knows it well. Now what will he decide to do with us? I am ignorant. He has promised to spare us our lives if we faithfully obey his orders. He will keep his promise. But if he does not believe our crimes sufficiently expiated he will know how to make us prefer death a thousand times to the life he grants us. You do not know him. Besides, he has more than one devil in his service--for this Cecily--whom may the thunder blast!"

"Once more, be still--not that name--not that name!"

"Yes, yes! may the thunder blast her who bears that name! It is she who has ruined all. Our heads would now be in security on our shoulders but for your silly love for this creature."

Instead of storming with rage, Jacques Ferrand answered with a deep sigh, "Do you know this woman? Speak. Have you ever seen her?"

"Never. They say she is beautiful."

"Beautiful!" answered the notary, shrugging his shoulders. "Hold!" he added with a kind of bitter desperation; "be still! Do not speak of what you do not know. Do not accuse me! What I have done you would have done in my place."

"I place my life at the mercy of a woman!"

"Of that one--yes--and I would do it again."

"By Jove, he is still under the charm," cried Polidori amazed.

"Listen," answered the notary, in a low, calm voice, "listen: you know if I love gold? You know what I have braved to acquire it? To reckon up the sums I possessed, to see them doubled by my avarice, to endure every privation, and know myself the master of a treasure--it was my joy, my happiness. Yes, to possess, not to enjoy, but to theorize, was my life. One month since, if they had said to me, 'Between your fortune and your head choose,' I would have given up my head."

"But of what use to have money when one dies?"

"Ask me, then, 'Of what use to possess it, when one makes no use of what one possesses?' I, a millionaire, did I lead the life of a millionaire? No: I lived like a poor beggar. I loved, then, to possess, for possession's sake."

"But once more I ask you, of what use is it when one dies?"

"To the possessing! Yes, to enjoy that even to the last moment for which you have braved privations, infamy, the scaffold; yes, to say once more, the head under the ax, 'I possess!' Oh! do you see, death is sweet compared to the torments that are endured on seeing one's self during life dispossessed, as I am, of all that I have amassed at the price of so much pain, so much danger! Oh! to say, at each moment of the day, 'I, who had more than a million--I, who have endured every privation to preserve it--I, who in ten years would have doubled it, tripled it--I have no longer anything. It is cruel! it is to die, not each day, but each moment of the day. Yes, to this horrible agony, which may endure for years, perhaps, I would have preferred death a thousand times. Once more, I could have said in dying, 'I possess.'"

Polidori looked at his accomplice with profound astonishment.

"I cannot comprehend you. Then why have you obeyed the commands of him who might have caused your head to roll from the scaffold? Why have you preferred life, without your treasure, if this life seems so horrible to you?"

"It is, do you see," answered the notary, in a voice sunk to a whisper, "it is not the thought of death--it is annihilation. And Cecily!"

"And you hope!" cried Polidori, astonished.

"I hope not; I possess---"

"What?"

"The remembrance."

"But you will never see her again; she has delivered up your head!"

"But I love her still, and more madly than ever," cried Jacques Ferrand, with an explosion of tears, of sobs, which strangely contrasted with the calmness of his last words. "Yes, I love her always, and I do not wish to die, so that I can plunge myself deeper and deeper with wild delight into this furnace where I am consumed by inches. For you do not know--that night--that night in which I saw her so beautiful--that night is always present to my thoughts--that picture of voluptuousness is there, there--always there--before my eyes. Let them be open or shut, in feverish weakness or burning watchfulness, I see her black eyes and inflaming glances, which boil the marrow of my bones. I feel her breath upon my face--I hear her voice."

"But these are frightful torments!"

"Frightful! ay, frightful! But death! but annihilation! but to lose forever this remembrance, as vivid as reality; but to renounce these recollections, which torture me, devour me, and consume me! No! no! no! Live! live--poor, despised, scorned--live in the galleys, but live! so that thought remains--since this infernal creature has all my thought--is all my thought!"

"Jacques," said Polidori, in a grave tone, which strangely contrasted with his habitual bitter irony, "I have seen much suffering, but never tortures that approach yours. He who holds us in his power could not have been more unmerciful. He has condemned you to live--to await death in terrible agonies--for this avowal explains to me the alarming symptoms which every day develop in you, and of which I sought in vain the cause."

"But these symptoms are nothing serious! It is exhaustion; it is the reaction of my sorrows! I am not in danger. Is it not so?"

"No, no; but your position is a critical one; you must not make it worse. Certain thoughts must be driven away, otherwise you run great risk."

"I will do what you wish so I may live, for I do not wish to die. Oh! the priests talk of the damned! never could one imagine for them a punishment equal to mine. Tortured by passion and avarice, I have two bleeding wounds instead of one, and I feel both of them equally. The loss of my gold is frightful to me, but death would be more frightful still. I wish to live; my life may be a torture without end, and I dare not call upon death, for death annihilates my fatal happiness, this phantom of my thoughts, in which Cecily constantly appears."

"You have at least the consolation," said Polidori, resuming his usual calmness, "of thinking upon the good that you have done in expiation of your crimes."

"Yes, rail--you are right; turn me over on the burning coals. You know well, wretch, that I hate humanity; you know well that these expiations which are imposed upon me, only inspire me with hatred against those who oblige me to act thus, and against those who profit by it. Thunder and blood! To think that, while I drag along a frightful life, these men whom I execrate have their misery solaced; that this widow and her daughter will thank God for the fortune I restore them--that this Morel and his daughter will live in ease and comfort--that this Germain will have an honorable situation assured to him for life! And this priest! this priest, who blessed me when my heart was swimming in gall and blood--I could have stabbed him! Oh! it is too much! No! no!" he cried, covering his face with his hands: "my head bursts--my ideas are confused--I cannot resist such attacks of impotent rage! And all this for you! Cecily! Cecily! do you know how much I suffer? do you know, Cecily--demon--brought up from below!"

Ferrand, exhausted by this frightful raving, fell back foaming on his chair, and threw his arms wildly about, uttering hollow and inarticulate sounds. This fit of convulsive and despairing rage by no means astonished Polidori. Possessing a consummate medical experience, he at once saw that Ferrand's anguish at seeing himself dispossessed of his fortune, joined to his passion for Cecily, had lighted up the flames of a devouring fever. Suddenly some one knocked hurriedly at the door of the cabinet.

"Jacques!" said Polidori, to the notary; "Jacques! recover yourself; here is some one."

The notary did not hear him. Half lying on his desk, he writhed with convulsive spasms. Polidori went to open the door, and saw the head clerk, who, pale and alarmed, cried, "I must speak at once to M. Ferrand."

"Silence! he is at this moment lying ill; he cannot understand you," said Polidori, in a whisper; and coming out from the cabinet, he closed the door after him.

"Oh! sir," cried the clerk, "you are the best friend of M. Ferrand; come to his assistance; there is not a moment to be lost."

"What do you mean?"

"I went, according to the orders of M. Ferrand, to tell the Countess M'Gregor that he could not visit her to-day as she desired."

"Well?"

"This lady, who appears to be now out of danger, made me come into her room. She cried, in a threatening tone, 'Return, and tell M. Ferrand that if he is not here in an hour he shall be arrested for forgery, for the child which he pretended was dead is yet alive. I know to whom he delivered her--I know where she is.'"

[Footnote: The reader will remember that the countess thought Fleur-de-Marit was still at Saint Lazare, according to La Chouette's account.]

"The woman is crazy," answered Polidori, coldly, shrugging his shoulders.

"You think so, sir."

"I am sure of it."

"I thought so at first; but the assertions of her ladyship."

"Her head, doubtless, has been weakened by illness, and visionaries always believe in their visions."

"I ought to tell you also, sir, that at the moment when I left the chamber of the countess, one of her women, entered precipitately, saying, 'His highness will be here in an hour!'"

"It is the prince!" thought Polidori. "He at the house of the Countess Sarah, whom he was never to see again! I do not know wherefore, but I do not like this meeting; it may make our position worse." Then, turning to the clerk, he said, "Once more I repeat that this is nothing. I will, however, inform M. Ferrand of what you have just related to me."

CHAPTER XIV.

RUDOLPH AND SARAH.

We will conduct the reader to the countess's, whom a salutary crisis had snatched from the delirium and sufferings which, during several days, had caused the most serious fears for her life. The day began to close. Sarah, seated in a large arm-chair, and supported by her brother, Thomas Seyton, was attentively surveying herself in a mirror, which was held by one of her women kneeling before her. This scene passed in the saloon where La Chouette had made her murderous attempt. The countess was as pale as marble, which gave a bolder relief to her dark eyes and hair; an ample white muslin wrapper completely concealed her form.

"Give me the coral coronet," she said to one of her women, in a weak but imperious voice.

"Betty will fasten it," said Thomas Seyton; "you will fatigue yourself; you are already so imprudent."

"The coral!" repeated she, impatiently, as she took the jewel and placed it on her brow. "Now fasten it, and leave me," she added, to her women.

As they were retiring, she said,

"Let them show M. Ferrand into the little blue saloon; and," she continued, with an expression of ill-concealed pride, "as soon as his Serene Highness the Grand Duke of Gerolstein arrives, he must be ushered in here. At length," said Sarah, throwing herself back in her chair as soon as she was alone with her brother, "at length I touch this crown--the dream of my life! The prediction is about to be accomplished!"

"Sarah, calm your emotion," said her brother, earnestly. "Yesterday they still despaired of your life; disappointment now might cause a relapse."

"You are right, Tom. The fall would be dreadful, for my hopes have never been nearer being realized than now! I am certain that what has prevented me from sinking under my sufferings has been my constant hope to profit by the important revelation which this woman made me at the moment when she stabbed me."

"Even during your delirium you constantly referred to this idea."

"Because this idea alone sustained my flickering life. What a hope! Sovereign princess! almost a queen," she added, with rapture.

"Once more, Sarah; no mad dreams; the awakening will be terrible!"

"Mad dreams? How! when Rudolph shall know that this young girl, now a prisoner at Saint Lazare, is our child, do you think that---"

Seyton interrupted his sister.

"I believe," he replied, with bitterness, "that princes place reasons of state and political proprieties before natural ties."

"Do you count so little on my address?"

"The prince is not the same fond and enamored youth whom you seduced in days gone by."

"Do you know why I have wished to ornament my hair with this band of coral? and why I have put on this white robe? It is because, the first time Rudolph saw me at the court of Gerolstein, I was dressed in white, and I wore the same band of coral in my hair."

"How?" said Thomas Seyton, looking at his sister with surprise: "you wish to evoke these memories; do you not, on the contrary, dread their influence?"

"I know Rudolph better than you. Doubtless, my features, now changed by age and sufferings, are no longer those of the young girl of sixteen he so wildly loved--whom he has alone loved--for I was his first love. And this love, unique in the life of man, leaves always in his heart ineffaceable traces. Believe me, brother, the sight of this ornament will awaken in Rudolph, not only the memories of his love, but also those of his youth; and to men the recollection of their first emotions is always sweet and precious."

"But to these soft memories are joined others of terrible import. Do you forget the fatal termination of your love? The conduct of the prince's father toward you? Your obstinate silence when Rudolph, after your marriage with Earl M'Gregor, demanded your child, then quite an infant? your daughter, of whose death, ten years before, you informed him in a cold letter? Do you forget that since that time the prince has only felt for you contempt--hatred?"

"Pity has taken the place of hatred. Since he has known that I was in a dying state, each day has he sent Baron de Graun to make inquiries."

"From humanity."

"Just now he answered my note; said that he would come here. This concession is immense, my brother."

"He believes you dying. He supposes that he is coming to take a last farewell. You were wrong not to write to him what you are now about to disclose."

[Illustration: THE LITTLE MENDICANT]

"I know why I act thus. This revelation will fill him with surprise and joy, and I shall be present to profit by his first burst of tenderness. To-day, or never, he shall say to me, 'A marriage would make the birth of our child legitimate.' If he says so, his word is sacred, and the hope of all my life will at length be realized."

"If he makes you this promise--yes."

At this moment was heard the noise of a carriage, which entered the court-yard. "It is he--it is Rudolph!" cried Sarah.

"Yes, it is the prince, he is getting out of the carriage."

"Leave me alone--this is the decisive moment," said Sarah, with immovable self-control; for a towering ambition and unbounded selfishness had always been and still were the ruling motives of this woman.

After a momentary hesitation, Thomas Seyton drew near to his sister and

said, "It is I who will inform the prince how your daughter has been saved; this interview will be too dangerous for you; a violent emotion would kill you."

"Your hand, my brother," said Sarah.

Then, placing on her impassable heart the hand of Seyton, she added, with a forced and icy smile, "Am I agitated?"

"No, in truth, not at all," said Seyton, with surprise; "I know what command you have over yourself. But at such a moment--where for you will be decided--a crown--or death--your calmness absolutely confounds me."

"Why this astonishment, my brother? did you not know that nothing--no, nothing has ever caused this marble heart to quicken its pulsations? It will only palpitate when I shall feel placed on my brow the sovereign crown. I hear Rudolph--leave me."

"But--"

"Leave me!" cried Sarah, in a tone so imperious, so resolute, that her brother left the apartment some moments before the prince was introduced. When Rudolph entered the saloon, his countenance expressed pity; but seeing the countess seated in the chair decked with her jewels, he drew back with surprise, and his physiognomy became immediately somber and suspicious.

The countess, divining his thoughts, said to him in a soft and feeble voice, "You thought to find me dying; you came to receive my last farewell!"

"I have always regarded as sacred the last wishes of the dying, but it appears I have been deceived."

"Reassure yourself," said Sarah, interrupting Rudolph. "I have not deceived you; there remain for me but a few hours to live. Pardon me a last act of coquetry; I wished to spare you the usual attendants of a death-bed. I wished to die dressed as I was the first time I saw you. Alas! after ten years of separation, I see you again! Thanks--oh, thanks! But in your turn, render thanks to heaven for having moved you to come to listen to my last prayer. If you had refused me, I had carried with me to the tomb a secret which is going to make the joy, the happiness of your life. Joy mixed with some tears, like all other human felicity; but this felicity! you would buy it at the price of half the remaining days of your life!"

"What do you mean to say?" demanded the prince, with surprise.

"Yes, Rudolph, if you had not come, this secret would have followed me to the tomb--it had been my sole vengeance; and yet--no, no, I should not have had this terrible courage. Although you would have caused me much suffering, I should have divided with you this supreme happiness, which, more fortunate than I, you will a long time enjoy."

"But, once more, madame, what means all this?"

"When you know it, you will comprehend my delay in informing you, for you will regard this revelation as a miracle from heaven. But, strange thought--I, who with one word can cause you the greatest happiness that you have ever experienced--I feel, although now the minutes of my life are counted--I feel an indescribable satisfaction in prolonging your suspense; and, besides, I know your heart, and, in spite of the firmness of your character, I should fear to announce to you, without preparation, a discovery so incredible. The emotions of sudden joy have also their dangers."

"Your pallor increases--you with difficulty restrain a violent agitation," said Rudolph; "all this proves that something grave and important----"

"Grave and important!" repeated Sarah, in a faltering voice, for, notwithstanding her habitual immobility, in reflecting upon the immense importance of the revelation she was about to make to Rudolph, she felt herself more agitated than she could have thought possible. After a moment's silence, Sarah, no longer able to restrain herself, cried, "Rudolph, our child is not dead."

"Our child!"

"I tell you she lives!" These words, the accent of truth with which they were pronounced, moved the prince to the very bottom of his heart.

"Our child!" he repeated, advancing hastily toward Sarah; "our child! my daughter!"

"She is not dead; I have certain proofs; I know where she is--to-morrow you shall see her."

"My daughter! my child!" repeated Rudolph, as if in a dream; "can it be possible? is she alive?"

Then, suddenly reflecting on the great improbability of this relation, and fearing to be the dupe of Sarah, he cried, "No, no; it is a dream! it is impossible, you deceive me; it is some unworthy deceit!"

"Rudolph, listen to me!"

"No, I know your ambition--I know of what you are capable; I can fathom the object of this fabrication!"

"Well! you speak the truth. I am capable of everything. Yes, I did wish to deceive you. Yes, some days before I received my mortal wound I did wish to find a young girl, whom I would have presented to you in the place of our child whom you regret so bitterly."

"Enough--oh! enough, madame."

"After this confession you will believe me, perhaps; or, rather, you will be forced to give credence to the proofs."

"To the proofs?"

"Yes, Rudolph; I repeat it, I have wished to deceive you, to substitute an obscure girl in the place of her we mourn; but Heaven willed that, at the moment when I was about to carry the project into execution, I should be stricken down."

"You! at this moment!"

"Heaven has also willed that they should propose to me to play this part--do you know whom? our daughter."

"Are you delirious? In the name of heaven---"

"I am not delirious, Rudolph. In this casket, among some papers and a portrait, which will prove to you the truth of what I say, you will find a paper stained with my blood."

"With your blood?"

"The woman who informed me that our child was still living dictated to me this revelation--then I was stabbed by a poniard."

"And who was she? how did she know?"

"It was to her our child was delivered--quite an infant--after having falsely reported her death."

"But this woman--her name? can she be believed? where did you become acquainted with her?"

"I tell you, Rudolph, that all this is fate--providential. Some months since, you rescued a poor girl from poverty, to send her to the country--is it not so?"

"Yes, to Bouqueval."

"Jealousy and hatred drove me wild. I caused this young girl to be carried off by the woman of whom I have spoken."

"And she took the unhappy child to Saint Lazare?"

"Where she yet is."

"She is there no longer. Ah! you do not know, madame, the frightful evil you have caused by tearing this poor child from the retreat where I had placed her; but--"

"The girl no longer at Saint Lazare?" cried the lady in alarm; "and you speak of a frightful evil!"

"A monster of cupidity had an interest in her death. They have drowned her,

madame; but answer, you say--"

"My daughter!" cried Sarah, interrupting Rudolph, and rising on her feet, immovable as a marble statue.

"What does she say? good heavens!" cried Rudolph.

"My child!" repeated Sarah, whose face became livid and frightful from despair; "they have killed my child!"

"The Goualeuse your child!" repeated Rudolph, recoiling with horror.

"The Goualeuse! yes! that is the name the woman mentioned--this woman called La Chouette. Dead--dead!" cried Sarah, still motionless, her eyes fixed and glaring; "they have killed her!"

"Sarah!" replied Rudolph, as pale and alarmed as she, "calm yourself--answer me--La Goualeuse--this girl whom you caused to be carried off by La Chouette from Bouqueval, was--"

"Our child!"

"She!"

"And they have killed her."

"Oh!--no, no--you rave--this cannot be. You know not, no, you know not how frightful this is. Sarah! compose yourself; speak to me tranquilly. Seat yourself--calm yourself. Often there are appearances--resemblances which deceive; one is inclined to believe what one desires. It is not a reproach I make you; but explain to me well--tell me all the reasons you have to credit this, for it cannot be--no, no; it must not be!--it is not so!"

After a moment's pause, the countess collected her thoughts, and said to Rudolph in an expiring voice, "Hearing of your marriage, thinking to be married myself, I could not keep our daughter with me; she was then four years old."

"But at this epoch I asked you for her with prayers," cried Rudolph, in a heartrending tone, "and my letters remained unanswered. The only one you wrote me announced her death."

"I wished to avenge myself for your contempt by refusing you your child. That was unworthy; but listen to me: I feel it--my life is drawing to a close; this last blow has overwhelmed me."

"No, no! I do not believe you--I do not wish to believe you! La Goualeuse my child! Oh, you would not have this so!"

"Listen to me, I say. When she was four years old my brother commissioned Madame SØraphin, widow of one of his old servants, to bring up the child until she was old enough to be placed at school. The sum destined for her future support was placed by my brother with a notary renowned for his

probity. The letters of this man, and of Madame SØraphin, addressed at this period to me and my brother, are there, in that casket. At the end of a year they wrote me that the health of my child failed; eight months after, that she was dead; and they sent me the official notification of her decease. At this time, Madame SØraphin entered the service of Jacques Ferrand, after having delivered our child to La Chouette by the hands of a wretch now in the galleys at Rochefort. I began to write this confession of La Chouette when she wounded me. This paper is there, with a portrait of our daughter at the age of four years. Examine all--letters, confessions, portrait--and you, who have seen her--this unfortunate child--judge."

At these words, which exhausted her strength, Sarah fell back almost lifeless in her chair. Rudolph was thunderstruck at this revelation. There are some misfortunes so unlooked for, so horrible, that we are unwilling to believe them until compelled by overwhelming evidence. Rudolph, persuaded of the death of Fleur-de-Marie, had but one hope left, which was to convince himself that she was not his child. With a frightful calmness, which alarmed Sarah, he approached the table, opened the casket, and fell to reading the letters one by one, and examining, with scrupulous attention, the papers which accompanied them. These letters, stamped at the post-office, written to Sarah and her brother by the notary and by Madame SØraphin, related to the childhood of Fleur-de-Marie, and to the investment of the funds destined for her support. Rudolph could not doubt the authenticity of this correspondence. The confession of La Chouette was confirmed by the information obtained (of which we have spoken at the commencement of this story) by order of Rudolph, which pointed out a man named Pierre Tournemine, a prisoner at Rochefort, as the man who had received Fleur-de-Marie from Madame SØraphin to deliver her to La Chouette--to La Chouette, whom the unfortunate child herself had recognized before Rudolph, at the tapis-franc of the Ogress. Rudolph could no longer doubt the identity of these persons and of the Goualeuse. The official notice concerning her death appeared in conformity to law; but Ferrand had himself acknowledged to Cecily that this forged notice had served for the spoliation of a considerable sum formerly settled as an annuity on the girl whom he had caused to be drowned by Nicholas Martial, by the Ravageurs' Island.

It was, then, with growing and alarming anguish that Rudolph acquired, in spite of himself, the terrible conviction that the Goualeuse was his daughter, and that she was dead. Unfortunately for him, all seemed to confirm this belief. Before condemning Jacques Ferrand on the proofs given by the notary himself to Cecily, the prince, his deep interest for the Goualeuse, having caused inquiries to be made at Asnières, had learned that, in fact, two women, one old and the other young, and dressed in a peasant's costume, had been drowned in going to Ravageurs' Island, and that rumor accused the Martials of this new crime. Here we must state that, in spite of the attention of Dr. Griffon, of the Count de Saint RØmy, and of La Louve, Fleur-de-Marie, for a long time in a desperate situation, had hardly become convalescent, and that her weakness, mental and physical, was such, that she had not been able up to this time to inform Madame George or Rudolph of her position. This concurrence of circumstances could not leave the slightest hope to the prince. A last proof was reserved for him. At length he cast his eyes on the miniature, which he had almost feared to

look at. The blow was frightful. In this infantine and charming face, already radiant with that divine beauty which belongs to the cherubim, he recognized in a striking manner the features of Fleur-de-Marie; her Grecian nose, her noble forehead, her little mouth; already slightly serious. For, said Madame SØraphin to Sarah, in one of her letters which Rudolph had just read, "The child asks always for its mother, and is very sad."

There were her large blue eyes, of a blue so pure and soft--the bluebell's blue, as La Chouette had said to Sarah on recognizing in this miniature the features of the unfortunate child whom she had persecuted, in her infancy, under the name of LaPegriotte, and as a young girl under the name of La Goualeuse.

At the sight of this miniature, Rudolph's tumultuous and violent feelings were stifled by his tears. He fell back, heartbroken, on a chair, and concealed his face in his hands, sobbing convulsively.

CHAPTER XV.

VENGEANCE.

While Rudolph wept bitterly, the features of Sarah changed perceptibly. At the moment when she thought she was about to realize the dream of her ambitious life, the last hope, which had until now sustained her, was crushed forever. This dreadful disappointment could not fail to have on her health, momentarily ameliorated, a mortal reaction. Fallen back in her chair, trembling with a feverish agitation, her hands crossed and clasped on her knees, her eyes fixed, the countess awaited with alarm the first word from Rudolph. Knowing the impetuous character of the prince, she feared that the sad grief, which drew so many tears from this inflexible and resolute man, would be succeeded by some terrible transports of passion. Suddenly Rudolph raised his head, wiped away his tears, arose, and approached Sarah, his arms crossed on his bosom, his manner menacing and without pity. He looked at her for some moments in silence; then he said, in a hollow voice: "This ought to be. I have drawn the sword against my father; I am stricken in my child. Just punishment of the parricide. Listen to me, madame---"

"Parricide! you! Oh, fatal day! of what are you going to inform me?"

"It is necessary that you should know, in this awful moment, all the evils caused by your implacable ambition, by your unbounded selfishness. Do you understand me, woman without heart and without conscience? Do you hear me, unnatural mother?"

"Oh, have pity, Rudolph!"

"No pardon for you, who formerly, without pity for a sincere love, coldly trifled, in the furtherance of your execrable pride, with a generous and

devoted passion, of which you feigned to partake. No mercy for you, who armed the son against the father! No grace for you, who, instead of watching piously over your child, abandoned her to mercenary hands, in order to satisfy your cupidity by a rich marriage, as you had already served your mad ambition by inciting me to marry you. No mercy for you who, after having refused me my child, have now caused her death by your unholy deceptions! Maledictions on you--my evil genius, and my family's!"

"Oh! he is without pity! leave me! leave me!"

"You must hear me, I tell you! Do you remember the last day I saw you--it is seventeen years since--you could no longer conceal the fruits of our secret union, which, like you, I believed indissoluble. I knew the inflexible character of my father. I knew what political marriage he projected for me. Braving his indignation, I declared to him that you were my wife before God and before man--that in a short time I should become a father. His anger was terrible; he would not give credence to my marriage--so much deception seemed impossible to him. He threatened me with his displeasure if I allowed myself to speak before him again of such folly. Then I loved you like a madman, dupe of your seductions. I thought that your rigid heart of brass had beaten for me. I answered to my father that I would never have any wife but you. At these words, his anger had no bounds; he called you the most outrageous names; swore that our marriage was null; and that, in order to punish your presumption, he would place you in the pillory. Yielding to my mad passion, to the violence of my temper, I dared to forbid my father, my sovereign, to speak thus of my wife. I dared to threaten him. Exasperated at this insult, my father struck me; rage blinded me. I drew my sword. I threw myself upon him. Except for Sir Walter Murphy, who turned aside the blow, I had been a parricide in reality, as I was in intention! Do you hear? parricide! And to defend you--you!"

"Alas! I was ignorant of all this."

"In vain I have thought my crime expiated; the blow I have received today is my punishment."

"But have I not also suffered from the obduracy of your father, who broke our marriage? Why accuse me of not having loved you, when--"

"Why?" cried Rudolph, interrupting Sarah, and casting upon her a glance of withering scorn. "Know it then, and be no more surprised at the horror with which you inspire me. After this fatal scene, in which I had threatened the life of my father, I gave up my sword. I was imprisoned with the greatest secrecy. Polidori, through whom our marriage had been concluded, was arrested. He proved that this union was null; that the clergyman was only a mock one; and that you, your brother, and myself had all been deceived. To disarm my father's anger against him, Polidori did more; he gave him one of your letters to your brother, which he had intercepted."

"Heavens! can it be possible?"

"Is my contempt for you explained now?"

"Oh! enough, enough!"

"In this letter you unfolded your ambitious projects with revolting coldness. You treated me with an icy disdain; you sacrificed me to your infernal pride; I was only the instrument by whose means you were to obtain the fulfillment of your destiny. You found that my father lived a very long time."

"Unfortunate that I am! Now I understand all."

"And to defend you, I had threatened the life of my father. When, on the morrow, without addressing me a word of reproach, he showed me this letter--this letter, which in every line revealed the blackness of your heart, I could only fall on my knees and ask for pardon. Since that day I have been pursued by unceasing remorse. Soon I left Germany on a long journey; then commenced the penance which I imposed upon myself. It will only finish with my life. To recompense the good, punish the bad, solace those who suffer, probe all the wounds of humanity, to endeavor to snatch souls from perdition--such is the noble task that I have imposed upon myself."

"It is noble and holy; it is worthy of you."

"If I speak of this vow," replied Rudolph, with as much disdain as bitterness; "of this vow, which I have fulfilled, according to my power, wherever I have been, it is not to be praised by you. Listen to me, then. Not long since I arrived in France; my sojourn in this country was not to be lost to the expiation. In wishing to assist honest unfortunates, I also wished to know those classes whom poverty crushes, hardens, and depraves, knowing that timely succor and kind words have often saved many a poor wretch from the abyss of despair. In order to be my own judge, I assumed the disguise and language of the people whom I wished to observe. It was on one of these excursions that, for the first time, I--I met--" Then, as if he recoiled from this terrible revelation, Rudolph added, "No, no, I have not the courage."

"What have you still to inform me?"

"You will only know it too soon; but," said he, with irony, "you feel so lively an interest in the past that I ought to speak to you of events which preceded my return to France. After a long journey, I returned to Germany; I married a Prussian princess. During my absence, you had been driven away from the grand duchy. Learning that you were married to Earl M'Gregor, I wrote to entreat you to send me my child; you did not reply. In spite of all my efforts, I could never find out where you had sent this unfortunate child. Ten years ago only, a letter from you informed me that our child was dead. Alas! would to God that she had then been dead; I should not have known the incurable grief which henceforth will imbitter my life."

"Now," said Sarah, in a feeble voice, "I am no more astonished at the aversion with which I have inspired you, since you have read this letter. I feel it, I shall not survive this last blow. Ah, well! yes; pride and ambition have ruined me! Under the appearance of passion, I concealed a

frozen heart. Not knowing what good reason you had to despise and hate me, my foolish hopes were renewed. Since we were both free again, I again believed in this prediction which promised me a crown; and when chance discovered my daughter, I seemed to see in this unhoped-for fortune a providential design! Yes; I went so far as to think that your aversion for me would yield to your love for your child; and that you would give me your hand in order to restore her to the rank which was her due."

"Well! let your execrable ambition be then satisfied and punished! Yes, notwithstanding the horror you inspired me with; yes, from attachment--what do I say! from respect for the frightful misfortunes of my child, I should have, although decided to live afterward separated from you--I should have, by a marriage which would legitimize my child, rendered her position as dazzling, as lofty as it had been miserable!"

"I was not deceived, then! Woel! it is too late!"

"Oh! I know it; it is not for the death of your child you weep; it is the loss of that rank which you have pursued with untiring pertinacity! Well! may these infamous regrets be your last punishment!"

"The last; for I shall not survive!"

"But, before you die, you shall know what has been the existence of your child since you abandoned her."

"Poor child! very miserable, perhaps!"

"Do you recollect," said Rudolph, with terrible calmness, "that night when you and your brother followed me to the city?"

"I do recollect; but why this question? your look freezes me."

"On coming from this den, you saw, did you not, at the corner of the wretched streets, some unhappy creatures, who--but, no, no--I dare not," said Rudolph, concealing his face in his hands, "I dare not; my words alarm me."

"Me also--they alarm me; what is it now?"

"You have seen them?" resumed Rudolph, with an effort. "You have seen those women, the shame of their sex? Well! among them did you remark a young girl of sixteen? beautiful, oh! beautiful as an angel; a poor child, who, in the midst of the degradation in which she had been plunged, preserved an expression so pure, so virginal, that the robbers and assassins among whom she lived, madame, had given her the name of Fleur-de-Marie; did you remark this young girl? speak, speak, tender mother."

"No, I did not notice her," said Sarah, almost mechanically.

"Really?" cried Rudolph, with a burst of sardonic laughter. "It is strange. I remarked her on the occasion; listen, well, during one of the excursions of which I have spoken just now, and which then had a double object, I

found myself in the city; not far from the den whither you followed me, a man wished to beat one of these unfortunate creatures; I defended her against his brutality. You cannot guess who was this creature; speak, good and provident mother, speak! You do not guess?"

"No, I do not guess. Oh! leave me, leave me!"

"The 'unfortunate' was Fleur-de-Marie."

"Oh! merciful powers!"

"And you do not guess who was Fleur-de-Marie, irreproachable mother?"

"Kill me! oh! kill me!"

"She was La Goualeuse--your daughter!" cried Rudolph, with a heartrending emotion. "Yes, this unfortunate, whom I had rescued from the violence of a liberated galley-slave, was my own child--mine--Rudolph of Gerolstein's! Oh! there was something in this encounter with my child, whom I saved without knowing her, something terrible, providential; a recompense for the man who seeks to succor his fellow-men, a punishment for the parricide."

"I die cursed and condemned," murmured Sarah, falling back in her chair and concealing her face in her hands.

"Then," continued Rudolph, with difficulty restraining his feelings, and wishing, in vain, to suppress his sobs, which almost choked him, "when I had rescued her from the hands of her assailant, struck with the inexpressible sweetness of her voice, the angelic expression of her features, it had been impossible not to have become interested in her. With what profound emotion have I listened to the touching recital of her life of abandonment, of sorrow, and misery; for, do you see, there have been frightful passages in the life of your daughter, madame. Oh! you must know the tortures that your child suffered; yes, my lady, while in the midst of your opulence you were dreaming of a crown, your child--your own little child, covered with rags, went at night to beg in the streets, suffering with cold and hunger. During the winter nights, she shivered on a little straw in the corner of a garret, and then, when the horrible woman who abused her was tired of beating the poor little thing, only thinking how she could torture her, do you know what she did, madame? She drew out some of her teeth!"

"Oh! would that I could die! this is bitter agony!"

"Listen again. Escaping at length from the hands of La Chouette, wandering without bread, without shelter, hardly eight years of age, she was arrested as a vagabond, and put in prison. Oh! these were the happiest days of your daughter, madame. Yes, in the prison-house, each night she thanked God that she suffered no more from cold and hunger, and was beaten no more. And it was in a prison that she spent the most precious years of a young girl's life, those years which a tender mother always surrounds with so jealous and pious a solicitude; yes, instead of being protected with maternal care, your daughter has only known the brutal indifference of jailers; and then

one day, society, in its cruel carelessness, cast her, innocent and pure, beautiful and ingenuous, into the filth and mire of this great city. Unhappy child, abandoned, without support, without advice, delivered to all the chances of misery and vice! Oh!" cried Rudolph, giving free vent to the sobs which overpowered him; "your heart is hardened, your selfishness cruel, but you would have wept--yes, you would have wept, on hearing the touching story of your child. Poor girl! sullied, but not corrupted, still chaste in the midst of this horrible degradation, which was for her a frightful dream; for each word told her horror for the life to which she was so fatally enchained! Oh! if you knew how at each moment were revealed the most adorable instincts--how much goodness--how much touching charity; yes, for it was to relieve an unfortunate more wretched than herself, the poor little thing had spent the little money she had, and which then separated her from the abyss of infamy into which she was plunged. Yes! for the day came--a frightful day--when, without work, without bread, without shelter--horrible women met her, exhausted from weakness--from hunger--and--"

Rudolph could not finish, but cried in a heartrending voice:

"And this was my daughter! my child!"

"Imprecations on my head!" murmured Sarah, concealing her face in her hands, as if she had feared the light of day.

"Yes," cried Rudolph, "imprecations on you! for it is your abandonment of this child which has caused all these horrors. Maledictions on you! for when, rescuing her from this filth, I had placed her in a peaceable retreat, you had her torn away by your miserable accomplices. Maledictions on you! for this again placed her in the power of Jacques Ferrand."

At this name, Rudolph stopped suddenly. He shuddered as if he had pronounced it for the first time. It was because he now pronounced this name for the first time since he had known that his daughter was the victim of that monster. The features of the prince assumed then a frightful expression of rage and hatred. Silent, immovable, he remained, as it were, crushed by this thought--that the murderer of his child still lived. Sarah, notwithstanding her increasing weakness, was struck by his sinister look; she feared for herself.

"Alas! what is the matter with you?" she murmured, in a trembling voice.

"Is it not enough of suffering?"

"No; it is not enough!" cried Rudolph, responding to his own thoughts. "I have never before experienced--never! such a desire for vengeance--a thirst for blood--a calm, reflecting rage! When I did not know that one of the victims of the monster was my own child, I said to myself, the death of this man will be sterile, while his life will be fertile, if, to redeem it, he accept the conditions which I impose. To condemn him to be charitable, to expiate his crimes, appeared to me just; and then, life without gold, life without sensuality, would be for him a long and double torture. But it is my child whom he has delivered to all the horrors of infamy and misery! but it is my daughter whom he has murdered! I will kill this man!"

And the prince sprung toward the door.

"Where are you going? Do not abandon me!" cried Sarah, half rising, and extending toward Rudolph her supplicating hands. "Do not leave me alone! I am dying!"

"Alone! no! no! I leave you with the specter of your daughter, whose death you have caused!"

Sarah, frantic, threw herself on her knees, uttering a cry of affright, as if an alarming phantom had appeared to her. "Pity! I die!"

"Die, then, accursed!" answered Rudolph, frightful with rage. "Now I must have the life of your accomplice, for it is you who delivered your daughter to her executioner!"

And Rudolph ordered his coach to be rapidly driven to the house of Jacques Ferrand.

CHAPTER XVI.

FURENS AMORIS.

Night closed in while Rudolph was on his way to the notary's. The pavilion occupied by Jacques Ferrand was buried in profound obscurity. The wind howled, the rain fell as during that gloomy night when Cecily fled forever from the notary's house. Extended on a bed in his sleeping apartment, feebly lighted by a lamp, Jacques Ferrand was dressed in black trousers and vest; one of the sleeves of his shirt was turned back, and a ligature around his attenuated arm announced that he had just been bled. Polidori was standing near the bed, with one hand on the bolster, and appeared to regard the features of his accomplice with inquietude.

Nothing could be more hideously frightful than the face of Ferrand, who was then plunged into that torpor which ordinarily succeeds violent attacks. Of a mortal pallor, strongly relieved by the shadows of the alcove, his face, streaming with a cold sweat, announced the last stage of consumption; his closed eyelids were so swollen and injected with blood, that they appeared like two reddish lobes in the middle of this visage of cadaverous lividity.

"One more attack like the last, and all is over," said Polidori, in a low tone, and, retiring from the bed, he commenced walking slowly up and down the room.

"Just now," he resumed, "during the attack which nearly proved fatal, I thought myself in a dream, as I heard him describe all the monstrous hallucinations which I crossed his brain. His sense of hearing was of a sensibility so incredibly painful that, although I spoke to him as low as

possible, yet it seemed to him, he said, that his head was a bell, and that an enormous clapper of brass, set in motion by the least sound, struck against it from time to time with a deafening and horrid noise."

Polidori again drew near the bed, and remained in a contemplative attitude. The tempest raged without; it soon burst forth in violent gusts of wind and rain, which shook all the windows of the dilapidated mansion.

Notwithstanding his audacious wickedness, Polidori was superstitious; dark presentiments agitated him; he felt an indefinable uneasiness; the howlings of the storm, which alone disturbed the mournful silence of the night, inspired him with an alarm against which he struggled in vain. To drive away these gloomy thoughts, he again examined the features of his accomplice.

"Now," said he, leaning over him, "his eyelids fill with blood. What sufferings! how protracted! and under what varied forms! Oh!" added he, with a bitter smile, "when nature becomes cruel, and plays the part of tormentor, she defies the most ferocious combinations of men. Oh! this face is frightful. These frequent convulsions which overspread it contract it, and at times render it fearful." Without, the tempest redoubled its fury. "What a storm!" said Polidori, throwing himself into a chair, and leaning his face on his hands. "What a night! what a night! Nothing could be more fatal for the situation of Jacques."

After a long silence, Polidori resumed, "When I think of the past, when I think of the ambitious projects which, in concert with Sarah, I founded on the youth and inexperience of the prince--how many events! by what degrees have I fallen into the state of criminal degradation in which I live! I, who had thought to effeminate this prince, and make him the docile instrument of the advancement of which I had dreamed! From preceptor I expected to become minister. And notwithstanding my learning, my mind, from misdeed to misdeed I have attained the last degree of infamy. Behold me, in fine, the jailer of my accomplice. Oh, yes! the prince is without pity. Better a thousand times for Jacques Ferrand to have placed his head on the block; better a thousand times the wheel, fire, the molten lead which burns and sinks into the flesh, than the torments this wretch endures. As I see him suffer, I begin to be alarmed for my own fate. What will they do with me--what is reserved for me, the accomplice of Jacques? To be his jailer will not suffice for the vengeance of the prince. He has not saved me from the scaffold to let me live. Perhaps an eternal prison awaits me in Germany. Better that than death. I can only place myself blindly at the discretion of the prince; it is my sole chance of safety."

At this moment the storm was at its height; a chimney, blown down by the violence of the wind, fell on the roof and into the court with a noise like thunder. Jacques Ferrand, suddenly aroused from his state of torpor, moved on the bed. A hollow groan attracted the attention of Polidori.

"He is awaking from his stupor," said he, approaching him slowly.

"Polidori," murmured Jacques Ferrand, still stretched on the bed, and with his eyes closed. "Polidori, what noise was that?"

"A chimney has fallen down," answered Polidori, in a low tone; "a frightful hurricane shakes the house to its foundations. The night is horrible, horrible!"

The notary did not hear, and half turning his head, whispered, "Polidori, are you there?"

"Yes, yes, I am here," said Polidori, in a louder voice; "but I answered softly, fearing to affect your hearing, as I did a few moments ago."

"No, now your voice reaches my ear without causing me those painful sufferings; for it seemed to me, at the least noise, as if a thunderbolt had broken in my head. And yet, in the midst of all this noise, of these sufferings without name, I distinguished the voice of Cecily calling me."

"Always this infernal woman--always. But drive away these thoughts, they will kill you."

"Drive them away!" cried Jacques Ferrand; "oh! never, never!"

"What mad fury! It alarms me."

"Hold, now," said the notary, in a husky voice, with his eyes fixed on an obscure corner of the alcove. "I see already--like a living thing--a shape appearing--there--there!"

And he pointed with his bony finger in the direction of the vision.

"Hush, be quiet, unhappy man!"

"Oh! there, there!"

"Jacques, it is death."

"Oh! I see her," added Ferrand, his teeth set. "There she is! how handsome she is; how handsome! See her long black hair; it floats in disorder upon her shoulders! And her small teeth, which are seen through her half-opened lips: her lips so red and humid! What pearls! Oh! her large eyes seem in turn to sparkle and die. Cecily! Cecily! I adore you!"

"Jacques," cried Polidori, alarmed, "do not excite yourself by these phantoms."

"It is not a phantom."

"Take care; a short time ago, you know, you imagined also that you heard the songs of this woman, and your hearing was suddenly affected by fearful sufferings--take care!"

"Leave me," cried the notary, with impatience, "leave me! Of what use is hearing, except to listen to her?--sight, except to see her?"

"But the tortures which ensue, miserable fool!"

The notary did not finish. He uttered a sharp cry of pain, throwing himself backward on the bed.

"What is the matter?" asked Polidori, with astonishment.

"Put out that light; its glare is too vivid. I cannot support it; it blinds me!"

"How?" said Polidori, more and more surprised.

"There is but one lamp with a shade, and its light is very feeble."

"I tell you that the light increases here. Hold! more! more! Oh! it is too much! it becomes intolerable!" raved on Jacques Ferrand, shutting his eyes with an expression of increasing pain.

"You are mad! This chamber is hardly light, I tell you. I have just turned down the lamps; open your eyes, you will see."

"Open my eyes! But I shall be blinded by the torrents of dazzling light which flood this apartment. Here, there, everywhere, sheets of fire--thousands of shining atoms," cried the notary, raising himself; then, uttering a cry of pain, he placed his hands on his eyes. "But I am blinded! the burning light pierces my eyelids! it consumes me! Put out that light! it casts an infernal flame."

"No more doubt," said Polidori; "his sight is stricken in the same manner as his hearing was just now. He is lost! To bleed him anew in this state would be fatal. He is lost!"

Another sharp, terrible yell from Jacques Ferrand resounded throughout the chamber.

"Executioner! put out the lamp! Its burning splendor penetrates through my hands; they are transparent! I see the blood! it circulates in my veins! I did well to close my eyelids! this fiery lava would have entered! Oh, what torture! It is as if my eyes were pierced with red-hot needles! Help! help!" cried he, struggling in his bed, a prey to horrible convulsions.

Polidori, alarmed at the violence of this attack, extinguished the light.

And both were left in utter darkness. At this moment was heard the noise of a carriage, which stopped at the street door. When the chamber became darkened, Ferrand's agony ceased by degrees, and he said to Polidori, "Why did you wait so long before you put out this lamp? Was it to make me endure all the torments of the damned? Oh, what I have suffered! Oh, heaven! how I have suffered!"

"Now do you suffer less?"

"I still experience a violent irritation, but it is nothing to what I felt just now. I cling to life because the memory of Cecily is all my life."

"But this memory kills, exhausts, consumes you." The notary did not hear his accomplice, who foresaw a new hallucination. In effect, Ferrand resumed, with a burst of convulsive and sardonic laughter:

"To take Cecily from me! But they do not know that, by concentrating all the power of one's faculties on a single object, the impracticable is gained. Thus, directly, I am going to the chamber of Cecily, where I have not dared to go since her departure. Oh, to see, to touch the vestments which have belonged to her; the glass before which she dressed--it will be to see herself! Yes; by fixing my eyes on this glass, soon shall I see Cecily appear. It will not be an illusion--a mist; it will be she; I shall find her there, as the sculptor finds the statue in the block of marble."

"Where are you going to?" said Polidori, hearing Jacques Ferrand getting up from his bed, for the most profound obscurity still reigned in the apartment.

"I go to find Cecily."

"You shall not go. The sight of her chamber will kill you."

"Cecily awaits me there."

"You shall not go--I hold you," said Polidori, seizing the notary by the arm.

Jacques Ferrand, arrived at the last stage of weakness, could not struggle against Polidori, who held him with a vigorous hand.

"You wish to prevent me from going to find Cecily?"

"Yes; and, besides, there is a lamp lighted in the next room; you know what effect the light produced just now upon your sight!"

"Cecily is there; she awaits me. I would traverse a blazing furnace to join her. Let me go. She told me I was her old tiger. Take care, my claws are sharp."

"You shall not go. I will rather tie you on your bed as a madman."

"Polidori, listen; I am not mad--I have all my reason. I know very well that Cecily is not materially there; but for me, the phantoms of my imagination are worth more than realities."

"Silence!" cried Polidori, suddenly, listening; "just now I thought I heard a carriage stop at the door. I was not mistaken. I hear now the sound of voices in the court."

"You wish to distract my thoughts. The trick is too plain."

"I hear some one speak, I tell you, and I think I recognize---"

"You wish to deceive me," said Ferrand, interrupting Polidori; "I am not your dupe."

"But, wretch, listen then--listen. Ah! do you not hear?"

"Let me go--Cecily is there--she calls me. Do not make me angry, in my turn, I tell you. Take care--do you understand? take care."

"You shall not go out."

"Take care---"

"You shall not go out from here; it is my interest that you should remain."

"You prevent me from going to find Cecily; my interest wills that you should die. Hold then!" said the notary, in a hollow voice.

Polidori uttered a cry.

"Scoundrel! you have stabbed me in the arm; but the wound is slight; you shall not escape me."

"Your wound is mortal. It is the poisoned dagger of Cecily which has stabbed you; I always carried it about me; await the effects of the poison. Ah! you loosen your grasp; you are going to die. You should not have hindered me from going to find Cecily," added Jacques Ferrand, feeling in the dark for the door.

"Oh!" murmured Polidori, "my arm stiffens--a mortal coldness seizes me--my knees tremble under me--my blood thickens in my veins--my head turns. Help!" cried the accomplice of Ferrand, collecting all his strength for a last cry; "help! I die!"

And he sunk under his own weight upon the floor. The crash of a glass door, opened with so much violence that several panes were broken to pieces, the ringing voice of Rudolph, and a noise of hasty footsteps, seemed to respond to Polidori's cry of anguish. Jacques Ferrand, having at length found the lock in the dark, opened the door leading into an adjoining apartment, and rushed into it, his dangerous weapon in his hand. At the same moment, threatening and formidable as the genius of vengeance, the prince entered the room from the opposite side.

"Monster!" cried Rudolph, advancing toward Jacques Ferrand, "it is my daughter whom you have killed! You are going--"

The prince did not finish; he recoiled alarmed. One would have said that his words had pierced Jacques Ferrand. Throwing his poniard aside, and placing both his hands before his eyes, the wretch fell with his face to the floor, uttering a howl that was anything but human. In consequence of the phenomenon of which we have spoken, of which a profound darkness had suspended the action, when Jacques Ferrand entered this chamber brilliantly lighted, he was struck with a vertigo, similar to that which we have already described, more intolerable than if he had been exposed to a

torrent of light as incandescent as that of the disk of the sun. And the agony of this man was a fearful spectacle; he writhed in frightful convulsions, tearing the floor with his nails, as if he wished to dig a hole to escape from the horrible tortures caused by this glaring light. Rudolph, one of his servants, and the porter of the house, who had been compelled to conduct the prince to this apartment, were transfixed with horror. Notwithstanding his just horror, Rudolph felt an emotion of pity for the unheard-of suffering of Jacques Ferrand; he ordered him to be laid on a sofa. This was not done without difficulty; for, fearing to be submitted again to the direct action of the light, the notary struggled violently, but when it streamed in his face he uttered another yell, which filled Rudolph with terror. After protracted torments, these attacks ceased, exhausted by their own violence. Arrived at the mortal period of his delirium, he remembered still the words of Cecily, who had called him her tiger; by degrees, his mind again wandered; he imagined himself a tiger! Crouched in one of the corners of the room, as in his den, his hoarse, furious cries, the grinding of his teeth, the spasmodic contortions of the muscles of his forehead and face, his glaring look, gave him a vague and frightful resemblance to this ferocious beast.

"Tiger--tiger--tiger I am," said he, in a broken voice, gathering himself up in a heap; "yes, tiger. How much blood! In my lair--corpses--torn to pieces! La Goualeuse--the brother of this widow--the child of Louise--here are corpses; my tigress Cecily shall take her share." Then looking at his bony fingers, of which the nails had grown very long during his illness, he added these words: "Oh! my sharp nails: an old tiger I am, but more active, and strong, and bold. No one shall dare dispute my tigress, Cecily. Ah! she calls! she calls!" said he, looking around, and seeming to listen. After a moment's pause, he groped his way along the wall, saying, "No; I thought I heard her; she is not there, but I see her, oh! always, always! Oh! there she is! She calls me--she roars--she roars there! I come, I come."

And Jacques Ferrand dragged himself toward the middle of the chamber on his hands and knees. Although his strength was exhausted, from time to time he advanced by a convulsive spring: then he would pause, seeming to listen attentively.

"Where is she? where is she? I approach, she flies. Ah! there; oh! she awaits me; go; go, Cecily, your old tiger is yours," cried he.

And with a desperate effort he succeeded in getting on his knees. But, suddenly, falling backward with alarm, his body crouched on his heels, his hair standing on end, his look wild, his mouth distorted with terror, his hands stretched out, he seemed to struggle with age against an invisible object, and cried, in a broken voice, "What a bite--help--my arms break--I cannot take it off--sharp teeth. No, no, oh! not the eyes--help--a black serpent--oh! its flat head--its burning eyeballs. It looks at me--it is the devil. Ah! he knows me--Jacques Ferrand--at the church--holy man--always at the church--avaunt!" And the notary, raising himself a little and sustaining himself with one hand on the floor, tried with the other to make the sign of the cross.

His livid face was covered with sweat, and all the symptoms of approaching

death were manifested. He fell immediately backward, stiff and inanimate; his eyes seemed to start from their sockets; horrible convulsions stamped his features with unearthly contortions, like those forced from dead bodies by a galvanic battery; a bloody foam inundated his lips, and the life of this monster became extinct in the midst of one of his horrid visions, for he muttered these words: "Night--dark! dark specters--brazen skeletons--red-hot--twine around me their burning fingers--my flesh smokes--specter--bloody--no! no--Cecily--fire--Cecily!" Such were the last words of Jacques Ferrand.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE HOSPITAL.

It will be remembered that Fleur-de-Marie, saved by La Louve, had been conveyed to the country house of Dr. Griffon, [Footnote: The name which I have the honor to bear, which my father, grandfather, grand-uncle, and great grandfather--one of the most learned men of the seventeenth century--have rendered celebrated by works on theoretical and practical medicine, would forbid me from any attack, or hasty reflection, concerning physicians; even though the gravity of the subject upon which I treat, and the just and deserved celebrity of the French Medical School, did not prevent me. In Dr. Griffon I have only wished to personify one, otherwise respectable, who allows himself to be carried away the ardor of art, and led to make experiments which are a serious abuse medical power (if I may express myself in this manner), forgetting that there is something more sacred than Science--Humanity.] not far from Ravageurs' Island. The worthy doctor, one of the physicians of the City Hospital where we shall conduct our readers, who had obtained this situation through a powerful interest, regarded his ward as a sort of place where he experimented on the poor the treatment which he applied afterward to his rich patients, never hazarding on the last any new cures before having first tried and retried the application *_in anima vili_*, as he said, with that kind of passionless barbarity which a blind love for science produces. Thus, if the doctor wished to convince himself of the comparative effect of some new and hazardous treatment, in order to be able to deduce consequences favorable to such or such system, he took a certain number of patients, treated some according to the new system, others by the ancient method. Under some circumstances, he abandoned others to the care of nature. After which he counted the survivors. These terrible experiments were, truly, a human sacrifice on the altar of science. Dr. Griffon did not seem to think of this. In the eyes of this prince of science (as they phrase it) the patients of his hospital were only subjects for study and experiment; and as, after all, there resulted sometimes from these essays *_in anima vili_* a fact or discovery useful to science, the doctor showed himself as entirely satisfied and triumphant as a general after a victory sufficiently costly in soldiers.

Homeopathy had never a more violent adversary than Dr. Griffon. He look

upon this method as absurd and homicidal; thus, strong in his convictions, and wishing, as he said, to drive the homeopaths to the wall, he offered to abandon to their care a certain number of patients, on whom they might experiment to their liking. But he affirmed in advance, sure of not being contradicted by the result, that, out of twenty patients submitted to this treatment, not over five, at the outside would survive. The homeopaths gave the go-by to this proposition, to the great chagrin of the doctor, who regretted the loss of this occasion to prove, by figures, the vanity of homeopathic practice. Dr. Griffon would have been stupefied if any one had said to him, in reference to this free and autocratic disposition of his subjects:

"Such a state of things would cause the barbarism of those days to be regretted when condemned criminals were exposed to undergo newly-discovered surgical operations; operations which they dared not practice on the uncondemned. If it were successful, the condemned was pardoned. Compared to what you do, sir, this barbarity was charity. After all, a chance for life was thus given to a poor creature for whom the executioner was waiting, and an experiment was rendered possible which might be useful to all. But to try your hazardous medicaments on unfortunate artisans, for whom the hospital is the sole refuge when sickness overtakes them; to try a treatment, perhaps fatal, on people whom poverty confides to you, trusting and powerless; to you, their only hope; to you, who will only answer for their life to God--do you know that this is to push the love of science to inhumanity, sir? How! the poorer classes already people the workshops, the field, the army; in this world they only know misery and privations; and when, at the end of their sufferings and fatigues, they fall exhausted--half-dead--sickness even does not preserve them from a last and sacrilegious "experiment!" I ask your heart, sir, would not this be unjust and cruel?"

Alas! Dr. Griffon would have been touched, perhaps, by these severe words, but not convinced. Man is made the creature of circumstances. The captain thus accustoms himself to consider his soldiers as nothing more than the pawns of the bloody game called battle. And it is because man is thus made, that society ought to protect those whom fate exposes to the action of these "humane necessities." Now the character of Dr. Griffon once admitted (and it can be admitted without much hyperbole), the inmates of this hospital had then no guarantee, no recourse against the scientific barbarity of his experiments; for there exists a grievous hiatus in the organization of the civil hospitals. We will point it out here, so that we may be understood. Military hospitals are each day visited by a superior officer charged to receive the complaints of the sick soldiers, and to attend to them if they appear reasonable. This oversight completely distinct from the government of the hospital, is excellent--it has always produced the best results. It is, besides, impossible to see establishments better kept than the military hospitals; the soldiers are nursed with much care, and treated, we would say, almost with respectful commiseration. Why not have a similar superintendence established in the civil hospitals, by men completely independent of the government and medical faculty? The complaints of the poor (if they were well founded) would thus have an impartial organ, while at present this organ is absolutely wanting. Thus the doors of the hospital of Dr. Griffon once shut on a patient, he

belonged body and soul to science. No friendly or disinterested ear can hear his grief. He is told plainly that, being admitted out of charity, he becomes henceforth a part of the experimental domain of the doctor, and that patient and malady must serve as subjects of study and observation, analysis, or instruction, to the young students who accompany assiduously the visits of M. Griffon. In effect, the subject soon had to answer to interrogations often the most painful, the most sorrowful; and that, not to the doctor alone, who like the priest, fulfills a duty, and has the right to know everything--no, he must reply in a loud voice before a curious and greedy crowd of students. Yes, in this pandemonium of science, old or young, maid or wife, were obliged to abjure every feeling or sentiment of shame, and to make the most confidential communications, submit to the most material investigations, before a numerous public; and almost always these cruel formalities aggravated their disease. And this is neither humane nor just; it is because the poor enter the hospital in the holy name of charity, that they should be treated with compassion and with respect, for misfortune has its dignity.

On reading the following lines, it will be perceived why we have caused them to be preceded by these reflections. Nothing could be more sad than the nocturnal aspect of the vast ward of the hospital, where we will introduce our readers. Along the whole length of its gloomy walls were ranged two parallel rows of beds, vaguely lighted by the sepulchral glimmering of a lamp suspended from the ceiling; the narrow windows were barred with iron, like a prison's. The atmosphere is so sickening, so filled with disease, that the new patients did not often become acclimated without danger: this increase of suffering is a kind of premium which every new-comer inevitably pays for a hospital residence. The air of this immense hall is, then, heavy and corrupted. At intervals, the silence of night is interrupted, now by plaintive moans, now by profound sighs, uttered by the feverish sleepers; then all is quiet, and naught is heard but the regular and monotonous tickings of a large clock, which strikes the hours, so long for sleepless suffering. One of the extremities of this hall was almost plunged into obscurity. Suddenly was heard a great stir, and the noise of rapid footsteps; a door was opened and shut several times; a sister of charity, whose large white cap and black dress were visible from the light which she carried in her hand, approached one of the last beds on the right side of the hall. Some of the patients, awaking with a start, sat up in bed, attentive to what was passing. Soon the folding doors were opened. A priest entered, bearing a crucifix--the two sisters knelt. By the pale light which shone like a glory around this bed, while the other parts of the hall remained in obscurity, the almoner of the hospital was seen leaning over this couch of misery, pronouncing some words, the slow sounds of which were lost in the silence of night. At the end of a quarter of an hour the priest took a sheet, which he threw over the bed.

Then he retired. One of the kneeling sisters arose, closed the curtains, and returned to her prayers alongside of her companion. Then everything became once more silent. One of the patients had just died. Among the women who did not sleep, and who had witnessed this mute scene, were three persons whose names have already been mentioned in the course of this history: Mademoiselle de Fermont, daughter of the unhappy widow ruined by the cupidity of Jacques Ferrand; La Lorraine, a poor washer-woman, to whom

Fleur-de-Marie had formerly given what money she had left; and Jeanne Duport, sister of Pique-Vinaigre, the patterer of La Force. We know Mademoiselle de Fermont and the juggler's sister. La Lorraine was a woman of about twenty, with a sweet face, but extremely pale and thin: she was in the last stage of consumption; there was no hope of saving her; she knew it, and was wasting away slowly. The distance was not so great between the beds of these two women but they could speak in a low tone, and not be overheard by the sisters.

"There is another one gone," whispered La Lorraine, thinking of the dead, and speaking to herself. "She will not suffer more--she is very happy."

"She is very happy, if she has left no children," added Jeanne.

"Oh! you are not asleep, neighbor," said La Lorraine, to her. "How do you get on, for your first night here? Last night, as soon as you were brought in, you were placed in bed, and I did not dare to speak to you; I heard you sob.

"Oh! yes; I have wept much."

"You are, then, in much pain?"

"Yes, but I am used to pain; it is from sorrow I weep. At length I fell asleep; I was still sleeping when the noise of the doors awoke me. When the priest came in, and the good sisters knelt, I soon saw it was a woman who was dying; then I said to myself a pater and an ave for her."

"I also; and, as I have the same complaint, as this woman had, who is just dead, I could not prevent myself from saying, 'Here is another whose sufferings are ended; she is very happy!'"

"Yes, as I told you, if she had no children."

"You have children, then?"

"Three," said the sister of Pique-Vinaigre, with a sigh,

"And you?"

"I had a little girl, but I did not keep her long. I am a washer-woman at the boats; I worked as long as I could. But everything has an end; when my strength failed me, my bread failed me also. They turned me out of my lodgings; I do not know what would have become of me, except for a poor woman who gave me shelter in a cellar, where she had concealed herself to escape from her husband, who wished to kill her. There I was confined on the straw; but, happily, this good woman knew a young girl, beautiful and charitable as an angel from heaven: this young girl had a little money; she took me from the cellar, and placed me in a furnished room, paying the rent in advance, giving me, besides, a willow cradle for my child, and forty francs for myself, with some clothes."

"Good little girl! I also have met, by chance, with one who may be called

her equal, a young dressmaker, very obliging. I had gone to see my poor brother, who is a prisoner," said Jeanne, after a moment of hesitation; "and I met in the visitors' room this young girl of whom I speak; having heard me say to my brother that I was not happy, she came to me, much embarrassed, to offer what services were in her power."

"How kind that was in her!"

"I accepted; she gave me her address, and, two days after, this dear little Rigolette--that's her dear name--gave me employment."

"Rigolette!" cried La Lorraine.

"You know her?"

"No; but the young girl who was so generous to me, several times mentioned the name of Rigolette: they were friends together."

"Well!" said Jeanne, smiling sadly, "since we are neighbors in sickness, we should be friends like our two benefactresses."

"Willingly: my name is Annette Gerbier, otherwise La Lorraine, washer-woman."

"And mine, Jeanne Duport, fringe-maker. Ah! it is so good, at the hospital, to find some one who is not altogether a stranger, above all, when you come for the first time, and you have many troubles! But I do not wish to think of this. Tell me, La Lorraine, what was the name of the young girl who has been so kind to you?"

"She was called La Goualeuse. All my sorrow is that I have not seen her for a long time. She was as beautiful as the Holy Virgin, with fine flaxen hair and blue eyes, so sweet--so sweet! Unfortunately, notwithstanding her assistance, my poor child died at two months," and Lorraine wiped away a tear.

"Poor Lorraine!"

"I regret, my child, for myself, not for her, poor little dear! She would have too much to struggle with, for she soon would have been an orphan. I have not a long time to live."

"You should not have such ideas at your age. Have you been sick for a long time?"

"It will soon be three months. Bless me! when I had to work for myself and my child, I increased my labor; the winter was cold, I caught a cold on my chest; at this time I lost my little girl. In watching her I forgot myself. To that add sorrow, and I am what you see me, consumptive, doomed--as was the actress who has just died."

"At your age there is always hope."

"The actress was only two years older, and you see---"

"She whom the good sisters are watching now, was she an actress?"

"Oh, yes--what a fate! She had been beautiful as the day. She had plenty of money, equipages, diamonds, but, unfortunately, the small-pox disfigured her; then want came, then poverty--behold her dead in the hospital. Yet, she was not proud; on the contrary, she was kind and gentle to everybody; she told us that she had written to a gentleman whom she had known in her prosperity, who had loved her; she wrote to him to come and reclaim her body, because it hurt her feelings to think she would be dissected--cut in pieces."

"And this gentleman has come?"

"No."

"Oh! that is very cruel."

"At each moment the poor woman asked for him, saying continually, 'Oh! he will come! oh! he will surely come;' and yet she died, and he had not come."

"Her end must have been so much the more painful."

"Oh, Lord, yes; for she dreaded so much what they would do to her body."

"After having been rich and happy, to die here is sad! For us, it is only a change of misery."

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE VISIT.

"Speaking of that," resumed La Lorraine, after a moment's hesitation, "I wish you would render me a service."

"Speak."

"If I should die, as is probable, before you leave this, I wish you would claim my body--I have the same dread as the actress; and I have put aside the small amount of money I have left, so that I can be buried."

"Do not have such ideas."

"Never mind--do you promise me?"

"Yes! but Lord be praised, that will not happen."

"But, if it does happen, I shall not have, thanks to you, the same misfortune as the actress."

"Poor lady, after having been rich, to end thus!"

"The actress was not the only one in this room who has been rich, Madame Jeanne."

"Call me Jeanne, as I call you La Lorraine."

"You are very kind."

"Who is it that has been rich besides?"

"A young person not over fifteen, who was brought here last night, before you came. She was so weak that they were obliged to carry her. The sister said that this young girl and her mother were very respectable people, who had been ruined."

"Her mother is also here?"

"No: the mother was so very sick, that she could not be moved. The poor child would not leave her, and they profited by a fainting fit to bring her here. It was the proprietor of a wretched lodging-house who, for fear that they would die in his abode, applied for their admission."

"And where is she?"

"There, in the bed opposite to yours."

"And only fifteen?"

"At the most."

"The age of my eldest daughter!" said Jeanne, unable to restrain her tears.

"Pardon me," said La Lorraine, sadly, "pardon me, if I cause you pain, unintentionally, by speaking of your children. Perhaps they are sick also?"

"Alas! I do not know what will become of them if I stay here more than a week."

"And your husband?"

After a pause, Jeanne answered, drying her tears, "Since we are friends together, La Lorraine, I can tell you my troubles, as you have told me yours--it will solace me. My husband was a good workman; he has become dissipated; he abandoned me and my children, after having sold all that we possessed; I worked hard; charitable people aided me; I began again to raise my head; I brought up my little family as well as I could, when my husband came back, with a bad woman, and again took all I had, leaving me to commence anew."

"Poor Jeanne! could you not prevent that?"

"I could have procured a separation by law, but the law is too dear, as my brother says. Alas! you shall see what effect this has upon us poor folks; some days since, I returned to see my brother: he gave me three francs, which he had collected from those who listened to his stories in prison."

"It is plain to see that you are a kind-hearted family," said La Lorraine, who, from a rare instinctive delicacy, did not interrogate Jeanne as to the cause of her brother's imprisonment.

"I took courage, then; I thought that my husband would not return for a long time, for he had taken from me all that he could take. No, I am mistaken," added the unhappy mother, shuddering: "there remained my daughter--my poor Catharine."

"Your daughter?"

"You shall see--you shall see. Three days since, I was at work, with my children around me; my husband came in. I saw at once that he been drinking. 'I come after Catharine,' said he. I caught my daughter by the arm, and asked Duport, 'Where do you wish to take her?' 'That does not concern you--she is my daughter; let her tie up some clothes and follow me.' At these words my blood curdled in my veins; for, imagine, La Lorraine, that this woman who is with my husband--it makes me shudder to say it, but--"

"Ah! yes, she is a real monster."

"'Take Catharine away!' I answered to Duport: 'never!' 'Now,' said my husband, whose lips were already white with rage, 'do not provoke me, or I'll knock you down!' Then he took my child by the arm, saying, 'Come with me, Catharine.' The poor little thing threw her arms around my neck; bursting into tears, she cried, 'I wish to stay with mamma!' Seeing this, Duport became furious: he tore my child from me, giving me a blow with his fist, which knocked me down; and once down--but, do you see, La Lorraine," said poor Jeanne, interrupting herself, "it is very certain he would not have been so cruel, except he had been drinking in fine, he trampled upon me, loading me with curses."

"How bad he must be!"

"My poor children fell on their knees, begging for mercy; Catharine also. Then he said to my daughter, swearing like a madman, 'If you do not come with me, I will finish the job with your mother!' I vomited blood. I felt myself half dead; but I cried to Catharine, 'Rather let him kill me! but do not follow your father!' 'Will you not be silent, then?' said Duport, giving me another blow, which made me lose all consciousness."

"What misery! what misery!"

"When I came to myself I found my two little boys beside me weeping."

"And your daughter?"

"Gone!" cried the poor mother, sobbing convulsively; "yes, gone! My other children told me that their father had struck her, threatening to take what life I had remaining on the spot. Then, what could you expect? the poor child was bewildered; she threw herself upon me for a last embrace, kissed her little brothers, and then my husband carried her off! Ah! that bad woman waited for them at the door, I am sure!"

"And could you not complain to the police?"

"At first I could think of nothing but Catharine's departure, but I soon felt great pains all over my body, I could not walk. Alas! what I had so much dreaded arrived. Yes--I had said to my brother, 'Some day my husband will beat me so hard--so hard, that I shall be obliged to go to a hospital. Then, my children, what will become of them?' And now here I am, at the hospital, and I say, What will become of my children?"

"But is there not any justice, then, my God! for the poor?"

"Too dear! too dear for us, as my brother said," answered Jeanne Duport, with bitterness. "My neighbors went to seek the police, they came: it was painful for me to denounce Duport, but on account of my daughter it was necessary. I said only that, in a quarrel I had with him about taking away my daughter, he had pushed me; that it was nothing, but that I wanted my daughter back again."

"And what did he reply?"

"That my husband had a right to take away his child, not being separated from me. 'You have only one way,' said the officer to me: 'commence a civil suit, demand a separation of body, and then the blows which your husband has given you, his conduct with this vile woman, will be in your favor, and they will force him to deliver up your daughter; otherwise, he can keep her in his own right.' 'But to commence a suit! I have not the means! I have my children to feed.' 'What can I do?' said he; 'so it is.' 'Yes," repeated Jeanne, sobbing, "he was right; so it is; and because that so it is, in three months, perhaps, my daughter will be a street-walker! while, if I had had the means to commence a suit, it would not have happened."

"But that will never happen, your daughter must love you so much."

"But she is so young! At that age, fear, bad treatment, bad counsels, bad examples! Poor Catharine! so gentle, so loving! and I, who only this year wished her to renew her first communion!"

"Oh! you have much sorrow. And I complained of mine!" said Lorraine, wiping her eyes. "And your other children?"

"On their account I did what I could to keep out of the hospital. I was obliged to give up. I vomit blood three or four times a day; I have a fever which prostrates me; I am unable to work. At least, by being cured quickly, I can return to my children, if, before this, they are not dead with hunger

or imprisoned as beggars. I here--who will they have to take care of them, and feed them?"

"Oh! this is terrible! You have no good neighbors, then?"

"They are as poor as I am, and they have five children of their own; thus two children more is a heavy burden; however, they have promised me to feed them a little, during eight days. It is all they can do; it is taking from them bread, of which they themselves have none too much; so I must be cured in eight days; oh yes! cured or not, I shall go out, all the same."

"But why have you not thought of this good Miss Rigolette, whom you met in prison? She would surely have taken care of them."

"I did think of her; and, although the dear little soul has, perhaps, as much as she can do to get along, I sent her word by a neighbor of my troubles. Unfortunately, she is in the country, where she is going to be married; so the porter of the house said."

"Thus, in eight days, your poor children--but no, your neighbors will not have the heart to send them away."

"But what would you have them to do? They do not eat now as much as they want, and they are obliged to take it out of the mouths of their own to give it to mine. No, no--do you see, I must be cured in eight days. I have already demanded it from all the doctors I have seen since yesterday, but they answered me, laughing, 'You must address yourself to the chief physician for that.' When will he come, La Lorraine?"

"Chut! I think he is there. We must not talk while he is making his visit," answered La Lorraine.

During the conversation of the two women the day commenced to dawn. A confused movement announced the arrival of Dr. Griffon, who soon entered the hall, accompanied by his friend the Count de Saint Rømy, who, having a deep interest in Madame de Fermont and her daughter, was far from expecting to find the latter unfortunate girl in the hospital. As he came into the ward, the cold and stern features of Dr. Griffon seemed to light up with a glow of satisfaction. Casting around him a look of complacency and authority, he answered with a patronizing bend of the head the eager greetings of the sisters. The rough and austere physiognomy of the Count de Saint Rømy was stamped with deep sadness. The fruitlessness of his attempts to discover traces of Madame de Fermont, the ignominious conduct of his son, who had preferred an infamous life to death, crushed him to the ground with sorrow.

"Well!" said Dr. Griffon to the count with a triumphant air, "what do you think of my hospital?"

"In truth," answered Saint Rømy, "I do not know why I have yielded to your desire; nothing is more heart-rending than the aspect of these wards filled with sick. Since my entrance here my feelings quite overcome me."

"Bah! bah! in fifteen minutes you will think no more about it; you, who are a philosopher, will find ample matter for observation: and then it would have been a shame that you, one of my oldest friends, should not visit the theater of my labors--of my glory, that you should not see me at my work. All my pride is in my profession; is it wrong?"

"No, certainly not; and after your excellent care of Fleur-de-Marie, whom you have saved, I could refuse you nothing. Poor child! what touching charms her features have preserved, notwithstanding her dangerous illness!"

"She has furnished me with a very curious medical fact; I am enchanted with her! By the bye, how has she passed this night? Did you see her this morning before you left Asnières?"

"No, but La Louve, who nurses her with unceasing assiduity, told me that she had slept perfectly well. Can we allow her to write today?"

After a moment's hesitation, the doctor answered, "Yes. As long as the subject was not completely convalescent, I feared the slightest emotion for her, the slightest application of mind; but now I do not see that any inconvenience can arise from her writing."

"At least she could inform her friends."

"Doubtless. Have you heard nothing more concerning the fate of Madame de Fermont and her daughter?"

"Nothing," said Saint Rømy, sighing. "My constant researches have no success. I have no more hope but in Lady d'Harville, who, as I am told, also takes a lively interest in these unfortunates; perhaps she may have some information which might lead to her discovery. Three days ago I went to her residence; she was expected to arrive every moment. I have written to her on this subject, begging her to answer me as soon as possible."

During the conversation of Saint Rømy and Dr. Griffon, several persons had slowly assembled around a large table occupying the middle of the hall; on this table was a register, where the students attached to the hospital, who might be recognized by their long white aprons, came in turn to sign their names as being present; a large number of young students arrived successively to swell the scientific retinue of Dr. Griffon, who, arriving a few moments in advance of his usual hour, waited until it struck.

"You see, my dear Saint Rømy, that my staff is quite considerable," said Dr. Griffon, with pride, pointing to the crowd who came to attend to his practical instruction.

"And these young men follow you to the bed of each patient?"

"They only come for that."

"But all these beds are occupied by women."

"Well?"

"The presence of so many men must cause them much painful confusion?"

"Tush, a patient has no sex."

"In your eyes, perhaps; but in their own--modesty, shame."

"All these fine things must be left at the door, my dear Alceste; here we commence on the living experiments and studies which we finish in the dissecting room on the corpse."

"Hold, doctor; you are the best and the most honest of men; I owe you my life; I recognize your excellent qualities; but habit and the love of your profession make you view certain questions in a manner that is revolting to me. I leave you," said Saint Rømy, turning to leave the hall.

"What childishness!" cried the doctor, detaining him.

"No, no--there are some things which wound me and make me indignant; I foresee that it will be torture for me to accompany you. I will not go, but I will await you here, near this table."

"What a man you are with your scruples! But I will not let you off. I admit it may be unpleasant for you to go from bed to bed; remain, then, there; I will call you for two or three cases which are very curious."

"Very well; since you are so very urgent, that will be enough, and more than enough."

The clock struck half-past seven.

"Come, gentlemen," said Dr. Griffon, and he commenced his visits, followed by a numerous train.

On arriving at the first bed of the range of the night, of which the curtains were closed, the sister said to the doctor,

"Sir, number one died this morning at half-past four."

"So late? that surprises me; yesterday morning I would not have given her the day: has the body been claimed?"

"No, doctor."

"So much the better--we can proceed with the autopsy; I can make some one happy;" then, addressing one of the students, the doctor added, "My dear Dunnoyer, you have wished for a subject for a long time; you are the first on the list; this one is yours."

"Ah! sir, how kind you are!"

"I could wish oftener to recompense your zeal, my dear friend; but mark the subject, and take possession."

And the doctor passed on. The student, with the aid of a scalpel, cut very delicately on the arm of the actress an F and a D, in order to take possession, as the doctor said.

"La Lorraine," whispered Jeanne Duport to her neighbor, "who are all these people that follow the doctor?"

"They are pupils and students."

"Oh! will all these young men be there when he examines me?"

"Alas! yes."

"But it is on my chest I am injured. Will they examine me before all these men?"

"Yes, yes, it must be so--they wish it. I wept enough the first time--I was dying with shame; I resisted, they threatened to turn me away; I was obliged to submit, but it affected me so much that I was worse. Judge, then, almost naked before so many people--it is very painful."

"Before the physician alone--I comprehend that--if it is necessary--and even that costs much. But why before all these young men?"

"They are learning; they teach them with us. What would we have? we are here for that; it is on this condition that we are received here."

"Ah! I comprehend," said Jeanne Duport, with bitterness; "they do not give us something for nothing. But yet, there are occasions where this could not be. Thus, if my poor daughter Catharine, who is but fifteen, should come to a hospital, would they dare before all these young men? Oh! no, I think I would prefer to see her die at home."

"If she came here, she would have to obey the rules, like you, like me."

"Hush, La Lorraine; if this poor little lady who is opposite should hear us--she who was rich, who perhaps has never before left her mother--it is going to be her turn--judge how confused and unhappy she will be."

"It is true, it is true; I shudder when I think of it, poor child!"

"Silence, Jeanne, here is the doctor!" said La Lorraine.

CHAPTER XIX.

CLAIRE DE FERMONT.

After having rapidly visited several patients whose cases presented no

great interest, the doctor at length reached the bed of Jeanne Duport.

At the sight of the eager crowd, who, anxious to see and to know, to understand and to learn, pressed around her bed, the unhappy woman, seized with a tremor of fear and shame, wrapped herself closely in the covering. The severe and intelligent face of Dr. Griffon, his penetrating look, his brow habitually contracted, his rough manner of speaking, augmented still more the alarm of Jeanne.

"A new subject!" said the doctor, casting his eye on the card where was inscribed the nature of the malady of the new-comer. He preserved a profound silence, while his assistants, imitating the prince of science, fixed their eyes on the patient with curiosity. She, to throw aside as much as possible all the painful emotions caused by so many spectators, looked steadily at the doctor, with deep anguish.

After an examination of several minutes, the doctor, remarking something anomalous in the yellowish tint of the eyeball, approached nearer to her, and with the end of his finger pushing back the eyelid, he examined the crystalline lens. Then several students, answering to a kind of mute invitation of their professor, went, in turn, to observe the appearance of the eye. Afterward the doctor proceeded to this interrogatory: "Your name?"

"Jeanne Duport," murmured the patient, more and more alarmed.

"Your age?"

"Thirty-six and a half."

"Louder. Born in--"

"Paris."

"Your occupation?"

"Fringe-maker."

"Married?"

"Alas! yes, sir," answered Jeanne, with a deep sigh.

"How long since?"

"Eighteen years."

"Any children?" Here, instead of answering, the unhappy mother gave vent to her tears, for a long time restrained.

"We do not want tears, but an answer. Have you any children?"

"Yes, sir, two little boys and a girl."

"How long have you been sick?"

"For four days, sir," said Jeanne, wiping her eyes.

"Tell me how you became sick."

"Sir, there are so many people, I do not dare."

"Where do you come from, my dear?" said the doctor, impatiently. "Would you not like me to bring a confessional here? Come, speak, and be quick. Be composed, we are quite a family party--quite a large family, as you see," added the prince of science, who was on that day in a gay humor. "Come, let us finish."

More and more intimidated, Jeanne said, stammering and hesitating at each word, "I had, sir, a quarrel with my husband, on the subject of my children; I mean to say, of my eldest daughter. He wished take her away. I--you comprehend, sir--I did not wish it, on account of a vile woman, who might give bad advice to my child; then my husband, who was drunk--oh! yes, sir, except for that he would not have done it--my husband pushed me very hard; I fell, and--then, a short time after, I began to throw up blood."

"Ta, ta, ta; your husband pushed you, and you fell. You set it off very nicely. He has certainly done more than push you; he must have struck you very hard, and what is more, several times. Perhaps, also, he has trampled you under foot. Come, answer! tell the truth."

"Ah! sir, I assure you he was drunk, otherwise he would not have been so wicked."

"Good or wicked, drunk or sober, it has nothing to do with present matters; I am not a magistrate, my good woman; I only wish to establish a fact. You have been knocked down and trampled upon, have you not?"

"Alas! yes, sir," said Jeanne, bursting into tears; "and yet I have never given him cause for complaint. I work as much as I can, and I--"

"The epigastrium must be painful? you must feel a great heat there?" said the doctor, interrupting Jeanne; "you must experience lassitude, uneasiness, nausea?"

"Yes, sir. I only came here at the last extremity, otherwise I would not have abandoned my children, for whom I am so much worried; and then Catharine--ah! it is on her account I fear the most. If you knew--"

"Your tongue!" said the doctor, again interrupting the patient.

This order appeared so strange to Jeanne, who had thought to excite feelings of compassion in the doctor, that she did not at first comply with it, but looked at him with amazement.

"Let us see this tongue, of which you make so good use," said the doctor, smiling; then he held down, with the end of his finger, her under jaw.

After causing the students to examine the tongue closely, in order to ascertain its color and dryness, the doctor stepped back a moment. Jeanne, overcoming her fear, cried in a trembling voice:

"Sir, I am going to tell you. Some neighbors, as poor as myself, have been kind enough to take charge of my Children, but for eight days only. That is a great deal. At the end of this time I must return home. Thus, I entreat you, for the love of heaven! cure me as soon as possible--or _almost_ cure me, so that I can get up and work. I have only a week before me, for--"

"Face discolored--state of prostration complete; yet the pulse hard, strong, and frequent," said the imperturbable doctor, looking at Jeanne. "Remark it well, gentlemen: oppression--heat at the epigastrium, all these symptoms certainly announce _hematemesis_, probably complicated with hepatitis, caused by domestic sorrows, as the yellowish coloration of the globe of the eye indicates; the subject has received violent blows in the regions of epigastrium and abdomen; the vomiting of blood is necessarily caused by some organic lesion of certain viscera. On this subject I will call your attention to a very curious point--very curious. The _post-mortem_ examinations of those who die with the complaint of which this _subject_ is attacked, offer results singularly variable; often the malady, very acute and very serious, carries off the patient in a few days, and leaves no traces of its existence; at other times, the spleen, the liver, the pancreas, present lesions more or less serious. It is probable that the _subject_ before us has suffered some of these lesions; we are going, then, to try to assure ourselves of this fact, and you--you will also assure yourselves by an attentive examination of the patient." And, with a rapid movement, Dr. Griffon, throwing the bed-clothes back, almost entirely uncovered Jeanne. It is repugnant to our feelings to depict the piteous struggles of this poor creature, who wept bitterly from shame, imploring the doctor and his auditory to leave her.

But at the threat, "You will be turned out of the hospital if you do not submit to the established usages"--a threat so overwhelming for those to whom the hospital is the last resource, Jeanne submitted to a public investigation, which lasted for a long time--a very long time; for the doctor analyzed and explained each symptom, and the more studious of the assistants wished to join practice to theory, and have an ocular assurance of the state of the patient. As a consequence of this cruel scene, Jeanne experienced an emotion so violent that she had a severe nervous attack, for which Dr. Griffon gave an additional prescription. The visit was continued. The doctor soon reached the bed of Claire de Fermont, a victim, as well as her mother, of the cupidity of Jacques Ferrand. Miss de Fermont wearing the linen cap furnished by the hospital, leaned her head in a languishing manner on the bolster of her bed; through the ravages of sickness could be traced, on this ingenuous and sweet face, the remains of distinguished beauty. After a night of bitter anguish, the poor child had fallen into a kind of feverish stupor before the doctor and his scientific cortege entered the hall; thus the noise attending his visit had not yet awakened her.

"A new _subject_, gentlemen," said the prince of the science, running

his eye over the card which a student presented to him. "Disease, _slow fever_--nervous. Plague on it!" cried the doctor, with an expression of profound satisfaction; "if the attending physician is not mistaken in his diagnostic, it is a most excellent windfall; I have desired a slow nervous fever for a long time, as this is not a malady of the poor. These affections are caused in almost every case by serious perturbations in the social position of the _subject_; and it cannot be denied that the more the position is elevated, the more profound are the perturbations. It is, besides, an affection the more to be remarked from its peculiar character. It is traced back to the highest antiquity; the writings of Hippocrates leave no doubt on this subject--it is very plain; this fever, as I have said, is almost always caused by violent sorrows. Now, sorrow is as old as the world; yet, what is singular, before the eighteenth century, this malady was not described by any author; it is Huxman who did so much honor to the profession at this epoch--it is Huxman, I say, who was the first to give a monograph of the nervous fever--a monograph which has become classic; and yet it was a malady of the old school," added the doctor, laughing. "It belongs to this grand, ancient, and illustrious _febris_ family, of which the origin is lost in the night of time. But do not let us rejoice too much; let us, in effect, see if we have the happiness to possess a specimen of this curious affection. It would be doubly desirable, for I have wished for a long time to test the internal use of phosphorus--yes, gentlemen," repeated the doctor, on hearing a kind of murmur of curiosity among his auditory, "yes, gentlemen, phosphorus; it is a very curious experiment which I wish to make--it is bold! but _audaces fortuna juvant_--and the occasion will be excellent. We are going, in the first place, to examine if the _subject_ presents on all parts of the body, and especially on the breast, this miliary eruption, so symptomatic, according to Huxman: and you will assure yourselves, by feeling the subject, of the kind of rugosity this eruption causes. But do not let us sell the skin of the bear before we bring him to the ground," added the prince of science, who was unusually jocular.

And he slightly touched her shoulder to arouse her. The girl started and opened her large eyes, sunken by disease. Let her terror and alarm be imagined. While a crowd of men surrounded her bed and followed her every motion with their eyes, she felt the hand of the doctor throw back the covering, and slip into the bed in order to feel her pulse.

Collecting all her strength, with a voice of anguish and affright, she cried: "Mother! help, mother!"

By a chance almost providential, at the moment when the cries of Miss de Fermont made the old Count de Saint Rerny start from his chair, for he recognized the voice, the door of the hall opened, and a young woman, dressed in mourning, entered precipitately, accompanied by the director of the hospital. This was Lady d'Harville.

"In mercy, sir," said she to the director, with the greatest anxiety, "conduct me to Miss de Fermont."

"Be good enough to follow me, my lady," answered the director, respectfully. "She is at No. 17, in this hall."

"Unfortunate child! here, here!" said Lady d'Harville, wiping her eyes;
"oh, it is frightful!"

Preceded by the director, she advanced rapidly toward the group assembled around the bed, when these words were heard, pronounced with indignation:
"I tell you that it is murder--you will kill her, sir."

"But, my dear Saint Reiny, listen then--"

"I repeat to you, sir, that your conduct is atrocious. I regard Miss de Fermont as my daughter. I forbid you to approach her; I will have her immediately removed hence."

"But, my dear friend, it is a case of slow nervous fever, very rare. I wish to try phosphorus. It is a unique occasion. Promise me at least that I shall take care of her. What matters it where you take her, since you deprive my clinique of a _subject_ so precious?"

"If you were not mad, you would be a monster," answered the Count de Saint Rømy.

Clømence listened to these words with increasing anguish; but the crowd was so dense that the director was obliged to say in a loud voice: "Make room, gentlemen, if you please--make room for her ladyship, the most noble the Marchioness d'Harville, who comes to see No. 17."

At these words the students fell back with as much eagerness as respectful admiration, on seeing the charming face of Clømence, to which emotion had given a most lively color.

"Madame d'Harville," cried the Count de Saint Rømy, pushing the doctor rudely aside, and advancing toward Clømence. "Oh! it is heaven who sends here one of its angels. Madame, I knew that you had interested yourself for these unfortunates. More fortunate than I, you have found them; as for me, it was chance which brought me here, to behold a scene of unheard-of barbarity. Unfortunate child! Do you see, madame--do you see! And you, gentlemen, in the name of your daughters, or your sisters, have pity on a child of sixteen, I entreat you; leave me alone with madame and the good sisters. As soon as she recovers a little, I will have her removed hence."

"So be it. I will sign an order for her departure; but I will follow her steps--I will cling fast to her. It is a _subject_ which belongs to me, and she will do well. I will take care of her. I will not experiment with the phosphorus--well understood--I will pass the night with her if it is necessary, as I have passed them with you, ungrateful Saint Rømy; for this fever is quite as singular as yours. They are two sisters, who have the same claim to my interest."

"Confounded man, why have you so much science?" said the count, knowing that in truth he could not confide Miss de Fermont to more skillful hands.

"Eh! it is very plain," whispered the doctor in his ear. "I have much

science, because I experiment, because I risk and practice much on my
subjects. Now, shall I have my slow fever, old growler?"

"Yes, but can this lady be removed?"

"Certainly."

"Then, for heaven's sake! retire."

"Come, sirs," said the prince of science, "we shall be deprived of a
precious study, but I'll keep you informed of the case."

And Dr. Griffon, accompanied by his numerous attendants, continued his
rounds, leaving Saint Rømy and Madame d'Harville with Claire de Fermont.

CHAPTER XX.

FLEUR-DE-MARIE.

During the scene which we have just described, Claire, still in her
fainting fit, was delivered to the tender care and attentions of Clømence
and the sisters; one of the latter sustained her drooping head, while Lady
d'Harville, leaning over the bed, wiped away with her handkerchief the cold
sweat from the brow of the patient. Profoundly affected, Saint Rømy
contemplated this touching picture, when a sudden thought struck him, and
he drew near Clømence, and said in a low tone: "And the mother of this
unfortunate, madame?"

The marchioness turned toward Saint Rømy, and answered, with sadness, "She
has no longer a mother, my lord."

"Dead!"

"I only learned last night, on my return, the address of Madame de Fermont,
and her alarming situation. At one o'clock in the morning I was with her,
accompanied by my physician. Oh! sir, what a picture! poverty in all its
horrors--and no hope of saving the expiring mother!"

"Oh! how frightful must have been her agony, if the thought of her daughter
was present!"

"Her last words were--my daughter!"

"What a death! she, the tender mother, so devoted. It is terrible!"

Here one of the sisters entered, interrupting the conversation, and said to
the lady: "The young lady is very feeble--she scarcely has any
consciousness; in a short time she may revive. If you do not fear to remain
here, madame, and wait until she comes to herself, I will offer you my

chair."

"Give it to me," said Clømence, taking a seat along-side of the bed. "I will not take my eyes from her; I wish that she should, at least, see a friendly face when she recovers; then I will take her with me, since the doctor decides that she can be removed without danger."

"Oh! madame, may God bless you for what you do," said Saint Rømy; "but pardon me for not having told you my name--so much sorrow! so much emotion!--I am the Count de Saint Rømy; the husband of Madame de Fermont was my most intimate friend. I live at Angers. I left that city because I was uneasy at not having received any news from these two noble and worthy women. I have since heard that they have been completely ruined."

"Oh! sir, you do not know all. Madame Fermont has been most cruelly despoiled!"

"By her notary, perhaps? For a moment I had such a suspicion."

"The man was a monster, sir! Alas! this cruel crime is not his only one. But, happily," said Clømence, thinking of Rudolph, "he has been compelled to make restitution; and while closing the eyes of Madame de Fermont, I have been able to assure her that her daughter is provided for. Her death thus had fewer pangs."

"I comprehend; knowing that her daughter was under your protection, madame, my poor friend died more tranquilly."

"Not only is my protection forever secured to Miss de Fermont, but her fortune will also be restored."

"Her fortune! How? The notary--"

"Has been forced to restore her money, which he had appropriated to himself by a horrid crime!"

"A crime?"

"This man assassinated the brother of Madame de Fermont, and made her believe that this unfortunate man had committed suicide, after having dissipated her fortune."

"This is horrible; it can hardly be credited; and yet I have had my doubts about this notary, for Renneville was honor itself. And this money--"

"Is deposited with a venerable priest, M. le Curø of Bonne-Nouvelle; he will hand it to Miss de Fermont."

"This restitution is not sufficient for human justice, madame! The scaffold claims this notary, for he has not only committed one murder, but two. The death of Madame de Fermont, the sufferings which her daughter has endured on this hospital bed, have been caused by the infamous abuse of confidence of this wretch!"

"And this wretch has committed another murder, quite as frightful!"

"What do you say, madame?"

"If he made away with the brother of Madame de Fermont by a pretended suicide, only a few days since he cruelly murdered a young girl, in whose destruction he was interested, by causing her to be drowned, certain that this would be attributed to accident."

Saint Rømy shuddered, looked at Madame d'Harville with surprise, and thinking of Fleur-de-Marie, cried: "Oh! what a strange coincidence!"

"What is the matter, my lord?"

"That young girl! Where was it he wished to drown her?"

"In the Seine, near Asnières, I am told."

"It is she! it is the same!" cried Saint Rømy.

"Of whom do you speak, my lord?"

"Of the girl this monster had an interest in."

"Fleur-de-Marie?"

"Do you know her, my lady?"

"Poor child! I loved her tenderly. Ah! if you had known how beautiful she was! But how did your lordship--"

"Dr. Griffon and myself gave her the first assistance."

"The first assistance? to her? where?"

"On Ravageurs' Island, where she was saved."

"Saved! Fleur-de-Marie! saved?"

"By a good creature, who, at the risk of her life, drew her out of the Seine. But what is the matter, madame?"

"Oh! sir, I dare not believe in so much happiness. I entreat you, tell me--describe the girl!"

"Of admirable beauty, and angelic face--"

"Large blue eyes--flaxen hair?"

"Yes, my lady."

"And when they tried to drown her, was she with an aged woman?"

"In fact it was only yesterday she could speak. She then mentioned that an old woman accompanied her."

"God be praised!" cried Clømence, clasping her hands fervently. "I can inform him that his favorite still lives. What joy for him, who in his last letter spoke of this poor child with such painful regret! Pardon me, sir; but if your lordship only knew how happy your information makes me, as well as another, who, still more than myself, has loved and protected Fleur-de-Marie! But I pray you, where is she at this moment?"

"Near Asnières, in the house of one of the physicians of this hospital--Dr. Griffon, who, notwithstanding some oddities which I deplore, has excellent qualities."

"And she is now out of danger?"

"Yes, madame; but only since two or three days. Today she is allowed to write to her protectors."

"Oh! it is I, my lord, I who will do this, or rather, it is I who will have the joy of conducting her to those, who, believing her dead, regret her so bitterly."

"I appreciate those regrets, madame; for it is impossible to know Fleur-de-Marie without being charmed with her angelic qualities: her grace and sweetness exercise on all those who approach her an unbounded influence. The woman who saved her, and who has since watched her night and day, as she would have watched her own child, is a courageous and determined person, but of a temper so habitually violent, that she has been called La Louve--judge! Well! a word from Fleur-de-Marie can calm her. I have heard her sob and utter cries of despair, when, at one time, Dr. Griffon had but little hopes of saving Fleur-de-Marie."

"That does not astonish me--I know La Louve."

"You, madame?" said Saint Rømy, surprised; "you know La Louve?"

"It must surprise you, truly, my lord," said the marchioness, smiling sweetly, for Clømence was happy--oh! very happy--in thinking of the joyful surprise she would cause the prince. What would have been her delight, if she had known that it was a daughter whom he believed dead--that she was about to restore to Rudolph. "Oh! this is so joyful a day for me, that I wish it to be so for others; it seems to me that there must be many unfortunate persons here to succor; this would be an excellent way to express my gratitude, my joy, for the news you have given me." Then, addressing one of the sisters, who had just given a drink to Miss de Fermont, she said, "Well, sister, is she yet sensible?"

[Illustration: THE CONVALESCENT]

"Not yet, madame--she is so weak. Poor thing! her pulse can hardly be felt."

"I will wait until she is able to be removed in my carriage. But tell me, sister, among all these unhappy sick, do you not know some who particularly merit my interest and pity, and to whom I can be useful before I leave the hospital?"

"Oh! madame, it is heaven sends you," said the sister; "there is," added she, pointing to the bed of Pique-Vinaigre's sister, "a poor woman, very sick, and very much to be pitied; she mourns continually about two small children, who have no one to look to for support but herself. She told the doctor just now that she would leave here, cured or not cured, in a week, as her neighbor had promised to take care of her children for that time only."

"Conduct me to her bed, I pray you, sister," said Lady d'Harville, rising, and following the nun.

Jeanne Duport, scarcely recovered from the violent attack caused by the treatment of Dr. Griffon, had not perceived the entrance of the noble lady into the hospital. What was her surprise, then, when the latter, lifting up the curtains of her bed, said to her, with a look full of kindness and commiseration, "My good mother, you must not be any longer uneasy about your children; I will take care of them; only think of being soon cured, so that you can join them."

Jeanne Duport thought that she was in a dream. In the same place where Dr. Griffon and his students had made her submit to such a cruel ordeal, she saw a lady of surpassing beauty come to her with words of pity, consolation, and hope.

The emotion of Pique-Vinaigre's sister was so great that she could not utter a word; she clasped her hands as if in prayer, looking at her unknown benefactress with adoration.

"Jeanne, Jeanne," whispered La Lorraine, "speak to this good lady." Then, addressing the marchioness, she said, "Ah! madame, you save her; she would have died with despair in thinking of her poor destitute children."

"Once more reassure yourself, my good mother--have no uneasiness," repeated the marchioness, pressing in her small white hand the burning one of Jeanne Duport. "Reassure yourself; be no longer uneasy concerning your children; and if you prefer it, you shall leave the hospital today; you shall be nursed at home--nothing shall be wanting. in this way you shall not leave your dear children; from this time I will see that you do not want for work, and I will attend to the future welfare of your children."

"Ah! what do I hear? The cherubim descend, then, from heaven, as is written in the church books," said Jeanne Duport, trembling, and scarcely daring to look at her benefactress. "Why so much goodness for me? How have I deserved this? It cannot be possible! I leave the hospital, where I have wept so much, suffered so much! not leave my children any more! have a nurse! why, it is a miracle from above!"

And the poor woman spoke the truth. If one only knew how sweet and easy it is to perform often, and at a small expense, such miracles! Alas! for those poor unfortunates, abandoned and repulsed on all sides--an instantaneous, unhopd-for assistance, accompanied by benevolent words of consideration, tenderly commiserative, may easily wear the supernatural appearance of a miracle.

"It is not a miracle, my good mother," answered Clømence, much affected; "that which I do for you," added she, slightly blushing at the recollection of Rudolph, "that which I do for you is inspired by a generous being, who has taught me to relieve the unfortunate; it is he whom you must bless and thank."

"Ah! madame! I shall bless you and yours," said Jeanne Duport, weeping. "I ask your pardon for expressing myself so badly. I am not accustomed to such great joy; it is the first time it has happened to me."

"Well! do you see, Jeanne," said La Lorraine, weeping, "there are also among the sick some Rigolettes and Goualeuses--on a large scale, it is true; but as to the good heart, it is the same thing!"

Lady d'Harville turned toward La Lorraine, much surprised at hearing her pronounce these two names.

"You know La Goualeuse and a young workwoman named Rigolette?" demanded Clømence of La Lorraine.

"Yes, madame. La Goualeuse--dear little angel--did last year for me--bless her! according to her poor means--that which you do for poor Jeanne. Yes, madame--oh! it does me good to say and repeat to every one, that La Goualeuse took me from a cellar where I was confined on some straw; and the dear little angel removed me and my child to a room where there was a good bed and a cradle. La Goualeuse did this out of pure charity; for she scarcely knew me, and was very poor herself. That was very kind, was it not, madame?" said La Lorraine excited.

"Oh! yes; the charity of the poor toward the poor is holy," said Clømence, her eyes bathed in tears.

"It was just the same with Rigolette, who, according to her means," replied La Lorraine, "offered her services, a few days since, to Jeanne."

"What a singular coincidence!" said Clømence to herself, more and more affected, for each of these two names, La Goualeuse and Rigolette, recalled a noble action of Rudolph. "And you, my child--what can I do for you?" said she to La Lorraine. "I wish the names that you have just pronounced with so much gratitude may bring you good fortune."

"Thank you, madame," said La Lorraine, with a smile of bitter resignation. "I had a child--it is dead. I am in a consumption, and am in a hopeless state. I have no longer need of anything."

"What gloomy thoughts! At your age--so young--there is always some

remedy."

"Oh! no, madame, I know my fate: I do not complain. I saw a person die last night--here--with the same disease; it is an easy death I thank you for your goodness."

"You may magnify your danger."

"I am not mistaken, madame, I know it well. But since you are so kind--a great lady like you is all-powerful--"

"Speak--say, what do you wish?"

"I have asked a service of Jeanne; but, since, thanks to the good God and you, she is going away--"

"Ah! well, this service--can I not render it?"

"Certainly, madame; one word from you to the sisters, or to the physician, would arrange all."

"This word? I will speak it, be assured."

"Since I have seen the actress who is dead, so tormented by the fear of being cut up after her death, I have had the same fear. Jeanne promised to come and claim my body, and have me buried."

"Ah! it is horrible!" said Clømence, shuddering with affright. "One must come here to know that there are, for the poor, misery and alarms even beyond the tomb."

"Pardon, madame," said La Lorraine, timidly; "for a great lady, rich and happy as you deserve to be, this request is a very sad one; I ought not to have made it!"

"I thank you, on the contrary, my child; it teaches me a misery of which I was ignorant, and this knowledge shall not be fruitless. Be comforted; although this fatal moment may be far off, when it does arrive, you may be sure to repose in holy ground."

"Oh! thank you, madame!" cried La Lorraine. "If I might dare to ask permission to kiss your hand."

Clømence presented her hand to the parched lips of La Lorraine.

"Oh! thank you, madame. I shall have some one to pray for and bless to the end, with La Goualeuse, and shall be no longer sad, for after my death---"

This resignation, and the fears far beyond the grave, had painfully affected Lady d'Harville; she whispered to the sister who came to inform her that Miss de Fermont was completely restored, "Is the condition of this young woman really desperate?"

"Alas! yes, madame; La Lorraine is given up; she has not perhaps, a week to live."

Half an hour afterward, Madame d'Harville, accompanied by Saint Rømy, took with her, to her own house, the young orphan, from whom she had concealed the death of her mother.

The same day an agent of Lady d'Harville, after having visited in the Rue de Barillerie the miserable abode of Jeanne Duport, and having received the most favorable accounts of this worthy woman, immediately hired on the Quai de l'École two large rooms and a bedroom; thanks to the resources of the Temple, they were furnished in two hours, and the same evening, Jeanne Duport was removed to this dwelling, where she found her children and an excellent nurse. The same agent was instructed to claim the body of La Lorraine, whenever she should sink under her malady, and have it decently interred. After having installed Claire de Fermont in her apartment, Lady d'Harville set out at once for Asnières, accompanied by Saint Rømy, in order to conduct Fleur-de-Marie to Rudolph.

CHAPTER XXI.

HOPE.

The early days of spring approached, the sun began to resume his power, the sky was pure, the air soft and mild. Fleur-de-Marie, leaning on the arm of La Louve, tried her strength by walking in Dr Griffon's garden. The vivifying warmth of the sun and the action of walking colored with a rosy tint the pale, thin cheeks of Goualeuse; her peasant's costume having been torn in the agitation attending the first assistance that had been rendered her, she wore a dress of dark-blue merino, made loose, and only confined around her delicate and slender waist by a woolen girdle.

"How pleasant the sun is!" said she to La Louve, stopping at the foot of a hedge of green trees exposed to the south, and which surrounded a stone bench. "Will you sit down here a moment, La Louve?"

"Is there any need of asking me if I will?" answered the wife of Martial, shrugging her shoulders.

Then, taking from her neck her shawl, she folded it carefully, knelt down, laid it on the slightly damp gravel of the walk, and said to La Goualeuse:

"Place yourself there."

"But, La Louve," said Fleur-de-Marie, who had perceived the design of her companion too late to prevent its execution, "but, La Louve, you will ruin your shawl."

"None of your arguments! the ground is damp," said La Louve, and taking the

small feet of Fleur-de-Marie in her hands, she placed them on the shawl.

"How you spoil me, La Louve!"

"Hum! do you not deserve it; always contending against that which I wish to do for your good. Are you not fatigued? here is a good half-hour that we have been walking. Noon has just struck at Asnières."

"I am slightly tired; but I feel that this walk has done me good."

"You see, you were tired--you could not ask me sooner to sit down!"

"Do not scold me--I did not know that I was so weak. It is so pleasant to walk after having been confined to the bed so long--to see the sun, the trees, the country, when one has thought never to see them again!"

"The fact is, that you have been in a very dangerous state for two days. Poor Goualeuse! Yes, now we can tell you that your life was despaired of."

"And then imagine, that on finding myself under the water, the recollection flashed across my mind that a wicked woman, who had badly treated me when I was very little, had always threatened to throw me to the fishes. Then I said to myself, 'I have no good fortune--it is fated that I shall not escape.'"

"Poor Goualeuse! was this your last thought when you supposed yourself lost!"

"Oh, no!" said Fleur-de-Marie, warmly; "when I felt myself about to die, my last thought was of him whom I regard as my 'Dieu;' so, also, when I was recalled back to life, my first thought was of him."

"It is a pleasure to confer benefits on you; you do not forget."

"Oh, no! it is so pleasant to fall asleep and dream of one's gratitude, and on awakening to remember it still!"

"Ah! one would go through fire to serve you."

"Good Louve! Hold; I assure you that one of the causes which render me desirous to live, is the hope of conferring happiness on you--of accomplishing my promise; you remember our castles in the air at Saint Lazare?"

"As to that, there is time enough; now you are on your feet again, I have made my expenses, as Martial says."

"I hope that the Count of Saint Rømy will tell me, directly, that the physician will allow me to write to Madame George. She must be so uneasy! And, perhaps, M. Rudolph also!" added Fleur-de-Marie casting down her eyes, and blushing anew at the thought of her preserver. "Perhaps they think me dead!"

"As those believe, also, who ordered you to be drowned, poor dear! Oh, the hounds!"

"You always suppose, then, that it was not an accident, La Louve?"

"An accident? Yes, the Martials call them _accidents_. When I say the Martials, it is without counting my man for he is not of that family, no more than François and Amandine shall be."

"But what interest could any one have in my death! I have never harmed any one--no one knows me."

"It's all one, if the Martials are scoundrels enough to drown some one, they are not fools enough to do it for nothing. Some words which the widow made use of in prison, to my Martial, proves this."

"He has been to see his mother, then? this terrible woman!"

"Yes, and there is no more hope for her, nor for Calabash, nor for Nicholas. Many things have been discovered, but Nicholas, in the hope of saving his life, has denounced his mother and sister for another assassination. On this account they will all be executed; the lawyers have no hope, the judges say that an example is necessary."

"Ah! it is frightful--almost a whole family!"

"Yes, unless Nicholas makes his escape; he is in the same prison with a monster called Skeleton, who has a plot on foot to escape. Nicholas told this to a prisoner who was discharged, and he informed Martial; for my Martial has been weak enough to go and see his rascally brother at La Force. Then, encouraged by this visit, this wretch has had the impudence to send word to his brother that any moment he may escape, and that Martial should hold himself ready, at Micou's, with money, and clothes for a disguise."

"Your Martial has so kind a heart!"

"Kind heart as much as you please, La Goualeuse, but hang me if I let my husband aid an assassin who wished to kill him! Martial will not denounce the plot--that is already a great deal. Besides, now that you are nearly well, La Goualeuse, we are going to start with the children on our tour through France; we will never plant our feet in Paris again; it was painful enough for Martial to be called son of the guillotined--what will it be when mother, brother, and sister are also executed!"

"You will wait, at least, until I have spoken to M. Rudolph concerning you, if I see him again. You have become changed; I told you that I would reward you, and I wish to keep my word; otherwise how can I pay the debt I owe you? You have saved my life; and during my illness you overwhelmed me with attentions."

"Exactly; now I should seem self-interested if I allowed you to ask anything for me from your protector. You are saved; I repeat to you that I

have made my expenses."

"Good Louve, reassure yourself; it is not you who are self-interested, it is I who am grateful."

"Listen, then!" said La Louve, suddenly rising; "it sounds like the noise of a carriage. Yes, yes, it approaches; hold! there it is; did you see it pass before the gate? there is a lady within."

"Oh! goodness!" cried Fleur-de-Marie, with emotion; "I thought I recognized--"

"Whom?"

"A handsome lady whom I saw at Saint Lazare, who was very kind to me."

"Is she aware that you are here?"

"I do not know; but she is acquainted with the person of whom I have spoken and who (if he wish, and he will, I hope) can make a reality of our Saint Lazare castles in the air."

A noise of footsteps approaching rapidly was heard behind the hedge; François and Amandine, who, thanks to the kindness of Saint Rømy, had not left La Louve, came rushing into the garden, crying:

"La Louve, here is a fine lady with my lord: they want to see Fleur-de-Marie at once."

"I was not mistaken," said Goualeuse.

Almost at the same moment, Saint Rømy appeared, accompanied by Lady d'Harville.

Hardly had she perceived Fleur-de-Marie, than she cried, running toward her and pressing her in her arms:

"Poor dear child! I see you again. Ah! saved! saved miraculously from a horrible death! With what happiness I find you--I, who, as well as your friends, thought you were lost forever!"

"I am also very happy to see you again, madame; for I have never forgotten your kindness to me," said Fleur-de-Marie, returning the tender caresses of Lady d'Harville with charming modesty.

"Ah! you do not know what will be the surprise, the wild joy of your friends, who, at this moment, weep for you so bitterly."

Fleur-de-Marie, taking the hand of La Louve, who had withdrawn a short distance, said to Lady d'Harville, presenting her:

"Since my safety is so dear to my benefactors, lady, permit me to bespeak, through you, their kindness for my companion, who saved me at the risk of

her life."

"Be assured, my child; your friends will prove to the brave Louve that they know it is to her they owe the happiness of seeing you again."

La Louve, blushing, confused, daring neither to answer nor raise her eyes toward Lady d'Harville, so much did the presence of a woman of her rank abash her, could not conceal her astonishment at hearing Clømence pronounce her name.

"But there is not a moment to lose," said the marchioness. "I am dying with impatience to take you with me, Fleur-de-Marie; I have brought in my carriage a shawl and a warm cloak; come, come, my child." Then, addressing the count, she added, "Will your lordship be good enough to give my address to this courageous woman, so that she can come to-morrow and say farewell to Fleur-de-Marie? So, you will be obliged to come and see us," she said to La Louve.

"Oh! lady, I will come, very sure," answered she, "since it is to say adieu to La Goualeuse; I should be very sad not to be able to see her once more."

A few moments afterward Lady d'Harville and La Goualeuse were on the road to Paris.

* * * * *

Rudolph, after having beheld the death of Jacques Ferrand, so terribly punished for his crime, had returned home in a state of deep dejection. After a long and sleepless night, he had sent for Sir Walter Murphy, to confide to this old and faithful friend the heartrending discovery concerning Fleur-de-Marie that he had made the previous evening. The worthy Englishman was overwhelmed; better than any other person, he could comprehend and partake of the profound grief of the prince. The latter, pale, prostrated, his eyes red from weeping, had just made Murphy this painful revelation.

"Take courage," said the latter, wiping his eyes; for, notwithstanding his firmness, he had also wept. "Yes, take courage, my lord--much courage. I offer no vain consolations--this sorrow has no cure."

"You are right. What I felt yesterday is nothing compared to my present sufferings."

"Yesterday your highness felt the shock, but the reaction will each day be more grievous. Therefore, call up all your energy. The future is sad--very sad."

"And then, yesterday, the contempt and horror with which this woman inspired me! But may God have pity on her, for at this moment she is before him. Yesterday, in fine, surprise, hatred, fright, so many violent passions, smothered within me these elements of despairing tenderness, that at present I can restrain myself no longer--I can hardly weep. And yet now, with you, I can. Hold! you see, I have no strength--I am cowardly--pardon

me. Tears again--always--oh! my child! my poor child!"

"Weep, weep, your highness. Alas! the loss is irreparable."

"And so many dreadful miseries to make her forget," cried Rudolph, in a touching tone, "after all that she has suffered! Think of the fate which awaited her!"

"Perhaps this transition might have been too abrupt for the unfortunate, already so cruelly tried."

"Oh! no, no! not so. If you knew with what delicacy--with what reserve, I should have apprised her of her birth; how gently I should have prepared her for this revelation--it was so simple, so easy. Oh! if this were the only question, do you see," added the prince, with a bitter smile, "I should have been composed, and not embarrassed. Throwing myself on my knees before the idolized child, I would have said, 'You who have been until now so cruelly treated, be at length happy--and forever happy. You are my daughter.' But no," said Rudolph, "no, that is not it--that would have been too hasty, too rash. Yes, I would have restrained myself and said to her, in a calm manner, 'My child, I must tell you something that will astonish you much. Yes; imagine that they have discovered traces of your parents; your father lives, and your father is--I am your father.'" Here the prince again interrupted himself. "No, no; this is also too sudden, too abrupt; but it is not my fault that this revelation is always springing to my lips; one must have more self-command--you comprehend, my friend, you comprehend? To be there before your daughter, and restrain your feelings!" Then, giving way again to despair, Rudolph cried, "But to what purpose these vain words? I shall never speak to her again. Oh! that which is frightful--frightful to think of, is, that I have had my daughter near me during a whole day--yes, that day, forever accursed, on which I took her to the farm; that day when all the treasures of her angelic mind were revealed to me in all their purity, and nothing in my heart whispered, 'She is your daughter!' nothing--nothing! Oh! how blind, stupid I was, not to imagine this. I was unworthy to be a father."

"But, sir--"

"But, in truth," cried the prince, "did it not depend upon myself whether I should ever leave her? Why did I not adopt her? I, who lament so much for my child? Why, instead of sending this unfortunate child to Madame George, did I not keep her with me? To-day I should only have had to extend my arms to her. Why have I not done that? Why? Ah! because one only does good by halves; because one only values treasures when they have disappeared forever: because instead of raising at once to her true level this admirable young girl, who, in spite of misery and abandonment, was, through her mind and heart, greater, nobler, perhaps, than she ever would have been by the advantages of birth and education. I thought I was doing much for her by placing her at a farm with some good people, as I would for the first interesting beggar that I met in the streets. It is my fault--it is my fault. If I had done that she would not have been dead. Oh! yes, I am punished--I have deserved it--bad son, bad father!"

Murphy knew that such grief was inconsolable, and remained silent.

"I shall not remain here--Paris is hateful to me; to-morrow I go--"

"You are right, my lord."

"We will stop at the farm of Bouqueval. I will shut myself up for some hours in her chamber, where she passed the only happy days of her life. I will have collected with religious care all that belonged to her--the books she commenced to read; the paper she had written on; the clothes she has worn--all, even to the furniture--even to the tapestry of her rooms, of which I myself will take an exact delineation. And at Gerolstein, in the private park where I have raised a monument to the memory of my outraged father, I will have a small house built, in which shall be rebuilt _this_ room; there I will go to weep for my daughter. Of these two funeral monuments, one will recall my crime to my father, the other the chastisement which reached me through my child. Thus, then, let everything be prepared to-morrow morning."

Murphy, willing to try if he could not turn the prince a moment from his gloomy thoughts, said, "All shall be ready, sir; only you forget that to-morrow the marriage of Germain, the son of Madame George, and Rigolette takes place. Not only have you made a provision for Germain, and munificently endowed the bride, but you have also promised to be present at the wedding as a witness. Then are they to be informed of the name of their benefactor."

"It is true I have promised. They are at the farm, and I cannot go there to-morrow without being present at the ceremony, and I will confess I have not the courage."

"The sight of the happiness of these young people will, perhaps, calm your sorrow."

"No, no, grief is selfish, and seeks retirement. To-morrow you will go in my place; and you will beg Madame George to collect everything belonging to my daughter. Let a plan of her room be made, and sent to me in Germany."

"Will your highness depart without seeing Lady d'Harville?"

At the name of Clømence, Rudolph started; he still cherished for her a sincere attachment, but at this moment it was, thus to speak, drowned in the wave of bitterness which inundated his heart. By a strange contradiction, the prince felt that the tender affection of Lady d'Harville would alone have aided him to support the grief which overwhelmed him, and he reproached this thought as unworthy the fervency of his paternal grief.

"I shall go without seeing the lady," answered Rudolph. "A few days since I wrote her how much I sorrowed for the death of Fleur-de-Marie. When she knows that Fleur-de-Marie was my daughter, she will comprehend the grief that seeks to be alone--yes, alone, so that it may be expiatory; and it is terrible, that expiation which fate imposes on me--terrible! for it commences, for me, at the time when the decline of life also commences."

Some one knocked lightly and discreetly at the door; Rudolph started in impatience; Murphy rose and went to see who was there. Through the half-open door an aid-de-camp of the prince said a few words to the knight, in a low tone. He answered by a sign, and, turning toward Rudolph, said, "Will your highness permit me to be absent for a moment? Some one wishes to speak to me on business of importance."

"Go," answered the prince.

Hardly had Murphy departed, than Rudolph, uttering a heavy sigh concealed his face in his hands.

"Oh!" cried he, "that which I feel alarms me. My heart overflows with hatred; the presence of my best friend weighs me down; the memory of a pure and noble love importunes and troubles me, and then--it is cowardly and unworthy. But last night I learned, with savage joy, the death of Sarah--of this unnatural mother, who has caused the death of my child. I amused myself in beholding the ravings and torments of the horrid monster who killed my daughter--oh, madness!--I arrived too late. Yet, yesterday I did not suffer so; and yesterday, as to-day, I thought my child dead--oh! yes; but I did not say to myself these words which henceforth will imbitter my life: 'I have seen my daughter; I have spoken to her; I have admired all that was adorable in her. Oh! how much time I might have passed at that farm! When I think that I only went there three times; yes, no more; and I could have gone there every day--to see my child every day! What do I say to keep her ever with me!' Oh! such shall be my punishment."

Suddenly the door of the cabinet opened, and Murphy entered; he was very pale--so pale that the prince half arose, and cried, "Murphy, what is the matter?"

"Nothing, my lord."

"You are very pale."

"It is astonishment."

"What astonishment?"

"Madame d'Harville!"

"Madame d'Harville? Some new misfortune!"

"No, no, my lord, reassure yourself; she is there in the parlor."

"She here! in my house! it is impossible!"

"I tell your highness, the surprise---"

"Such a step on her part--but what is the matter, in the name of heaven?"

"I do not know--I cannot explain what I feel."

"You conceal something from me."

"On my honor, no. I do not know what she meant?"

"But what did she say?"

"'Sir Walter,' and although her voice trembled, her face was beaming with joy, 'my presence here must surprise you very much; but there are certain circumstances so important, that they leave no time to think of appearances. Entreat his highness to grant me, immediately, an audience in your presence; for I know that the prince has no better friend. I should have begged him to come to my own house, but that would have delayed our interview for an hour, which the prince will confess should not have been retarded a moment,' added she, with an expression which made me tremble."

"But," said Rudolph, in a broken voice, and becoming still paler than Murphy, "I cannot imagine the cause of your trouble--of your emotion--of your looks; there is something else--this interview--"

"On my honor, I do not know anything more. These words alone, of the marchioness, have unsettled me. Why, I am ignorant. But you yourself--you are very pale, sir."

"I?" said Rudolph, supporting himself on a chair, for he felt his knees giving way under him.

"I tell your highness, that you are as much disturbed as I am. What is the matter?"

"Although I should die under the blow, beg Madame d'Harville to enter," cried the prince. By a strange sympathy, the visit, so unexpected, so extraordinary, had awakened in both Murphy and Rudolph a certain vague and indefinite hope; but this hope seemed so extravagant, that neither one nor the other dared to avow it.

Madame d'Harville, followed by Murphy, entered the cabinet. Ignorant, as we have said, that Fleur-de-Marie was the daughter of the prince, Madame d'Harville, in her joy at bringing back his protégée, had not thought she would be able to present her to him without previous preparation: she had left her in the carriage at the door, as she did not know whether the prince was willing to make himself known to the young girl, and receive her in his own house. But perceiving the great alteration in the looks of Rudolph, and remarking in his eyes the traces of recent tears, Clémence thought he had met with some misfortune more severe than the death of La Goualeuse; thus forgetting the object of her visit, she cried, "What is the matter with your highness?"

"Are you ignorant, madame? Ah! all hope is lost. Your haste--the interview you have so earnestly demanded--I thought----"

"Oh! I entreat you, let us not speak of the object of my visit. In the name of my father, whose life you saved, I have almost the right to demand from

you the cause of the affliction in which you are plunged. Your state of dejection, your paleness, alarms me. Oh! speak, my lord; be generous--speak--have pity on my distress."

"For what good, madame? my wound is incurable."

"These words redouble my alarm, my lord; explain yourself--Sir Walter, what is it?"

"Well!" said Rudolph, in a hollow voice, making a violent effort to restrain himself, "since I informed you of the death of Fleur-de-Marie, I have learned that she was my child."

"Fleur-de-Marie your child!" cried Clømence, in a tone impossible to be described.

"Yes; and just now, when you asked to see me immediately, to inform me of something that would overwhelm me with joy--have pity on my weakness--but a father, mad with grief at the loss of his child, is capable of indulging in many mad hopes. For a moment I thought--that--but no, no; I see I deceived myself. Pardon me; I am but a miserable, foolish man."

Rudolph, exhausted by the violence of his feelings, fell back in his chair, covering his face with his hands. Madame d'Harville remained stupefied, immovable, dumb, breathing with difficulty--in turns a prey to joy, to fear, for the effect which the revelation she was about to make might have upon the prince--in fine, exalted by a holy gratitude toward Providence, who intrusted her--_her_--to announce to Rudolph that his daughter lived, and she had brought her back to him. Clømence, agitated by these emotions, so violent, so diverse, could not utter a word. Murphy, after having for a moment partaken of the mad hopes of the prince, seemed quite as much overcome as he was. Suddenly the marchioness, yielding to an unexpected and involuntary emotion, forgetting the presence of Murphy and Rudolph, sunk on her knees, clasped her hands, and cried, with an expression of fervent piety and ineffable gratitude:

"Thanks, my God! be praised! I acknowledge Thy sovereign will. Thanks once more, for Thou hast chosen me to inform him that his child is saved!"

Although said in a low voice, these words, pronounced in a tone of sincere and holy fervor, reached the ears of Murphy and the prince. The latter raised his head quickly at the moment Clømence arose from the ground. It is impossible to describe the look, action, and expression of Rudolph, on contemplating Madame d'Harville, whose charming features, stamped with a celestial joy, shone at this moment with superhuman beauty. Leaning with one hand on the marble table, and compressing with the other the rapid pulsations of her heart, she gave an affirmative nod of the head in answer to a look from Rudolph, which once more we are unable to describe.

"Below--in my carriage."

Save for the presence of Murphy, who, quick as lightning, threw himself before Rudolph, he would have rushed at once to the street.

"My lord, you would kill her!" cried the squire, holding back the prince.

"Only since yesterday she is convalescent. For her life, no imprudence, my lord," added Clømence.

"You are right," said Rudolph, restraining himself with difficulty; "you are right--I will be calm--I will not see her yet--I will wait--let my first emotions be controlled. Ah! it is too much--too much in one day!" added he, in a broken voice. Then, addressing Madame d'Harville, and extending his hand toward her, he cried, with a burst of inexpressible gratitude, "I am pardoned! You are the angel of mercy!"

"Your highness restored to me my father--Heaven willed that I should bring back your child," answered Clømence. "But, in my turn, I ask your pardon for my weakness. This revelation--so sudden, so unexpected--has confused me. I confess that I have not the courage to go for Fleur-de-Marie--my agitation would alarm her."

"And how was she saved?" cried Rudolph. "See my ingratitude. I have not yet asked you this question."

"At the moment she was drowning, she was rescued from a watery grave by a courageous woman."

"Do you know her?"

"To-morrow she will come to see me."

"The debt is immense," said the prince, "but I shall know how to pay it."

"What a happy circumstance, my God! that I did not bring Fleur-de-Marie with me," said the marchioness; "this scene would have been fatal to her."

"It is true, madame," said Murphy; "it is a providential chance that she is not here."

"Now," said the prince, who had for a few moments been endeavoring to conquer his emotions, "now I have self-command, I assure you. Murphy, go and seek _my daughter._" These words, _my daughter_, were pronounced by the prince with an accent we will not attempt to express.

"Are you quite sure of yourself?" said Clømence. "No imprudence."

"Oh! be tranquil. I know the danger there would be for her--I will not expose her to it. My good Murphy, I entreat you--go--go!"

"Reassure yourself, madame," answered the squire, who had attentively observed the prince; "she can come. My lord will restrain himself."

"Then go--go quickly, my old friend."

"Yes, my lord; I ask but for a moment--one is not made of iron," said the

good man, wiping away the traces of his tears; "she must not see that I have been weeping."

"Excellent man!" replied Rudolph, cordially pressing his hand.

"I am ready. I did not wish to pass through the servants' lines all in tears, like a Magadalen. But what shall I say?"

"Yes, what shall he say?" demanded the prince from Clømence.

"That M. Rudolph wishes to see her--nothing more, it seems to me."

"Undoubtedly. Say that M. Rudolph wishes to see her, nothing more. Come, go--go."

"It is certainly the very best thing that can be said to her," answered the squire. "I will merely say that M. Rudolph wishes to see her; that will not cause her to conjecture anything--to foresee anything: it is the most reasonable way, truly."

But Sir Walter did not stir.

"Sir Walter," said Clømence, smiling, "you are afraid."

"It is true, my lady; in spite of my six-foot stature and my rough exterior, I am still under the influence of violent emotions."

"My friend, take care," said Rudolph; "wait a moment longer, if you are not sure of your self-possession."

"This time, my lord, I am victorious," said the baronet, after having passed over his eyes his Herculean hand. "Really, at my age, this weakness is perfectly ridiculous. Fear nothing now."

And Murphy left the apartment with a firm step and tranquillized air. A moment of silence ensued; then Clømence, blushing, remembered that she was in Rudolph's house, and alone with him. The prince approached her, and said, almost timidly, "If I choose this day--this moment--to make you a sincere avowal, it is because the solemnity of this day--this moment--will add still more to the gravity of the confession. Ever since I have known you I have loved you. So long as concealment of this love was necessary, I concealed it; now that you are free, and have restored me my daughter, will you be to her a mother?"

"I, my lord!" cried Madame d'Harville. "What do you say?"

"I entreat you, do not refuse me; let this day decide my future happiness," said Rudolph tenderly.

Clømence also had loved the prince for a long time; she thought she was in a dream. The avowal of Rudolph, at once so simple, so serious, so touching--made under such circumstances, transported her with an unhoped-for happiness; she answered, hesitatingly, "My lord, it is for you

to recall to mind the difference of rank--the interest of your sovereignty."

"First let me think of the interest of my heart--of that of my cherished daughter; make us both happy--oh! very happy. Permit me, who but now was without family, to say, 'My wife--my daughter;' allow this poor child--also without family--to say, 'My father--my mother--my sister;' for you have a daughter, who will become mine."

"Oh! my lord, to such noble words one can only answer by grateful tears," cried Clømence. Then, composing herself, she added, "My lord, some one comes; it is your child."

"Oh! do not refuse me," cried Rudolph, in a supplicating voice; "in the name of my love, say our child."

"Our child," murmured Clømence; at the same moment Murphy opened the door, leading in Fleur-de-Marie.

The girl, descending from the carriage, had crossed an ante-chamber, filled with footmen in full livery; a waiting-room, where valets attended; then the ushers' saloon; and, finally, the waiting-rooms, occupied by a chamberlain and the aides of the prince in full uniform. Let the reader imagine the astonishment of the poor Goualeuse, who knew no other splendors than those of the farm at Bouqueval, on traversing these princely apartments, resplendent with gold, mirrors, and paintings.

As soon as she appeared, Lady d'Harville ran toward her, took her by the hand, and placing her arm around her for support, she conducted her toward the prince, who, standing near the chimney, had not been able to move. Murphy, after having confided Fleur-de-Marie to the care of Lady d'Harville, hastily disappeared behind the folds of one of the immense window-curtains, finding that he was not altogether sure of his self-possession. At the sight of her benefactor, her savior, who regarded her with silent ecstasy, Fleur-de-Marie, already so agitated, began to tremble.

"Compose yourself, my child," said Lady d'Harville; "there is your friend, M. Rudolph, who awaits you impatiently; he has been very uneasy about you."

"Oh! yes, very--very uneasy," said Rudolph, still immovable, his heart almost breaking at the sight of the sweet pale face of his child.

Thus, in spite of his resolution, the prince was for a moment obliged to turn his head to conceal his emotion.

"Stay, my child, you are still very weak; sit down there," said Clømence, to turn her attention from the prince; and she led her to a large arm-chair of bronze and gilt, in which the Goualeuse seated herself. Her agitation increased every moment: she was oppressed, speech failed her; she had not a word of gratitude for Rudolph.

At length, on a sign from Lady d'Harville, who was leaning on the back of

the chair, and holding one of Fleur-de-Marie's hands in her own, the prince approached softly to the other side of the seat. With more self-command, he then said to Fleur-de-Marie, who turned toward him her enchanting face:

"At length, my child, you are once more reunited to your friends, and forever! You never shall leave them more Now you must forget what you have suffered."

"Yes, my child, the best way to prove that you love us," added Clømence, "is to forget the past."

"Believe me, M. Rudolph--believe me, my lady, that if I do recall it sometimes, it will only be to say to myself, that, without you, I should still be very unhappy."

"Yes; but we will take care that you have no more such gloomy thoughts. Our tenderness will not leave you the time, my dear Marie," answered Rudolph, "for you know that I gave you this name at the farm."

"Yes, M. Rudolph. And is Madame George, who allowed me to call her mother, well?"

"Very well, my child. But I have important news to tell you."

"Me, M. Ruldoph?"

"Since I have seen you, great discoveries have been made concerning your birth."

"My birth!"

"It is known who were your parents--who was your father."

Rudolph was so much choked by his tears on his pronouncing these words, that Fleur-de-Marie, very much affected, turned quickly toward him: he had turned away his head. An incident, half burlesque, diverted the attention of La Goualeuse, and prevented her from remarking more closely the emotion of her father: the worthy squire, who still remained behind the curtain, and, apparently was very attentively looking into the garden of the hotel, could not refrain from blowing his nose with a most formidable noise, for he wept like a child.

"Yes, my dear Marie," Clømence hastened to say, "your father is known--he still lives."

"My father!" cried the Goualeuse, with an outburst which put the composure of Rudolph to a new trial.

"And some day," resumed Clømence, "very soon, perhaps, you will see him. What will doubtless surprise you very much is, that he is of high standing--noble birth."

"And my mother, madame--shall I see her?"

"Your father will answer this question, my child; but shall you not be very happy to see him?"

"Oh! yes, madame," answered Fleur-de-Marie, casting down her eyes.

"How much you will love him, when you know him," said the marchioness.

"From that day forward, a new life will commence for you, Marie," added the prince.

"Oh! no, M. Rudolph," answered the Goualeuse, unaffectedly.

"My new life commenced on the day when you took pity on me--when you sent me to the farm."

"But your father will cherish you," said the prince.

"I do not know him, and to you I owe all, M. Rudolph."

"Then you love me as much--more, perhaps, than you would love your father?"

"I bless you, and I respect you as I do God. M. Rudolph, because you have done for me that which God alone else could have done," answered the Goualeuse, with enthusiasm, forgetting her habitual timidity. "When my lady had the goodness to speak to me in prison, I said to her what I said to everybody--yes, M. Rudolph; to those who were very unfortunate, I said, 'Hope! M. Rudolph succors the unfortunate.' To those who hesitated between good and evil, I said, 'Courage, be virtuous; M. Rudolph rewards those who are virtuous.' To those who were wicked, I said, 'Take care! M. Rudolph punishes the wicked.' In fine, when I thought I was about to die, I said to myself, 'God will have mercy upon me, for M. Rudolph has judged me worthy of his interest.'"

Fleur-de-Marie, carried away by her gratitude toward her benefactor, had overcome her fears: a slight carnation tinged her cheeks, and her beautiful blue eyes, which she raised toward heaven as if in prayer, shone with the softest luster. A silence of some seconds succeeded the enthusiastic words of Fleur-de-Marie; the emotions which affected the actors in this scene were profound.

"I see, my child," resumed Rudolph, hardly containing his joy, "that in your heart I have almost taken the place of your father."

"It is not my fault, M. Rudolph. It is, perhaps, wrong in me; but, as I have told you, I know you, and I do not know my father, and," added she, holding down her head in confusion, "and then you know the past, M. Rudolph; and yet you have overwhelmed me with favors; but my father does not know it. Perhaps he will regret having found me," added the unfortunate child, shuddering, "and since he is, as my lady said, of high birth, doubtless he will be ashamed--he will blush for me!"

"_Blush_ for you!" cried Rudolph, drawing himself up proudly.

"Reassure yourself, poor child; your father will place you in a position so brilliant, so lofty, that the greatest among the great of this world will regard you henceforth with the utmost respect. Blush for you! no, no; you will rank with the noblest princesses of Europe."

"My lord!" cried Murphy and Clømence at the same time, alarmed at the vehemence of Rudolph and the increasing pallor of Fleur-de-Marie, who looked at her father with surprise.

"Blush for you!" continued he; "oh! if I ever rejoiced and felt pride in my sovereign rank it is that, thanks to this rank, I can elevate you as much as you have heretofore been abased. Do you hear, my darling child--my beloved daughter? for it is I--I, who am your father!"

And the prince, no longer able to conquer his emotion, threw himself at the feet of Fleur-de-Marie, whom he covered with tears and caresses.

"God be praised!" cried Fleur-de-Marie, clasping her hands. "I am permitted to love my benefactor as much as I would have loved him. He is my father. I can cherish him without remorse. Be praised, my---"

She could not finish--the shock was too violent; Fleur-de-Marie fainted in the arms of her father.

Murphy ran to the door, opened it, and said, "Dr David instantly for his royal highness; some one is ill!"

"Curses on me? I have killed her," cried Rudolph--in tears, kneeling before his daughter. "Marie, my child, listen to me; it is your father. Pardon--Oh! pardon for not having retained this secret longer. I have killed her!"

"Calm yourself, my lord," said Clømence; "there is, doubtless, no danger. See her cheeks are tinged with color; it is the shock--only the shock."

"But hardly convalescent, she will die. Woe is me!"

At this moment, David, the black physician, entered precipitately: holding in his hands a small box filled with vials, and a paper, which he handed to Murphy.

"David, my child is dying. I have saved your life--you must save my child!" cried Rudolph.

Although amazed at these words of the prince, who spoke of his child, the doctor ran to Fleur-de-Marie, whom Lady d'Harville held in her arms, took hold of the young girl's pulse, placed his hand on her forehead, and turning toward Rudolph, who, pained and alarmed, awaited his doom, he said: "There is no danger, let your highness be assured."

"You speak the truth--no danger--none?"

"Not any, your highness. A few drops of ether, and this attack will pass over."

"Oh! thank you, David--my good David!" cried the prince, warmly. Then turning toward Clømence, Rudolph added, "She lives--our daughter will live."

Murphy had just cast his eyes over the note which David had placed in his hand; he shuddered, and looked at the prince with affright.

"Yes, my old friend," said Rudolph, "in a short time my daughter will say to Lady d'Harville, "My mother!"

"My lord," said Murphy, trembling, "the news of yesterday was false."

"What do you say?"

"A violent attack, followed by a fainting fit, had caused them to think that the Countess M'Gregor was dead."

"The countess--"

"This morning there are hopes of saving her."

"Oh!" cried the prince, while Clømence looked at him with surprise, not comprehending his altered appearance.

"My lord," said David, still occupied with Fleur-de Marie, "there is no cause for the slightest uneasiness. But fresh air is necessary; the chair can be rolled on the terrace by opening the door of the garden, she will then soon recover."

Murphy ran immediately to open the glass door, and aided by David, he gently rolled the chair into the garden, leaving Rudolph and Clømence alone.

CHAPTER XXII

DEVOTION.

"Ah! madame," cried Rudolph, as soon as Murphy and David had departed, "you do not know that the Countess M'Gregor is the mother of Fleur-de-Marie!"

"Great heavens!"

"I thought her dead; and what you are still ignorant of," added Rudolph, with bitterness, "is that this woman, as selfish as ambitious, loving me only as a prince, had, in my younger days, contrived to lead me into a marriage, which was afterward dissolved. Wishing then to marry again, the

countess has caused all the misfortunes of her child by abandoning her to mercenary hands."

"Ah! now I understand the aversion that your highness had for her."

"You comprehend also why she wished to ruin you by infamous anonymous communications! Always impelled by her implacable ambition, she thought to force me to return to her by isolating me from all endearments."

"Oh! what a wicked intention!"

"And she is not dead!"

"This regret is not worthy of your highness."

"It is because you are not aware of all the injury she has caused! At this time, when, on finding my daughter again, I was about to give her a mother worthy of her--oh! no, no--this woman is a demon of vengeance in my path!"

"Come, your highness, take courage!" said Clømence, wiping away the tears, which fell in spite of her: "you have a great and holy duty to fulfill. You said yourself, that henceforth the fate of your daughter should be as happy as it had been miserable; that she should be as elevated as she had been abased. For that you must legitimize her birth; for that, your highness, you must espouse the Countess M'Gregor."

"Never--never! It would be to reward perjury, selfishness and the mad ambition of this unnatural mother. I will acknowledge my daughter; you will adopt her, and thus, as I hoped, she will find in you maternal affection."

"No, you will not do that; no, you will not leave the birth of your child in the shade. The countess is of a noble and ancient house; for you, doubtless, this alliance is disproportionate, but it is honorable. By this marriage, your daughter will not be legitimized, but legitimate; and thus, whatever may happen to her, she can be proud of her father, and openly acknowledge her mother."

"But to renounce you--is impossible. Oh! you do not think what happiness it would have been for me, divided between you and my child--my only love in this world."

[Illustration: THE PLEA FOR CHARITY]

"Your child remains to your highness: heaven has miraculously restored her to you. Not to be perfectly happy will be ingratitude!"

"Oh! you do not love me as I love you."

"Believe it, your highness, believe it; the sacrifice that you make to duty will seem less painful."

"But if you love me--if your regrets are as bitter as mine, you will be very unhappy. What will remain for you?"

"Charity, your highness! that admirable sentiment which you have awakened in my heart; that sentiment which has caused me to forget so many sorrows, and to which I am indebted for so many sweet and tender consolations."

"Pray listen to me. Be it so: I will marry this woman; but once the sacrifice accomplished, will it be possible for me to live with her, with her who only inspires me with aversion and contempt? No, no; we shall remain forever separated; never shall she see my child. Thus Fleur-de-Marie will lose in you the most tender of mothers."

"But there will remain for her the most tender of fathers. By the marriage, she will be the legitimate daughter of a sovereign prince of Europe; and thus, as your highness has said, her position will be as splendid as it was obscure."

"You are without pity. I am very unhappy."

"Dare you speak thus--you, so great, so just--you, who so nobly comprehend duty, devotion, and self-denial? A short time since, before this providential revelation, when you wept for your child with such bitter tears, if any one had said to you, 'Make one wish--one alone, and it shall be realized,' you would have cried, 'My daughter!--oh! my daughter--let her live!' This is accomplished; your daughter is restored to you, and you call yourself unhappy. Ah! may Fleur-de-Marie not hear your highness."

"You are right," said Rudolph, after, a long silence; "so much happiness would have been heaven upon earth; but I do not deserve that. I will do my duty. I do not regret my hesitation. I owe to it a new proof of the beauty and noble sentiments of your mind."

"This mind--it is you who have exalted and elevated it. If that which I do is well, it is you whom I praise for it. Courage, my lord; as soon as Fleur-de-Marie can stand the fatigue of traveling, take her with you. Once in Germany, a country so calm and grave, her transformation will be complete, and the past will only be to her a sad and distant dream."

"But you? but you?"

"I--I can well tell you that now, because I shall always say it with joy and pride: my love for you shall be my guardian angel, my savior, my virtue, my future. Every day I will write you; pardon me this demand--it is the only one I shall make. Your highness, you will reply to me sometimes, to give me news of her, who, for a moment at least, I called my daughter," said Clømence, without being able to restrain her tears; "and who shall always be so, at least in my thoughts; in fine, when time shall have given us the right openly to avow the unalterable affection which binds us--ah, well! I swear it in the name of your daughter, if you desire it, I will go and live in Germany--in the same city with you--never more to part; and thus terminate a life which might have been more happy, but which will have been at least worthy and honorable."

"My lord!" cried Murphy, entering precipitately, "she whom God has restored

to you has recovered her senses. Her first words were, 'My father!' She asks to see you."

A few moments after, Lady d'Harville left the mansion. Accompanied by Murphy, Baron de Graun, and an aid-de-camp, the prince went in great haste to the residence of the Countess M'Gregor.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE WEDDING.

Since Rudolph had informed her of the murder of Fleur-de-Marie, Countess Sarah M'Gregor, overwhelmed by this revelation, which ruined all her hopes, tortured by deep remorse, had been attacked by violent nervous spasms, and a frightful delirium; her wound, hardly healed, reopened, and a fainting fit of long duration had caused her attendants to suppose her dead. However, from the strength of her constitution, she did not sink under this severe attack; a new glimmering of life once more reanimated her. Seated in an arm-chair, in order to relieve the oppression which suffocated her, Sarah, almost regretting the death from which she had just escaped, was occupied with bitter thoughts. Suddenly Thomas Seyton entered the chamber of the countess; he with difficulty restrained some internal agitation; at a sign from him her two women withdrew.

"How are you now?" said he to his sister.

"In the same state--I am very weak, and from time to time almost suffocated. Why did not heaven take me away from this world during my last attack?"

"Sarah," said Thomas Seyton, after a pause, "you are between life and death--a violent emotion might kill you, as it might save you."

"I have now no more emotions to experience, my brother."

"Perhaps--"

"The death of Rudolph would find me indifferent; the ghost of my drowned daughter--drowned by my fault--is there--always there, before me. It is not an emotion--it is incessant remorse. I am really a mother now, since I no longer have a child."

"I would prefer to find in you that cold ambition which made you regard your daughter as a means to realize the dream of your life."

"The frightful reproaches of the prince have killed this ambition; the maternal sentiment is awakened in me at the picture of the extreme misery of my daughter."

"And," said Seyton, hesitating and weighing each word, "if by chance--supposing an impossible thing--a miracle--you were informed that your daughter still lived--how would you support such a discovery?"

"I should die with shame and despair at the sight of her."

"Do not believe that--you would be too much elated with the triumph of your ambition; for, if your daughter had lived, the prince would have married you--he told you so."

"In admitting this mad supposition, it seems to me that I should not have a right to live. After having received the hand of the prince, my duty would be to deliver him of an unworthy wife--my daughter of an unnatural mother."

The embarrassment of Thomas Seyton increased every moment. Charged by Rudolph, who was in an adjoining room, to inform Sarah that Fleur-de-Marie was alive, he did not know how to accomplish it. The state of the countess was so critical that she might expire from one moment to another; there was, then, no time to be lost in celebrating the marriage in extremis which was to legitimate the birth of Fleur-de-Marie. For this sad ceremony, the prince had brought with him a clergyman, with Murphy and Baron de Graun as witnesses; the Duke de Lucenay and Lord Douglas, notified in haste by Seyton, were to serve as witnesses for the countess, and had just arrived. Time was pressing; but remorse, feelings of maternal tenderness, which replaced, in Sarah's heart, her merciless ambition, rendered the task of Seyton still more difficult. All his hope was that his sister deceived him or deceived herself, and that her pride would be awakened, as soon as she had gained this crown, so long and ambitiously coveted.

"Sister," said Thomas Seyton, "I am in a terrible perplexity; one word from me, perhaps, will restore you to life--perhaps will send you to your tomb."

"I have already told you that I have no more emotions to dread."

"One alone, however--"

"Which?"

"If it concerned your child?"

"My child is dead."

"If she were not?"

"We have exhausted this supposition already. Enough, brother, my remorse suffices."

"But if it were not a supposition? if by chance--an incredible chance--your daughter had been rescued from death; if she lived?"

"You alarm me; do not talk thus."

"Well, then, may God pardon me and judge you! she lives still."

"My daughter?"

"She lives, I tell you. The prince is here with a clergyman. I have sent for two of your friends for witnesses; the wish of your life is at length realized--the prediction is fulfilled--you are a sovereign."

Thomas Seyton pronounced these words while fixing on his sister a look of anguish, watching for each sign of emotion. To his great astonishment, the features of Sarah remained almost impassible; she placed her hand upon her heart, and falling back in her chair, suppressed a slight cry, which appeared to have been caused by some sudden and excruciating pain, after which her face became composed and calm.

"What is the matter, sister?"

"Nothing--surprise--unhoped-for joy. At length my wishes are crowned."

"I was not deceived," thought Thomas Seyton. "Ambition rules--she is saved." Then, addressing his sister, he said, "What did I tell you?"

"You were right," replied she, with a bitter smile, divining her brother's thoughts; "ambition has once more stifled maternity within me."

"You will live; and will love your daughter?"

"I do not doubt it--I shall live--see how calm I am. Where is the prince?"

"He is here."

"I wish to see him before the ceremony. My daughter is here also, without doubt."

"No; you will see her afterward."

"Now that I have the time, ask, I pray you, the prince to come."

"My sister, I do not know why--but your manner is strange."

"Would you have me laugh? Do you think satisfied ambition has a soft and tender expression? Let the prince come!"

In spite of himself, Seyton was uneasy at Sarah's calmness. For a moment he thought he saw in her eyes restrained tears; after a little longer hesitation, he opened a door, which he left open, and went out.

"Now," said Sarah, "let me but see and embrace my child, I shall be satisfied. It will be very difficult to be obtained: Rudolph, to punish me, will refuse; but I will succeed."

Rudolph entered and closed the door.

"Your brother has told you all?" demanded the prince, coldly.

"All!"

"Your ambition is satisfied?"

"It is satisfied."

"The clergyman and the witnesses are here."

"I know it. One word, my lord."

"Speak, madame."

"I wish to see my daughter."

"It is impossible."

"I tell your highness that I wish to see my child."

"She is hardly convalescent--she has been quite ill this morning; this interview might be fatal to her."

"But at least she will embrace her mother."

"For what purpose? You are now a sovereign."

"I am not yet, and I will not be until I have embraced my child."

Rudolph looked at the countess with profound astonishment. "How!" he cried, "you subject the satisfaction of your pride--"

"To the satisfaction of my maternal tenderness; that surprises your highness."

"Alas! yes."

"Shall I see my child?"

"But--"

"Take care, my lord; my moments are perhaps counted. As my brother said, this crisis may save or kill me. At this moment I collect all my strength, all my energy, and I need them much to struggle against the shock of such a discovery. I wish to see my child, or I refuse your hand; and if I die, her birth is not legitimate."

"Fleur-de-Marie is not here; I should have to send for her at my house."

"Send for her at once, and I consent to all. As my moments, perhaps, are counted, I have said it. The marriage can take place while some one goes for Fleur-de-Marie."

"Although this feeling astonishes me, it is too praiseworthy to be

disregarded. You shall see Fleur-de-Marie; I will write to her."

"There, on the desk where I was wounded." While Rudolph hastily wrote a few lines, the countess wiped away the icy sweat which stood upon her brow; her features now betrayed violent and concealed suffering.

His note being written, Rudolph arose and said to the lady, "I will send this to my daughter by one of my aids-de-camp. She will be here in half an hour. Shall I bring with me, on my return, the clergyman and witnesses?"

"You can, or, rather, I beg you will do so. Ring--do not leave me alone!"

Rudolph rang the bell, and requested the servant who answered the summons to desire Sir Walter Murphy to come to him.

"This union is sad, Rudolph," said the countess, bitterly; "sad for me. For you it will be happy, for I shall not survive it."

At this moment Murphy entered.

"My friend," said Rudolph, "send this letter immediately by the colonel; he will bring my daughter back with him in the carriage. Beg the clergyman and witnesses to walk into the next room."

"Oh, heaven!" cried Sarah, in a supplicating tone, when the squire had departed, "grant me strength enough to see her--let me not die before she arrives!"

"Oh, why have you not always been as good a mother?"

"Thanks to you, at least, I know repentance--devotion--self-denial. Yes, just now, when my brother said our child lived--let me say our child--I felt that I was stricken unto death. I did not tell him, but I was happy. The birth of our child will be legitimized and I should die afterward."

"Do not speak thus!"

"Oh! this time I do not deceive you--you will see."

"And no vestige remains of that implacable ambition which has ruined you! Why has fate willed that your repentance should be so late?"

"It is late, but profound--sincere; I swear it to you. At this solemn moment, if I thank heaven to take me from the world, it is because my life has been to you a horrible burden."

"Sarah, in mercy--"

"Rudolph, a last prayer--your hand."

The prince, turning away his eyes, gave his hand to the countess, who placed it between her own.

"Oh! your hands are icy cold," cried Rudolph with affright.

"Yes, I am dying. Perhaps for a last punishment, heaven does not will that I should embrace my child."

"Oh! yes, yes, it will be moved by your remorse."

"And you, my friend, are you touched? do you pardon me? Oh! in mercy, say it. Directly, when our child shall be here--if she comes in time--you cannot pardon me before her; that would be to teach her how guilty I have been, and that you would not like. When I am once dead, what matters it to you if she love me?"

"Be comforted; she shall know nothing."

"Rudolph, pardon! oh! pardon! Will you be without pity! Am I not sufficiently unhappy?"

"Well, may heaven pardon the evil you have done to your child, as I pardon what you have done to me, unhappy woman."

"You pardon me--from the bottom of your heart?"

"From the bottom of my heart," replied the prince.

The lady pressed the hand of Rudolph to her dying lips in an ecstasy of joy and gratitude, and said, "Let the clergyman come in, my friend, and tell him that afterward he must stay. I feel myself very weak."

This scene was heart-rending; Rudolph opened the folding-doors, and the clergyman entered, followed by the witnesses. All the actors in this sad scene were grave and sad; M. de Lucenay himself had forgotten his habitual frivolity. The contract of marriage between the most illustrious and very puissant prince, His Serene Highness, Gustavus Rudolph V., reigning Grand Duke of Gerolstein, and Sarah Seyton of Halsbury, Countess M'Gregor, had been prepared by the care of Baron de Graun: it was read by him, and signed by the bride and groom and their witnesses. Notwithstanding the repentance of the countess, when the clergyman said, with a solemn voice, to Rudolph, "Does your royal highness consent to take for wife Madame Sarah Seyton of Halsbury, Countess M'Gregor?" and the prince had answered "YES!" with a loud and firm voice, the deathlike countenance of the lady brightened; a rapid and transitory expression of triumphant pride passed over her livid features; it was the last flash of the ambition which died with her. During this sad and imposing ceremony, not a word was uttered by the witnesses. When it was finished, they all came forward, profoundly saluted the prince, and retired.

"Brother," said Sarah in a low tone, "beg the clergyman to have the goodness to wait a moment in the adjoining room."

"How do you feel now, my sister? you are very pale."

"I am sure to live now--am I not the Grand Duchess of Gerolstein?" added she, with a bitter smile.

Remaining alone with Rudolph, Sarah murmured, in an exhausted voice, while her features changed in an alarming manner, "My strength is gone. I feel that I am dying--I shall never see her."

"Yes, yes, calm yourself, Sarah--you will see her."

"I have no more hope--this delay--oh! it needs a strength superhuman. My sight fails already."

"Sarah!" said the prince, approaching, and taking her hands within his own, "she will come--now she cannot delay."

"God has not willed this last consolation."

"Sarah, listen--listen. I hear a carriage--yes--it is she; here is your child!"

"Rudolph, you will not tell her that I was a bad mother?" articulated the countess, slowly. The noise of a carriage resounded on the pavement of the court. The countess could not hear it. Her words were more and more incoherent. Rudolph leaned over her with anxiety; he saw her eyes covered with a film.

"Pardon--my child--see, my child--pardon--at least--after my death--the honors--of--my--rank----" These were her last intelligible words. The fixed, predominating thought of her whole life returned again, notwithstanding her sincere repentance. At this moment Murphy entered the room.

"Your highness, the Princess Marie----"

"No," cried Rudolph, quickly, "let her not enter. Tell Seyton to bring the clergyman." Then, pointing to Sarah, who was gradually expiring, Rudolph added, "Heaven refuses her the last consolation of embracing her child."

Half an hour afterward, the Countess M'Gregor had ceased to exist.

CHAPTER XXIV.

BICETRE.

Fifteen days had passed since Rudolph, by marrying the Countess M'Gregor in extremis, had legitimized the birth of Fleur-de-Marie. It was Mid-Lent. This date being established, we will conduct the reader to Bicetre. This immense establishment, founded for the treatment of the insane, serves also as a place of refuge for seven or eight hundred poor

old men, who are admitted when they have reached the age of seventy, or are afflicted with any very serious infirmity. On arriving at Bicetre, the visitor enters at first a vast court planted with large trees, and divided into grass plots, ornamented in summer with flower borders. Nothing could be more cheerful, more peaceful, or more salubrious than this promenade, which was specially designed for the indigent old men of whom we have spoken. It surrounds the buildings, in which, on the first floor, are found the spacious sleeping apartments; and on the ground floor, the dining halls, kept in admirable order, where the pensioners of Bicetre eat, in common, most excellent food, prepared with great care, thanks to the paternal solicitude of the directors of this establishment. To enumerate completely the different purposes for which this institution is designed, we mention that, at the time of which we speak, the condemned prisoners were brought here after their sentence. It was in one of the cells of this house that Widow Martial and her daughter Calabash awaited the moment of their execution, which was fixed for the next day. Nicholas, Skeleton, and several other scoundrels, had succeeded in making their escape from La Force.

We have already said that nothing could be more cheerful than the approach to this edifice, when, on coming from Paris, one entered it by the poorhouse yard. Thanks to a forward spring, the elms and the lindens were already beginning to shoot forth their leaves; the large plots of grass were of a luxuriant growth; here and there the flower beds were enameled with crocuses, primroses, and auriculas. The sun was shining brightly, and the old pensioners, dressed in gray coats, were walking up and down, or seated on the benches; their placid countenances expressed calmness, or a kind of tranquil indifference. Eleven o'clock had just struck, when two carriages stopped before the outer gate: from the first descended Madame George, Germain, and Rigolette; from the second, Louise Morel and her mother. Germain and Rigolette had been married a fortnight. We will leave the reader to imagine the saucy gayety, the lively happiness, which shone in the blooming visage of the grisette, whose rosy lips were only opened to smile or embrace Madame George, whom she called her mother. The features of Germain expressed a felicity more calm, more reflecting, more grave; there was mingled with it a feeling of profound gratitude, almost of respect, toward this noble and excellent girl, who had offered him in prison consolations so sustaining and delightful, which Rigolette did not seem to recollect the least in the world; thus, as soon as Germain turned the conversation on this subject, she spoke of something else, saying these recollections made her sad. Although she had become Madame Germain, and Rudolph had settled on her forty thousand francs, Rigolette had not been willing (and her husband was of the same opinion) to change her grisette cap for a hat. Certainly, never had humility served better an innocent coquetry; for nothing could be more becoming, more elegant, than her little cap, ornamented on each side with orange bows, which contrasted well with her shining black hair, now worn in long ringlets, since she had _time_ to put them in paper; around her charming neck she wore a richly-embroidered collar and a scarf of French cashmere of the same shade as the ribbons of her cap, which half concealed her fine person; and although she wore no corset, according to her usual custom, her dress showed not the slightest wrinkle on her slender figure. Madame George contemplated her son and Rigolette with quiet happiness.

Louise Morel, after a rigid examination and autopsy of her child, had been set at liberty; the beautiful features of the daughter of the lapidary expressed a kind of sad and melancholy resignation. Thanks to the generosity of Rudolph, and the care and attention which he had caused to be shown her, the mother of Louise Morel, who accompanied her, had recovered her health. The porter at the gate had asked Madame George whom she desired to see; she replied that one of the physicians of the asylum for the insane had made an appointment with her and her friends at eleven o'clock. Madame George had the option either to wait for the doctor in an office which was pointed out to her, or in the court of which we have spoken. She chose the latter; leaning on the arm of her son, and continuing to converse with the wife of the lapidary, she walked in the garden, Louise and Rigolette following at a short distance.

"How happy I am to see you, dear Louise!" said the grisette. "Just now when we went to seek you in the Rue du Temple on our arrival from Bouqueval, I wished to go up and see you; but my husband did not wish it, saying it was high up; I waited in the cab. Your vehicle followed ours, so that I now see you for the first time since---"

"Since you came to see me in prison. Ah! Miss Rigolette," cried Louise, "what a kind heart! what--"

"In the first place, my good Louise," said the grisette, interrupting gayly the daughter of the lapidary, in order to escape her thanks, "I am no more Miss Rigolette, but Madame Germain. I do not know if you are aware of it, and I am proud of it!"

"Yes, I knew you were married. But let me thank you again--"

"That of which you are most completely ignorant, my good Louise," replied Madame Germain, again interrupting the daughter of Morel, in order to change the course of her ideas: "that of which you are ignorant is, that I am married, thanks to the generosity of him who has been our Providence--mine as well as yours!"

"M. Rudolph! Oh! we bless him every day! When I came out of prison, the lawyer whom he sent to see me told me that (owing to M. Rudolph, who had already done so much for us) M. Ferrand," the poor creature shuddered, "M. Ferrand, to make amends for his cruelties, had settled some money on my father and me--my poor father, who is still here, but who, thanks to God, gets better and better."

"And who will return with us to-day to Paris, if the hopes of the worthy doctor are realized."

"May heaven grant it!"

"It will grant it. Your father is so good and honest! I am sure that we will take him back with us. The doctor thinks that now a great effort must be made, and that the unexpected presence of several persons whom your father was accustomed to see almost daily before he lost his reason may

effect a cure. As for me, in my poor judgment, it appears certain."

"I dare hardly believe it, Miss--"

"Mrs. Germain--Mrs. Germain, if it is all the same to you, my good Louise. But to return to what I was speaking about: you do not know who M. Rudolph is?"

"He is the Providence of the unfortunate!"

"It is true; and what then? you do not know. Well, I am going to tell you." Then, addressing her husband, who was walking near her, Rigolette cried, "Do not go so fast, my dear!--you fatigue our good mother; and, besides, I prefer to have you nearer to me."

Germain turned round, lessening his pace a little, and smiled on Rigolette who playfully threw him a kiss.

"How genteel my little Germain is! is he not, Louise? With that air so stylish! such a fine figure! was I not right when I found him more to my liking than M. Girandeu, the traveling clerk, or M. Cabrion? Oh! speaking of Cabrion--M. Pipelet and his wife? where are they? The doctor said they ought to come also, because your father often pronounces their names."

"They will not long delay. When I left the house, they had been gone for a long time."

"Oh! then they will not fail to be here; for M. Pipelet is as punctual as a clock. But let us return to my marriage and to M. Rudolph. Only think, Louise, it was he who sent me with the order for Germain's release. You can imagine our joy on leaving that dreadful prison! We reached my room, and there, aided by Germain, I arranged a slight repast, but a repast for real gourmards. It is true, it was of no great use to us, for when we had finished, we had neither of us eaten anything--we were too happy. At eleven o'clock, Germain went away; we agreed to meet the next morning. At five o'clock I was up and at work, for I was two days behindhand. At eight o'clock some one knocked; I opened; who should come in but M. Rudolph. At once I began to thank him from the bottom of my heart for what he had done for Germain; he would not let me finish. 'My neighbor,' said he to me, 'Germain will soon be here; give him this letter. You and he will take a cab, and go at once to a little village called Bouqueval, near Ecoeu, on the St. Denis Road. Once there, you will ask for Madame George; and I wish you much pleasure.' 'M. Rudolph, I am going to tell you it will be another day lost, and, without any reproach, this will make three.' 'Reassure yourself, my neighbor; there is some work for you at Madame George's, whom you will find an excellent customer.' 'If that is so, very good, M. Rudolph.' 'Adieu, neighbor.' 'Adieu, and thank you, neighbor.' He went, and Germain arrived. I told him what had occurred; M. Rudolph could not deceive us; we got into a carriage, as frolicsome as children--we, who were so sad the day previous. Well! we arrive. Oh! my good Louise--hold! in spite of myself the tears will come to my eyes. This Madame George whom you see before us is the mother of Germain."

"His mother?"

"Dear me! yes, his own mother, from whom her child had been carried off when quite young, and whom she had no hope of ever seeing again. You can imagine their happiness. After Madame George had wept much, and embraced her son, it was my turn. M. Rudolph had written many fine things about me, for she told me, as she held me in her arms, that she knew of my conduct toward her son. 'And if you wish, mother,' said Germain, 'Rigolette shall be your daughter also.' 'If I wish it, my children? with all my heart. I know you will never find a better or nicer little wife.' Behold me, then, installed in a fine farm with Germain, his mother, and my birds, which I sent for, poor little things, so that they should be of the party. Although I do not like the country, the days passed so quickly, that it was like a dream; I only worked for my pleasure; I assisted Madame George, I walked with Germain, I sung, I jumped; it was enough to make one crazy. At length our marriage was fixed for two weeks ago yesterday. Two days previous, who should arrive in a fine carriage but a stout, bald gentleman, with a very good-natured look, who brought me from M. Rudolph a wedding gift. Just imagine, Louise, a large rosewood box, with these words written in gold on a plate of blue enamel: 'Industry and Virtue, Love and Happiness.' I opened the box; what did I find? some small lace caps like the one I have on, dress patterns, jewels, gloves, this scarf, a beautiful shawl; in fine, it was like a real fairy tale."

"It is true, it is like a real fairy tale; but, do you see, to have been so good, so industrious, has brought you happiness."

"As to being good and industrious, my dear Louise, I have not been so purposely; it has so happened: so much the better for me. But this is not all: at the bottom of the box I discovered a handsome portfolio, with these words, 'Neighbor to Neighbor.' I opened it: there were two packages, one for Germain, the other for me; in Germain's I found a paper, which named him director of a Bank for the Poor, with a salary of 4,000 francs; in the envelope directed to me, there was a check for 40,000 francs on the--on the Treasury; yes, that is it; this was my marriage portion. I wished to refuse it, but Madame George, who had talked with the tall, bald gentleman and with Germain, said to me, 'My child, you can, and ought to accept it; it is the recompense of your virtue, your industry, and of your devotion to those who suffer; for it is only by depriving yourself of your usual hours of repose, at the risk of making yourself sick, and thus losing your sole means of subsistence, that you have been able to go and console your unfortunate friends.'"

"Oh! that is very true," cried Louise; "there is no one else like you, at least, Miss--Mrs. Germain."

"Very good! I told the bald gentleman that what I had done was my pleasure; he answered, 'No matter! M. Rudolph is immensely rich; your marriage portion on his part is a testimony of esteem and friendship; your refusal would cause him great sorrow; he will be present at your marriage, and will force you to accept.' What happiness that so much wealth should be in the possession of a person as charitable as M. Rudolph!"

"Doubtless he is very rich, but if that were all--"

"Oh! my good Louise, if you only knew who M. Rudolph is! and I made him carry my bundles! But patience! you shall see. The evening before the marriage, very late, the bald gentleman arrived, having traveled post. M. Rudolph could not come; he was indisposed; but the tall gentleman came in his place. It is only then, my good Louise, that we were informed that your benefactor, that ours, was--guess what? a prince!"

"A prince?"

"What do I say, a prince? a royal highness, a reigning grand duke, a king on a small scale. Germain explained this to me."

"M. Rudolph!"

"My poor Louise, yes! And I had asked him to help me wax my floor!"

"A prince--almost a king. That is the reason he has so much power to do good."

"You comprehend my embarrassment, my good Louise. Thus, seeing that he was almost a king, I did not dare refuse my marriage portion. We were married. Eight days afterward, M. Rudolph sent word to us, and Madame George, that he would be very happy, if we would make him a bridal visit; we went. You comprehend, my heart beat fast; we arrived at the Rue Plumet; we entered a palace; we passed through parlors filled with servants in livery, gentlemen in black, wearing silver chains around their necks and words at their sides, and officers in uniform; and then gildings everywhere, almost enough to blind you. At length we found the bald gentleman in a saloon with some other gentlemen, all laced over with embroidery; he introduced us into a large room, where we found M. Rudolph--that is to say, the prince, dressed very plainly, and looking so kind, so frank, so little proud--in fine, he looked so much like the M. Rudolph of old, that I felt myself at once at my ease, recalling to my mind that I had made him fasten my shawl, mend my pens, and give me his arm in the streets."

"You were no longer afraid? Oh! how I should have trembled!"

"Not I, after having received Madame George with great kindness, and offered his hand to Germain, the prince said to me, smiling, 'Well, my neighbor, how are _Papa Cretu_ and _Ramonette?_' (those are the names of my birds; how kind in him to remember them). 'I am sure,' he added, 'that now you and Germain rival with your joyous songs those of your little birds?' 'Yes, your highness!' (Madame George had taught us to say that while we were on the road)--'Yes, your highness, our happiness is great, and it seems to us more sweet because we owe it to you.' 'It is not to me you owe it, my child, but to your excellent qualities and to those of Germain,' and so forth, and so forth: I pass over the rest of his compliments. Finally, we left this good nobleman with our hearts rather full, for we shall see him no more. He told us that he would return to Germany in a few days; perhaps he has already gone; but gone or not, we shall always remember him."

"Since he has subjects, they must be very happy!"

"Judge! he has done so much good to us, who are nothing to him. I forgot to tell you that it was at this farm where we lived that one of my old prison companions resided, a very good little girl, who, to her happiness, had also met M. Rudolph; but Madame George had recommended me not to speak about it to the prince; I do not know wherefore; doubtless because he does not like that any one should speak to him of the good he does. What is certain is, that it appears this dear Goualeuse has found her parents, who have taken her with them, very far away: all I regret is, not having embraced her before her departure."

"So much the better," said Louise, bitterly; "she is happy also--she--"

"My good Louise, pardon me--I am selfish; I only speak to you of happiness, and you have yet so many reasons for sorrow."

"If my child had lived," said Louise, sadly, "that would have consoled me; for now where is the virtuous man who would have me, although I have money!"

"On the contrary, Louise, I say that none but a virtuous man can comprehend your position; yes, when he knows all, when he shall know you, he can but pity you, esteem you; and he will be sure to have in you a good and worthy wife."

"You say that to console me."

"No, I say that because it is true."

"Well, true or not, it does me good, and I thank you. But who comes here? Hold! it is M. Pipelet and his wife! Goodness! how pleased he is! he who formerly was always so miserable on account of the jokes of M. Cabrion."

The Pipelets came forward joyfully; Alfred, wearing his irremovable hat, had on a magnificent coat of grass green in all its pristine luster; his cravat, with embroidered corners, just allowed room for a formidable shirt collar, which concealed half of his cheeks, a large waistcoat, of a deep-yellow ground, with brown stripes; black breeches, rather short; stockings of dazzling whiteness, and well-brushed shoes, completed his attire. Anastasia strutted in a robe of amaranth-colored merino, over which showed to great advantage a shawl of deep blue. She proudly displayed to all eyes her wig, freshly curled, and had her cap suspended from her arm by strings of green ribbon, like a reticule. The physiognomy of Alfred, ordinarily so grave, so collected, and latterly so much cast down, was beaming, rejoicing, sparkling; as soon as he saw Louise and Rigolette at a distance, he ran toward them, crying in his bass voice, "Delivered--gone!"

"Oh! M. Pipelet," said Rigolette, "how very gay you look! what is the matter?"

"Gone, miss, or, rather, madame, do I, can I, ought I to say, for now you

are exactly like Anastasia, thanks to the conjugal! just as your husband, M. Germain, is exactly like me."

"You are very kind, M. Pipelet," said Rigolette, smiling; "but who has gone, then?"

"Cabron!!!" cried M. Pipelet, respiring and inhaling the air with inexpressible satisfaction, as if he had been relieved from an enormous weight. "He leaves France forever--forever--for perpetuity--in fine, he is gone."

"You are very sure of it?"

"I have seen him, with my own eyes, get into a diligence for Strasbourg--he and his trunks, and all his effects--that is, to say, a hatbox, a maulstick, and a box of colors."

"What is he singing about there, the old darling?" said Anastasia, arriving out of breath, for she had with difficulty followed the quick movements of Alfred. "I bet he is talking to you of Cabron! he has done nothing but repeat it over and over again all along the way."

"That is to say, Anastasia, that I could hardly keep on the ground. Before, it seemed to me that my hat was lined with lead; now, one would say that the air raised me toward the firmament! gone--at last--gone!!! and he will never return more!"

"Most happily, the blackguard!"

"Anastasia, spare the absent; happiness renders me merciful; I will simply say that he was an unworthy blackguard."

"And how did you know that he had gone to Germany?" asked Rigolette.

"By a friend of my prince of lodgers. Apropos of this dear man, do you not know that, thanks to his good recommendations, Alfred is appointed porter of a Pawn Office and Bank for the Poor, established in our house by a good soul that I cannot help thinking must be the person for whom M. Rudolph was the traveling clerk in good actions!"

"That happens very well," said Rigolette: "my husband is the director of this bank, for which he is also indebted to the recommendation of M. Rudolph."

"Hooraw!" cried Madame Pipelet, gayly; "so much the better; so much the better! old faces are preferable to new ones. But to return to Cabron: just imagine, that a tall bald gentleman, on coming to inform us of Alfred's appointment as porter, asked us if a painter of much talent, named Cabron had not lived with us. At the name of Cabron, there was my old darling lifting his boot in the air, and already half dead. Happily, the great fat bald man added, 'This young painter is about to start for Germany; a wealthy person sends him there for some work which will employ him for several years; perhaps he may always remain there.' As a proof of

what he had said, the individual gave to my old darling the date of the intended departure of Cabrion and the address of the stage-coach office, and I had the unhopd-for happiness to read on the register, 'M. Cabrion, painter, leaves for Strasbourg.' The departure was fixed for this morning."

"I went to the office with my wife."

"We saw the knave mount on the imperial, alongside of the conductor."

"And just at the moment the diligence started, Cabrion perceived me, recognized me, turned round, and cried, 'I go forever--yours for life!' Happily, the trumpet of the conductor almost drowned these last words and the indecent familiarity of his address, which I despise; for, at last, Heaven be praised, he is gone."

"And gone forever, believe it, M. Pipelet," said Rigolette, restraining a violent desire to laugh. "But what you do not know, and what will astonish you very much is, that M. Rudolph was--"

"Well?"

"A prince in disguise--a royal highness."

"Come, get along--what a sell!" said Anastasia.

"I swear it to you by my husband," said Rigolette, very seriously.

"My prince of lodgers, a royal highness!" cried Anastasia. "Get along! And I asked him to take care of my lodge! Pardon--pardon--pardon." And she mechanically put on her cap, as if this head-dress were more suitable when she was speaking of a prince.

By a manifestation, diametrically opposed as to form, but quite similar as to the reality, Alfred, contrary to his habit, uncovered his head entirely, and saluted the air profoundly, crying, "A prince! a highness in our lodge! And he has seen me between the sheets when I was in bed, in consequence of the indignities of Cabrion!" At this moment Madame George turned round, and said to her son and to Rigolette, "My children, here is the doctor."

CHAPTER XXV.

THE SCHOOLMASTER.

Dr. Herbin, a man of ripe age, had a physiognomy very intellectual and lofty, a look of remarkable sagacity and depth of thought, and a smile of extreme goodness. His naturally harmonious voice became full of kindness when he spoke to the lunatics; thus the suavity of his tone and the benevolence of his words seemed oft to calm the natural irritability of these unfortunate people. He was among the first to substitute, in his

treatment for madness, commiseration and benevolence for the terrible coercive means employed formerly; no more chains, no more blows, no more shower-baths; above all (save in some few cases), no more solitary confinement. His lofty understanding had comprehended that monomania, insanity, and madness were increased by confinement and abusive treatment; that, on the contrary, by allowing the patients to live together, a thousand distractions, a thousand incidents occurring at each moment, prevented them from being absorbed in a fixed idea, so much the more fatal as it is more concentrated by solitude and intimidation. Thus experience proves that solitary confinement is as fatal to lunatics as it is salutary to criminals; the mental perturbation of the former increases in solitude, while the perturbation, or, rather, moral corruption of the latter, is augmented and becomes incurable by the society of their brothers in crime. Doubtless, some years hence, the penitentiary system, with its prisons in common (true schools of infamy), with its galleys, its chains, its pillories, and its scaffolds, will appear as corrupt, as savage, as atrocious as the old method of treatment for the insane appears to us of the present day.

"Doctor," said Madame George to M. Herbin, "I thought I might be allowed to accompany my son and daughter-in-law, although I do not know M. Morel. The situation of this excellent man appeared to me so interesting that I have not been able to conquer my desire to assist with my children in attempting his complete restoration to reason, which, you hope (so we have been told), will be accomplished by the means you are about using."

"I count much, madame, on the favorable impression which the presence of his daughter and persons whom he has been accustomed to see will produce upon him."

"When they came to arrest my husband," said the wife of Morel, with emotion, showing Rigolette to the doctor, "our good little neighbor was occupied in assisting me and my children."

"My father also well knew M. Germain, who has always been very kind to us," added Louise. Then, noticing Alfred and Anastasia, she added, "These are the porters of our house; they have also assisted us as much as they could in our misfortunes."

"I thank you, sir," said the doctor to Alfred, "for having inconvenienced yourself by coming here; but, from what I have been told, I see this visit has not cost you a great deal."

"Sir," said M. Pipelet, with a grave nod, "man should assist his fellow-man here below; he is a brother, without counting that Morel was the cream of honest men, before he lost his reason, in consequence of his arrest and his dear Louise's."

"And over and above all," said Anastasia, "I always regret that the porringer full of scalding soup which I threw on the backs of the two bailiffs had not been melted lead."

"It is true; and I ought to render this just homage to the affection which

my wife has avowed to the Morels."

"If you do not fear, madame," said Doctor Herbin, to the mother of Germain, "the sight of the lunatics, we will pass through several courts in order to reach the exterior building, where I have had Morel conducted; for I have given orders this morning that he should not be led to the farm as usual."

"To the farm, sir?" said Madame George, "is there a farm here?"

"Does that surprise you, madame? I can conceive it. Yes, we have here a farm cultivated by the lunatics, and its produce is very valuable to the house."

"Do they work there without restraint, sir?"

"Yes; and the labor, the quiet of the fields, the sight of nature, are among the best of our remedies. A single keeper conducts them thither, and there is hardly an instance of escape; they go with evident satisfaction, and their slight earning; serve to ameliorate their condition. But here we are at the door of one of the courts." Then, seeing a slight shade of apprehension on the face of Madame George, the doctor added, "Fear nothing, madame; in a few moments you will feel as secure as I do."

"I follow you, sir. Come, my children."

"Anastasia," whispered M. Pipelet, who was behind with his wife, "when I think that if the infernal conduct of M. Cabrion had lasted, your Alfred would have become mad, and, as such, would have been confined among these unfortunates whom we are going to see, clothed in costumes the most singular, chained by the middle of their bodies, or shut up in cages like the wild beasts of the Garden of Plants!"

"Do not speak of it, old darling! It is said that those who are mad for love are like real apes when they see a woman: they throw themselves against the bars of their cages, uttering the most frightful cooings. Their keepers are obliged to soothe them with great blows from a whip, and letting fall on their heads immense quantities of water, which drops from a hundred feet high, and that is not a bit too much to refresh them."

"Anastasia, do not approach too near to the cages of these madmen," said Alfred, gravely: "an accident happens so quickly!"

"Yes, not to say a word of how ungenerous it would be on my part to have the appearance of defying them; for, after all," added Anastasia, with a melancholy sigh, "it is our attractions which make them distracted. Hold! I shudder, my Alfred, when I think that, if I had refused you your happiness, you would be at this moment crazy from love, like some of these madmen; that you would cling to the bars of your cage the moment you saw a woman, and roar afterward, poor old darling! you who, on the contrary, run away as soon as they attempt to allure you."

"My modesty is suspicious, it is true; but, Anastasia, the door opens--I shudder. We are going to see abominable figures, hear the noise of chains

and grinding of teeth."

Mr and Mrs. Pipelet, not having heard the conversation of Doctor Herbin, partook of the popular prejudice which still exists on the subject of insane hospitals; prejudices which forty years ago were not without foundation. The door of the court was opened. This court, forming a long parallelogram, was planted with trees and furnished with benches; a gallery of elegant construction extended on each side; cells, well ventilated, opened on this gallery; some fifty men, uniformly clothed in gray, were walking, talking, or sitting silent and contemplative in the sun.

On the arrival of Dr. Herbin, a large number of lunatics pressed around him, extending their hands to him with a touching expression of confidence and gratitude, to which he cordially replied, saying to them, "Good-day, good-day, my children."

Some of these unfortunate beings, at too great a distance from the doctor for him to take their hand, came and offered it with a kind of hesitation to the persons who accompanied him.

"Good-day, my friends," said Germain, kindly, shaking hands in a manner which seemed to delight them.

"Sir," said Madame George to the doctor, "are these lunatics?"

"These are about the most dangerous in the house," said the doctor, smiling. "We leave them together in the daytime, but at night they are locked up in the cells, of which you see the doors open."

"How? these people are completely mad? But are they ever furious?"

"At first--at the commencement of their malady, when they are brought here; then, by degrees, the treatment begins to produce its effect, and the sight of their companions calms them and distracts their attention; gentle usage appeases them, and their violent attacks, at first frequent, become more and more rare. Hold! here is one of the most violent."

This was a robust and powerful man of about forty years of age, with long, black hair, high forehead, sallow complexion; intellectual expression, and most intelligent countenance, He approached the doctor, and said to him, in a tone of exquisite politeness, although slightly constrained, "Doctor, I ought, in my turn, to have the right of conversing and walking with the blind man; I have the honor of observing to you that there is a flagrant injustice in depriving this unfortunate man of my conversation, to deliver him" (and the madman smiled with bitter disdain) "to the stupid incoherences of an idiot, who is completely a stranger (I hazard nothing in saying it)--completely a stranger to the least notions of any science whatever, while my conversation might divert the attention of the blind man. Thus," added he, with extreme volubility, "I would have told him my opinion on the isothermal and orthogonal superficies, causing him to observe that the equations of partial differences, of which the geometrical explanation is summed up in two orthogonal superficies, cannot generally be integral on account of their complication. I should have proved to him that

the united superficies are all necessarily isothermal, and together we would have sought what superficies are capable of composing a trebly isothermal system. If I do not deceive myself, sir, compare this recreation with the stupid nonsense with which they entertain this blind man," added the lunatic, taking breath, "and tell me, is it not a pity to deprive him of my conversation?"

"Do not take what he has just said, madame, for the wanderings of a madman," whispered the doctor; "he handles in this way sometimes the most difficult questions of geometry or astronomy, with an acuteness which would do honor to the most illustrious learned men. His knowledge is great. He speaks all the living languages, but he is, alas! a martyr to his thirst for erudition and pride of learning. He imagines that he has absorbed all human knowledge, and that, by retaining him here, humanity is thrown back into the darkness of the most profound ignorance."

The doctor replied aloud to the lunatic, who seemed to await his reply with a respectful anxiety, "My dear M. Charles, your complaint appears to me very just, and this poor blind man, who, I believe, is dumb, but, happily, is not deaf, will have great delight in the conversation of a man as learned as you are. I will see that you have justice done you."

"Besides, by retaining me here, you deprive the universe of all human knowledge, which I have appropriated to myself by assimilation," said the madman, becoming animated by degrees, and commencing to gesticulate with great violence.

"Come, come, calm yourself, my good M. Charles; happily the world has not yet discovered its deficiencies; as soon as it shall have become enlightened in this respect, we shall endeavor to supply its wants; and in that case, a man of your capacity, of your learning, can always render great services."

"But I am for science what Noah's ark was for physical nature," cried he, grinding his teeth, his eye looking very wild.

"I know it, my dear friend."

"You wish to put the light under the bushel!" cried he, clinching his fists. "But then I will break you like glass," added he, with a threatening air, his face purple with anger, and the veins swelling like cords.

"Ah! M. Charles," answered the doctor, fixing on the madman a calm, piercing, steady look, and assuming a caressing and flattering manner, "I thought that you were the greatest professor of modern times."

"And past," cried the madman, forgetting all at once his anger in his pride.

"You did not let me finish: that you were the greatest professor of time past, and present--"

"And future," cried the madman, proudly.

"Oh! the great babbler, who always interrupts me," said the doctor, smiling, and striking him amicably on the shoulder. "Can it be said that I am ignorant of all the admiration that you inspire and deserve! Come, let us go and see the blind man."

"Conduct me to him. Doctor, you are a good man; come, come, you will see what he is obliged to listen to when I can tell him such fine things," answered the lunatic, completely calmed, walking before the doctor with a satisfied air.

"I confess to you, sir," said Germain, who had drawn near to his wife, remarking her fear when the madman spoke and gesticulated so violently, "I confess to you, for a moment I feared a crisis."

"Formerly, at the very first word of excitement, at the very first sign of a threat, the keepers would have seized, tied, beat, and inundated him with a shower-bath, one of the most atrocious tortures that ever were invented. Judge of the effect of such a treatment on an energetic and irritable temperament, whose force of expansion becomes more violent as it is more compressed. Then he would have fallen into one of those frightful fits of madness which defy the most powerful restraint; exasperated by their frequency, they become almost incurable; while as you see, by not restraining at first this momentary ebullition, or in turning it aside by the aid of the excessive mobility of mind which is to be remarked among many lunatics, these experimental bubblings are assuaged as soon as they are raised."

"And who is this blind man of whom he speaks? is that an illusion of his mind?" asked Madame George.

"No, madame, it is a very strange history," answered the doctor. "This blind man was taken in a den in the Champs Elysees, where they arrested a band of robbers and assassins; he was found chained in the middle of a subterranean cavern, alongside of the corpse of a woman, so horribly mutilated that she could not be recognized."

"Ah! it is frightful," said Madame George, shuddering, never suspecting the truth.

"This man is frightfully ugly; his face has been burned with vitriol. Since his arrival here, he has not spoken a single word. I do not know whether he is really dumb, or only affects to be so. By a singular chance, the only attacks he has had have occurred during my absence, and always at night. Unfortunately, all the questions that have been addressed to him have been unanswered, and it is impossible to obtain any information as to his situation; his attacks seem to be caused by a madness of which the cause is impenetrable, for he does not pronounce a word. The other lunatics pay him great attention; they guide his footsteps, and they like to entertain him, alas! according to their degree of intelligence. Hold! here he is!"

All the persons who accompanied the doctor recoiled with horror at the sight of the Schoolmaster, for it was he. He was not mad, but he pretended

to be both mad and dumb. He had massacred La Chouette, not in a fit of madness, but in a fit of fever, such as he had been attacked with at Bouqueval on the night of his horrible vision. After his arrest in the tavern of the Champs Elysees, recovering from his transient delirium, the Schoolmaster had awoke in a cell of the Conciergerie, where the insane are temporarily confined. Hearing every one say around him, "He is a furious madman," he resolved to continue to play his part, and pretended dumbness in order not to compromise himself by his answers, in case they should suspect his feigned insanity. This stratagem succeeded. Conducted to Bicetre, he pretended to have other attacks of madness, always taking care to choose the night for these manifestations, in order to escape the penetrating observation of the chief physician; the attending surgeon, awakened in haste, never arriving until the crisis was over, or nearly at an end. The very small number of the accomplices of the Schoolmaster, who knew his real name and his escape from the galleys at Rohefort, were ignorant of what had become of him, and, besides, had no interest in denouncing him; thus his identity could not be proved. He hoped to remain always at Bicetre, by continuing his part of a madman and mute. Yes, always. Such was then the sole desire of this man, thanks to the inability to do harm which paralyzed his savage instincts. Thanks to the state of profound seclusion in which he had lived in the cellar of Bras-Rouge, remorse had taken almost entire possession of his iron heart. By dint of concentrating his mind upon one unceasing meditation (the recollection of his past crimes), deprived of all communication with the exterior world, his ideas often assumed a sort of reality, as he had told La Chouette; then passed before him sometimes the features of his victims; but this was not madness--it was the power of memory carried to its greatest extent. Thus this man, still in the prime of life, of a vigorous constitution--this man, who, without doubt, would live many long years--this man, who enjoyed all the plenitude of his reason, was to pass these long years among madmen, without ever exchanging a word with a human being. Otherwise, if he were discovered, he would be led to the scaffold for his new murders, or he would be condemned to a perpetual imprisonment among scoundrels, for whom he felt a horror which was augmented by his repentance. The Schoolmaster was seated on a bench; a forest of grayish hair covered his hideous and enormous head; with his elbows on his knees, he supported his chin on his hand. Although this frightful man was deprived of sight, two holes replaced his nose, and his mouth was deformed, yet a withering, incurable despair was still manifest on his horrid visage. A lunatic of a sad, benevolent, and juvenile appearance kneeled before the Schoolmaster, held his large hands in his own, looked at him with kindness, and, with a sweet voice, constantly repeated, "Strawberries! strawberries! strawberries!"

"See now," said the learned madman, gravely, "the sole conversation which this idiot can hold with the blind man. Yes, with him, the eyes of the body closed, those of the mind are without doubt opened, and he will be pleased if I enter into communication with him."

"I do not doubt it," said the doctor; while the poor lunatic with the melancholy face regarded the abominable face of the Schoolmaster with compassion, and repeated, in his soft voice, "Strawberries! strawberries! strawberries!"

"Since his entrance here, this poor idiot has uttered no other words than these," said the doctor to Madame George, who looked at the Schoolmaster with horror; "what mysterious events are connected with these words, I cannot penetrate."

"Mother," said Germain to Madame George, "how much this poor blind man seems depressed!"

"It is true, my child," answered Madame George: "in spite of myself my heart is oppressed! the sight of him sickens me. Oh! how sad it is to see humanity under this dreadful aspect."

Hardly had Madame George pronounced these words, than the Schoolmaster started; his scarred face became pale under its cicatrices; he arose, and turned his head so quickly toward the mother of Germain, that she could not refrain from a cry of horror, although she did not know who he was. The Schoolmaster had recognized the voice of his wife, and the words of Madame George told him that she had spoken to his son!

"What is the matter, mother?" cried Germain.

"Nothing, son; but the movement of this man, the expression of his face--all this has frightened me. Pardon my weakness," added she, addressing the doctor, "I almost regret having yielded to my curiosity in accompanying my son."

"Oh! for once, mother--there is nothing to regret."

"Very sure am I that our good mother will never return here, nor we either, my little Germain," said Rigolette: "it is too affecting."

"You are a little coward!" said Germain, smiling: "is not my wife a little coward, doctor?"

"I confess," answered the doctor, "that the sight of this unhappy blind and dumb man has made a strong impression upon me--who have seen so much distress."

"What a sight, old darling!" whispered Anastasia.

"Well! in comparison with you, all men appear to me as ugly as this frightful madman. It is on this account that no one can boast of--you comprehend, my Alfred?"

"Anastasia, I shall dream of that face, it is certain--I shall have the nightmare."

"My friend," said the doctor to the Schoolmaster, "how do you find yourself?" The Schoolmaster remained mute.

"Do you not hear me, then?" continued the doctor, striking him lightly on the shoulder.

The Schoolmaster made no reply, but bowed his head. At the end of some moments, from his sightless eyes there fell a tear.

"He weeps," said the doctor.

"Poor man!" added Germain, with compassion.

The Schoolmaster shuddered; he heard anew the voice of his son, who evinced for him a sentimental compassion.

"What is the matter? What afflicts you?" demanded the doctor. The Schoolmaster buried his face in his hands.

"We shall obtain nothing," said the doctor.

"Let me try: I am going to console him," replied the learned madman. "I am going to demonstrate that all kinds of orthogonal surfaces in which the three systems are isothermal, are 1st, those of the superficies of the second order; 2nd, those of the ellipsoids of revolution around the small axis and the grand axis; 3rd, those--but no," said the madman, reflecting, "I will commence with him on the planetary system." Then, addressing the young lunatic, who was still kneeling before the Schoolmaster, "Take yourself off from there with your strawberries."

"My boy," said the doctor to the young madman, "each one must have his turn with the old man. Let your comrade take your place."

The young boy obeyed at once, arose, looked at the doctor timidly with his large blue eyes, showed his deference by a salute, made a parting sign to the Schoolmaster, and departed, repeating, in a plaintive voice, "Strawberries! strawberries!"

The doctor, perceiving the painful effect this scene had produced upon Madame George, said to her, "Happily, madame, we are going to find Morel, and, if my hopes are realized, your heart will expand with joy on seeing this excellent man restored to the tenderness of his wife and daughter."

And the physician withdrew, followed by the friends of the artisan Morel. The Schoolmaster remained alone with the learned madman, who commenced to explain to him, very learnedly and very eloquently, the imposing movement of the stars, which describe their immense revolutions silently in the heavens of which the normal state is night. But the Schoolmaster did not listen. He thought, with profound despair, that he should never hear again the voices of his son and wife. Confident of the just horror with which he had inspired them, of the misfortune, the shame, the affright into which he would have plunged them by the revelation of his name, he would have endured rather a thousand deaths than have disclosed himself to them. One single last consolation remained to him: for a moment he had inspired his son with pity. And in spite of himself, he recalled to mind the words which Rudolph had spoken to him before he had inflicted this terrible chastisement.

"Each of your words is an oath; each of your words shall be a prayer. You

are audacious and cruel because you are strong; you shall be meek and humble because you shall be weak. Your heart is closed to repentance; some day you will weep for your victims. From a man you have made yourself a savage beast; some day your understanding shall be restored by repentance. You have not even spared what the wild beasts spare, the female and her young. After a long life consecrated to the expiation of your crimes, your last prayer shall be to supplicate God to grant you the unhoped-for happiness of dying before your wife and your son."

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"We are going to pass into the court of the idiots, and then we shall reach the building where we shall find Morel," said the doctor, on leaving the court where the Schoolmaster was.

CHAPTER XXVI.

MOREL, THE DIAMOND-CUTTER.

Notwithstanding the sadness with which the sight of the lunatics had inspired her, Madame George could not but stop for a moment before a railed court, where the incurable idiots were confined. Poor beings! who often have not even the instinct of the beast, and whose origin is almost always unknown--unknown to all as well as to themselves. Thus they pass through life, absolute strangers to the affections, to thoughts, experiencing only the most limited animal wants. If madness does not reveal itself at once to a superficial observer by a single inspection of the physiognomy of the lunatic, it is but too easy to recognize the physical character of idiotism. Dr. Herbin had no occasion to direct the attention of Madame George, to the expression of savage brutishness, stupid insensibility, or imbecile amazement, which gave to the features of the unfortunate wretches an expression at once hideous and painful to behold. Almost all were clothed in long dirty frocks, ragged and torn; for, in spite of all possible care, these beings, absolutely deprived of instinct and reason, cannot be prevented from tearing and soiling their vestments, crawling and rolling like beasts in the mire of the courts, where they remain during the day. Some of them, crouched in the most obscure corners of a shed which sheltered them, gathered in a heap, like animals in their dens, uttered a kind of hollow and continual rattling noise. Others, leaning against the wall immovable, looked fixedly at the sun. An old man, of monstrous obesity, seated on a wooden chair, devoured his pittance with animal voracity, casting on either side oblique angry glances. Some walked rapidly, describing a circle, limiting themselves to a very small space. This strange exercise would last for entire hours. Seated on the ground, others swayed their bodies continually backward and forward, only interrupting this movement of vertiginous monotony by shouts of laughter--the guttural, harsh laugh of idiocy. Others, in fine, were almost in a state of annihilation, only opening their eyes at the moment of repast, remaining inert, inactive, deaf, dumb, blind--not a cry, not a

gesture announcing their vitality. The complete absence of verbal or intellectual communication is one of the most gloomy characteristics of a company of idiots, Lunatics, notwithstanding the incoherency of their words and thoughts, at least speak, know each other, and seek each other; but among idiots there reigns a stupid indifference, an isolated savageness. Never do they pronounce an articulate word. Sometimes is heard among them savage laughter, or groans and cries which resemble nothing human. Scarcely can a few among them recognize their keepers; and yet, let us repeat it with admiration, with reverence to the Creator, these unfortunate creatures, who seem no longer to belong to our species, and not even to the animal species, by the complete annihilation of their intellectual faculties; these incurable beings, who partake more of the mollusca than animated life, and who often thus pass through all the stages of a long existence, are surrounded by tender cares, of which we have no idea. Doubtless it is well to respect the principle of human dignity, even in these unhappy beings who have only the exterior of men; but let us always repeat, one should also think of the dignity of those who, endowed with all their faculties, filled with zeal and activity, and the living strength of the nation; to give them consciousness of this dignity by encouraging them, and reward them when it is manifested by the love of industry, by resignation, by probity; not to say, in fine, with semi-orthodox selfishness, "Let us punish here below, God will recompense above."

"Poor people!" said Madame George, following the doctor, after having cast a last look into the court of the idiots; "how sad it is to think there is no remedy for their woes!"

"Alas! none, madame!" answered the doctor; "above all, when they have reached this age; for, now, thanks to the progress of the science, idiot children receive a kind of education which develops, at least, the atom of imperfect intelligence with which they are sometimes endowed. We have a school here, directed with as much perseverance as enlightened patience, which already offers the most satisfactory results; by a very ingenious method, the mental and physical capacities are exercised at the same time; and many have been taught the alphabet, figures, and to distinguish colors; they have also succeeded in teaching them to sing in chorus; and I assure you, madame, that there is a kind of strange charm, at once sad and touching, in hearing these plaintive, wondering voices raised toward heaven in a chant, of which almost all the words, although in French, are to them unknown. But here we are at the building where we shall find Morel. I have recommended that he should be left alone this morning, that the effect which I hope to produce upon him may have greater power."

"And what is his madness, sir?" whispered Madame George to the doctor, so as not to be heard by Louise.

"He imagines that if he does not earn thirteen hundred francs in his day's work, to pay a debt contracted with a notary named Jacques Ferrand, Louise will die on the scaffold for the crime of infanticide."

"Oh! sir, that notary was a monster!" cried Madame George, informed of the hatred of this man against Germain. "Louise Morel and her father are not his only victims; he has persecuted my son with undying animosity."

"Louise Morel has told me all, madame," answered the doctor. "God's mercy! this wretch has ceased to live! but be pleased to wait for a moment, with these good people; I am going to see how poor Morel is." Then, addressing the daughter of the lapidary, "I beg you, Louise, pay great attention! the moment I cry, _Come!_ appear at once, but alone; when I say a second time, _Come!_ the others will also enter."

"Oh! sir, my courage fails me," said Louise, drying her tears. "Poor father! if this trial should be useless!"

"I hope it will save him; for a long time I have been preparing for it. Come, compose yourself, and remember my instructions."

And the doctor, leaving the persons who accompanied him, entered into a room of which the grated windows opened on a garden.

Thanks to repose, the salutary rules and comforts with which he was surrounded, the features of Morel were no longer pale, ghastly, and wrinkled by an unhealthy meagerness; his full face, slightly colored, announced the return of health; but a melancholy smile, a certain fixed expression, indicated that his reason was not yet completely re-established.

When the doctor entered, Morel, seated and bent over a table, imitated the exercise of his trade of a lapidary, saying, "Thirteen hundred francs--thirteen hundred francs, or Louise to the scaffold--thirteen hundred francs; let us work--work--work."

This aberration, of which the attacks were becoming less and less frequent, had always been the primordial symptom of his madness. The physician, at first vexed to find Morel at this moment under the influence of his monomania, soon hoped to make it serve his project; he took from his pocket a purse containing sixty-five golden louis, which he had placed there for the purpose, poured the gold into his hand, and said suddenly to Morel, who, profoundly absorbed by his ideal occupation, had not perceived the arrival of the doctor:

"My good Morel! you have worked enough; you have earned the thirteen hundred francs which you need to save Louise--here they are." And the doctor threw on the table his handful of gold.

"Louise saved!" cried the lapidary, clutching the gold eagerly. "I will run to the notary;" and, rising precipitately, he rushed to the door.

"Come!" cried the doctor, with a lively anxiety, for the instantaneous cure of the lapidary might depend upon this first impression.

Hardly had he said "Come," than Louise appeared at the door, at the moment that her father reached it. Morel, stupefied, recoiled two steps, and dropped the gold which he had held. For some moments, he looked at Louise with profound amazement, not yet recognizing her. He seemed, however, to be endeavoring to collect his thoughts; then, approaching her by degrees, he

looked at her with an uneasy and timid curiosity. Louise, trembling with emotion, with difficulty restrained her tears, while the doctor, recommending her, by a sign, to remain silent, watched attentively the smallest movements of the lapidary's countenance. He, leaning toward his daughter, began to turn pale; he passed both his hands over his forehead, covered with sweat; then, taking a step toward her, he wished to speak, but his voice died upon his lips, his paleness increased, and he looked around him with surprise, as if he were just awaking from a dream.

"Well, well," whispered the doctor to Louise, "it is a good sign; when I say 'Come,' throw yourself into his arms, calling him father."

The lapidary placed his hands on his chest, looking at himself (if we may so express it) from head to foot, as if to convince himself of his identity. His features expressed a sad uncertainty: instead of fixing his eyes on his daughter, he seemed as if he wished to hide himself from her sight. Then he said, in a low and broken voice, "No! no! a dream--where am I? impossible--a dream--it is not she." Then, seeing the gold scattered on the floor, "And this gold--I do not remember--am I awake? My head turns--I dare not look--I am ashamed: it is not Louise."

"Come!" said the doctor, in a loud voice. "Father, recognize me! I am Louise, your daughter!" cried she, bursting into tears, and throwing herself into his arms; at the same moment, Madame Morel, Rigolette, Madame George, Germain, and the Pipelets entered the apartment.

"Oh! heavens!" said Morel, whom Louise loaded with caresses, "where am I? what do they want with me? what has taken place? I cannot believe." Then, after a pause, he took suddenly the head of Louise between his two hands, looked at her fixedly, and cried, after some moments of increasing emotion, "Louise!"

"He is saved," said the doctor.

"My husband! my poor Morel!" cried the wife of the lapidary, running to join Louise.

"My wife!" said Morel; "my wife and child!"

"And I also, M. Morel," said Rigolette; "all your friends are collected around you."

"All your friends! do you see, M. Morel?" added Germain.

"Miss Rigolette! M. Germain!" said the lapidary, recognizing each personage with new astonishment.

"And your old friends of the lodge, too!" said Anastasia, approaching in her turn, with Alfred; "here are the Pipelets--the old Pipelets--friends till death! Daddy Morel, here is a great day."

"M. Pipelet and his wife! so many people around me! it seems to me so long since! And, but, it is Louise, is it not?" cried he with emotion, pressing

his daughter to his heart. "It is you, Louise? very sure?"

"My poor father, yes; it is I; it is my mother: here are all your friends--you shall leave us no more--we shall be happy now--very happy."

"Very happy. But wait until I recollect--all happy; it seems to me, however, that they came to conduct you to prison, Louise."

"Yes, my father; but I have been acquitted--you see it--I am here--near to you."

"Wait still--wait--my memory returns." Then he said, with affright, "And the notary?"

"Dead."

"Dead--he! then I believe you; we can be happy; but where am I? how am I here? for how long a time, and why? I do not exactly recollect."

"You have been so sick, sir," said the doctor, "that you have been brought here, into the country; you have had a fever--very violent--delirium."

"Yes, yes I recollect; the last thing--before my illness--I was talking to my daughter, and who--who then? Oh! a very generous man, M. Rudolph, prevented my arrest. Since then I recollect nothing."

"Your disease was attended by a loss of memory," said the doctor. "The sight of your daughter, of your wife, of your friends, has restored it to you."

"And at whose house am I, then?"

"At a friend of M. Rudolph's," Germain hastened to say: "the change of air, it was thought, would be useful to you."

"Very well," whispered the doctor; and, addressing the superintendent, added, "Order the cab round to the garden door, so that he shall not be obliged to pass through the courts to go out at the main entrance."

Thus, as often happens in cases of madness, Morel had no recollection or consciousness of the alienation of mind with which he had been attacked. What remains to be told? Some moments afterward, leaning on his wife and daughter, and accompanied by a medical student, who, as a matter of precaution, was to accompany them to Paris, Morel got into the carriage, and left Bicetre, without suspecting that he had been confined there as a lunatic.

"You think this man is completely cured?" said Madame George to the doctor, who was conducting her to the principal entrance of Bicetre.

"I think so, madame, and I have expressly left him under the happy influence of this family meeting. I should have feared to separate them. I shall go and see him every day until his cure is perfectly established;

for, not only does he interest me very much, but he was particularly recommended to me, on his first entrance here, by the charge d'affaires of the Grand Duchy of Gerolstein."

Germain and his mother exchanged glances.

"I thank you, sir," said Madame George, "for the kindness with which you have allowed me to visit this fine establishment; and I congratulate myself at having witnessed a touching scene, which your knowledge and skill had foreseen and predicted."

"And I, madame, doubly congratulate myself upon the success which has restored so excellent a man to the arms of his family."

Some moments afterward, Madame George, Rigolette and Germain had left Bicetre, as well as the Pipelets.

Just as Dr. Herbin returned to the courts, he met one of the superior officers of the house, who said to him, "Ah! my dear M. Herbin, you cannot imagine what a scene I have just witnessed. For an observer like you it would have been an inexhaustible source of--"

"How then? What scene?"

"You know that we have here two women who are condemned to death--the mother and daughter--who are to be executed to-morrow?"

"Doubtless."

"Never in my life have I seen hardihood and unconcern like this mother's: she is an infernal woman."

"Is it not Widow Martial, who showed so much unblushing assurance at her trial?"

"The same."

"And what has she done more?"

"She demanded to be confined in the same cell with her daughter until the moment of her execution. They have granted her request. Her daughter, much less hardened than she is, appears to be softened as the fatal moment approaches, while the diabolical assurance of the widow augments still more, if such a thing were possible. Just now the venerable chaplain of the prison entered their cell to offer them the consolations of religion. The daughter was about to accept them, when her mother, without losing for a moment her usual coolness, attacked both her and the almoner with such frightful remarks that the venerable priest was obliged to leave the dungeon, after having in vain endeavored to address some holy words to this unmanageable woman."

"Upon the eve of mounting the scaffold! Such hardihood is truly infernal," said the doctor.

"Would not one say that this was one of the families pursued by a fatality? The father died upon the scaffold; one son is in the galleys; another, also condemned to death, has lately escaped. The eldest son, and two younger children only, have escaped this frightful contagion. However, this woman has sent for the eldest son, the sole honest man of this detestable race, to come to-morrow morning to receive her last wishes! What an interview!"

"Are you not curious to be present?"

"Frankly, no. You know my opinion concerning punishment by death, and I have no need of such a spectacle to confirm this opinion. If this horrible woman carries her unwavering firmness and assurance to the scaffold, what a sight for the people! what a deplorable example!"

"There is something singular in this double execution--the day has been fixed."

"How?"

"To-day is Mid-Lent."

"Well?"

"To-morrow the execution takes place at seven o'clock. Now the crowd of maskers, who will pass the night at the balls, will necessarily meet the mournful procession on their return to Paris; without speaking of the place of execution, the Barrière Saint Jacques, where will be heard, in the distance, the music at the surrounding taverns; for, to celebrate the last day of the carnival, they dance in the wine-shops until ten or eleven in the morning."

The next morning the sun rose clear and glorious. At four o'clock several pickets of infantry and cavalry surrounded and guarded the approaches of Bicetre. We will conduct the reader to the cell where we will find the widow and her daughter Calabash.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE TOILET.

At Bicetre, a gloomy corridor, lighted at intervals by grated windows, or kind of air-holes just above the level of the courtyard, leads to the condemned cell. This dungeon received its light only from a large wicket in the upper part of the door, which opened into the dark passage spoken of above. In this cell, with its damp and moldy walls, its floor paved with stones as cold as those of the sepulcher, were confined Widow Martial and her daughter Calabash. The sharp face of the convict's widow, stern and immovable, stood out in bold relief, like a marble mask, from the midst of

the obscurity which existed in the dungeon.

Deprived of the use of her hands, for under her black dress she wore a strait-jacket, she asked that her cap might be taken off, complaining of great heat in the head. Her gray hair fell disheveled upon her shoulders. Seated on the edge of the bed, her feet on the ground, she looked fixedly on her daughter, Calabash, who was separated from her by the width of the dungeon. She, half reclining, and also wearing a strait-jacket had her back against the wall. Her head was hanging on her breast, her eyes fixed, her respiration broken. Save a slight convulsive movement, which from time to time agitated her under jaw, her features appeared calm, but of livid paleness. At the further end of the dungeon, near the door, under the open wicket, a veteran with the ribbon of the Legion of Honor, with a rough and swarthy face, a bald head, and long gray mustachios, is seated on a chair. He ought never to lose sight of the condemned.

"It is very cold here! and yet my eyes burn; and then I am thirsty--always thirsty," said Calabash, at the end of a few moments. "Some water, if you please, sir."

The old soldier rose and took from a bench a tin pail of water, filled a tumbler, and gave her a drink.

After having drunk greedily, she said, "thank you, sir."

"Will you drink?" asked the soldier of the widow, who shook her head in the negative.

"What o'clock is it, sir?" said Calabash.

"It will soon be half-past four."

"In three hours!" resumed Calabash, with a sardonic and sinister smile, alluding to the time of her execution, "in three hours--" She dared not finish.

The widow shrugged her shoulders. Her daughter comprehended her thoughts, and replied, "You have more courage than I, mother, do you never falter--"

"Never."

"I know it well--I see it clearly. Your face is as tranquil as if you were seated by the fire of our kitchen, sewing. Oh! those good days are so far off--so far----"

"Parrot!"

"It is true; instead of resting there and thinking, without saying anything, I would rather talk--I would rather----"

"Shake off your thoughts, coward!"

"Even if it should be so, mother, every one has not your courage. I have

done all I could to imitate you. I have not listened to the priest, because you did not wish it. And yet I may have been wrong--for, in fine," added the condemned girl, shuddering, "_hereafter_--who knows? and _hereafter_ will be very soon."

"In three hours."

"How coldly you say that, mother! And yet it is true; we are here, both of us, not sick, not wishing to die, and yet in three hours----"

"In three hours you will have died like a true Martial. You will have seen black, that's all; be bold, daughter."

"It is not right for you to talk to your daughter in that way," said the old soldier, in a slow and grave tone; "you would have done much better to have allowed her to speak with the ordinary."

The widow shrugged her shoulders with savage contempt, and, without turning her head, she continued: "Courage, daughter; we will show them that women have more firmness than these men, with their priests--the cowards!"

"Commandant Leblon was the bravest of the third regiment of Chasseurs; I saw him covered with wounds in the breach of Saragossa, and he died making the sign of the cross," said the veteran.

"You were his chaplain, then?" demanded the widow, with a savage burst of laughter.

"I was his soldier," answered the veteran, mildly. "It was only to let you know that one can pray when about to die, without being a coward."

Calabash looked attentively at this man with the bronzed visage, a perfect type of the soldier of the Empire; a deep scar furrowed his left cheek, and was lost in his large mustache. The simple words of this veteran, whose features, wounds, and red ribbon announced calm and tried bravery, profoundly struck the widow's daughter.

She had refused the consolation of the priest, more from shame and fear of her mother, than from callousness. In her restless and dying thoughts, she compared the impious jesting of her mother with the piety of the soldier. Strong in this testimony, she thought she could listen without cowardice to those religious instincts which even intrepid men had obeyed.

"In truth," said she, with anguish, "why did I not wish to hear the priest? there is no weakness in that. Besides, it would keep off my thoughts, and then, hereafter, who knows?"

"Again!" said the widow, in a tone of withering scorn. "Time is wanting--it is a pity--you would be religious. The arrival of your brother Martial will finish your conversion. But he will not come; the honest man, the good son."

Just as the widow pronounced these last words the door of the prison

opened.

"Already!" cried Calabash with a convulsive start. "Oh! they have put the clock ahead! They have deceived us!"

"So much the better--if the watch of the executioner is too fast--your follies will not dishonor me."

"Madame," said the prison warder, with that kind of commiseration which forebodes death, "your son is here; will you see him?"

"Yes," answered the widow, without turning her head.

"Enter, sir," said the warder. Martial entered.

The veteran remained in the dungeon, the door of which was left open as a matter of precaution. Through the gloom of the corridor, half lighted by the increasing day and by a lamp, several soldiers were seen sitting or standing. Martial was as pale as his mother; his countenance expressed deep and profound anguish, his knees trembled under him. In spite of the crimes of this woman, in spite of the aversion that she had always shown for him, he had thought it a duty to obey her last wishes. As soon as he entered the dungeon, the widow cast on him a searching look, and said to him in a hollow and angry voice, as if to awaken in her son a feeling of revenge, "You see what they are going to do with your mother and your sister!"

"Ay! mother, it is frightful; but I warned you of it, alas!--I told you."

The widow bit her pale lips with rage; her son did not comprehend her; she resumed: "They are going to kill us, as they killed your father."

"Alas! I can do nothing--it is finished. Now, what would you have me do? Why did you not listen to me--you and sister? You would not have been here."

"Oh! it is so," answered the widow, with her habitual and savage irony; "you find it all right, do you?"

"Mother!"

"Now you are satisfied; you can say, without a lie, that your mother is dead; you shall no longer blush for her."

"If I were a bad son," answered Martial, quickly, shocked at the unjust harshness of his mother, "I should not be here."

"You came from curiosity."

"I come to obey you."

"Oh! if I had listened to you, Martial, instead of listening to my mother, I should not be here," cried Calabash, in a heart-rending voice, and yielding at length to her anguish and terror, which, until now (through the

influence of her mother), she had restrained. "It is your fault: I curse you, my mother!"

"She repents--she curses me! you must be delighted now!" said the widow to her son, with a burst of diabolical laughter.

Without replying to her, Martial approached Calabash, whose agony continued, and said to her, with compassion, "Poor sister! it is too late now."

"Never too late to be a coward!" cried the mother, with fury. "Oh! what a race! what a race! Happily Nicholas has escaped; happily François and Amandine will escape you. They have already the seeds of vice: poverty will cause them to grow!"

"Oh, Martial! watch well over them, or they will end like my mother and myself. They will also lose their heads," cried Calabash, uttering a hollow groan.

"He will do well to watch over them," cried the widow, vehemently; "vice and misery will be stronger than he, and some day they will avenge father, mother, and sister."

"Your horrible hope will not be realized, mother!" answered Martial, indignantly. "Neither they nor I shall ever more have misery to fear. La Louve saved the young girl whom Nicholas wished to drown, the relations of this girl have proposed to give us plenty of money, or less money and some lands in Algiers. We have preferred the land. There is some danger, but that suits us. To-morrow we leave with the children, and never return."

"Is what you say true?" asked the widow, in a tone of irritated surprise.

"I never told a falsehood."

"You do now, to drive me mad."

"Why? because the welfare of your children is secured?"

"Yes; of the wolfs cubs you would make lambs. The blood of your father, your sister, mine, will not be avenged."

"At this moment, do not talk thus."

"I have killed--they kill me. We are even."

"Mother, repentance."

The widow shouted with laughter.

"For thirty years I have lived in crime, and to repent for thirty years they give me three days, and death at the end of them. Do you think I have time? No, no; when my head falls, it will gnash its teeth with rage and hatred."

"Brother, help--take me from hence; they are coming," murmured Calabash, in a suffocating voice, for the poor creature began to be delirious.

"Will you hush?" said the widow, exasperated by the weakness of Calabash, "will you hush? Oh! the wretch! and she _my_ daughter! pah!"

"Mother! mother!" cried Martial, tortured by this horrible scene, "why did you send for me?"

"Because I thought to give you a heart and revenge: but who has not the one has not the other, coward!"

"My mother!"

"Coward, I say!"

At this moment a tramp of footsteps was heard in the corridor. The veteran looked at his watch, and stood up. The rising sun, dazzling and radiant, shot suddenly a golden beam of light through the grated window of the corridor opposite the door of the dungeon. This door was thrown open, and two keepers appeared, bringing two chairs; then the jailer came, and said to the widow, in an agitated voice, "Madame, it is time."

The widow stood up, impassible; Calabash uttered piercing screams. Four men entered. Three of them, roughly clad, held in their hands small coils of very fine but strong cord. The tallest of these four men, neatly dressed in black, wearing a round hat and a white cravat, handed a paper to the jailer. This man was the executioner. The paper was a receipt for two women fit to be guillotined. The executioner took possession of these two of God's creatures; from that time he was answerable.

To the frightful despair of Calabash had succeeded a helpless torpor. Two of the assistants were obliged to seat her on her bed, and to sustain her. Her jaws, clinched by convulsions, hardly allowed her to utter some unmeaning words; she rolled around in vacancy her dull and almost sightless eyes; her chin fell upon her breast, and without the assistance of the two deputies, her body would have sunk to the ground like an inert mass. Martial (after having for a long time embraced this unfortunate being) alarmed, not daring nor able to move a step, and as if fascinated by the scene, remained immovable. The brazen hardihood of the widow did not forsake her; with her head erect and thrown back, she assisted to take off the waistcoat, which impeded her movements. It fell to the ground, and she remained in her old dress of black woolen.

"Where must I place myself?" she asked in a firm voice.

"Have the kindness to seat yourself in one of these two chairs," said the executioner, pointing to them.

The door being left open, several of the keepers, the governor of the prison, and some privileged persons, were seen standing in the corridor. The widow walked with a firm and bold step to the place indicated, passing

near her daughter, when she stopped, and said in a voice slightly broken:

"Daughter, kiss me!"

At the voice, Calabash was aroused from her apathy, drew up on her seat, and with a gesture of malediction, she cried, "If there is eternal fire, descend into it, accursed."

"My child, embrace me!" said the widow again, making a step toward her daughter.

"Do not approach me! you have ruined me!" murmured the unfortunate, throwing out her hands as if to repulse her mother.

"Forgive me!"

"No, no!" said Calabash, in a convulsed voice; and this effort having exhausted her strength, she fell back, almost without consciousness, into the arms of the assistants.

A shade passed over the impassible face of the widow; for a moment her dry and burning eyes became moistened. At this instant she met the eyes of her son. After a moment's hesitation, and as if she yielded to the effect of an inward struggle, she said to him, "And you?"

Martial threw himself sobbing into the arms of his mother.

"Enough!" said the widow, overcoming her emotion, and disengaging herself from the embraces of her son. "He is waiting," she added, pointing to the executioner.

Then she walked rapidly toward the chair, where she resolutely seated herself. The spark of maternal sensibility, which had for a moment lighted up the dark recesses of this corrupted heart, was extinguished forever.

"Sir," said the veteran to Martial, approaching him with interest, "do not remain here. Come, come."

Martial, stupefied, with horror and alarm, mechanically followed the soldier. Two of the assistants had carried the wretched Calabash to the other chair; one of them sustained the almost lifeless body, while the other, by means of whip-cord, exceedingly fine but very strong, tied her hands behind her back, and also fastened her feet together by the ankles, allowing slack enough to enable her walk slowly. The executioner and his other assistant performed the same operation on the widow, whose features underwent no alteration; only from time to time she coughed slightly. When the condemned were thus prevented from offering any resistance, the executioner, drawing from his pocket a long pair of scissors, said to her with marked politeness, "Have the goodness to bend your head."

The widow obeyed, saying: "We are good customers; you have had my husband; now here are his wife and daughter."

Without replying, the executioner gathered in his left hand the long gray hair of the condemned, and commenced cutting it short--very short, particularly about the neck.

"This makes the third time that I have had my hair dressed in my lifetime," said the widow, with a horrible laugh: "the day of my first communion, when they put on my veil; the day of my marriage, when they put on my orange blossoms; and now to-day--the head-dress of death."

The executioner remained silent. The hair of the condemned being thick and coarse, the operation was so long in being performed, that Calabash's lay strewed upon the ground before her mother's was half finished.

"You do not know of what I am thinking?" said the widow, after having looked at her daughter again.

The executioner continued to keep silent. Nothing could be heard but the snipping of the scissors and the kind of rattling which from time to time escaped from the throat of Calabash. At this moment was seen in the corridor a priest of venerable appearance, who approached the governor, and spoke a few words to him in a low tone. The chaplain came to make a last effort to soften the heart of the widow.

"I think," resumed the widow at the end of some moments, and seeing that the executioner did not reply, "I think that at five years old, my daughter, whose head is to be cut off, was the handsomest child that I ever saw. She had flaxen hair and rosy cheeks. Then, who would have told me that,--" After a pause, she cried, with a burst of laughter, and an expression impossible to be described, "What a comedy is fate!"

At this moment the last locks of the condemned fell upon her shoulders.

"It is finished, madame," said the executioner, politely.

"Thank you. I recommend to you my son Nicholas," said the widow; "you will dress his hair some of these days." A keeper came and whispered a few words to her.

"No; I have already said no," answered she, roughly. The priest heard these words, raised his eyes toward heaven, clasped his hands, and disappeared.

"Madame, we are going to set out; will you take something?" said the executioner, obsequiously.

"Thank you; to-night I will take a drink of sawdust."

And the widow after this new sarcasm stood up erect. Although her step was firm and resolute, the executioner obligingly wished to assist her; she made a gesture of impatience and said, in a harsh and imperious tone:

"Do not touch me; I have a firm step and a good eye. On the scaffold you will see I have a good voice, and if I speak words of repentance."

And the widow, leaving the dungeon, escorted by the executioner and an assistant, entered the corridor. The two other assistants were obliged to carry Calabash in a chair; she was dying. After having traversed the whole length of the corridor, the funeral procession ascended the same staircase, which conducted to a court on the outside. The sun, with its warm and golden light, gilded the tops of the high white walls which surrounded the court, and strangely contrasted with the pure blue of the sky. The air was soft and balmy; never was a spring morning more smiling, more magnificent. In this court were seen a detachment of police, a cab, and a long, narrow vehicle, painted yellow, drawn by three post horses, which neighed gayly, shaking little bells on their harness. This vehicle was entered from behind like an omnibus. This was the cause of a last joke from the widow.

"The conductor will not say full?" said she, as she mounted the step as lightly as the cord which confined her ankles would allow.

Calabash, expiring, sustained by an assistant, was placed in the carriage opposite her mother, and the door was closed. The hackney-coachman had fallen asleep; the executioner shook him.

"Excuse me, citizen," said he, descending hastily from his seat; "but a night in Mid-Lent is rough. I had just taken to Vendanges de Bourgogne a load of maskers, who were singing, ' _La mØre Godichon_,' when you engaged me by the hour. I--"

"Enough. Follow this vehicle to the Boulevard St. Jacques."

"Excuse me, citizen. An hour ago I was going to the 'Vendanges;' now to the guillotine! That proves that, as the saying is, there are queer ups and downs in life!"

The two vehicles, preceded and followed by the gendarmes, left Bicetre and took the road to Paris.

* * * * *

We have presented the picture of the toilet of the condemned in all its frightful reality, because it seems to us that we can derive from it powerful arguments. Against punishment of death. Against the manner in which it is applied. Against the effects which must be expected from such an example given to the populace.

The toilet, although divested of that solemnity, at once imposing and religious, which ought, at least to surround all the acts of the highest punishment known to the laws, is the most impressive of all the ceremonies attending the execution of a criminal, and yet it is concealed from the multitude.

In Spain, on the contrary, the condemned remains exposed during three days in a " _chapelle ardente_;" his coffin is continually before his eyes; the priests say the prayers for the dying; the bells of the church night and day ring a funeral knell.

It will be conceived that this kind of initiation to death may alarm the most hardened criminals, and inspire with salutary terror the crowd which surrounds the "_chapelle mortuaire_."

Then the day of the execution is a day of public mourning; the bells of all the churches toll; the condemned is slowly conducted to the scaffold, with mournful and imposing pomp; his coffin is carried before him; the priests, walking at his side, chant the prayers for the dead; then comes the religious brotherhood; and, finally, the mendicant friars, asking from the crowd money for prayers for the repose of the culprit's soul. The crowd never remains deaf to this appeal. Without doubt, all this is frightful, but it is logical and imposing. It shows that they do not cut off from this world a creature of God, full of life and strength, as they would slaughter an ox. It causes the multitude to reflect (who always judge of the crime by the magnitude of the punishment) that homicide is a fearful offense, since its punishment disturbs, afflicts, and sets in commotion a whole city. Again, this dreadful spectacle may cause serious reflections, inspire salutary alarms; and that which is barbarous in this human sacrifice, is at least hidden by the awful majesty of its execution. But, we ask, the events taking place exactly as we have described them (and sometimes even _less seriously_), what kind of an example can it afford? Early in the morning, the condemned is bound and thrown into a closed carriage; the postilion whips up his horses, reaches the scaffold; the ax descends, and a head falls into a basket, in the midst of the most atrocious jeerings of the vilest of a vile populace! Finally, in a hasty and secret execution, where is the example? where is the terror? And then, as the execution takes place, as we may say, privately, in a byplace, with great precipitation, the whole town is ignorant of this bloody and solemn act; nothing announces that, on this day, they are _killing a man_; they laugh and sing at the theaters; the multitudes pass on, careless and indifferent. As it regards society, religion, and humanity, this judicial homicide, committed in the name of the _interests of all_, is, however, something which ought to be of importance to _all_. In fine, let us say it again, say it always, here is the sword, but where is the crown? Beside the punishment show the recompense; then only will the lesson be complete and fruitful. If, on the day following this morn of sorrow and of death, the people, who have seen the blood of a great criminal redden the scaffold, should see the truly virtuous man honored and rewarded, they would dread as much the punishment of the first, as they would ambitiously covet the triumphs of the last; terror hardly prevents crime, never does it inspire virtue. Does any one consider the effect of capital punishment on the criminals themselves? Either they brave it with reckless impudence; or, inanimate, they suffer it, half dead with terror; or they offer their heads with profound and sincere repentance.

Now the punishment is insufficient for those who defy it; useless for those who are already morally dead; excessive for those who repent with sincerity. Let us repeat it: society does not kill the murderer to cause him suffering, or to inflict the _lex talionis_; it kills him to prevent him from doing harm; it kills him that the example of his punishment may serve as a warning to murderers _to come._ We think that the punishment is barbarous, and that it does not sufficiently terrify. If this assertion is doubted, we will recall many proved facts of the deep horror expressed by

hardened criminals for solitary confinement. Is it not known that some have committed murders in order to be condemned to death, preferring this punishment to a cell? What, then, would be their horror, when _blindness_, joined to solitary confinement, would deprive them of the hope of escape--a hope which he preserves, and which he sometimes realizes, even in a dungeon and loaded with irons. And touching this matter, we also think that the abolishment of capital punishment will be one of the forced consequences of solitary confinement; the alarm which this punishment inspires the generation who at this moment people the prisons and the galleys, being such, that many among these incorrigibles prefer to incur the highest penalty known to the law, than imprisonment in a cell; then, doubtless, the punishment of death ought to be suppressed, in order to sweep away this last and frightful alternative.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

MARTIAL AND THE SLASHER.

Before we pursue our narrative, let us say a few words touching the recently established connection between the Slasher and Martial. As soon as Germain had left the prison, the Slasher, who easily proved that he had robbed himself, confessed to the judge the reason of this singular deceit, and was set at liberty after receiving a severe and just reproof from the magistrate. Not having then recovered Fleur-de-Marie, and wishing to recompense the Slasher (to whom he had already owed his life) for this new act of devotion, Rudolph, to crown the happiness of his rude _protogøe_, had lodged him in the mansion of the Rue Plumet, promising him to take him in his train when he returned to Germany. We have already said that the Slasher felt for Rudolph the instinctive, faithful attachment of a dog for his master. To live under the same roof with the prince; to see him sometimes; to await with impatience a new opportunity of sacrificing himself for his interests, were the limits of the ambition and happiness of the Slasher, who preferred a thousand times this situation, to money and the possession of the farm at Algiers which Rudolph had placed at his disposal. But when the prince had discovered his daughter, all was changed: notwithstanding his lively gratitude toward the man to whom he owed his life, he could not resolve to take with him to Germany this witness of Fleur-de-Marie's first shame. Determined in any other manner to satisfy the wishes of the Slasher, he sent for him for the last time, and told him that he expected a new service from his attachment. At these words, the Slasher's face brightened, but it soon became clouded when he learned that not; only must he not follow the prince to Germany, but that it was necessary for him to leave the hotel that very day. It is useless to speak of the brilliant compensations that Rudolph offered to the Slasher: the money that was designed for him--the deed for the farm in Algiers--anything more that he wished; all was at his disposal. The Slasher, cut to the heart, refused all; and, for the first time in his life, perhaps, this man shed tears. It had needed all the persuasion of Rudolph to induce him to accept his previous gifts. The next day the

prince sent for La Louve and Martial; and, without informing them that Fleur-de-Marie was his daughter, he asked them what he could do for them; all their wishes should be accomplished. Perceiving their hesitation, and remembering what Fleur-de-Marie had told him about the slightly uncivilized tastes of La Louve and her husband, he offered them either a considerable amount of money, or the half of this amount, and lands in the vicinity of the farm which he had bought for the Slasher. Both of them rugged, energetic, both endowed with good natural impulses, sympathized the better with each other, since they each had reasons to seek solitude--the one for her past life, the other for the crimes of his family. He was not deceived; Martial and La Louve accepted his offer with transport; then, having, through the intervention of Murphy, made the acquaintance of the Slasher, they mutually congratulated each other on the agreeable prospects before them in Algiers. Notwithstanding the deep sadness into which he was plunged; or, rather, in consequence of this sadness the Slasher, affected by the cordial advances of Martial and his wife, responded to them with warmth. In a short time a sincere friendship united the future colonists; persons of their temperament form very sudden attachments. La Louve and Martial, being unable, in spite of their kind attentions, to divert the melancholy of their new friend discontinued their efforts, trusting that the voyage, and the active employment of their future life, would change his thoughts; for, once in Algiers they would be obliged to turn their attention to the cultivation of the lands which had been bestowed upon them. These facts established, it will be understood that, informed of the painful interview that Martial was obliged to undergo in obedience to the last wishes of his mother, the Slasher had wished to accompany his new friend to the gate of Bicetre, where he awaited him in the coach which had brought them, and which took them back to Paris, after Martial, deeply agitated, had left the dungeon, where the terrible preparations for the execution of mother and sister were being made. The physiognomy of the Slasher was completely altered; the expression of boldness and of happiness which ordinarily characterized his manly face was replaced with sorrowful dejection: his voice, also had lost somewhat of its roughness. Grief, until now a stranger to him, had broken, prostrated his energetic nature. He looked at Martial with compassion.

"Cheer up," said the Slasher to him "you have done all that a brave fellow could do--it is all over, think of your wife, of those children whom you have prevented from following the bad example of their parents; and then, besides, this evening we shall have quitted Paris, never to return; and you will never again hear of that which afflicts you."

"It is all the same, do you see, Slasher. After all, it is my mother and my sister."

"But what would you--this has happened; and it's no use crying over spilled milk," said the Slasher, suppressing a sigh.

After a moment's silence, Martial said to him, cordially, "I, also, ought to console you, my poor fellow--always this melancholy."

"Always, Martial."

"Well, my wife and I confidently hope that, once away from Paris, it will be dissipated."

"Yes," said the Slasher, at the expiration of a few seconds, and hardly restraining a shudder, "if I leave Paris--"

"But we set out this evening."

"That is to say, _you_--you go this evening."

"And you, then, have you changed your intention recently?"

"No."

"Well, what then?"

The Slasher again remained silent; then he replied, struggling to preserve his calmness, "Hold, Martial; I know that you will laugh at me; but I wish to tell you all, so that, if anything should happen to me, this at least will prove that I was not deceived."

"What is it, then?"

"When M. Rudolph asked if it should be agreeable for us to go together to Algiers, and to be neighbors there, I did not wish to deceive either you or your wife. I told you what I had been."

"Let us speak no more about that. You have undergone your punishment--you are as good as the best of us. But I can conceive that, like me, you would prefer to live abroad, thanks to our generous protector, than to remain here, where, no matter how honest, and how easy in our circumstances we may be, we shall always be reproached, you for the crime which you have expiated, and which you still regret, and I for the crimes of my parents, for which I am not responsible. But, between us, the past is gone, and gone forever. Be tranquilized; we rely upon you, as you may rely upon us."

"Between us, perhaps, the past will be forgotten; but, as I said to M. Rudolph, Martial, there is a Providence above, and I have killed a man."

"It is a great misfortune; but at the time you did not know what you were doing--you were not yourself; and, besides, you have saved the lives of others, and that ought to count in your favor."

"Listen, Martial, I have now spoken to you of my unhappiness, because, formerly, I often had a dream, in which I saw the sergeant, whom I killed; for a long time I have not had this dream, and last night I dreamed it"

"It was chance."

"No, this forebodes that some misfortune will happen to me this day."

"You are unreasonable, my good comrade."

"I have a presentiment that I shall never quit Paris."

"Once more, you have not common sense. Your sorrow at the thought of quitting our benefactor, the knowledge that you were to accompany me to Bicetre, where so painful an interview awaited me; all this agitated you last night; hence naturally, your dream returned to you."

The Slasher sadly shook his head.

"It has returned to me on the night before the departure of M. Rudolph, for it is today that he goes."

"Today?"

"Yes; yesterday I sent a messenger to his hotel, not daring to go there myself; he has forbidden it. They told him that the prince would set out this morning, at eleven o'clock, by the Barrière Charenton. Thus, when we shall have arrived in Paris, I will post myself there, to endeavor to see him for this last time! the last!"

"He appears so good that I comprehend how well you must love him."

"Love him!" said the Slasher, with deep and passionate emotion; oh, yes! Do you understand, Martial! to sleep on the ground--to eat black bread--to be his dog; but to be where he is, I ask nothing more--that was too much--he did not wish it."

"He has been so generous to you!"

"It is not that which makes me love him so much--it is because he said to me that I had a heart and honor! yes, and at a time when I was as ferocious as a wild beast, when I despised myself as the vilest of the vile, he made me comprehend that there was still some good in me, since, my punishment inflicted, I had repented, and after having suffered the utmost extremity of want without being guilty of theft, I had industriously labored to gain an honest livelihood: wishing to injure no one, although every one looked upon me as a finished scoundrel, which was not very encouraging. It is true, in most instances, all that is necessary to keep one in the right path are words of encouragement and kindness. Is it not so, Martial? So when M. Rudolph said these words to me, my heart beat high and proudly. Since then I would go through fire to do a good action. Oh! that the opportunity might offer! you would see--and to whom the thanks? the thanks to M. Rudolph."

"Truly, since you are a thousand times better than you used to be, you should not have such evil presentiments. Your dream signifies nothing."

"Well, we shall see. I do not purposely search for a misfortune; there can be for me no greater one than that which has already happened; never to see him more. M. Rudolph! I who thought never more to quit him. In my sphere, I would have been at his service, body and soul, always ready. Well, perhaps he is wrong. You know, Martial, that I am but an earth-worm in comparison

with him; well, sometimes it happens that the most insignificant can be useful to the most powerful. If that should be the case, I would never pardon him for depriving himself of my services."

"Who knows? one day, perhaps, he will recall you."

"Oh, no! he said to me, 'My good fellow, you must promise me that you will never endeavor to see me again; by so doing, you will render me a service.' You understand, Martial, I have promised; on the honor of a man, I will keep my word; but it is hard."

"Once at our destination, you will forget, by degrees, your sorrow. We will work, we will live retired and tranquil, like good farmers, except occasionally trying our skill, as marksmen, on the Arabs. Ah! there La Louve will help us."

"If it should come to blows, I am at home there, Martial," said the Slasher, slightly animated. I am unmarried, and I have been a trooper."

"And I a poacher!"

"But you--you have a wife, and these two children whom you have adopted. As for me, I have nothing but my hide, and since it can no longer serve as a screen for M. Rudolph, I have no regard for it. So, if we should be obliged to give them their change, it's my affair."

"Ah! we'll both have something to do with it."

"No; I alone--thunder! leave the Bedouins to me."

"Good; I would rather hear you speak thus than you did a short time since. Come, Slasher, we will be true brothers, and you can converse with me of your sorrow, if it endures, for I have my own. The recollection of this day will last all my life. One cannot see his mother, his sister, as I have seen mine, without forever bearing it in remembrance. Our situations are so similar that it is good for us to be together. We will not fear to look danger in the face; well, we will be half farmers, half soldiers. If we can start any game, we will hunt. If you wish to live alone, you can do so, and we will be near neighbors: if otherwise, we will all live together. We will bring up the children like honest people, and you shall be, almost, their uncle, while we will be brothers. How does it suit you?" said Martial, offering his hand to the Slasher.

"It suits me well, my good Martial; and then, sorrow shall kill me or I will kill it, as the saying is."

"It will not kill you--we shall grow old in our wilderness, and every night we will say, brother, _thanks_ to M. Rudolph--that shall be our prayer for him."

"Martial, you put balsam on my wound."

"Good; this foolish dream, you will think no more of it, I hope?"

"I will endeavor."

"Ah! well, you will call for us at four o'clock? the diligence starts at five."

"It is agreed upon. But here we are in Paris; I will stop the coach, and go on foot to the Barrière Charenton; I will await M. Rudolph, to see him pass."

The carriage stopped, and the Slasher got out.

"Don't forget, at four o'clock, my good comrade," said Martial: "at four o'clock!"

The Slasher had forgotten that it was the morning after Mid-Lent. So he was much surprised at the spectacle, at the same time fantastic and hideous, which was presented to his view when he walked through a part of the exterior boulevard which he crossed on his way to the Barridre Charenton.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE HAND OF HEAVEN.

The Slasher in a few moments was carried along, in spite of himself, by a dense crowd, a popular torrent, which, descending from the taverns of the Faubourg de la Glacière, collected around the approaches to the Barrière, to pour out afterward on the Boulevard Saint Jacques, where the execution was to take place. Although it was broad daylight, yet still could be heard at a distance the resounding music of the orchestras of the drinking dens, where, above all, could be distinguished the sonorous vibrations of the cornets-à-piston.

It needs the pencil of Callot, or Rembrandt, or of Goya to portray the bizarre, hideous, almost fantastical appearance of this multitude. Almost all, men, women, children, were dressed in old masquerading costumes; those who had not been able to obtain this luxury had fastened on their clothes old rags, of flaunting colors; some young men were attired in women's apparel, torn and soiled with mud; all these faces, haggard from debauch and vice, bloated by intoxication, sparkled with savage joy, in thinking that, after a night of drunken orgies, they were going to see the two women put to death, for whom the scaffold was raised. The scum of the population of Paris, an immense mob, was composed of bandits and abandoned women, who demand each day from crime their daily bread, and who each night return well filled to their dens. The exterior boulevard being very contracted at this place, the closely-packed crowd entirely blocked up the passageway. In spite of his athletic strength, the Slasher was obliged to remain almost immovable in the midst of this compact mass; he submitted. The prince, leaving the Rue Plumet at ten o'clock, as they had told him, would not

leave the Barrière Charenton until about eleven, and it was not yet seven. Although formerly he had associated with the degraded classes to which this mob belonged, the Slasher, on again finding himself among them, felt invincible disgust. Crowded, by the reflux of the mob, against the wall of one of the wine shops, which swarm on these boulevards, through the open window from whence escaped the deafening sound of a brass band, the Slasher saw, against his will, a strange spectacle. In a long low room (one end of which was occupied by the musicians), surrounded by benches and tables covered with the remains of a repast, broken plates, and overturned bottles, a dozen men and women disguised, half drunk, were dancing *La Chahut*—a dance which was never performed except at the end of the *ball*, when the municipal guards had retired. Among the depraved couples who figured in the revel, the Slasher remarked two who won applause above all by the disgusting immodesty of their postures, gestures, and words. The first couple were composed of a man nearly disguised as a bear, by means of a waistcoat and trousers of black sheepskin. The head of the animal, doubtless too heavy to carry, had been replaced by a kind of hood of long hair, which entirely covered the face; two holes near the eyes, and a large slit over the mouth, allowed him to see, speak, and breathe. This masked man, one of the prisoners who had escaped from La Force (among whom were also Barbillon and the two murderers arrested at the *tapis-franc* at the commencement of this story), was Nicholas Martial, the son and brother of the women for whom the scaffold was erected close at hand. Dragged into this act of inhuman insensibility by one of his companions, a formidable ruffian, this wretch dared, with the aid of his disguise, to yield himself to the last joys of the carnival. The woman with whom he danced was dressed as a sutler, with a leathern cap rather the worse for wear, the ribbons torn, a kind of jacket of faded red cloth, ornamented with three rows of brass buttons, hussar-fashion; a green petticoat and pantaloons of white calico; her black hair fell in disorder on her face; her ghastly and livid features expressed impudence and effrontery. The *vis-à-vis* of these dancers were not less vile. The man of very tall stature, disguised as Robert Macaire, had daubed his bony face with soot in such a manner that he was not recognizable; besides a large band covered his left eye, and the dead white of the right one, standing out in relief with the black face, made it still more hideous. The lower part of the visage of Skeleton (doubtless he has been recognized) disappeared entirely in a high cravat made of an old red shawl. He wore, according to the tradition, a gray hat, rasped, flattened, dirty, and without a crown; a green coat in tatters; madder-colored pantaloons, patched in a thousand places, and tied around the ankles with twine; this assassin, overdoing the most grotesque and most impudent positions of the *Chahut*, now to the right, now to the left, backward and forward, with his long limbs hard as iron, folded and unfolded them with so much vigor and elasticity, that one would have said they were hung on springs. Worthy corypheus of this Saturnalian, his partner, a tall, brazen creature dressed as a *døbardeur* wearing a cap stuck on a powdered wig with a long tail, had on a vest and trousers of green velvet, fastened around her waist by an orange scarf, whose long ends floated behind. A fat, masculine-looking woman, the Ogress of the *tapis-franc*, seated on one of the benches, held on her lap the plaid cloaks of this creature and the sutler, while they danced with their worthy companions. Among the other dancers was remarked a little cripple dressed as a devil with the aid of a black knit guernsey, much too large for him, red drawers, and a horrible

grinning green mask. Notwithstanding his infirmity, this little monster was of surprising agility; his precocious depravity reached, if it did not surpass, that of his frightful companions, and he gamboled away with equal effrontery opposite his partner, a fat woman disguised as a shepherdess, who excited still more the impudence of her partner by her shouts of laughter.

No charge being brought against Tortillard, and Bras-Rouge having been provisionally left in prison, the child, on the demand of his father, had been reclaimed by Micou the receiver.

As secondary figures of the picture which we have endeavored to paint, let the reader imagine all that is lowest, most shameless, and most monstrous in this idle, reckless, rapacious, sanguinary debauch, which shows itself more hostile to social order, and to which we have wished to call the attention of reflecting persons on terminating this recital. May this last horrible scene symbolize the imminent peril which continually menaces society! Yes, let one reflect that the cohesion, the dreaded increase of this race of robbers and murderers is a kind of living protest against the defects of restraining laws, and, above all, against the absence of preventive measures, of provident legislation, of preservative institutions, destined to overlook and guard from infancy this crowd of unfortunates, abandoned or perverted by frightful examples. Once more, these disinherited beings, made neither better nor worse than other creatures, do not become thus incurably corrupted but in the filth of misery, ignorance, and brutality, where they crawl into existence. Still more excited by the laughter, by the bravos of the crowd collected at the windows, the actors of the abominable orgies which we now relate shouted to the orchestra to play a last *galop*. The musicians, delighted at the prospect of a termination to their labors, yielded to the general wish, and played with energy a lively tune. At the vibrating sounds of the brazen instruments, the excitement increased, the dancers appeared to be seized with a sort of frenzy, and, following Skeleton, and his partner, commenced a *ronde infernale*, uttering savage shouts. A thick dust, raised by these furious shufflings, arose from the floor, and cast a kind of red cloud around this whirlwind of men and women, who turned with giddy rapidity. Soon--for these heads excited by wine, by the rapid motion, by their own cries, it was no longer inebriety--it was delirium, it was frenzy; room was wanting.

Skeleton cried with a breathless voice, "Clear the door! We are going out--up on the boulevard."

"Yes, yes!" cried the dense crowd at the windows, "a *galop* to the Barrière Saint Jacques!"

"It will soon be time for them to shorten the two motts!"

"The executioner throws a double ace; it is *low!*"

"Accompanied by the French horn!"

"We will dance the cotillon by the guillotine!"

"Go ahead of the women without any head!" cried Tortillard.

"It will enliven the condemned."

"I invite the widow."

"I invite the daughter."

"That will make Jack Ketch gay."

"He will dance La Chahut in his shop with customers."

"Death to the nobles. Long live the leary coves and nailers!" cried Skeleton, in a roar.

These jests, and cannibal threats, accompanied by vulgar songs, cries, whistlings, shouts, were augmented still more when the band had made, by its impetuous violence, a large opening through the middle of this compact crowd. Then it was a frightful pell-mell; then were heard howlings, imprecations, and bursts of mad laughter, which no longer appeared human.

The tumult was suddenly carried to its height by two new incidents.

The vehicle containing the condemned, accompanied by its escort of cavalry, appeared in the distance at the corner of the boulevard; then all the mob rushed in this direction, uttering a howl of ferocious satisfaction.

At this moment, also, the crowd was met by a courier coming from the Boulevard des Invalides, and galloping toward the Barrière de Charenton. He was dressed in a light blue jacket, with a yellow collar, laced with silver on all the seams; but as a sign of deep mourning, he wore black breeches, with heavy boots; his cap, also, bordered with silver was surrounded with a crape. In fine, on the horses blinkers were, in relief, the sovereign arms of Gerolstein.

The courier walked his horse; but, his progress becoming more and more embarrassed, was almost obliged to stop when he found himself in the midst of the crowd of which we have spoken. Although he cried "Take care!" and guided his horse with the greatest precaution, cries, threats, abuses, soon arose against him.

"Does he want to get on our backs with his camel, this fellow?"

"A silver door-plate on his body!" cried Tortillard, under his green mask with its red tongue.

"If he gives us any cheek, we'll put him on his feet."

"And we'll cut off the jingles of his jacket to melt them," said Nicholas.

"And we'll rip you open if you are not satisfied, dirty footman," added Skeleton, addressing the courier, and seizing the bridle of his horse, for

the crowd had become so dense that the bandit had relinquished his project of dancing to the barrier.

The courier, a vigorous and resolute man, said to Skeleton, raising the handle of his whip, "If you do not let go the bridle of my horse, I will cut you across the face."

"You, you pitiful scoundrel?"

"Yes; I am walking my horse; I cry 'Take care!' you have no right to stop me. The carriage of my lord follows me. I already hear the cracking of the whips. Let me pass."

"Your lord?" said Skeleton. "What is your lord to me? I will knock him down if it pleases me. I never have stabbed a lord: this gives me a desire to do it."

"There are no more lords--Hooraw for the Revolution!" cried Tortillard, and humming the lines of the Parisienne:

"Onward! on! upon their cannon!"

he caught hold of one of the courier's boots, and bearing with all his weight, made him shake in his seat. A blow with the butt of his whip on the head of Tortillard paid him for his audacity. But immediately the enraged mob threw themselves upon the courier; he dashed the spurs into the sides of his horse, and endeavored to disengage himself, but could not succeed; neither was he able to draw his hunting-knife. Dismounted, thrown backward, amid their cries and enraged shouts, he would have been killed, had it not been for the arrival of Rudolph's carriage, which diverted the attention of these wretches.

For some time the prince's coupø, drawn by four post-horses, went only at a walk, and one of the two footmen, in mourning (on account of the Countess M'Gregor's death) seated behind, had prudently descended, and stood near one of the doors, the carriage being a very low one. The postilions cried, "Look out!" and advanced with caution. Rudolph, as well as his daughter, was dressed in deep mourning; holding one of her hands, he looked at her with unspeakable happiness; the sweet, charming face of Fleur-de-Marie appeared to advantage in her little black crape bonnet, which set off her fair complexion and the brilliant tints of her beautiful flaxen hair; one would have said that the azure of this fine day was reflected in her large eyes, which never had been of a softer and more transparent blue. Although her sweet smiling face expressed calmness and happiness, yet, when she looked at her father, a shade of melancholy, sometimes even of indefinable sadness, cast this shadow on the features of Fleur-de-Marie, when the eyes of her father were turned away.

"You are displeased at my calling you so early this morning, and for having advanced the moment of departure?" said Rudolph, smiling.

"Oh, no! father dear--the morning is so beautiful!"

"That was my thought; and our day's journey will be better divided by leaving early, and you will be less fatigued. Murphy, my aids-de-camp, and the carriage with your women, will join us at our first stopping-place, where you will repose."

"Dear father, it is I only of whom you are always thinking."

"Yes, darling, it is impossible for me to have any other thought," said the prince, smiling; then he added, with a burst of tenderness, "Oh! I love you so much--I love you so much--your forehead--quick."

Fleur-de-Marie leaned toward her father, and Rudolph kissed her beautiful forehead.

It was at this moment that the carriage, approaching the crowd, had lessened its speed. Rudolph, much astonished let down the window, and said in German to the foot-man who stood near the door, "Well, Franz, what is the matter? what is this tumult?"

"There is such a crowd that the horses cannot your highness."

"And what is the reason of the crowd?"

"I have just heard that there is an execution about to take place, your highness."

"Oh! this is frightful!" cried Rudolph, throwing himself back in the carriage.

"What is the matter, father?" said Fleur-de-Marie, with anxiety.

"Nothing--nothing, my child."

"But these threatening cries--do you hear? they approach. What is that?"

"Franz, order the postilions to turn and go to Charenton by another road, whatever it may be," said Rudolph.

"It is too late, your highness! we are in the crowd. They have stopped the horses. Some ill-looking people--" The footman could not say another word. The crowd, exasperated by the sanguinary shouts of Skeleton and Nicholas, suddenly surrounded the carriage. In spite of the efforts and threats of the postilions, the horses were stopped, and Rudolph saw himself surrounded on all sides by horrible, threatening, and furious faces: pre-eminent among all, from his great height, was Skeleton, who advanced to the carriage door.

"Father, take care!" cried Fleur-de-Marie, throwing her arms around Rudolph's neck.

"Is it you, then, who are the lord?" said the Skeleton, thrusting his hideous head into the carriage.

At this insolence, Rudolph would have given way to the natural violence of his character, had it not been for the presence of his daughter; but he restrained himself, and answered coolly, "What do you want? Why do you stop my carriage?"

"Because it pleases us," said Skeleton, placing his bony hands on the door. "Every one in his turn; yesterday you trampled on the poor man; today the poor man will trample on you, if you stir."

"Father, we are lost!" murmured Fleur-de-Marie in a low voice.

"Compose yourself--I comprehend," said the prince; "it is the last day of the carnival. These people are drunk. I will soon get rid of them."

"We must make him get out, and his mott also," cried Nicholas. "Why should they trample on poor folks?"

"You appear to be drunk, and doubtless have a desire to drink more," said Rudolph, taking a purse from his pocket. "Here, this is for you; do not detain my carriage any longer." And he threw out his purse. Tortillard caught it.

"Exactly; you are going a journey; your pockets must be well lined, so hand out some more money or I will kill you. I have nothing to risk. I ask you for your money or your life in broad daylight. It is a rare old game!" said Skeleton, completely intoxicated with wine and rage; and he roughly opened the door. The patience of Rudolph was exhausted; uneasy for Fleur-de-Marie, whose alarm increased at each moment, and thinking that a decided stand would overawe this wretch, whom he thought intoxicated, he sprang from his carriage to seize Skeleton by the throat. At first the latter drew back quickly, taking from his pocket a long knife; then he threw himself upon Rudolph. Fleur-de-Marie, seeing the poniard of the villain raised against her father, uttered a piercing scream, sprang out of the carriage, and clasped her arms around him. Without the aid of the Slasher, they would have perished. He, at the commencement of the affray, having recognized the livery of the prince, had succeeded, after superhuman efforts, in approaching the Skeleton. At the moment that he threatened the prince with his knife, the Slasher with one hand grasped the arm of the villain, and with the other seized him by the throat, and gave him the trip backward. Although taken by surprise, Skeleton turned, recognized the Slasher, and cried, "Blue Cap of La Force! this time I kill you;" and throwing himself furiously on the Slasher, he plunged the knife into his breast.

The Slasher staggered, but did not fall; the crowd supported him.

"The guard! here is the guard!" cried several voices.

At these words, at sight of the assassination of the Slasher, the dense crowd, fearing to be compromised in the murder, dispersed as by enchantment, and fled in all directions. When the guard arrived, guided by the courier, who had succeeded in making his escape when the mob had abandoned him to surround the carriage, there only remained on the mournful scene Rudolph, his daughter, and the Slasher covered with blood. The two

footmen had seated him on the ground, with his back against a tree. All this had passed a thousand times more rapidly than it is possible to write it, at some steps from the wine shop whence had issued Skeleton and his band. The prince, pale and agitated, supported the fainting Fleur-de-Marie in his arms, while the postilions readjusted the traces, which had been injured.

"Quick!" said the prince to his people, who were occupied in assisting the Slasher. "Carry this unfortunate man into this tavern. And you," added he, addressing his courier, "get on the box, and drive with all speed to the hotel for Dr. David. He was not to leave before eleven o'clock: you will find him there."

Some minutes afterward, the carriage was rapidly driven off, and the two domestics carried the Slasher into the saloon where the orgies had taken place, and where still remained some of the women who had figured in it.

"My poor child," said Rudolph to his daughter, "I will lead you to a chamber in this house, and you will await me there; for I cannot abandon solely to the care of my people this courageous man, who has once more saved my life."

"Oh! father, I entreat you, do not leave me!" cried Fleur-de-Marie with alarm, clinging to the arm of Rudolph. "Do not leave me alone. I would die with fear. I will go where you go--"

"But this is a frightful sight!"

"But, thanks to this man, you live for me, father; at least, permit me to unite with you in thanking and consoling him."

The perplexity of the prince was great; his daughter seemed so much alarmed at remaining alone, that he was obliged to allow her to accompany him to the room where the Slasher had been carried. The master of the tavern, assisted by several of the women who had remained (among whom was the Ogress of the White Rabbit), had in haste laid the wounded man upon a mattress, and then stanching his wound with napkins. The Slasher had just opened his eyes, when Rudolph entered. At the sight of the prince, his countenance of deathlike paleness, brightened up a little; he smiled painfully, and said to him, in a feeble voice:

"Ah! M. Rudolph! how fortunate it was that I was at hand."

"Brave and devoted--as always," said the prince to him in a mournful voice; "you save me again!"

"I was going to the BarriŁre de Charenton--to see you depart--happily--I was stopped here by the crowd--besides, this was to happen to me--I said so to Martial--I had a presentiment."

"A presentiment?"

"Yes, M. Rudolph--the dream of the sergent--last night I had it--"

"Forget these ideas. Hope; your wound will not be mortal."

"Oh! yes--Bones has struck home. Never mind, I was right--to say to Martial--that an earthworm like me could sometimes be--useful--to a great lord like you---"

"But it is life--life!--that I owe you again."

"We are quits, M. Rudolph. You told me that I had a heart and honor. These words--Oh! I suffocate, without you--command--do me the honor--of--your hand!--I feel that I am going---"

"No, it is impossible!" cried the prince, bending over the Slasher, and pressing in his hands the icy fingers of the dying man. "No; you will live--you will live!"

"M. Rudolph--do you see that there is something-up there!--I killed--with a _slash_ myself!" said the Slasher, in a voice more and more feeble and indistinct.

At this moment his eyes were fixed on Fleur-de-Marie, whom he had not yet perceived. Astonishment was painted on his dying face, he started, and said, "Oh! La Goualeuse."

"Yes, she is my daughter. She blesses you for having preserved her father."

"She--your daughter! here--that reminds me of our acquaintance--M. Rudolph--and the--blows with the fists--at the end--but--this--blow with the knife--will be also--the blow--of the end. I have _slashed_--I am _slashed_--it is fair play!"

Then he uttered a deep sigh, his head falling backward--he was dead!

The noise of horses resounded without; the carriage of Rudolph had met that of Murphy and David, who, in their eagerness to rejoin the prince, had hastened their departure. David and the squire entered.

"David," said Rudolph, wiping away his tears, and pointing to the Slasher, "is there no hope?"

"None, your highness," said the doctor, after a minute's examination. During this minute, a mute but frightful scene passed between Fleur-de-Marie and the Ogress, which Rudolph had not noticed. When the Slasher pronounced in a low tone the name of La Goualeuse, the Ogress raising her head, had quickly seen Fleur-de-Marie. Already the horrible woman had recognized Rudolph in the person whom they called his highness. He called La Goualeuse his daughter. Such a transformation stupefied the Ogress, who kept her staring eyes obstinately fixed on her former victim.

Fleur-de-Marie, pale and alarmed, seemed fascinated by this look. The death of the Slasher, the unexpected appearance of the Ogress, who had just awakened more grievously than ever the remembrance of her former

degradation, seemed to her of mournful presage. From this moment, Fleur-de-Marie was struck with one of those presentiments which often have, on characters like hers, an irresistible influence.

* * * * *

A short time after these sad events, Rudolph and his daughter had left Paris forever.

EPILOGUE.

GEROLSTEIN.

CHAPTER I.

PRINCE HENRY D'HERKAUSEN-OLDENZAAL TO COUNT MAXIMILIAN KAMINETN.

"OLDENZAAL, August 23d, 1841.

I have just returned from Gerolstein, where I passed three months with the grand duke and his family. I expected to have found a letter announcing your arrival at Oldenzaal, my dear Maximilian. Imagine my grief and surprise, when I understood that you would be detained in Hungary several weeks longer. I have not been able to write to you for four months, not knowing how to direct my letters to you, thanks to your original and adventurous manner of traveling; and yet you had, nevertheless, seriously promised me at Vienna, at the moment of our separation, that you would be at Oldenzaal the first of August. I must, then, renounce the pleasure of seeing you; and never had I more desire to pour out my heart into yours, my good Maximilian, my oldest friend; for though we are both still young, our friendship is old--it dates from our infancy. What shall I say to you?

Within three months a great revolution has taken place in me. I have reached one of those moments which decide a man's fate. Judge if I do not want your presence, your advice. But you will not fail me much longer; whatever concerns detain you in Hungary, you will come, Maximilian; you must come, I conjure, for I shall, indeed, need the most earnest consolation, and I cannot go to you. My father, whose health becomes more and more feeble, has recalled me from Gerolstein. He grows weaker every day. It is impossible for me to leave him. I have so much to tell you, that I shall be prolix, for I have to recount to you the most painful, the most romantic incident of my life. Strange and sad chance! during this period we are fatally distant from each other; we inseparables, we brothers, both of us the most fervent apostles of thrice holy friendship, we, who were so proud of proving that the Cazlas and Posa of our Schiller are not

idealities, and that, like those divine creations of the great poet, we know how to taste the sweet delights of a tender and mutual attachment! Oh, my friend, why were you not there, why were you not there! For three months my heart has been overflowing with emotions at the same time inexpressibly sweet and sad. And I was alone; I am alone now. Pity me; you, who know my sensibility, at times so fancifully expansive; you, who have often seen my eyes moistened with tears at the simple recital of a generous action, at the simple view of a beautiful sunset, or in a quiet and starry summer night. You remember the past year, during our excursion to the Ruins of Oppenfeld--the borders of the great lake--our silent reveries during that magnificent evening, so calm, so poetical, so serene. Strange contrast! it was three days before that bloody duel, in which I would not take you for my second, for I should have suffered too much for you if I had been wounded under your eyes--that duel, for a quarrel at play, in which my second unfortunately killed that young Frenchman, the Viscount St. Rømy. Apropos, do you know what has become of that dangerous siren St. Rømy brought to Oppenfeld, and whose name was, I think, Cecily David? You will smile with pity, my friend, to see me wander thus among these vague remembrances of the past, instead of proceeding to the grave confessions which I have announced to you; it is because, in spite of myself, I recoil from these confessions. I know your severity; I am afraid of being scolded, yes, scolded, because, instead of having acted with reflection, with wisdom (alas for the wisdom of one-and-twenty!), I have acted foolishly, or, rather, I have not acted at all; I have suffered myself to be borne along blindly on the current which carried me forward. It is only since my return from Gerolstein that I have, so to speak, awakened from the enchanting vision in which I have been cradled for the last three months, and this waking is sad. Come then, my friend, good Maximilian, I assume my best courage. Hear me with indulgence. I begin by casting down my eyes; I dare not look at you, for as you read these lines your features will become so grave, so severe. Stoical man! Having obtained leave of absence for six months, I left Vienna, and remained here some time with my father; his health was then good, and he advised me to go and visit my excellent aunt, Princess Juliana, the superior of the Abbey of Gerolstein. I have told you, I believe, my friend, that my grandmother was cousin-german of the grandfather of the present grand duke; and that the latter, Gustavus Rudolph, on account of this relationship, has always treated my father and myself very kindly, very affectionately, as cousins. You know also, I believe, that during a very long journey which the prince recently made into France he gave to my father the charge of the government of the grand duchy.

You will believe that it is not from any pride, my friend, that I mention these circumstances to you; it is only by way of explanation of the causes of the extreme intimacy in which I live with the grand duke and his family during my stay at Gerolstein. You recollect that last year, during our journey on the banks of the Rhine, we were informed that the prince had found in France, and had married in extremis, the Countess M'Gregor, in order to legitimize the birth of a daughter, whom he had by her in consequence of an early secret marriage, which was afterward broken, from some illegality in the ceremony, and because it had been contracted against the will of the reigning grand duke. This young daughter, so solemnly acknowledged, is that charming Princess Amelia, [Footnote: As the name of

Marie recalled to Rudolph and his daughter such sad recollections, he had given her the name of Amelia, after his mother.] of whom Lord Dudley, who saw her at Gerolstein about a year since, spoke to us so often at Vienna last winter. You recollect we accused him of exaggeration. Strange chance! If any one had then told me--But though you have undoubtedly now almost divined my secret, let me follow the march of events without interruption. The Convent of Saint Hermangilda, of which my aunt is the abbess, is hardly a quarter of a league distant from Gerolstein, for the abbey gardens border on the suburbs of the city. A charming house, completely isolated from the cloister, had been placed at my disposition by my aunt, who loves me, as you know, with a maternal tenderness. The day of my arrival she informed me that there was the next day to be a solemn reception and court ceremony; the grand duke on that day was to make the official announcement of his approaching marriage with the Marchioness d'Harville, who had recently arrived at Gerolstein, accompanied by her father, Count Orbigny. [Footnote: The reader is reminded, in order to maintain the probability of this narrative, that the last Princess of Courtland, a lady as remarkable for the singular superiority of her mind as for the charm of her character, and the admirable goodness of her heart, was Mademoiselle de Medeur.] Some blame the prince for not having sought a sovereign alliance in his marriage (the grand duchess, the former wife of the prince, belonged to the house of Bavaria): others, on the contrary, and my aunt is of the number of these, congratulate him for having preferred an amiable young lady, whom he adores, and who belongs to the highest nobility of France, to considerations of ambition. You know, moreover, my friend, that my aunt having always entertained for the Grand Duke Rudolph the most profound attachment, she can appreciate, better than any one else, the eminent qualities of the prince.

"My dear child," said she to me, on occasion of this solemn reception, which I was to attend the day after my arrival, "my dear child, the most remarkable part of this _fCete_ the _Pearl of Gerolstein_."

"What do you mean, my dear aunt?"

"The Princess Amelia."

"The daughter of the grand-duke? Lord Dudley told us about her at Vienna. He spoke of her with an enthusiasm which we called poetical exaggeration."

"At my age, with my character, and in my position," replied my aunt, "one is not easily excited; and you will believe my judgment to be impartial, my dear child. Indeed, I assure you, that in my whole life I never knew anything so enchanting as the Princess Amelia. I might speak to you of her angelic beauty, if she were not endowed with an inexpressible charm which is superior even to her beauty. Figure to yourself candor with dignity, and grace in modesty. From the first day in which the grand-duke presented me to her, I felt for this young princess an involuntary sympathy. Nor am I alone in this opinion. The Archduchess Sophia has been at Gerolstein some days; she is the proudest and most haughty princess whom I know."

"Very true, my aunt, her irony is terrible; few persons escape her biting pleasantries. At Vienna she was dreaded like the fire. Can the Princess

Amelia have found favor with her?"

"The other day she came here, after having visited the House of Refuge, which is placed under the superintendence of the young princess. 'Do you know one thing,' said this dreaded archduchess to me, with her abrupt frankness, 'I have a mind singularly disposed to satire, have I not? Well, if I were to live long with the daughter of the grand duke, I should become, I am sure, inoffensive; her goodness is so penetrating, so contagious."

"But is my cousin, then, an enchantress?" said I to my aunt, smiling.

"Her most powerful attraction, in my eyes at least," replied my aunt, "is that mingling of gentleness, modesty, and dignity, of which I have spoken to you, and which gives the most touching expression to her angelic face."

"Modesty is certainly a rare quality in a princess so young, so beautiful, so happy."

"Remember, too, my dear child, how much better it is for the Princess Amelia to enjoy without vain ostentation the high position which is incontestably acquired for her; her elevation is recent." [Footnote: On arriving in Germany, Rudolph had given out that Fleur-de-Marie, whom he had long supposed dead, had never quitted her mother, the Countess M'Gregor.]

"In her conversations with you, dear aunt, has the princess ever made any allusions to her past fortunes?"

"No; but when, notwithstanding my advanced age, I have spoken to her with the respect which is due to her, since her royal highness is the daughter of our sovereign, her ingenuous distress, mingled with gratitude and veneration for me, have deeply moved me; for her reserve, at the same time noble and affable, proved to me that the present did not intoxicate her so much as to make her forget the past, and that she rendered to my age what I granted to her rank."

"You must have an exquisite tact, my dear aunt, to observe such delicate shades."

[Illustration: A PAGE OF THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY]

"Thus, my dear child, the more I have seen of the Princess Amelia, the more I have felt my first impression confirmed. Since she has been here, the good works she has accomplished are incredible, and she has done it all with a reflection, a maturity of judgment, which amazes me in a person of her age. Judge of them: at her request, the grand duke has founded at Gerolstein an establishment for little orphan girls of five or six years old, and for young girls, also orphans or abandoned by their parents, who have reached the age of sixteen, an age so fatal for the unfortunate who have no one to defend them from the seductions of vice or the pressure of want. The noble nuns of my abbey teach and direct the daughters of this house. In going to visit it, I have often occasion to observe the adoration which these poor disinherited creatures entertain toward the Princess

Amelia. Every day she goes to pass several hours in this establishment, which is placed under her especial protection; and I repeat to you, my child, it is not only respect, gratitude, that these poor girls and the nuns feel for her highness, it is almost fanaticism."

"The Princess Amelia must be an angel," replied I to my aunt.

"An angel--yes, an angel," replied she, "for you cannot imagine with what melting goodness she treats her favorites, and with what pious solicitude she watches over them--I have never seen the susceptibility of misfortune more delicately treated; it seems as if an irresistible sympathy especially attracts the princess toward this class of the abandoned poor. Finally, would you believe it, she, the daughter of a sovereign, never calls these young girls anything but _sisters_."

At these last words of my aunt, I confess to you, Maximilian, the tears came into my eyes. Do you not find something beautiful and holy in this conduct of the princess? You know my sincerity, I protest to you that I report to you, as I will always report to you, the conversation of my aunt, almost word for word.

"Since the princess," said I to her, "is so marvelously endowed, I shall feel great embarrassment when I am presented to her to-morrow; you know my insurmountable timidity, you know that elevation of character overpowers me more even than that of rank, I am sure I shall appear to the princess as stupid as embarrassed; I know this well enough beforehand."

"Come, come," said my aunt, smiling, "she will take pity on you, my dear child, and the more so as you will not be a new acquaintance to her."

"Dear aunt?"

"Certainly."

"How so?"

"You recollect that when at the age of sixteen years, you quitted Oldenzaal to make a journey to Russia and England with your father, I had your portrait painted in the costume which you wore at the first fancy ball given by the late grand duchess?"

"Yes, the costume of a German page of the sixteenth century."

"Our excellent painter, Fritz Mokker, while he faithfully reproduced your features, not only retraced a personage of the sixteenth century, but with the caprice of an artist, he amused himself with imitating even the manner and the appearance of age of pictures painted soon after that period. A few days after her arrival in Germany, the Princess Amelia having come to visit me with her father, remarked your portrait, and asked me with great simplicity what this charming picture of the olden time was? Her father smiled, and making a signal to me, answered her, 'This portrait is that of one of our cousins, you see by his costume, my dear Amelia, of some three hundred years date. When he was very young he exhibited a rare courage and

an excellent heart. Does he not, in fact, display bravery in his bearing, and goodness in his smile?’

(I beg you, Maximilian, do not shrug your shoulders with impatient disdain, at my writing such things about myself. It is hard for me to do it, you may suppose, but the sequel of this narrative will prove to you that these puerile details, of which I feel the bitter ridicule, are unfortunately indispensable. I close the parenthesis, and go on:)

"The Princess Amelia," continued my aunt, "the dupe of this innocent pleasantry, agreed in opinion with her father, respecting the gentle and proud expression of your physiognomy, after having attentively examined the portrait. Afterward, when I went to see her at Gerolstein, she smilingly asked me the news of her cousin of the olden time. I then owned to her our deception, telling her that the fair page of the sixteenth century was simply my nephew, Prince Henry d'Herkausen Oldenzaal, now twenty-one years of age, captain of his Majesty the Emperor of Austria's Guards, and in everything, excepting, the costume, very like his portrait. At these words, the Princess Amelia," added my aunt, "blushed and became again serious, as she almost always is. Since then, she has not spoken to me again about the picture. Nevertheless, you see, my dear child, that you will not be entirely a stranger and a new face to _your cousin_, as the grand duke calls you. So take courage and sustain the honor of your portrait," added my aunt, smiling.

This conversation took place, as I have told you, my dear Maximilian, on the eve of the day when I was to be presented to the princess, my cousin. I then left my aunt, and returned to my apartment. I have never hidden from you my most secret thoughts, good or evil; I am therefore about to confess to you what absurd and foolish imaginations I allowed myself to indulge in after the conversation which I have just reported to you.

CHAPTER II.

PRINCE HENRY D'HERKAUSEN-OLDENZAAL TO COUNT MAXIMILIAN KAMINETZ.

You have often told me, my dear Maximilian, that I have no vanity; I believe that is true, and must believe so, to be able to continue this account without exposing myself to the charge of presumptuousness in your eyes. When I was alone at home, in recalling my aunt's conversation, I could not help dreaming over with a secret satisfaction the fact that the Princess Amelia having observed the portrait of me, made six or seven years ago, had asked a few days after, in jest, for news of her cousin of the olden time. I acknowledge that nothing was more foolish than to found the least hope upon such an insignificant circumstance; but, as I told you, I shall always use the most entire frankness with you; this insignificant circumstance ravished me. Undoubtedly the praises which I had heard lavished upon the Princess Amelia by a woman as grave and austere as my aunt, while they raised the princess still higher in my eyes, rendered me

yet more sensible to the distinction which she had deigned to bestow upon me, or, rather, had granted to my portrait. However, as I tell you, this distinction awakened in me such foolish hopes, that, now, in throwing back a calmer glance upon the past, I ask how I could have allowed myself to be drawn on to those thoughts, which inevitably bordered upon a precipice. Although a relation of the grand duke, and always kindly welcomed by him, it was impossible for me to conceive of the least hope of marriage with the princess, even if she had accepted my love, which was still more improbable. Our family holds an honorable rank, but it is poor, if we compare our fortune with the immense domains of the grand duke, the richest prince of the Germanic Confederation; and then, I was hardly twenty-one years old; I was a mere captain in the Guards, without renown, without personal reputation; never, in short, would the grand duke dream of me for his daughter. All these reflections should have preserved me from a passion which as yet I did not feel, but of which I had, so to speak, a singular presentiment. Alas! I gave myself up, on the contrary to new childishness. I was wearing on my finger a ring which was formerly given me by Theckla (the good countess, whom you know); although this token of careless and frivolous love could not trouble me much, I heroically made of it a sacrifice to ray new-born love, and the poor ring disappeared in the water which flows rapidly under my window. It is useless to tell you what a night I passed; you can imagine it I knew that the Princess Amelia was fair, and of angelic beauty; I endeavored to imagine her features, her stature, her demeanor, the sound of her voice, the expression of her countenance; then, remembering my portrait which she had remarked upon, I recollected with regret that the cursed artist had flattered me; besides, in despair, I compared the picturesque costume of a page of the fifteenth century with the severe uniform of His Imperial Majesty's captain of the Guards. Then to these foolish ideas succeeded now and then, I assure you, my friend, some generous thoughts, some noble impulses of the soul; I felt myself moved--yes! deeply moved at the remembrances, of what my aunt had told me of that adorable goodness of the Princess Amelia who called the poor abandoned ones whom she protected--_her sisters._ In fine--odd and inexplicable contrast--I have, you know, the most humble opinion of myself--and I was, nevertheless, proud enough to suppose that the sight of my portrait had struck the princess; I had good sense enough to understand that an impassable distance separated me from her forever, and yet I asked myself, with real anxiety, whether she would not find me unworthy of my portrait. In short, I had never seen her; I was convinced beforehand that she would hardly look upon me; and, nevertheless, I thought myself right in sacrificing to her the pledge of my former love. I passed in real suffering the night of which I speak, and a part of the next day. The hour of reception arrived. I tried on two or three uniforms, finding each worse than the other, and set out for the palace of the grand duke, much displeased with myself.

Although Gerolstein is hardly a quarter of a league from St. Hermangilda's Abbey, during the short drive a thousand thoughts assailed me: all the nonsense with which I had busied myself disappeared before a grave, sad, almost threatening idea; an invincible presentiment forwarned me of one of those crises which govern the whole life; a sort of revelation told me that I was about to love, to love passionately, to love as one loves but once; and, to heighten the fatality, this love, so highly and worthily placed,

was always to be unfortunate to me. These ideas alarmed me so much, that I suddenly took the wise resolution of stopping my carriage, returning to the abbey, and going to rejoin my father, leaving to my aunt the duty of excusing me to the grand duke for my abrupt departure. Unfortunately, one of those vulgar causes, of which the effects are sometimes so immense, prevented me from executing this. My carriage having stopped at the entrance of the avenue leading to the palace, I leaned out at the window to give orders to my people to return, when the Baron and Baroness Roller, who, like me, were on their way to court, perceived me, and ordered their carriage also to stop. The baron, seeing me in uniform, said, "Can I assist you in anything, my dear prince? what has happened to you? Since you are on your way to the palace, will you not join us, if anything has happened to your horses?"

Nothing could have been more easy you may say, my friend, than for me to have made some excuse for leaving the baron, and to have regained the abbey. I suppose it would have been; whether it was weakness, or a secret desire to escape from the salutary resolution I had just formed, I replied with an embarrassed air, that I was giving orders to my coachman to inquire at the gate of the palace whether we entered by the new pavilion, or through the marble court. "The entrance is through the marble court, my dear prince," replied the baron; "it is a grand gala reception. Tell your coachman to follow mine; I will show you the way."

You know, Maximilian, how much of a fatalist I am; I would have returned to the abbey, to spare myself the vexations which I foresaw; fate opposed it; I abandoned myself to my star. You do not know the grand ducal palace of Gerolstein, my friend. According to all those who have visited the capitals of Europe, there is not, with the exception of Versailles, a royal residence, of which the whole pile of building, and the avenues to it, have a more majestic aspect. If I enter into some details on this subject, it is that, in recalling at this hour these imposing splendors, I ask myself why they did not all at first call up my nothingness; for the Princess Amelia was the daughter of the sovereign of this palace, of these guards, of this great wealth. The court of marble, a vast hemicycle, is so called because, with the exception of a broad path around it, in which the carriages pass, it is paved with marble of every color, having magnificent mosaics. In the center of it is placed an immense basin of antique marble, fed by abundant springs of water, which fall continually into a large porphyry vase. This court of honor is surrounded by a row of white marble statues, of the finest execution, bearing torches of gilded bronze, from whence floods of dazzling gas are poured out. Alternating with these statues, Medicean vases, raised on their richly-sculptured pedestals, contain enormous rose-laurels, real flourishing shrubs, whose lustrous foliage, seen in the resplendent light, shines with a metallic verdure.

The carriages stopped at the foot of a double row of balustrades, which led to the peristyle of the palace; at the foot of this staircase, two cavaliers of the guard of the grand duke, mounted on black horses, stood as sentries. The soldiers of the guard were chosen from among the largest-sized non-commissioned officers of the army. You, my friend, who are so fond of military men, would have been struck with the severe and martial air of these two colossal figures, whose cuirasses and brazen

casques of an antique form, without ornament or crest, shone in the light. These cavaliers wore blue coats with yellow collar, pantaloons of white buckskin, and stout boots, reaching above the knee. Finally, for you, my friend, who are fond of military details, I will add, that at the top of the steps, on each side of the door, two grenadiers of the regiment of infantry of the grand ducal guard were on duty. They resembled, I was told, in appearance, with the single exception of the color of the dress and its facings, Napoleon's old guard. After having crossed the vestibule, where, with their halberds in their hands, stood the Swiss liveried servants of the prince, I ascended an imposing staircase of white marble, which led to a portico, ornamented with columns of jasper, surmounted by a cupola, painted and gilded. There were ranged two long files of foot servants. I afterward entered into the guard-room, at the door of which were standing a chamberlain and an aid-de-camp on service, whose duty it was to lead up to his royal highness such persons as were entitled to be presented to him. My relationship, though distant, gave me a right to this honor. An aid-de-camp preceded me into a long gallery filled with men in court-dresses or uniforms, and ladies in full costume. While I was slowly passing through this brilliant crowd, I heard words which heightened still more my emotion. On all sides people were admiring the angelic beauty of the Princess Amelia, the charming face of the Marchioness d'Harville, and the truly imperial air of the Archduchess Sophia, who had recently arrived from Munich, with the Archduke Stanislaus, and was soon to go to Warsaw. But while all rendered homage to the lofty dignity of the archduchess and to the distinguished grace of the Marchioness d'Harville, it was acknowledged that nothing was more ideal than the enchanting form of the Princess Amelia. As I approached the spot where the grand duke and his daughter were standing, I felt my heart beating violently. At the moment when I reached the door of this saloon (I forgot to tell you that there was a ball and court concert), the illustrious Liszt had just seated himself at the piano, and the deepest silence succeeded to the slight murmur of conversation. While awaiting the end of the piece, which the artist played with his accustomed superiority, I remained standing at the door. Then, my dear Maximilian, for the first time I saw the Princess Amelia. Allow me to paint to you the scene, for I feel an inexpressive pleasure in gathering up all these recollections. Imagine, my friend, a vast saloon, furnished with royal splendor, dazzling with light, and hung with crimson draperies, about which ran a border of foliage embroidered in gold. In the first row, in large gilded chairs, were seated the Archduchess Sophia (to whom the prince was doing the honors of the palace), on her left the Marchioness d'Harville, and on her right the Princess Amelia. Standing behind them was the grand duke, wearing the uniform of colonel of his guards. He seemed to have renewed his youth by his happiness, and did not look more than thirty years old. The military dress set off finely the elegance of his height, and the beauty of his face. Near him stood the Archduke Stanislaus, in the uniform of a field marshal. Then came the Princess Amelia's ladies of honor, the wives of the grand dignitaries of the court, and, finally, the latter themselves. Need I tell you that the Princess Amelia, by her rank, less than by her grace and beauty, reigned supreme in this dazzling assemblage? Do not condemn me, my friend, without reading this description. Though it fall a thousand times below the reality, you may comprehend my adoration; you will understand that as soon as I saw her, I loved her, and that the suddenness of this passion can be equaled only by its violence,

and the intensity of its duration. The Princess Amelia, dressed in a simple robe of white watered silk, wore, like the Archduchess Sophia, the grand cordon of the Imperial Order of Saint Nepomucene, which had been recently sent her by the empress. A bandeau of pearls, surrounding her noble and open forehead, harmonized most exquisitely with the two large braids of magnificent ashy blond hair which bordered her cheeks, which were lightly tinged with red; her fair arms, still whiter than the waves of lace from which they escaped, were half hidden by her gloves, which did not come up to her dimpled elbow: nothing could be more graceful than her bearing; nothing prettier than her little foot, with its white satin shoe. At the moment when I saw her, her large eyes, of the purest azure, were thoughtful. I do not know whether at this moment she felt the influence of some serious idea, or whether she was deeply impressed by the grave harmony of the piece Liszt was playing, but her half smile seemed to me to have a sweet and inexpressible melancholy: her head was slightly bent over on her bosom, and she was playing mechanically with a great bouquet of white violets and roses which she held in her hand. I could never express to you my feelings at that moment; all that my aunt had said to me of the ineffable goodness of the Princess Amelia came back to my mind. You may smile, my friend, but in spite of myself I felt my eyes moistening as I gazed on this thoughtful, almost sad young girl, so admirably beautiful, surrounded with honors, with such respect, and so idolized by such a father as the grand duke.

Maximilian, I have often said it to you, I believe man incapable of tasting certain kinds of happiness, which are, so to speak, too complete, too immense for his circumscribed faculties; I think, too, that certain beings are too divinely endowed not to feel sometimes that they are alone here below, and that they feel at times vague regrets for their exquisite delicacy, which exposes them to so many deceptions, to so many chills which are unknown to less tender natures. It seemed to me that at that time the Princess Amelia felt the reaction of such a thought. Suddenly, by some strange chance (there is fatality about everything here), she mechanically turned her eyes toward the place where I was standing. You know how scrupulously etiquette and the hierarchy of rank is observed with us. Thanks to my title and to the ties of relationship which attach me to the grand duke, the persons in the midst of whom I had at first placed myself had receded gradually, so that I remained almost alone, and decidedly in the first row, in the embrasure of the gallery door. It must undoubtedly have been this circumstance which caused the princess, as she started from her reverie, to perceive and take notice of me, for she made a slight movement of surprise, and blushed. She had seen my portrait at the abbey, in my aunt's apartments, and she recognized me--nothing was more simple. The princess had scarcely looked at me for a second, but that look made me feel the most violent, the most profound emotion; I felt my cheeks on fire; I cast down my eyes, and remained some minutes without daring to raise them again toward the princess. When I ventured to lift them, she was talking in a low tone with the Archduchess Sophia, who appeared to listen with the most affectionate interest. Liszt having put an interval of some moments between the two pieces he was to play, the grand duke took advantage of that moment to express to him his admiration in the most gracious manner. The prince, as he turned to his place, perceived me, made a sign of the head to me with the greatest kindness, and said some words to the

archduchess in pointing me out to her. The latter, after having looked at me for a moment, turned toward the grand duke, who could not help smiling as he replied to her and spoke to his daughter. The Princess Amelia seemed to be embarrassed, for she again blushed. I was in torments; unfortunately, etiquette did not permit me to quit the spot where I was until the concert was over, which was beginning. Two or three times I stole a glance at the Princess Amelia; she seemed pensive and thoughtful; my heart was oppressed. I suffered a slight feeling of uneasiness, as if I had been the cause of the pain she felt. Undoubtedly the grand duke had been asking her, jestingly, if she found any resemblance to the portrait of her cousin of the olden times; and, in her ingenuousness, she perhaps reproached hers. If for not having told her father that she had before recognized me. When the concert was over, I followed the aid-de-camp. He led me toward the grand duke, who advanced a few steps to meet me, took me cordially by the arm, and, approaching the Archduchess Sophia, said to her:

"I beg of your royal highness the permission to present to you my cousin, Prince Henry of Herkausen-Oldenzaal."

"I have already met the prince at Vienna, and I am happy to see him again here," replied the archduchess, before whom I made a profound bow.

"My dear Amelia," continued the prince, addressing himself to his daughter, "I present to you Prince Henry, your cousin; he is son of Prince Paul, one of my most venerable friends, whom I much regret not to see to-day at Gerolstein."

"Be so kind, sir, as to inform Prince Paul that I share deeply in my father's regrets, for I shall be always happy to become acquainted with his friends," replied my cousin, with a simplicity full of grace.

I had not before heard the sound of Princess Amelia's voice; imagine, my friend, the sweetest, the most delicious, the most harmonious tones; in fine, one of those accents which cause the most delicate chords of the soul to vibrate.

"I hope, my dear Henry, that you will remain some time with your aunt, to whom I am greatly attached. I respect her as a mother, as you know," said the grand duke kindly to me. "Come often to see us, familiarly, in the morning, at three o'clock. If we are going out, you can join us in our walk; you know I have always loved you, because you have one of the most noble hearts."

"I do not know how to express to your royal highness my gratitude for the kind reception you condescend to bestow on me."

"To prove to me your gratitude, then," said the prince, smiling, "ask your cousin for the second contra-dance; the first belongs of right to the archduke."

"Will your highness grant me this favor?" said I to the Princess Amelia, bowing before her.

"Call each other simply cousins, after the good old German custom," said the grand duke gayly; "ceremony is not proper among relatives!"

"Will my cousin do me the honor to dance this contra-dance with me?"

"Yes, cousin," replied the Princess Amelia.

CHAPTER III.

PRINCE HENRY D'HERKAUSEN-OLDENZAAL TO COUNT MAXIMILIAN KAMINETZ.

"OLDENZAAL, August 25th, 1841.

I can hardly tell you, my friend, how pleased, and, at the same time, pained, I was at the fatherly cordiality of the grand duke; the confidence he testified toward me, the affectionate kindness with which he induced his daughter and myself to substitute for the formula of etiquette these family terms of a most tender intimacy, all penetrated me with gratitude; I reproached myself so much the more bitterly for the fatal attraction of a love which ought not, or could not be agreeable to the prince. I have promised myself, it is true (and I have not failed in this resolution), never to utter a word which might lead my cousin to suspect the love that I was nourishing; but I feared that my emotion, my glances, might betray me. In spite of myself, however, this sentiment, silent and concealed as it must be, seemed guilty to me. I had time to make these reflections while the Princess Amelia was dancing the first contra-dance with the Archduke Stanislaus. Here, as everywhere, dancing is no more than a kind of march which follows the measure of the orchestra; nothing could show to more advantage the serious grace of my cousin's carriage. With a happiness mingled with anxiety, I awaited the moment for that conversation that the liberty of the ball would allow me to hold with her. I was sufficiently master of myself to conceal my embarrassment, as I went to seek her with the Marchioness d'Harville. Thinking of the circumstances of the portrait, I expected to see the Princess Amelia share my embarrassment. I was not mistaken; I recall, almost word for word, our first conversation; let me relate it to you, my friend:

"Will your highness permit me," said I to her, "to say always my cousin, as the grand duke has authorized me?"

"Certainly, my cousin," she kindly answered me; "I am always happy to obey my father."

"And I am still more proud of this familiarity, my cousin; I have learned through my aunt to know you, that is to say, to appreciate you."

"My father has also spoken to me of you, cousin, and what will perhaps astonish you," added she, timidly, "I know you already, if I may say so, by sight. The lady superior of St. Hermangilda, for whom I have the most

affectionate respect, one day showed to us, to my father and myself, a picture."

"Where I was represented as a page of the sixteenth century?"

"Yes, cousin, and my father even used the little deceit of telling me that this portrait was of one of our relations of the olden time, adding such kind words toward this cousin of former days, that our family must be happy to number him among our relations of the present day."

"Alas! my cousin, I fear I resemble no more the moral portrait that the grand duke designed to make of me, than I do the page of the sixteenth century."

"You deceive yourself, cousin," said the princess to me, gayly; "for at the end of the concert, casting my eyes, by chance, toward the side gallery, I recognized you directly, in spite of the difference of costume."

Then wishing, undoubtedly, to change a subject of conversation that embarrassed her, she said to me, "What a wonderful talent M. Liszt possesses! do you not think so?"

"Wonderful! With what pleasure you listened to him!"

"Because, indeed, it seems to me there is a double charm in music without words; not only is it played with excellent execution, but we can in a moment apply our own thoughts to the melodies that we hear, and which become, so to speak, their accompaniment, I know not if you understand me, cousin?"

"Perfectly. Our thoughts are, then, the words that we adapt mentally to the air that we hear."

"Just so, just so; you understand me," said she to me, with an expression of pleased satisfaction; "I fear I should explain but ill what I felt just now, while listening to that melody, so plaintive and so touching."

"God grant, my cousin," said I to her, smiling, "that you may have no words to put to an air so sad!"

Either because my question was indiscreet, and she wished to avoid answering me, or because she had not understood it, the Princess Amelia immediately said to me, pointing out the grand duke, who, giving his arm to the Archduchess Sophia was then traversing the dancing gallery:

"Cousin, look at my father: how handsome he is! how noble and fine his air! how eagerly all glances follow him! It seems to me he is more beloved even than he is revered."

"Ah!" I exclaimed, "it is not only here, in the midst of this court, that he is cherished. If the blessings of the people should be echoed to posterity, the name of Rudolph of Gerolstein would be, with justice, immortal."

In speaking thus, my enthusiasm was sincere; for you know, my friend, that the dominions of the prince are, with good reason, called the Paradise of Germany.

It is impossible to paint to you the grateful glance my cousin threw upon me on hearing me speak in this manner.

"To appreciate my father thus," said she to him, with emotion, "is to be worthy of the attachment he bears to you."

"And can no one but myself love and admire him! Beside those rare qualities that make great princes, has he not the genius of kindness that makes princes adored?"

"You know not how truly you speak," exclaimed the princess, still more moved.

"Ah, I know--I know it, and all those whom he governs know it as I do. They love him so much that they mourn in his sorrows, as they rejoice in his happiness; the eagerness of all to come and offer their homage to the Marchioness d'Harville is bestowed on the choice of his royal highness, as well as the true worth of the future grand duchess."

"The Marchioness d'Harville is more worthy than any one of the attachment of my father; this is the highest praise of her I can give you."

"And you can, doubtless, appreciate her justly. Have you not known her in France, my cousin?"

Hardly had I uttered these words, when some sudden thought, I know not what, came into the Princess Amelia's mind, she cast down her eyes, and, for a second, her features wore an expression of sadness, that made me silent with surprise. We were then at the end of the contradance; the last figure separated me a moment from my cousin; when I led her back to the Marchioness d'Harville, it seemed to me her features were still slightly moved. I believed, and I believe still, that my allusion to the abode of the princess in France, having recalled to her the death of her mother, created in her the painful impression of which I have just spoken to you. During this evening, I remarked a circumstance which will, perhaps, appear to you puerile, but which has been to me a new proof of the fascination this young girl inspires in all. Her bandeau of pearls being a little deranged, the Archduchess Sophia, who was leaning upon her arm, was kind enough to be willing herself to replace the bijou upon her brow. Now, to one who knows the proverbial hauteur of the archduchess, such an act of graciousness from her seems scarcely conceivable. Besides, the Princess Amelia, whom I was observing attentively at the moment, appeared at the same time so confused, so grateful, I might almost say so embarrassed, at this graceful attention, that I thought I saw a tear sparkle in her eyes.

Such, my friend, was my first evening at Gerolstein. If I have related it to you with some detail, it is that almost all these circumstances have since had their results for me. I will now abridge: I will only speak to

you of some of their principal circumstances relating to my frequent interviews with my cousin and her father. The day after this fête, I was among the very small number of persons invited to the celebration of the marriage of the grand duke and the Marchioness d'Harville. I never saw the countenance of the Princess Amelia more radiant and more serene than during this ceremony. She gazed upon her father and the marchioness with a kind of religious ecstasy, that gave a new charm to her features; it might have been said that they reflected the ineffable happiness of the prince and the Marchioness d'Harville. That day my cousin was very gay, very affable. I gave her my arm in a walk that we took after dinner in the palace gardens, which were magnificently illuminated. She said to me, on speaking of her father's marriage, "It seems to me that the happiness of those we cherish is yet more sweet to us than our own; for is there not always a shade of selfishness in the enjoyment of our own personal happiness?"

If I give you, from among a thousand, this reflection of my cousin's, my friend, it is that you may judge of the heart of this adorable creature, who possesses, like her father, the spirit of goodness. Some days after the marriage of the grand duke, I held quite a long conversation with him. He asked me of the past, of my plans for the future: he gave me the wisest counsel, the most flattering encouragement; he even spoke to me of several of his plans for government, with a confidence that made me feel as proud as I was flattered; in short--shall I tell it to you? For one moment a most foolish idea crossed my mind; I fancied that the prince had imagined my love, and that in this conversation he wished to study me, feel my sentiments, and perhaps lead me to an avowal.

Unhappily, this mad hope did not last long; the prince brought the conversation to a close by telling me that the time for great wars had passed away; that I ought to profit by my name, my connections, the education I had received, and the intimate friendship that had united my father and Prince M., prime minister to the emperor, and pass through the diplomatic instead of the military career; adding, that all the questions which were decided formerly upon the battle-field, would henceforth be decided by Congresses; that soon the intricate and base tradition of ancient diplomacy would give place to an enlarged and _humane_ system of politics concerning the true interests of the people, who from day to day gained more knowledge of their rights; that a high, loyal, and generous spirit might have, before many years, a noble and great part to play in political affairs, and might thus do much good; he proposed to me, in short, the assistance of his high patronage to facilitate me at the outset of the career in which he solicited me to embark. You understand, my friend, that if the prince had had the least design upon me, he had not made me such overtures. I thanked him for his offers with warm gratitude, adding, that I felt all the worth of his counsel, and was determined to follow it. I had at first used some reserve in my visits to the palace, but in consequence of the urgency of the grand duke, I soon went there every day about three o'clock. They lived there in all the simplicity of our German courts. It was the life of the great castles in England, rendered still more attractive by the cordial simplicity, the pleasing liberty of German manners. When the weather permitted, we took long rides with the grand duke, the grand duchess, my cousin, and the people of their household. When we remained in the palace, we were occupied with music. I

sung with the grand duchess and my cousin, whose voice was of a tone of unequalled sweetness and purity--such, that I could never hear it without being moved even to the depths of my soul. At other times, we examined in detail the wonderful collection of pictures and works of art, or the admirable library of the prince, who, you know, is one of the most learned and best-informed men in Europe; frequently I returned to dine at the palace, and on opera days I accompanied the grand ducal family to the theater.

Every day passed like a dream: my cousin gradually came to treat me with a true sisterly familiarity; she did not conceal from me the pleasure that she felt in seeing me; she confided to me all that interested her. Two or three times she begged me to accompany her when she went with the grand duchess to visit the young orphans; often, also, she spoke to me of my future plans with a maturity of reason, a serious and reflective interest, that astonished me, coming from a girl of her age; she was very fond, too, of inquiring of my infancy, and of my mother, alas! ever regretted. Every time that I wrote to my father, she begged me to recall her to his remembrance; then, for she embroidered to admiration, she gave me one day for him a charming piece of tapestry, upon which she had worked for a long time. What more shall I tell you, my friend? a brother and sister, meeting again after a long separation, would not have enjoyed a sweeter intimacy. Let me add that, when, by some unusual chance, we were left alone, the entrance of a third could never have changed the subject, or even the accent of our conversation. You will be perhaps astonished, my friend, at this brotherly feeling between two young people, especially as you recall what I have acknowledged to you; but the more confidence and familiarity my cousin showed me, the more I watched over, the more I constrained myself, for fear of putting an end to the adorable familiarity. And then, what increased still more my reserve, the princess showed, in her intercourse with me, so much frankness, so much noble confidence, and especially so little coquetry, that I am almost certain that she has always been ignorant of my violent passion, though there remains a slight doubt on this subject, arising from a circumstance that I will relate immediately. If this brotherly intercourse could always have lasted, perhaps this happiness might have been sufficient for me; but even while I was enjoying this with delight, I reflected that my service or the new career in which the prince was inducing me to engage would soon call me to Vienna or abroad; I reflected, in short that, presently, perhaps, the grand duke would think of marrying his daughter in a manner worthy of her. These thoughts became the more painful to me as the moment of my departure approached. My cousin soon observed the change that was at work in me. The evening before the day I left her, she told me for a long time she had found me gloomy and abstracted. I endeavored to elude her questions; I attributed my sadness to a vague ennui.

"I cannot believe you," said she to me; "my father treats you almost as a son; everybody loves you; to be unhappy would be ingratitude."

"Ah well!" said I to her, without being able to conquer my emotion, "it is not ennui; it is grief--yes, a penetrating grief that I feel."

"And why? What has happened to you?" she asked me, with interest.

"Just now, my cousin, you told me that your father treated me as a son; that everybody loved me. Ah! well, before long, I must renounce these precious attachments; I must, in short, leave Gerolstein, and, I confess to you, this thought fills me with despair."

"And the remembrance of those that are dear to us--is this then, nothing, my cousin?"

"Ah, yes--but years, but events bring so many unforeseen changes!"

"There are at least attachments which are not changed: such as my father has always shown you. What I feel for you is of this kind, you know full well; we are brother and sister--never to forget one another," added she, raising toward me her large blue eyes, filled with tears.

This glance overwhelmed me; I was on the point of betraying myself; fortunately, I restrained myself.

"It is true that feeling lasts," said I to her, in an embarrassed manner; "but circumstances alter. For instance, my cousin, when in a few years I shall return, do you think that then this intimacy, whose charm I value so fully, may yet continue?"

"Why should it not continue?"

"Because you will then be, undoubtedly, married, my cousin--you will have other duties--and you will have forgotten your poor brother."

* * * * *

I swear to you, my friend, I said no more to her. I know not yet if she saw in these words an avowal which was displeasing to her, or whether she, like myself, was sadly struck by the inevitable changes that the future must necessarily make in our intercourse; but, instead of answering me, she remained a moment silent, overwhelmed; then, rising suddenly, her countenance pale and disordered, she went out, after examining some embroidery by the young Countess d'Oppenheim, one of her ladies of honor, who was working in the embrasure of one of the windows of the saloon where our conversation took place. The evening of this day I received a new letter from my father, which recalled me suddenly here. The next morning I went to take leave of the grand duke; he told me that my cousin was a little unwell, that I might entrust to him my last words to her; he pressed me to his heart, like a father, regretting, he added, my sudden departure, and especially that this departure was occasioned by the anxiety that the health of my father gave me; then, recalling to me, with the greatest kindness, his counsel on the subject of the new career which he begged me to embrace immediately, he added, that on my return from my embassies, or on my leaves of absence, he should see me again at Gerolstein with warm pleasure. Happily, on my arrival here I found the state of my father a little improved; he still keeps his bed, and is constantly feeble, but his health no longer gives me any serious anxiety. Unfortunately, he has already noticed my depression, my gloomy taciturnity, several times; but he

has supplicated me in vain to confide to him the cause of my melancholy grief. I should not dare it, notwithstanding his blind tenderness for me; you know his severity as regards everything which appears to him wanting in frankness and loyalty. Yesterday, I watched with him; when alone by his side, believing him asleep, I could not restrain my tears, which flowed in silence as I thought of my happy days at Gerolstein. He saw me weep, for he soon awaked while I was absorbed in my grief; he questioned me with the most touching kindness; I attributed my sadness to the anxiety that his health had caused me, but he was not deceived by this evasion. Now that you know all, my good Maximilian, say is not my fate forlorn enough! What shall I do--what resolve?

Ah, my friend, I cannot tell you my anguish. What is to happen, my God! All is utterably lost! I am the most wretched of men if my father does not renounce his project. I will tell you what has just happened; just now I had finished this letter, when, to my great astonishment, my father, whom I believed in bed, entered my cabinet, where I was writing to you; he saw upon my desk my first four great pages all filled; I was at the end of this last--"

"To whom do you write so at length?" he asked, smiling.

"To Maximilian, father."

"Oh!" said he to me, with an expression of affectionate reproach, "I know that he possessed your confidence entirely; _he is very happy--he!_"

He pronounced these last words so sadly, in such a bounded tone, that, touched by his accent, I replied to him, giving him my letter, almost without reflection: "Read, father."

My friend, he has read all. Do you know what he said to me, after remaining for some time thoughtful?

"Henry, I am going to write to the grand duke all that passed during your stay at Gerolstein."

"My father, I conjure you, do not do it."

"Is what you relate to Maximilian perfectly true?"

"Yes, my father."

"In this case, until now your conduct has been upright. The prince will appreciate it. But in future you should not show yourself unworthy of his noble confidence; you would do so if, abusing his offer, you should return hereafter to Gerolstein, with the intention, perhaps, of making yourself beloved by his daughter."

"My father, could you think----"

"I think that you love with passion, and that passion is, sooner or later, an evil consoler."

"How, my father? you will write to the prince that----"

"You love your cousin desperately."

"In the name of heaven, my father, I supplicate you, do nothing of this!"

"Do you love your cousin?"

"I love her to idolatry; but----"

My father interrupted me: "If this is the case, I shall write to the grand duke to demand of him for you the hand of his daughter."

"But, my father, such a claim is madness for me!"

"It is true; nevertheless, I ought frankly to make this demand of the prince, representing to him the reasons that lead me to this step. He has received you with the most true hospitality, he has shown you fatherly kindness; it would be unworthy me and you to deceive him. I know the greatness of his soul; he will feel that I am dealing as an honest man; if he refuses to give you his daughter, and this is almost unquestionable, he will know at least that in future, if you should return to Gerolstein, you ought to be no more in the same intimacy with her. You have shown me, my child," added my father, kindly, "the letter that you have written to Maximilian. I am now informed of everything; it is my duty to write to the grand duke, and I am going to write this very moment."

You know, my friend, that my father is the best of men, but he has an inflexible tenacity of will when the question is what regards his _duty_; judge of my anguish, my terror. Though the step he is going to take may be, after all, frank and honorable, it does not trouble me less. How will the grand duke receive this mad offer? Will he not be displeased with it? and will not the Princess Amelia be as much wounded that I have allowed my father to take such a step without her consent?

Ah, my friend, pity me, I know not what to think. It seems as though I were looking upon an abyss, and that a dizziness were coming over me.

I finish in haste this long letter; I shall write you soon. Yet once more pity me, for, in truth, I fear I shall become crazy if the fever that excites me lasts longer. Adieu, adieu! Yours from my heart, and ever,

HENRY D'H.-O.

* * * * *

We now conduct our reader to the palace of Gerolstein, where Fleur-de-Marie had dwelt since her return from France.

CHAPTER IV.

THE PRINCESS AMELIA.

The apartment occupied by Fleur-de-Marie (we shall call her the Princess Amelia only officially), in the grand ducal palace, had been furnished by Rudolph's care, with extreme taste and elegance. From the balcony of the young girl's oratory could be seen, in the distance, the two towers of the Convent of St. Hermangilda, which, rising above immense masses of verdure, were themselves commanded by a high wooded mountain, at the foot of which the abbey stood. On a beautiful morning in summer, Fleur-de-Marie was allowing her glances to wander over the splendid landscape, which extended far away in the distance. Her hair was dressed, but she wore a morning dress of thin material, white, with narrow blue stripes; a large handkerchief of plain cambric falling upon her shoulders, left visible the two ends and the knot of a little silk cravat, of the same blue as the girdle of her dress. Seated in a large, high-backed elbow chair made of carved ebony and cramoisie velvet, her elbow supported by one arm of this seat, her head a little bent down, she supported her cheek upon the back of her small white hand, delicately veined with azure. The languishing attitude of Fleur-de-Marie, her paleness, the fixedness of her gaze, the bitterness of her half-smile, revealed a deep melancholy. After some moments, a heavy, sad sigh relieved her breast. Then, letting her hand which supported her cheek fall again, she bent her head further upon her breast. You would have said that the wretched girl was bending beneath the weight of some heavy misfortune. At this moment a woman of mature age, with a grave and distinguished air, dressed in elegant simplicity, entered the oratory, almost timidly, and coughed slightly, to attract the attention of Fleur-de-Marie. Arousing herself from her reverie, she raised her head quickly, and said, saluting her with a motion full of grace,

"What do you wish, my dear countess?"

"I come to inform your highness that my lord begs you to await him; for he will meet you here in a few minutes," replied Princess Amelia's maid of honor, with respectful formality.

"I was wondering that I had not yet saluted my father to-day; I wait his visit each morning with so much impatience! But I hope that I do not owe to any illness of Fräulein Harneim the pleasure of seeing you, my dear countess, at the palace two days in succession."

"Let your highness feel no uneasiness on that point; Fräulein Harneim has begged me to take her place to-day; to-morrow she will have the honor of resuming her service of your highness, who will, perhaps excuse the change."

"Certainly, for I shall lose nothing by it; after having had the pleasure of seeing you two days in succession, my dear countess, I shall have for two other days Fräulien Harneim with me."

"You highness honors us," replied the maid of honor, bending again; "this

extreme kindness encourages me to ask a favor."

"Speak, speak; you know my eagerness to be of assistance to you."

"It is true that for a long time your highness has accustomed me to your goodness; but this regards a subject so painful, that I should not have the courage to enter upon it, if it did not concern a very deserving object; for this reason I dare to depend upon the extreme indulgence of your highness."

"You have no need of any indulgence, my dear countess; I am always very grateful for every occasion that is given me for doing a little good."

"This concerns a poor creature who, unfortunately, had quitted Gerolstein before your highness had established that institution, which is so charitable, and so useful for young orphan or forsaken girls, whom nothing protects from evil passions."

"And what has happened to her? what do you beg for her?"

"Her father, a very adventurous man, went to seek his fortune in America, leaving his wife and daughter to a precarious mode of existence. The mother died; the daughter, hardly sixteen years old when left to herself, quitted the country to follow to Vienna a seducer, who soon forsook her. Then, as always happens, the first step in the path of vice led this wretched girl to an abyss of infamy; in a short time she became, like so many other miserable creatures, the opprobrium of her sex."

Fleur-de-Marie cast down her eyes, blushed, and could not conceal a slight shudder, which did not escape the maid of honor. Fearing to have wounded the chaste susceptibility of the princess by conversing with her upon such a creature, she continued, with embarrassment:

"I ask a thousand pardons of your royal highness; I have undoubtedly offended you by drawing your attention to so polluted a being; but the miserable one shows so sincere a repentance, that I thought I could solicit for her a little pity."

"And you were right. Go on, I pray you," said Fleur-de-Marie, conquering her sad emotion; "indeed, all errors are worthy of pity when repentance follows them."

"And that is the case here, as I have remarked to your highness. After two years of this abominable life, grace touched this abandoned one. A prey to a late remorse, she has returned here. Chance so favored her, that, on her arrival here, she was lodged at a house belonging to a worthy widow, whose gentleness and piety are well known. Encouraged by the pious goodness of the widow, the poor creature has confessed to her her faults, adding that she felt a just horror for her past life, and that she would purchase, at the price of the most severe penance, the happiness of entering a religious house, where she might expiate her errors and deserve their redemption. The worthy widow to whom she has intrusted this confidence, knowing that I had the honor to serve your highness, has written to me to recommend to me this

unfortunate one, who, by means of the all-powerful agency of your highness with the Princess Juliana, lady superior of the abbey, might hope to enter St. Hermangilda Abbey as lay sister; she asks as a favor to be employed in the most painful hours that her penance may be more meritorious. I have several times desired to converse with this woman before allowing myself to implore for her the pity of your highness, and I am firmly convinced that her repentance will be lasting. It is neither want nor age that has brought her to the true good; she is scarcely eighteen years old; she is yet very beautiful, and possesses a small sum of money, that she wishes to devote to a charitable object if she obtains the favor that she solicits."

"I will take charge of her," said Fleur-de-Marie, restraining with difficulty her emotion, so much resemblance did her past life offer to that of the unfortunate one in whose favor she was solicited: she added, "the repentance of this miserable one is too praiseworthy to be left without encouragement."

"I know not how to express my gratitude to your highness. I hardly dared hope your highness would deign to be so charitably interested in such a creature."

"She has been guilty--she repents," said Fleur-de-Marie, with an accent of commiseration and inexpressible sadness; "it is right to nourish pity for her. The more sincere her remorse, the more painful must it be, my dear countess."

"I hear my lord, I believe," said the maid of honor, suddenly, without remarking the deep and increasing emotion of Fleur-de-Marie.

In fact, Rudolph was entering a saloon which opened into the oratory, holding in his hand an enormous bunch of roses. At the sight of the prince the countess discreetly retired. Hardly had she disappeared, when Fleur-de-Marie threw herself upon her father's neck, resting her forehead upon his shoulder, and remained thus some seconds without speaking.

"Good-morning, good-morning, my dear child," said Rudolph, pressing his daughter to his breast with feeling, without yet observing her sadness.

"See this mass of roses; what a fine harvest I gathered for you this morning; it was this that prevented me from coming sooner; I hope that I have never brought you a more magnificent bouquet. Take it."

And the prince, still holding his bouquet in his hand, moved backward gently, to disengage his daughter from his arms and look at her; but seeing her burst into tears, he threw the bouquet upon the table, took Fleur-de-Marie's hands in his, and exclaimed, "You weep! Oh, what is the matter?"

"Nothing, nothing, my dear father," said Fleur-de-Marie, drying her tears and endeavoring to smile upon Rudolph.

"Tell me, I beg you, what is the matter? What can have made you sad?"

"I assure you, father, it is nothing to distress you. The countess has just

solicited my interest for a poor woman, so interesting, so unhappy, that in spite of myself I am moved by her recital."

"Truly? Is it only this?"

"It is only this," answered Fleur-de-Marie, taking from a table the flowers that Rudolph had thrown there; "but how you spoil me!" added she, "what a magnificent bouquet, and when I think that each day you bring me such, gathered by yourself."

"My child," said Rudolph, gazing upon his daughter with anxiety, "you conceal something from me; your smile is sad--constrained. Tell me, I beg you, what distresses you: do not occupy yourself with this bouquet."

"Ah, you know this bouquet is my joy every morning; and then I love roses so much--I have always loved them so much. You remember," added she, with an affecting smile, "you remember my poor little rose-bush. I have always kept its remains."

At this painful allusion to the past, Rudolph exclaimed, "Unhappy child! Are my suspicions founded? In the midst of the splendor that surrounds you, would you yet sometimes think of that horrible time? Alas, I had thought to have made you forget it by tenderness."

"Pardon, pardon, father! these words escaped me. I make you sad."

"I am myself sad, poor angel," said Rudolph sorrowfully, "because these returns to the past must be fearful to you--because they would poison your life if you were weak enough to abandon yourself to them."

"Father, this was by chance. Since our arrival here, this is the first time--"

"This is the first time you have spoken of it--yes; but, perhaps, this is not the first time that these thoughts have troubled you. I have perceived your moments of melancholy, and sometimes I have accused the past as causing your sadness. But, as I was uncertain, I dared not even attempt to combat the sad influence of these remembrances--to show you the uselessness, the injustice of them--for if your grief had arisen from another cause, if the past had been to you what it ought to be, a vain, bad dream, I should risk awakening in you painful ideas that I should wish to destroy."

"How good you are! how these fears show me your ineffable tenderness."

"What do you mean? My position was so difficult, so delicate. On another occasion I said nothing, but I was ever thinking of what concerned you. By contracting this marriage, which crowned all my desires, I also hoped to give another guarantee to your repose. I knew too well the excessive delicacy of your heart to hope that you could ever--ever cease to think of the past; but I said to myself, that if, by chance, your thoughts ever lingered there, you ought, feeling yourself cherished as a daughter by the noble woman who knew and loved you in the depth of your misfortunes--you

ought, I say, to regard the past as sufficiently expiated for by your heavy miseries, and be indulgent, or rather just, toward yourself: for, indeed, my wife is entitled by her high qualities to the respect of all--is it not so? Ah, well, since you are to her a daughter, a cherished sister, ought you not to be encouraged? Is not her tender attachment an entire redemption? Does it not tell you that she knows, as I do, that you have been a victim--that you are not guilty--that others can, indeed, reproach you only with misfortune, that has overwhelmed you from your birth? Had you even committed great faults, would they not be a thousand times expiated, redeemed, by all the good you have done, by all that is excellent and adorable that has been developed in you?"

"My father--"

"Ah, let me--let me tell you all my thoughts, since an accident, for which indeed we ought to be grateful, has caused this conversation. For a long time I have desired, and at the same time dreaded it. God will that it may have a salutary result! It was mine to make you forget so many dreadful sorrows. I have a mission to fulfill towards you so august, so sacred, that I should have had the courage to sacrifice, for your repose, my love for Madame d'Harville--my friendship for Murphy, if I had thought their presence would have recalled to you too bitterly the past."

"On, my good father, could you think so? Their presence, the presence of those who know _what I was_, and who yet love me tenderly, does not it, on the contrary, personify forgetfulness and pardon? Indeed, my father, would not my whole life have been made desolate, had you renounced for me your marriage with Madame d'Harville?"

"Ah! I should not have been the only one to desire this sacrifice, if it would secure your happiness. You know not what self-denial Clømence has already voluntarily imposed upon herself, for she also comprehends all the extent of my duty to you."

"Your duty to me, my God! And what have I done to merit so much?"

"What have you done, poor dear angel! Until the moment you were restored to me, your life was only bitterness, misery, desolation; and for your past sufferings I reproach myself, as if I had caused them. And when I see you smiling, pleased, I believe myself pardoned; my only aim, my only wish, is to render you as entirely happy as you have been unfortunate; to raise you as much as you have been lowered, for it seems to me the last traces of the past are effaced when the most eminent, the most honorable persons pay you the respect which is due to you."

"Respect to me? no, no, my father; but to my rank, or, rather, to that you have given me."

"Ah! it is not your rank that is loved, that is revered--it is you, understand; indeed, my dear child, it is yourself, yourself alone. There is homage imposed by rank, but it is another imposed by powers of attraction and fascination! You know not how to distinguish between these, because you know not yourself; because you know not that, by a wonderful intelligence

and tact, which renders me as proud as idolatrous of you, carry into all ceremonious intercourse, so new to you, a union of dignity, modesty, and grace, which is irresistible to the most stately characters."

"You love me so much, father, and all love you so much, that every one is sure of pleasing you by showing me deference."

"Oh, the wicked child!" exclaimed Rudolph, interrupting his daughter, and embracing her tenderly; "what a wicked child, who will not grant a single satisfaction to my fatherly pride!"

"Is not this pride sufficiently satisfied by attributing to you the good feeling that is shown me, my good father?"

"No, indeed, miss," said the prince, smiling, to his daughter, to chase away the sadness with which he still saw her affected; "no, miss, it is not the same thing; for it is not allowable for me to be proud of myself, and I can and ought to be proud of you--yes, proud. And, again, you know not how divinely you are endowed; in fifteen months your education has become so marvelously complete that the most difficult mother would be satisfied with you, and this education has increased still more the almost irresistible influence that you spread around you without being yourself aware of it."

"My father, your praises confuse me."

"I speak the truth, nothing but the truth. Do you wish for instances? Let us speak boldly of the past; it is an enemy that I wish to fight hand to hand; we must look it in the face. Do you not, then, remember La Louve, that courageous woman who saved you? Recall that prison scene which you have related to me; a crowd of prisoners, more hardened indeed than wicked, were bent upon tormenting one of their companions, feeble, infirm, and yet their drudge; you appear, you speak, and, behold, immediately these furies, blushing for their base cruelty toward their victim, show themselves as charitable as they were wicked. Is this, then, nothing? Again, is it--yes or no--owing to you that La Louve, that ungovernable woman, has felt repentance, and desired an honest and laborious life? Ah, believe me, my dear child, that which conquered La Louve, and her turbulent companions, merely by the ascendancy of goodness, combined with a rare elevation of mind; this, although in other circumstances and in an utterly different sphere, must by the same charm (do not smile at such a parallel, miss) fascinate the stately Archduchess Sophia and all the circle of my court; for the good and wicked, great and small, submit almost always to the influence of higher, nobler spirits. I do not wish to say that you were born princess in the aristocratic sense of the word; that would be a poor flattery to make you, my child; but you are of that small number of privileged beings who are born both to speak to a queen so as to charm her, and to earn her love, and also to speak to a poor, debased, and abandoned creature, so as to make her better, to console her, and thus gain her adoration."

"But, my dear father, I beg--"

"Oh, it is so much the worse for you, darling, that it is so long since my

heart has poured forth. Think, then, how, with my fear of awakening in you the remembrances of the past which I wish to annihilate, and that I will forever annihilate in your mind, I dared not converse to you of these comparisons, these parallels, which render you so admirable in my eyes. How many times have Clømence and I been enraptured with you. How many times moved so that the tears rose in her eyes, has she said to me, 'Is it not wonderful that this child should be what she is, after misfortune has so pursued her? or, rather,' would Clømence continue, 'is it not wonderful that, far from impairing that noble and rare nature, misfortune has, on the contrary, given a higher range to what there was excellent in her?'"

At this moment the door opened, and Clømence, Grand Duchess of Gerolstein, entered, holding a letter in her hand.

"Here, my friend," said she to Rudolph, "is a letter from France. I wish to bring it to you, that I might say good-morning to my indolent child, whom I have not seen this morning," added Clømence, embracing Fleur-de-Marie tenderly.

"This letter comes just at the right moment," said Rudolph, gayly, after having read it through. "We were talking just now of the past; of that monster we must incessantly combat, my dear Clømence, for it threatens the repose and happiness of our dear child."

"Is this true, my friend? those attacks of melancholy which we have observed--"

"Have no other cause than wicked remembrances; but, fortunately, we now know our enemy, and we will triumph over it."

"But from whom, then, is this letter, my friend?" asked Clømence.

"From Rigolette, the wife of Germain."

"Rigolette!" exclaimed Fleur-de-Marie; "what happiness to hear from her!"

"My friend," said Clømence, aside to Rudolph, at the same time glancing at Fleur-de-Marie, "do you not fear that this letter may recall to her painful recollections?"

"These are those very remembrances I wish to put an end to, my dear Clømence: we must approach them boldly, and I am sure that I shall find in Rigolette's letter excellent arms against them, for this excellent little creature adored our child, and appreciated her as she should be."

And Rudolph read aloud the following letter:--

"Bouqueval Farm, August 15th, 1841.

"YOUR HIGHNESS, I take the liberty of writing to you again, to make you a sharer of a great happiness which has befallen us, and to ask a new favor of you, to whom we already owe so many, or, rather, to whom we owe the

perfect paradise in which we live, I, my Germain, and his good mother.

"This is the cause, my lord; for ten days I have been mad with joy, for it is ten days since I have possessed the love of a little girl: I fancy that she is the very picture of Germain; be, that she is of me; our dear Mamma George says that she resembles both; the fact is she has charming blue eyes like Germain, and black hair, curly, like mine. Just now, contrary to his custom, my husband is unjust; he wishes to have our little one always upon his knees, while it is my right, is it not, my lord?"

"Fine, worthy young persons! they ought to be happy," said Rudolph. "If ever couple were well matched, it is they."

"And Rigolette deserves her happiness," said Fleur-de Marie.

"I have always blessed the good fortune that caused me to meet them," said Rudolph, and he continued, "But, indeed, my lord, pardon my burdening you with these little family quarrels that end always with a kiss. Certainly your ears must tingle well, my lord, for there does not pass a day that we do not say, looking at each other, we too, Germain and I, 'How happy we are! O, God, how happy we are!' and, naturally, your name follows directly after these words. Excuse the scrawl there is just here, my lord, and the blot; I had written without thinking, M. Rudolph, as I used to say, and I have scratched it out. I hope, by the way, that you will find my writing has improved much, as well as my orthography, for Germain always shows me how, and I no longer make great blots stretching all across, as when you made my pens."

"I must confess," said Rudolph, laughing, "that my friend is under a slight illusion, and I am sure that Germain is occupied rather with kissing the hand of his pupil than directing it."

"Come, come, my dear, you are right," said Clømence, looking at the letter, "the writing is rather large, but very legible."

"In truth, there is some progress," said Rudolph; "formerly it would have taken eight pages to contain what she writes now in two."

And he continued: "It is, however, true, that you have made pens for me, my lord; when we think of it, Germain and I, we are quite ashamed, in recalling how far from proud you were. Oh, here again do I find myself speaking to you of something besides what we wish to ask you, my lord; for my husband unites with me, and it is very important; we have formed a plan. You shall see. We supplicate you, then, my lord, to have the goodness to choose and give us a name for our dear girl; it is agreed upon with the godfather and godmother, and this godfather and godmother, do you know who they are, my lord? Two persons whom you and her ladyship the Marchioness d'Harville have raised from misery to render happy, happy as we are. In a word, they are Morel, the jeweler, and Jeanne Duport, the sister of a poor prisoner named Pique-Vinaigre, a worthy woman whom I saw in prison when I went to visit my poor Germain there, and whom, afterward, her ladyship, the marchioness, brought out from the hospital. Now, my lord, you must know why we have chosen M. Morel for godfather, and Jeanne Duport for godmother. We

said one to another, Germain and I, this will be a way of thanking M. Rudolph again for his kindness, by taking for godfather and godmother of our little girl worthy people who owe everything to him and to the marchioness, without taking into consideration that Morel the jeweler and Jeanne Duport are the cream of honest people. They are of our class, and besides, as Germain and I say, they are our kindred in happiness, for they are like us, of the family of your _protØgØes_, my lord."

"Oh, father, has not this idea a charming delicacy," said Fleur-de-Marie, with emotion, "to take as godfather and godmother of their child those who owe everything to you and my second mother."

"You are right, dear child," said ClØmence; "I am most deeply touched by this token."

"And I am very glad that I have so well bestowed my benefits," said Rudolph, continuing to read.

"Besides, with the aid of the money you have given him, M. Rudolph, Morel is now a dealer in precious stones; he gains something to bring up his family upon, and the means of teaching his children some trade. The good Louise will, I think, marry a worthy laborer, who loves and respects her, as he should, for she has been unfortunate, but not guilty, and the betrothed of Louise has heart enough to understand this."

"I was very certain," exclaimed Rudolph, addressing his daughter, "of finding in dear little Rigolette's letter arms against our enemy! You hear, it is the expression of the plain common sense of this honest and upright soul. She says of Louise, 'She has been unfortunate, but not guilty, and her betrothed has heart enough to understand this.'"

Fleur-de-Marie, more and more moved and saddened by the reading of this letter, trembled at the glance that her father fixed upon her, for a moment, as he emphasized the above last words.

The prince continued: "I will tell you also, my lord, that Jeanne Duport, through the generosity of the marchioness, has been able to be separated from her husband, that wicked man who ate her out of everything and beat her; she has taken her eldest daughter with her, and she keeps a little lace shop, where she sells what she and her children make; their trade prospers. There are nowhere such happy people, and thanks to whom! thanks to you, my lord, to the marchioness, who both know how to give so much, and to give to so good purpose.

"By the way, Germain will write to you as usual, my lord, at the end of the month, on the subject of the Bank for Laborers out of employment, and of gratuitous loans; the reimbursements are seldom behindhand, and we perceive already much good that this spreads in this quarter. Now, at least, poor families can get through the dull season for work without putting their linens and beds in pledge. Then when work returns, you should see with what spirit they put themselves to it; they are so proud that confidence is placed in their work and their probity! And, indeed, it is not only this you should see. Besides, how they bless you for having lent them the

wherewithal. Yes, my lord, they bless you, _you_, for although you say you have done nothing in its institution but to nominate Germain for head cashier, and that it is an unknown who has done this good work, we like better to believe that it is to you we owe it; it is more natural. Besides, there is a famous trumpet to repeat on every occasion that it is you we should bless; this trumpet is Madame Pipelet, who repeats to every one that it is only her _prince of tenants_ (excuse me, M. Rudolph, she always calls you so) who can have done this charitable work, and her Darling Alfred is of her opinion. As to him, he is so proud and so pleased with his office of bank porter, that he says that the employment of M. Cabrion would be nothing to him. To end your family of _protégés_, my lord, I will add that Germain has read in the papers that Martial, a planter in Algiers, has been spoken of with great praises for the courage he had shown in repulsing, at the head of his farmers, an attack of thievish Arabs, and that his wife, as intrepid as himself, had been slightly wounded in the side while she was discharging her gun like a real grenadier. From that time, they say in the papers, she has been called 'Mrs. Rifle.' Excuse this long letter, my lord, but I thought you would not be sorry to hear from us concerning those whose good Providence you have been. I write to you from the farm at Bouqueval, where we have been since spring with our good mother. Germain leaves every morning for his business, and returns at night. In the autumn we shall go back to live in Paris. How strange it is, M. Rudolph, I, who never loved the country, adore it now. I make it clear to myself: it is because Germain loves it so much. Speaking of the farm, M. Rudolph, you, who undoubtedly know where that good little Goualeuse is--if you have an opportunity, tell her how we always remember her as one of the sweetest and best beings in the world; and that I myself never think of our happiness without saying, since M. Rudolph was also the M. Rudolph of dear Fleur-de-Marie, through his care she must be as happy as we; and this makes my happiness yet more perfect. How I run on! What will you say to me, my lord? But oh! you are so good! And then, you see, it is your fault if I chatter as much and as joyously as Papa Cretu and Ramonette, who no longer dare to rival me in singing. Indeed, M. Rudolph, I can tell you, I put it into their mouths. You will not refuse us one request, will you, my lord? If you give a name to our dear little child, it seems to us it will bring her good fortune, it will be like a happy star for her; believe it, M. Rudolph, sometimes my good Germain and I almost congratulate ourselves for having known so much sorrow, because we feel doubly how happy our child will be not to know what is the misery through which we have passed. If I close by telling, M. Rudolph, that we endeavor to aid poor people here and there, according to our means, it is not to boast of ourselves, but that you may know we do not keep to ourselves alone all the happiness you have given us; beside, we always say to those we succor, 'It is not we that you must thank and bless, it is M. Rudolph, the best, most generous man that there is in the world; 'and they take you for a kind of _saint_, if nothing more. Adieu, my lord! believe me, when our little girl shall begin to spell, the first words she shall read will be your name, M. Rudolph, and afterward, those words you caused to be written upon my wedding gift:

"Labor, and wisdom--honor and happiness."

"With the help of these four words, our tenderness and our care, we hope, my lord, that our child will be always worthy to speak the name of him who

has been our good Providence, and that of all the wretched ones he has known. Pardon, my lord, for finishing thus; I have such large tears in my eyes--they are good tears--excuse, if you please--it is not my fault--but I cannot see clearly, so that I write badly.

"I have the honor, my lord, to salute you with as much respect as gratitude, RIGOLETTE GERMAIN."

"P.S.--Oh! my lord, in reading over my letter, I perceive that I have very often written _M. Rudolph_. You will pardon me? I may hope so? You know well that under one name or another, we respect and bless you the same, my lord."

"Dear little Rigolette," said Clømence, softened by the letter which Rudolph had just read. "This simple epistle is full of sensibility."

"Undoubtedly," replied Rudolph, "a benefit was never better bestowed. Our friend is endowed with an excellent disposition; she has a heart of gold, and our dear child appreciates her as we do," added he, addressing his daughter. Then, struck with her paleness and emotion, he cried:

"But what is the matter?"

"Alas, what a sad contrast between my position and Rigolette's. Work and wisdom--honor and happiness--those four words tell all that has happened to her. A laborious and sensible daughter, a beloved wife, a happy mother, an honored woman--such is her destiny--while I--"

"Great God, what are you saying?"

"Pardon, my good father, do not accuse me of ingratitude, but notwithstanding your ineffable tenderness, notwithstanding that of my second mother, notwithstanding your sovereign power, notwithstanding the respect and splendor with which I am surrounded, my shame is incurable. Nothing can annihilate the past--once more, pardon me, my father. I have until now concealed it from you, but the remembrance of my former degradation throws me into despair--it kills me."

"Clømence, do you hear her?" cried Rudolph, in despair.

"But, my poor child," said Clømence, taking affectionately the hands of Fleur-de-Marie in her own, "our tenderness, the affection of those who surround you, and which you so well merit, does not all this prove to you that the past should be to you only a vain and bad dream?"

"Oh, fatality, fatality!" resumed Rudolph. "Now I curse my fears and silence; that sad idea, so long rooted in her mind, has made there, unknown to us, dreadful ravages, and it is too late to contend against this deplorable error; alas! how unfortunate I am."

"Courage, my dear," said Clømence to Rudolph; "you just now said it is better to know the enemy which threatens us. We now know the cause of our

dear child's sorrow! we shall triumph over it, because we shall have reason, justice, and tenderness on our side."

"And then at last, because she will see that her affliction, if it were incurable, would render ours incurable also," replied Rudolph, "for in truth it would be to despair of all justice, human and Divine, if our poor child had only a change of sufferings."

After a silence of some moments, during which Fleur-de-Marie appeared to be collecting herself, she took with one hand Rudolph's, with the other Clømence's, and said to them, with a voice expressive of deep emotion: "Listen to me, my good father, and you also, my loving mother, this day is a solemn one--God has granted, and I thank Him for it, that it should be impossible for me to conceal from you any longer what I feel. In a little time I should, in any event, have made to you the confession you are now about to hear, for all suffering has an end, and concealed as mine has been, I should not have been able to keep silence to you much longer."

"Oh! I understand all," cried Rudolph; "there is no longer any hope for her."

"I hope for the future, my father, and this hope gives me strength to speak to you thus."

"And what can you hope for the future, my poor child, since your present fate causes you only grief and bitterness?"

"I am going to tell you, my father; but, before all, permit me to recall the past to you, to own to you, before God who hears me, what I have felt up to this time."

"Speak, speak, we hear you," said Rudolph, seating himself with Clømence, by Fleur-de-Marie.

"While I remained at Paris, near you, my father," said Fleur-de-Marie, "I was so happy, oh! so completely happy, that those delicious days would not be too well paid for by years of suffering. You see I have at least known what happiness is."

"During some days, perhaps?"

"Yes, but what pure and unmingled felicity! Love surrounded me then, as ever, with the tenderest care. I gave myself up without fear to the emotions of gratitude and affection which every moment raised my heart to you. The future dazzled me: a father to adore, a second mother to love doubly, for she had taken the place of my own, whom I had never known--I must own everything; my pride was excited in spite of myself, so much was I honored in belonging to you. Then the few persons of your household who at Paris had occasion to speak to me called me 'your highness,' I could not prevent myself from being proud of this title. If I thought then, at times, vaguely of the past, it was to say to myself, 'I, formerly so humble, the beloved daughter of a sovereign prince who is blessed and revered by every one; I, formerly so miserable, I am enjoying all the splendors of luxury,

and of an almost royal existence.' Alas! my father, my fortune was so unforeseen, your power surrounded me with such a splendid _eclat_ that; I was excusable perhaps in allowing myself to become so blinded."

"Excusable! nothing was more natural, my poor beloved angel; what wrong was there in being proud of a rank which was your own, of enjoying the advantages of the position to which I had restored you! At that time I recollect you were delightfully gay; how many times have I seen you fall into my arms as if overpowered with happiness, and heard you say to me, with an enchanting accent, 'My father, it is too much, too much happiness!' Unfortunately, these are only recollections; they lulled me into a deceitful security, and since then I have not been enough alarmed at the cause of your melancholy."

"But, tell us then, my child," asked Clømence, "what has changed into sadness this pure, this legitimate joy which you first felt?"

"Alas! a very sad and entirely unforeseen circumstance."

"What circumstance?"

"You recollect, my father," said Fleur-de-Marie, without being able to conquer a shuddering of horror; "you remember the sad scene which preceded our departure from Paris, when your carriage was stopped near the barrier?"

"Yes," replied Rudolph, sadly. "Brave Slasher, after having again saved my life; he died there before us, saying, 'Heaven is just; I have killed, they kill me.'"

"Oh well, father, at the moment when this unfortunate man was expiring, do you know whom I saw looking intently at me? Oh, that look, that look! it has pursued me ever since," added Fleur-de-Marie, shuddering.

"What look? of whom do you speak?" cried Rudolph.

"Of the Ogress of the White Rabbit," murmured Fleur-de-Marie.

"That monster seen again?--where?"

"You did not perceive her in the tavern where the Slasher breathed his last. She was among the women who surrounded him."

"Oh, now!" said Rudolph, dejectedly, "I understand: already struck with terror by the murder of the Slasher, you thought there was something providential in this dreadful meeting."

"It is but too true, my father. At the sight of the Ogress I felt a mortal shudder. It seemed to me that, under her look, my heart, until then radiant with happiness and hope, was suddenly frozen. Yes; to meet this woman at the moment when the Slasher was dying and repeating the words 'Heaven is just,' this seemed to me a providential reproof of my proud forgetfulness of the past, which I ought to expiate by humiliation and repentance."

"But the past was laid upon you; you can answer for it before high heaven! You were constrained, intoxicated, unfortunate child. Once precipitated, in spite of yourself, in this abyss, you could not leave it, notwithstanding your remorse, your terror your despair, thanks to the atrocious indifference of that society of which you were the victim. You saw yourself forever chained in that cavern; the chance which placed you in my path could alone have dragged you from it."

"And then, my child, as your father has told you, you were the victim, not the accomplice, of the infamy," cried Clømence.

"But to this infamy I have submitted, my mother," sadly rejoined Fleur-de-Marie; "nothing can annihilate these horrible recollections. They pursue me incessantly, no longer as formerly, in the midst of the peaceable inhabitants of a farm, or of the degraded women, my companions in Saint Lazare, but they pursue me even to this palace, peopled with the _elite_ of Germany. They pursue me even to the arms of my father, even to the steps of his throne."

Fleur-de-Marie melted into tears. Rudolph and Clømence remained mute before this frightful expression of invincible remorse. They, too wept, for they felt the powerlessness of their consolations.

"Since then," resumed Fleur-de-Marie, drying her tears, "every moment of the day I say to myself, with bitter shame, 'I am honored, I am revered; the most eminent and most venerable surround me with respect; in sight of the whole court, the sister of an emperor has deigned to fasten the bandeau upon my head; yet I had lived in the mud of the city--have been spoken to familiarly by thieves and assassins!' Oh, father, forgive me! but the more my position is elevated, the more I have been struck with the profound degradation into which I had fallen. At each new homage which is rendered me, I feel myself guilty of a profanation. Think of it, oh, heaven! after having been what _I have been_ to suffer old men to bow before me--to suffer noble young women, women justly respected, to feel themselves flattered to approach me--to suffer finally, that princesses, doubly august by age and their sacerdotal character should heap upon me favors and praises, is not this impious and sacrilegious? And then, if you knew, my father, what I have suffered--what I still suffer every day, in saying, 'If it should please God that the past should be known, with what merited scorn would she be treated who is now elevated so high. What a just--what a frightful punishment!'"

"But, unfortunate one, my wife and I, who know the past, are worthy of our rank, and we love, we adore you."

"You have for me the blind tenderness of a father and a mother."

"And all the good you have done since your abode here--this beautiful and holy institution, this asylum opened by you to orphans and poor abandoned girls--those admirable cares of intelligence and devotion with which you watch over them--you insisting that they call themselves _your sisters_--wishing that they should call you so, since in fact you treat them as such, is this nothing to atone for faults which were not your own?"

Finally, the affection which is shown for you by the worthy abbess of Saint Hermangilda, who did not know you till after your arrival here--do you not owe it altogether to the elevation of your mind, the beauty of your soul, and your sincere piety?"

"While the praises from the abbess are addressed only to my present conduct, I enjoy them without scruple, my father; but when she quotes my example to the noble ladies who are engaged in religious offices in the abbey--when they see in me a model of all the virtues, I am ready to die of confusion, as if I were the accomplice of a wicked falsehood."

After a long silence, Rudolph resumed, with deep dejection: "I see--I must despair of persuading you: reason is weak when opposed to a conviction, the more firm because it has its source in a generous and elevated sentiment. Since every moment you throw back a look on the past, the contrast between these remembrances and your present position must be indeed a continual punishment to you. Pardon me in turn, poor child."

"You, my good father, ask pardon of me, for what? Good heaven, what?"

"For not having foreseen your susceptibility. From the exceeding delicacy of your heart, I ought to have divined it; and yet, what could I do? It was my duty solemnly to acknowledge you as my daughter. Then this respect, of which the homage is so painful to you, comes of necessity to surround you. Yes; but I was wrong in one point. I have been, do you see, too proud of you--I have wished too much to enjoy the charms of your beauty--those charms of the mind which surprised every one who approached you. I ought to have hidden my treasure--to have lived almost in retirement with Clømence and you; I should have renounced these _fœtes_--these numerous receptions, at which I loved so much to see you shine, thinking, foolishly, to elevate you so high--so high, that the past would disappear entirely from your eyes. But, alas! the reverse has taken place, and, as you have told me, the more elevated you have been, the deeper and more dark has seemed the abyss from which I drew you. Yet once again it is my fault. I meant, however, to do right, but I was mistaken," said Rudolph, drying his eyes, "but I was mistaken; and then I supposed myself pardoned too soon. The vengeance of God was not satisfied; it still pursues me in the unhappiness of my daughter!"

A discreet knock at the door of the saloon which adjoined the oratory of Fleur-de-Marie interrupted this sad conversation.

Rudolph rose, and half opened the door. He saw Murphy, who said, "I ask pardon of your royal highness for disturbing you, but a courier from Prince Herkausen-Oldenzaal has just brought a letter, which, he says, is very important, and must be delivered immediately to your royal highness."

"Thank you, my good Murphy; do not go away," said Rudolph, with a sigh; "presently I shall want to talk with you."

And the prince, having shut the door, remained a moment in the saloon, to read the letter which Murphy had just brought him. It was in these words:

"My Lord,--May I hope that the ties of relationship which attach me to your royal highness, and the friendship with which you have always deigned to honor me, will excuse me for a proceeding which might be considered very rash, if it was not imposed by the conscience of an honest man. It is fifteen months, my lord, since you returned from France, bringing with you a daughter, so much the more beloved because you had thought her forever lost, while, on the contrary, she had never quitted her mother, whom you married at Paris _in extremis_, in order to legitimize the birth of the Princess Amelia, who is thus the equal of the other princesses of the Germanic Confederation. Her birth is, therefore, sovereign, her beauty is incomparable, her heart is as worthy of her birth as her mind is worthy of her beauty, as my sister, the Abbess of Saint Hermangilda, has written me. The abbess, as you know, has often the honor of seeing this well-beloved daughter of your royal highness. During the time which my son passed at Gerolstein he saw, almost every day, the Princess Amelia; he loves her desperately, but he has always concealed this passion. I have thought it my duty, my lord, to inform you of this circumstance. You have deigned, as a father, to receive my son, and have invited him to the bosom of your family, and to live in that intimacy which was so precious to him. I should fail in loyalty to your highness if I dissimulated a circumstance which modified the reception which was reserved for my son. I know that it would be madness in us to dare hope to ally ourselves more nearly to the family of your royal highness. I know that the daughter of whom you have so good a right to be proud may aspire to a higher destiny. But I know, also, that you are the most tender of fathers, and that if you ever judged my son worthy of belonging to you, and of contributing to the happiness of the Princess Amelia, you would not be deterred by the grave disproportion which places such a fortune beyond our hopes. It is not for me to make a eulogium of Henry, my lord, but I appeal to the encouragement and to the praise you have so often condescended to bestow on him. I dare not and I cannot say more to you, my lord; my emotion is too profound. Whatever may be your determination, believe that we shall submit to it with respect, and that I shall be always faithful to the sentiments of the most profound devotion with which I have the honor to be, your royal highness's most humble and obedient servant,

GUSTAVUS PAUL,

"Prince of Herkausen-Oldenzaal."

CHAPTER V

After reading the prince's letter, Rudolph remained for some time sad and thoughtful: a ray of hope then lighted up his face; he returned to his daughter, on whom Clømence was vainly lavishing the most tender consolations.

"My child, you have yourself said it was heaven's will that this day should be one of solemn explanations." said Rudolph to Fleur-de-Marie; "I did not

anticipate a new and grave circumstance which was to justify your words."

"To what does it refer, father?"

"My dear, what is it?"

"New causes of fear!"

"For you."

"For me?"

"You have confessed to us but half your troubles, my poor child."

"Be so kind as to explain yourself, my father," said Fleur-de-Marie, blushing.

"Now I can do it; I could not sooner, not knowing how much you despaired of your fate. Listen, my beloved daughter! You believe yourself, or rather, you are, very unhappy. When, at the beginning of our conversation, you spoke to me of the hopes which remained to you, I understood--my heart was broken, for I was to part with you forever--that I was to see you shut yourself up in a cloister--to see you descend living to a tomb. Is it your wish to enter a convent?"

"Father!"

"My child, is this true?"

"Yes, if you will permit me to do it," replied Fleur-de-Marie, with a stifled voice.

"Leave us!" cried Clømence.

"The Abbey of Saint Hermangilda is very near Gerolstein. I shall often see you and father."

"Do you consider that such vows are eternal, my dear child? you are only eighteen years old, and perhaps some day--"

"Oh, I shall never repent the resolution I have taken. I shall never find repose and forgetfulness but in the solitude of the cloister, if you, my father, and you my second mother, continue your affection to me."

"The duties and consolations of a religious life might, indeed," said Rudolph, "if they could not heal, at least calm, the sorrows of your poor depressed and distracted spirit. And though half the happiness of my life is the forfeit, I may perhaps approve your resolution. I know what you suffer, and I do not say that renouncing the world may not be the fatally logical end of your sorrowful existence."

"What, you also, Rudolph?" cried Clømence.

"Permit me, my dear, to express all my thoughts," replied Rudolph. Then, addressing his daughter, "But before taking this last determination, we must examine if there may not be other prospects for the future, more agreeable to your wishes and ours. In this case, I should not regard any sacrifice, if I could secure you such a future existence."

Fleur-de-Marie and Clømence started with surprise. Rudolph continued, fixing his eyes on his daughter, "What do you think of your cousin Henry?" After a moment of hesitation, she threw herself weeping into the arms of the prince.

"You love him, my poor child?"

"You never asked me, father," replied Fleur-de-Marie, drying her tears.

"My dear, we were not deceived," said Clømence.

"So you love him," added Rudolph, taking his daughter's hands in his own, "you love him well, my dear child?"

"Oh, if you knew," replied Fleur-de-Marie, "how much it has cost me to hide from you the sentiment as soon as I discovered it in my heart--alas, at the least question from you, I should have owned everything. But shame restrained me, and would always have restrained me."

"And do you think that Henry knows your love for him?" said Rudolph.

"Great Heaven, father, I do not think so," cried Fleur-de-Marie, in terror.

"And do you think he loves you?"

"No, father, no--oh, I hope not--he would suffer too much."

"And how did this love come, my beloved angel?"

"Alas, almost without my knowing it--you remember the picture of the page?"

"Which is in the apartment of the Abbess of Saint Hermangilda--it was Henry's portrait."

"Yes, dear father, believing this to be a painting of another age, one day in your presence, I did not conceal from the superior that I was struck with the beauty of this portrait. You said to me then, in jest, that the picture represented one of our relations of the olden time, who, when very young, had displayed great courage and excellent qualities. The grace of this figure, joined to what you told me of the noble character of this relative, added yet to my first impression. From that day, I often took pleasure in recalling this portrait, and that without the least scruple, believing that it belonged to one of my cousins long since dead. Little by little I habituated myself to these gentle thoughts, knowing that it was not permitted me to love on this earth," added Fleur-de-Marie with a heart-rending expression, and her tears bursting forth anew. "I gave to these romantic reveries a sort of melancholy interest, half smiles, half

tears. I looked upon the pretty page of the past time as a lover beyond the grave, whom I should perhaps one day meet in eternity. It seemed to me that such a love was alone worthy of a heart which belonged entirely to you, my father. But pardon me these sad, childish imaginations."

"Nothing can be more touching, on the contrary, poor child," said Clømence.

"Now," replied Rudolph, "I understand why you one day reproached me with an air of regret for having deceived you about the picture."

"Alas, yes, dear father. Judge of my confusion when, afterward, the superior informed me that this picture was that of her nephew, one of our relations. Then my trouble was extreme; I endeavored to forget my first impressions, but the more I endeavored, the more they became rooted in my heart, in consequence even of the perseverance of my efforts. Unfortunately, yet, I often hear you, dear father, praising the heart, the mind, the character of Prince Henry."

"You already loved him, my dear child, even when you had as yet seen only his portrait, and heard of his rare qualities!"

"Without loving him, I felt toward him an attraction, for which I bitterly reproached myself. But I consoled myself by thinking that no one in the world would know this sad secret which covered me with shame in mine own eyes. To dare to love, me, me, and then not to be contented with your tenderness and that of my second mother! Did I not owe to you enough to employ all my strength, all the resources of my heart, in loving you both? Oh, believe me, among the reproaches I made myself, these last were the most painful. Finally, I saw my cousin for the first time at that grand fête you gave to the Archduchess Sophia. Prince Henry resembled his portrait in such a striking manner, that I recognized him immediately. The same evening, dear father, you presented my cousin to me, authorizing between us the intimacy which our relationship permitted."

"And soon you loved each other?"

"Ah, my father, he expressed his respect, his attachment, his admiration, with so much eloquence; you had yourself told me so much good of him."

"He deserved it; there is no more elevated character; there is no better or braver heart."

"Your pardon, dear father, do not praise him so much; I am already so unhappy."

"And I must convince you of all the rare qualities of your cousin. What I say surprises you; I understand it, my child--go on."

"I felt the danger that I incurred in seeing Prince Henry every day, and yet I could not withdraw myself from the danger. Notwithstanding my blind confidence in you, dear father, I dared not express my fears to you. I directed all my courage to concealing my love; however, I own to you, dear father, notwithstanding my remorse, often in this fraternal intimacy of

every day, forgetting the past, I felt gleams of happiness till then unknown to me, but followed soon, alas! by dark despair, when I again fell under the influence of my sad recollections. For, alas! if they pursued me in the midst of the homage and respect of persons almost indifferent to me, judge, judge, dear father, of my tortures when Prince Henry lavished on me the most delicate praises, followed me with such frank and pious adoration; putting, as he said, the brotherly attachment that he felt for me under the holy protection of his mother, whom he lost when he was Very young. I endeavored to merit this sweet name of sister, which he bestowed upon me, by advising my cousin respecting his future prospects, according to my weak knowledge; by interesting myself in all which related to him; by promising always to ask of you such assistance for him as you might be able to give. But often, also, what torments have I felt, how I have restrained my tears when, by chance, Prince Henry interrogated me about my infancy, my early youth! to deceive--always to deceive, always to fear, always to lie, always to tremble, before the inexorable look of one's judge. Oh! my father, I was guilty, I know it; I had no right to love; but I expiated this sad love by many bitter sorrows. What shall I say to you? The departure of the Prince Henry, in causing me a new and violent chagrin, enlightened me--I saw that I loved him more than I imagined. Thus," added Fleur-de-Marie, with deep dejection, and as if this confession had exhausted her strength, "I should have soon made you this avowal, for this fatal love has filled up the measure of my sufferings. Say, now that you know all, my father, is there any future prospect for me but that of the cloister?"

"There is another, my child; yes, and this future is as sweet, as smiling, as happy, as the other is dark and gloomy."

"What do you say, dear father?"

"Hear me in my turn. You must feel that I love you too much, that my tenderness is too clear-sighted, to have allowed your love and that of Henry to have escaped me; at the end of a few days I was certain that he loved you, more even, perhaps, than you loved him."

"My father, no, no; it is impossible; he does not love me at this time."

"He loves you, I tell you; he loves you passionately, to madness, almost."

"Oh, heaven!"

"Listen further. When I told you that pleasantries about the picture, I did not know that Henry was about to visit his aunt at Gerolstein. When he came I yielded to the inclination I have always felt toward him; I invited him to come and see us often. I had before always treated him like my son; I changed in no degree my manner toward him. At the end of some days, Clømence and myself no longer doubted the regard you felt for each other. If your position was painful, my poor child, mine was not less so; it was extremely delicate. As a father, knowing the rare and excellent qualities of Henry, I could not but be profoundly happy at your attachment, for I could never have dreamed of a husband more worthy of you."

"Ah! dear father, pity, pity!"

"But, as a man of honor, I thought of the sad past life of my child. Thus, far from encouraging the hopes of Henry, I gave him, in several conversations, advice absolutely contradictory from what he would have expected from me if I had thought of giving him your hand. In such a situation, one so delicate, as a father and a man of honor, it was incumbent on me to keep a rigorous neutrality, not to encourage the love of your cousin, but to treat him with the same affability as formerly. You have been hitherto so unhappy, my beloved child, that seeing you, so to speak, reviving under the impulse of this noble and pure love, I could not for anything in the world have deprived you of its divine and rare joys. Admitting even that this love must afterward be broken off, you would at least have known some days of innocent happiness, and then, finally, this love might secure your future repose."

"My repose?"

"Listen again. The father of Henry, Prince Paul, has just written to me--here is his letter. Though he regards this alliance as an unhoped-for favor, he asks of me your hand for his son, who, he says, feels for you the most respectful, the most passionate love."

"Oh!" said Fleur-de-Marie, hiding her face in her hands, "I might have been so happy!"

"Courage, my well-beloved daughter; if you wish it, this happiness is yours," cried Rudolph, tenderly.

"Oh! never, never; do you forget?"

"I forget nothing; but if to-morrow you enter the convent, not only I lose you forever, but you quit me for a life of tears and austerity. Oh! to _lose_ you! to lose _you_! Let me at least know that you are happy, and married to the man you love and who adores you."

"Married to him! Me, dear father!"

"Yes; but on condition that, immediately after your marriage, contracted here at night, without other witnesses than Murphy for you and Baron Graun for Henry, you shall both go to some tranquil retreat in Switzerland or Italy, to live unknown as wealthy citizens. Now, my beloved daughter, do you know why I resign myself to a separation from you? Do you know why I desire Henry to quit his title when he is out of Germany. It is because I am sure that, in the midst of a solitary happiness, concentrated in an existence deprived of all display, little by little you will forget this odious past, which is especially painful to you because it forms such a bitter contrast to the ceremonious homage with which you are constantly surrounded."

"Rudolph is right," cried Clømence: "alone with Henry, continually happy with his happiness and your own, you will no longer have time to think, my dear child, of your former sorrows."

"Then, as it will be impossible for me to be long without seeing you, every year Clømence and I will go to visit you."

"And some day, when the wound of which you suffer, poor little angel, shall be healed, when you shall have found forgetfulness in happiness, and this moment will come sooner than you think, you will return to us, never to leave us."

"Forgetfulness in happiness," murmured Fleur-de-Marie, who, in spite of herself, was soothed by this enchanting vision.

"Yes, yes, my child," replied Clømence, "when at every moment of the day you see yourself blessed, respected, adored by the husband of your choice, by the man whose noble and generous heart your father has extolled to you a thousand times, shall you have leisure to think of the past, and even if you should think of it, why should the past sadden you? why should it prevent you from believing in the radiant felicity of your husband?"

"Finally it is true, for tell me, my child," replied Rudolph, who could scarcely restrain his tears at seeing that his daughter hesitated, "adored by your husband, when you shall have the knowledge and the proof of the happiness which he owes to you, what reproaches can you make yourself?"

"Father," said Fleur-de-Marie, forgetting the past for this ineffable hope, "can so much happiness be reserved for me?"

"Ah, I was sure of it," cried Rudolph, in an ecstasy of triumphant joy; "is there a father who wishes it, who cannot restore happiness to an adored child?"

"She merits so much that we ought to be heard, my friend," said Clømence, sharing the transport of her husband.

"To marry Henry, and some day to pass my whole life between him, my second mother, and my father," replied Fleur-de-Marie, yielding more and more to the sweet intoxication of her thoughts.

"Yes, my beloved angel, we shall all be happy. I will reply to Henry's father that I consent to the marriage," cried Rudolph, pressing Fleur-de-Marie in his arms with indescribable emotion. "Take courage, our separation will be short; the new duties which your marriage will impose upon you will confirm your steps still more in the path of forgetfulness and felicity in which you will henceforth tread, for finally, if you should one day be a mother, it would not be only for yourself that it would be necessary you should be happy."

"Ah!" cried Fleur-de-Marie, with a heart-rending cry, for this word _mother_ awoke her from the enchanting dream which was lulling her.

"Mother? me!--Oh, never! I am unworthy that holy name; I should die with shame before my child, if I had not died with shame before its father, in making him the avowal of the past."

"What does she say, gracious heaven!" cried Rudolph, stunned by the abrupt

change.

"I a mother!" resumed Fleur-de-Marie, with bitter despair, "I respected, I blessed by an innocent and pure child, I, formerly the object of everybody's scorn, I profane thus the sacred name of mother? Oh, never! miserable thing that I was to allow myself to be drawn away to an unworthy hope!"

"My daughter, listen to me, in pity."

Fleur-de-Marie stood upright, pale, and beautiful, in the majesty of incurable misfortune.

"My father, we forget that before marrying me Prince Henry must know my past life."

"I have not forgotten it," cried Rudolph. "He must know all, he shall know all."

"And would you not rather see me die than see me so degraded in his eyes?"

"But he shall also know what an irresistible fatality plunged you into the abyss. He shall know your restoration."

"And he will finally feel," replied Clømence, pressing Fleur-de-Marie in her arms, "that when I call you my daughter, he may without shame call you his wife!"

"And I, mother, I love Prince Henry too much, I esteem him too much, ever to give him a hand which has been touched by the ruffians of the city."

* * * * *

A short time after this sad scene, the "Official Gazette" of Gerolstein contained the following announcement:

"Yesterday took place, at the Grand-Ducal Abbey of Saint Hermangilda, in presence of his royal highness the reigning grand duke and all the court, the taking of the veil by the very high and most puissant princess, her Royal Highness Amelia of Gerolstein. The novice was received by the most illustrious and most reverend Lord Charles Maximilian, Archbishop-Duke of Oppenheim; Lord Hannibal, Andre Montano, of the Princes of Delpha, Bishop of Ceuta _in partibus infidelium_ and apostolic nuncio, gave the salutation and the Papal benediction. The sermon was pronounced by the most reverend Lord Peter von Asfeld, Canon of the Chapter of Cologne, Count of the Holy Roman Empire--VENI CREATOR OPTIME."

CHAPTER VI

THE PROFESSION.

Rudolph to Clømence.

GEROLSTEIN, January 12th, 1842. [Footnote: About six months have passed since Fleur-de-Marie entered St. Hermangilda Abbey as a novice.]

In assuring me to-day of the complete restoration of your father's health, my dear, you give me reason to hope that you can, by the end of the week, bring him back here. I foresaw that in the residence at Rosenfeld, situated in the midst of forests, he would be exposed, notwithstanding all possible precaution, to the severity of our cold; unfortunately, his passion for hunting rendered our advice useless. I conjure you, Clømence, as soon as your father can bear the motion of the carriage, to set out immediately, quit that wild country and wild dwelling, only habitable for those old Germans of iron frame whose race has disappeared. I fear lest you should also fall sick: the fatigues of this hurried journey, the anxiety which preyed upon you until you reached your father, all these causes must have affected you sadly. Why could I not accompany you? Clømence, I beg of you, be not imprudent; I know how bold and how devoted you are. I know how anxiously you will attend to your father; but he will be as much in despair as myself if your health should be impaired by this journey. I deplore doubly the illness of the count, for it takes you from me at a moment when I could have drawn deeply up from the fountain of consolation of your tenderness. The ceremony of the profession of our poor child is fixed for to-morrow--to-morrow, the 13th of January, fatal epoch. It was upon the 13th of January that I drew the sword against my father. Ah! my friend, I too soon thought myself forgiven. The intoxicating hope of passing my life with you and my daughter made me forget that it was not myself, but that it was she who had been punished thus far, and that my punishment was still to come. And it did come--when, six months since, the unhappy one unveiled to us the double torment of her heart; "her incurable shame at the past, added to her unhappy love for Henry." These two bitter and burning sensations, the one heightened by the other by a fatal logic, caused her to take up the unconquerable resolution to take the veil. You know, my dear friend, how, in combating this design with all the strength of our adoration for her, we could not deny that her worthy and courageous conduct should have been ours. How could we answer those terrible words? I love Prince Henry too well to give him a hand which has been touched by the ruffians of the city."

She was obliged to sacrifice herself to her noble scruples, to the ineffaceable remembrance of her shame; she has done it valiantly; she has renounced the splendors of the world; she has descended from the steps of a throne to kneel, clothed in sackcloth, upon the pavement of a church; she crossed her hands upon her breast, bowed her angelic head, and her beautiful fair locks, which I loved so much, and which I preserve as a treasure, fell, cut off by the sharp iron. Oh! my friend, you know our heart-rending emotion at this mournful and solemn moment; this emotion is, even now, as poignant as at the time. In writing these words to you, I weep like a child.

* * * * *

I saw her this morning; although she seemed to me less pale than usual, and declares she does not suffer, her health makes me anxious. Alas! when, under the veil and band which surround her noble forehead, I see her attenuated features, which have the cold whiteness of marble, and which make her large blue eyes seem larger still, I cannot help dreaming over the gentle and pure splendor with which her beauty sparkled at our marriage. Never did she look so charming. Our happiness seemed to radiate from her beautiful countenance. As I told you, I saw her this morning; she has not been informed that Princess Juliana voluntarily resigns in her favor the dignity of abbess; to-morrow, therefore, on the day of her profession, our child will be elected abbess, as there is a unanimous desire among the noble ladies of the community to confer upon her this dignity. Since the beginning of her novitiate, there has been but one opinion of her piety, charity, and religious exactness in fulfilling all the duties of her order, whose austerities she exaggerates most unfortunately. She has exercised in this convent the influence which she exercises everywhere without attempting to do so, and in ignorance of the fact which increases her power. Her conversation this morning confirmed my doubts. She has not found in the solitude of the cloister, and in the severe practice of monastic duties, repose and forgetfulness. She congratulated herself, however, upon her resolution, which she considers the accomplishment of an imperious duty; but she suffers continually, for she is not formed for those mystical contemplations, in the midst of which certain people, forgetting all affection, all earthly remembrances, are lost in ascetic delights. No; Fleur-de-Marie believes, prays, submits herself to the rigorous and harsh observance of her order; she pours out the most evangelical consolations, the most humble cares upon the poor sick women who are taken care of in the hospital of the abbey. She has even refused the assistance of a lay sister for the moderate care of that cold and bare cell where we remarked, with such sad astonishment, you remember, my dear friend, the dried branches of her little rose-bush, suspended beneath her crucifix. She is, indeed, the cherished example, the venerated model of the community. But she confessed to me this morning, while bitterly reproaching herself for this weakness, that she is not so much absorbed by the duties and austerities of a religious life as to prevent the past from constantly appearing before her, not only as it was, but as it might have been.

"I blame myself for it, my father," said she to me, with that calm and gentle resignation which you know belongs to her, "I blame myself, but I cannot help often thinking that if God had spared me the degradation which has withered forever my future life, I might have lived always near you, beloved by the husband of your choice, In spite of myself, my life is divided between these grievous regrets and the frightful recollections of the city; in vain I pray to God to free me from these frightful recollections, to fill my heart alone with pious love for Him, with holy hopes; in short, to take me entirely to Himself, since I wish to give myself entirely to Him. He does not grant my prayers--undoubtedly because earthly thoughts render me unworthy to enter into communion with Him."

"But then," cried I, seized with a foolish glimmering of hope, "there is still time--to day your novitiate ends; but it is not until to morrow that your solemn profession will take place; you are still free--renounce this

rude and austere life, which does not afford you the consolation you expected; if you must suffer, come and suffer in our arms: let our tenderness assuage your sorrows."

Shaking sadly her head, she answered me, with that inflexible justness of reasoning which has so often struck us. "It is true, my dear father, the solitude of this cloister is sad for me--for me, already accustomed to your kindness every moment. It is true, I am pursued with bitter regrets and grievous recollections; but, at least, I have the consciousness of fulfilling a duty; I understand, I know, that everywhere but here I should be out of place; I should again be in that cruelly false position in which I have already suffered so much both for myself and for you--for I, too, am proud. Your daughter shall be such as she ought to be; shall do what she ought to do; shall suffer what she ought to suffer. To-morrow all will know from what a slough you have rescued me; in seeing the repentant at the foot of the cross, they will, perhaps, pardon the past in consideration of my present humility. It would not be so, my dear father, if they saw me, as a few months ago, shining in the midst of the splendors of your court. Besides, to satisfy the just and severe demands of the world, will satisfy myself; and I am grateful to God, with all the power of my soul, when I think that He alone can offer to your daughter an asylum and position worthy of her and of you; a position, in short, which shall not form a sad contrast to my former degradation, and in which I can deserve the only respect which is due to me, that which is granted to repentance and sincere humility." Alas! Clømence, what could I reply to that? Fatality! Fatality! for this unfortunate child is endowed, so to speak, with an inexorable logic in all that concerns the sensitiveness of the heart and one's honor. With such a mind and soul, one cannot think of palliating or hiding false positions--we must suffer the imperious consequences. I left her, as usual, with a breaking heart. Without founding the least hope upon this interview, which will be the last before her profession, I said to myself "To-day she might renounce the cloister." But you see, my dear friend, her will is irrevocable, and I must indeed agree with her, and repeat her words:

"God alone can offer her an asylum and a position worthy of her and of me."

Once more, her resolution is admirably logical, and suited to the position in society in which we are placed. With Fleur-de-Marie's exquisite sensibility, no other condition was possible for her. But I have often told you, my friend, if sacred duties, more sacred still than those of family, did not detain me in the midst of a people who love me, and to whom I stand, in a slight degree, in the place of Providence, I should go away with you, my daughter, Henry, and Murphy, to live happily and obscurely in some unknown retreat. Then, far from the imperious laws of a society which is powerless to cure the evils which it has caused, we might have forced this unhappy child into happiness and forgetfulness. While here, in the midst of splendor, of ceremony, as restrained as this, it was impossible. But still, once more, fatality! fatality! I cannot abdicate my power without compromising the happiness of this people, who rely upon me. Brave and worthy people! how little do they know how much their happiness costs me! Adieu, a tender adieu, my beloved Clømence. It is a consolation to me to see you as afflicted as myself at the fate of my child, for thus I can say our sorrow, and there is no egotism in my suffering. Sometimes I

ask myself, with fear, what would become of me without you, in the midst of such grievous circumstances? Often these thoughts make me still more sad at Fleur-de-Marie's fate; for you remain to me, you. But for her who is there? Adieu, a sad adieu, my dear, good angel of unhappy days. Come back soon; this absence weighs upon you as well as me. My life and love to you! soul and heart to you! R.

I send you this letter by a courier; in case of any unexpected change, I will despatch to you another immediately after the sad ceremony. A thousand wishes and hopes to your father for the establishment of his health. I forgot to give you intelligence of poor Henry; his state of health is better, and no longer gives us such anxiety. His excellent father, himself ill, has recovered strength to take care of Henry, to watch over him; a miracle of paternal love--which does not astonish us--the rest of us.

Thus, my dear friend, to-morrow--to-morrow--fatal and unpropitious day for me.

Yours forever, R.

Abbey of St. Hermangilda, 4 o'clock in the morning.

Calm yourself, dear Clømence, calm yourself; although the hour in which I write this letter, and the place whence it is dated, might alarm you. Thanks to Heaven, the danger is past, but the crisis was terrible. Yesterday, after having written to you, agitated by a fatal presentiment, in recalling to myself the paleness and appearance of suffering in my daughter, the state of weakness in which she had languished for some time, remembering, in short, that she was to pass in prayer, in a large, icy-cold church, almost all the night before her profession, I sent Murphy and David to the abbey to ask the Princess Juliana to permit them to remain, until to-morrow, in the outer house which Henry usually inhabited. Thus, my daughter could have prompt assistance, _and_ I could have intelligence if, as I feared, strength should fail her to accomplish this rigorous, I will not say cruel, obligation to remain a January night in prayer in the excessive cold. I had also written to Fleur-de-Marie, that while I respected the exercise of her religious duties, I begged her to take care of her health, and to pass the evening in prayer in her cell, and not in the church. This is the letter she sent in reply.

"My dear father, I thank you deeply, and with all my heart, for this new and tender proof of your interest; have no anxiety, I believe I am in the way of accomplishing my duty. Your daughter, my dear father, can show neither fear nor weakness. Such are the rules; I must conform to them. If some physical sufferings result from it, with joy do I offer them to God! You will approve it, I hope; you, who have always practiced renunciation and duty with so much courage. Farewell, my dear father. I will not say I am going to pray for you, when I pray to God, I always pray for you, for it is impossible to prevent mingling you with the divinity I implore; you have been to me on earth what God, if I deserve it, will be to me in heaven.

"Deign this evening to bless in thought your daughter, my dear father.
To-morrow she will be the bride of the Lord.

"She kisses your hand with pious respect.

"SISTER AMELIA."

This letter, which I could not read without shedding tears, reassured me, however, but little; I, too, must pass a sad evening. Night having come, I went to shut myself up in the pavilion which I have had built not far from the monument erected to my father's memory, in expiation of that fatal night.

Toward one o'clock in the morning, I heard Murphy's voice; I shuddered with alarm; he had come in haste from the convent. How shall I tell you, my friend? As I had foreseen, the unfortunate child, notwithstanding her courage and strong will, had not strength to accomplish entirely the barbarous custom, which it had been impossible for the Princess Juliana to dispense with, as the rules on this subject were precise. At eight o'clock in the evening, Fleur-de-Marie kneeled down on the stone pavement in the church. Until midnight she continued praying. But at this hour, overcome by her weakness, the horrible cold, and her emotion, for she wept long and silently, she fainted. Two nuns, who by the Princess Juliana's order had watched with her, took her up, and carried her to her cell.

David was immediately called. Murphy came in a carriage to seek me; I flew to the convent; I was received by Princess Juliana. She told me that David feared the sight of me would make too great an impression upon my daughter; that her fainting, from which she had recovered, presented nothing very alarming, having been only caused by great weakness. At first a horrible dread seized me. I feared they wished to hide from me some great misfortune, or, at least, to prepare me to hear it; but the superior said to me, "I assure you, my lord, Princess Amelia is out of danger, a simple cordial which Dr. David gave her has restored her strength." I could not doubt what the abbess affirmed; I believed her, and awaited intelligence from my daughter with sad impatience.

At the end of a quarter of an hour David returned. Thanks to Heaven, she was better; and she had desired to continue her watching and prayers in the church, consenting only to kneel upon a cushion. And as I resisted, and was indignant that the superior should have granted her request, adding that I formally opposed myself to it, he replied to me that it would have been dangerous to contradict the wishes of my daughter at a time when she was under the influence of a strong nervous emotion; and, besides, he had agreed with Princess Juliana that the poor child should quit the church at the hour of matins to take a little repose, and prepare for the ceremony.

"She is now in church, then?" said I to him.

"Yes, my lord, but in half an hour she will have quitted it."

I caused myself to be conducted to the north gallery, from which the whole

choir of the church can be seen. There, in the midst of the darkness of this vast church, only illuminated by the pale light of the lamp from the chancel, I saw her near the grating on her knees, her hands joined, and praying with fervor. I also knelt, and thought of my child.

Three o'clock struck; two sisters who were seated, but who had not moved their eyes from her, went and whispered to her. In a few moments she made a sign, got up, and crossed the church with a firm step--although, my friend, when she passed under the lamp, her countenance appeared to me as white as the long veil which floated around her.

I also went out of the gallery, intending first to go to meet her, but feared a new emotion would prevent her from taking a few moments' repose. I sent David to learn how she was; he came back to tell me she felt better, and intended to try to sleep a little. I remained at the abbey, for the ceremony which will take place to-morrow.

I think now, my friend, it is useless to send you this incomplete letter. I shall finish it to-morrow by relating the events of that sad day. Until then farewell, my friend. I am worn out with grief. Pity me.

CHAPTER VII

THE THIRTEENTH OF JANUARY.

Rudolph to Clømence.

Thirteenth of January--an anniversary now doubly dreadful! My friend, we are losing her forever! All is over--all! Listen to the story! It is indeed true, there is an atrocious pleasure in relating a horrible grief.

Yesterday I bewailed the chance which retained you away from me. To-day, Clømence, I congratulate myself that you are not here; you would suffer too much. This morning--I had hardly slept through the night--I was awakened by the sound of the bells; I groaned with terror; it seemed to me funereal, a funereal knell. In fact, my daughter is dead to us--dead: do you hear, Clømence, from this day you must begin to wear mourning for her in your heart--in your heart, so filled with maternal affection for her. Is our child buried under the marble of a tomb or under the vaults of a cloister--for us, what is the difference? From this day, do you understand, Clømence, we must regard her as dead. Besides, she is so very weak; her health, impaired by so much sorrow, by so many shocks, is so feeble. Why not that other death, still more complete? Fate is not weary. And then, besides, after my letter yesterday, you may understand that it would perhaps be more happy for her if she were dead.

DEAD! The four letters have a singular appearance, do you not think so? when one writes them in reference to an idolized daughter, a daughter so fair, so charming, of such angelic goodness, scarcely eighteen, and yet

dead to the world! Indeed, for us and for her, why vegetate in suffering in the gloomy tranquillity of this cloister! Of what importance that she lives, if she is lost to us--she might have loved life so much--what a fatality has attended her! What I am saying is horrible! there is a barbarous egotism in paternal love. At noon her profession took place with solemn pomp. Hidden behind the curtains of our gallery, I was present at it. I felt, over again, but with still more intensity, all those poignant emotions which we suffered at her novitiate.

A singular thing, she is adored: it is generally believed that she is drawn toward a religious life by an irresistible call; her profession might be looked upon as a happy event for her, and yet, on the contrary, an overpowering sadness weighs down the whole assembly. At the end of the church, among the people, I saw two officers of my guard, old hardy soldiers, hold down their heads and weep. There seemed to be in the act a sad presentiment. If there was foundation for it, it has been but half realized. The profession terminated, our child was brought back into the hall of the chapter, where the nomination of the new abbess was to take place. Thanks to my privilege as sovereign, I went into this hall to await the return of Fleur-de-Marie. She soon entered. Her emotion, her weakness was so great, that two sisters supported her. I was alarmed, less even by her paleness and the deep alteration of her features than by the expression of her smile: it seemed to me marked by a sort of secret satisfaction. Clømence, I say to you, perhaps soon we shall need all our courage--much courage-I _feel_ so to speak, _within me_ that our child is struck with death! After all, her life would be so unhappy. Here is the second time that, in thinking the death of my daughter possible, I have said that death would put an end to her cruel existence. This idea is a horrible symptom; but if sorrow must strike us, it is better to be prepared, is it not, Clømence? To prepare one's self for such a misfortune, to taste little by little beforehand that slow anguish, it is an unheard-of refinement of grief. It is a thousand times more dreadful than to have the blow fall unexpectedly; at least the stupor, the annihilation would spare one a part of this cutting anguish. But the customs of compassion prescribe to us a _preparation_. Probably I should never act otherwise myself, my poor friend, if I had to acquaint you with the sad event of which I speak to you. Thus be alarmed, if you observe that I speak to you of _her_ with the delicacy, the caution of desperate sadness, after having announced to you that I do not feel serious inquietude respecting her health. Yes, be alarmed, if I speak to you as I am writing now, for though I left her, to finish this letter, an hour ago in a tolerably calm state, I repeat it to you, Clømence, I seem to _feel within me_ that she suffers more than she appears to do. Heaven grant that I deceive myself, and that I take for presentiments the despairing sadness which this melancholy ceremony inspires. Fleur-de-Marie then entered the large hall of the chapel. All the stalls were occupied by the nuns. She went modestly to take the lowest place on the left, supporting herself on the arm of one of the sisters, for she still seemed very weak. At the upper end of the hall the Princess Juliana was seated, the grand prioress beside her; on the other hand, a second dignitary, holding in her hand the golden cross, the symbol of the authority of the abbess.

A profound silence prevailed. The princess arose, took her cross in her

hand, and said, with a serious tone and an expression of much emotion: "My dear daughters, my great age obliges me to confide to younger hands this emblem of my spiritual power;" and she showed her cross. "I am authorized to do it by a bull of our holy father. I will present, then, to the benediction of my Lord Archbishop of Oppenheim, and to the approbation of his royal highness the grand duke, our sovereign, and to yours, my dear daughters, the one of your number whom you have designated to succeed me. Our grand-prioress will make known to you the result of the election, and to the person whom you shall have elected I will deliver up my cross and ring."

I never moved my eyes from my daughter. Standing in her stall, her two hands crossed on her bosom, her eyes cast down, half enveloped in her white veil, and the long descending folds of her black robe, she remained immovable and thoughtful; she had never for a moment supposed that she could be chosen; her elevation had been only confided to me by the abbess. The grand-prioress took a register and read: "Each of our dear sisters having been, according to rule, invited, eight days since, to place their votes in the hands of our holy mother, and mutually to keep secret their choice until this moment, in the name of our holy mother I declare that one of you, my dear sisters, has, by her exemplary piety, by her evangelical virtues, merited the unanimous suffrage of the community; and this is our Sister Amelia, during her life-time the most high and puissant Princess of Gerolstein."

At these words, a sort of murmur of sweet surprise and happy satisfaction passed round the hall; the looks of all the nuns were fixed upon my daughter, with an expression of tender sympathy. Notwithstanding my all engrossing anxieties, I was myself deeply moved with this nomination, which, made separately and secretly, offered nevertheless a touching unanimity.

Fleur-de-Marie, astounded, became still more pale; her knees trembled so much that she was obliged to support herself with one hand on the side of the stall. The abbess Spoke again with a very clear but grave voice: "My dear daughters, is it indeed Sister Amelia whom you consider most worthy and most deserving of all of you? Is it indeed she whom you acknowledge as your spiritual superior? Let each of you in turn answer me, my dear daughters."

And each nun answered in a loud tone: "I have voluntarily and freely chosen, and I do choose Sister Amelia for my holy mother and superior."

Overpowered with an expressible emotion, my poor child fell on her knees, joined her hands, and so remained till every vote was given. Then the abbess, placing the cross and ring in the hands of the grand prioress, advanced toward my daughter, to take her by the hand and lead her to the seat of the abbess. My dear, my love, I have interrupted myself a moment, I must take courage and finish the relation of this heart-rending scene. "Rise, my dear daughter," said the abbess to her: "Come to take the place which belongs to you; your evangelical virtues, and not your rank, have gained it for you." Saying these words, the venerable princess bent toward my daughter to assist her to rise.

Fleur-de-Marie took a few trembling steps, then, arriving in the middle of the hall of the chapel, she stopped and said, with a voice the calmness and firmness of which astonished me:

"Pardon me, holy mother, I would speak to my sisters."

"Ascend first, my dear daughter, your seat as abbess," said the princess; "it is from thence that you must let them hear your voice."

"That place, holy mother, cannot be mine," replied Fleur-de-Marie, with a low and trembling voice.

"What do you say, my dear daughter?"

"Such a high dignity is not made for me, holy mother."

"But the voices of your sisters call you to it."

"Permit me, holy mother, to make here on my knees a solemn confession; my sisters will see, and you also, holy mother, that the most humble condition is not humble enough for me."

"Your modesty misleads you my dear daughter," said the superior, with kindness, believing, in fact, that the unfortunate child was yielding to a feeling of exaggerated modesty; but I, I divined those confessions which Fleur-de-Marie was about to make. Dazed with horror, I cried out in a supplicating voice, "My child I conjure--"

At these words, to tell you, my friend all that I read in the profound look which Fleur-de-Marie cast upon me, would be impossible. As you see directly, she had understood me--yes, she had understood that I should partake in the shame of this horrible revelation; she understood that, after such a revelation, I might be accused of falsehood, for I had a ways left it to be believed that Fleur-de-Marie had never left her mother.

At this thought the poor child believed herself guilty of the blackest ingratitude toward me. She had not strength to go on--she was silent, and held down her head from exhaustion.

"Yes once again, my dear daughter," resumed the abbess, "your modesty deceives you; the unanimity of your sisters' choice proves to you how worthy you are to take my place. If you have taken part in the pleasures of the world, your renouncing these pleasures is but the more meritorious. It is not her Royal Highness Princess Amelia who is chosen--it is _Sister Amelia_. For us, your life began when you entered this house of the Lord, and it is this example and holy life which we recompense. I say to you, moreover, my dear daughter, that if before entering this retreat your life had been as guilty as it has been, on the contrary, pure and praiseworthy, that the angelic virtues of which you have given us the example since your abode here would expiate and redeem, in the eyes of the Lord, any past life, however guilty it may have been. After this, my daughter, judge if your modesty ought not to be assured."

These words of the abbess were the more precious to Fleur-de-Marie, inasmuch as she believed the past ineffaceable. Unfortunately, this scene had deeply distressed her, and, though she affected calmness and firmness, it seemed to me that her countenance changed in an alarming manner. Twice she groaned as she passed her poor emaciated hand over her forehead.

"I think I have convinced you, my dear daughter," resumed the Princess Juliana, "and you would not cause your sisters a severe pain by refusing this mark of their condescence and their affection."

"No, holy mother," said she, with an expression which struck me, and with a voice becoming weaker and weaker, "I _now_ think I may except it. But, as I feel greatly fatigued and somewhat ill, if you will permit it, holy mother, the ceremony of my consecration shall not take place for a few days."

"It shall be as you desire, my dear daughter; but while we wait till your office shall be blessed and consecrated, take this ring: come to your place; our dear sisters will render you their homage, according to the rules."

I saw at every moment her emotion increasing, her countenance changing more and more; finally, this scene was beyond her strength; she fainted before the procession of the sisters was finished. Judge of my terror; we carried her into the apartment of the abbess. David had not left the convent; he hastened and bestowed the first caress upon her. Oh, that he may not have deceived me: he assures me that this new accident was caused only by extreme weakness occasioned by the fastings, the fatigues, and the privation of sleep which my daughter has imposed upon herself during her novitiate. I believe him, because, in fact, her angelic features, though of a frightful paleness, did not betray any suffering; when she recovered her consciousness, I was even struck with the serenity which shone on her forehead. It seems to me that she was concealing the secret hope of an approaching deliverance. The superior having returned to the chapter to close the session, I remained alone with my daughter.

"My good father, can you forget my ingratitude? Can you forget that, at the moment I was about to make this painful confession, you asked me to spare you!"

"Oh! do not speak of it, I supplicate you."

"And I had not dreamed," continued she, with bitterness, "that in saying, in the face of all, from what an abyss of degradation you had drawn me, I was revealing a secret that you had kept out of tenderness to me; it was to accuse you publicly--you, my father--of a dissimulation to which you had resigned yourself only to secure to me a brilliant and honored existence. Oh! can you pardon me?"

Instead of answering her, I pressed my lips upon her forehead; she felt my tears flow. After having kissed my hands several times, she said to me, "Now I feel better, my good father, now that I am, as our rules says, here,

and dead to the world. I should wish to make some dispositions in favor of several persons; but as all I possess is yours, will you authorize me, my good father?"

"Can you doubt it? but I beseech you," said I to her, "do not indulge these sad thoughts; by and by you shall employ yourself in this duty: you have time enough."

"Undoubtedly, my good father, I have yet much time to live," added she, with an accent that, I know not why, made me shudder. I looked at her most attentively; but no change in her features justified my uneasiness. "Yes, I have yet much time to live," resumed she, "but I must not occupy myself longer with terrestrial things, for to-day I renounce all which attached me to the world. I beseech you, do not refuse me."

"Direct me: I will do anything you wish."

"I should wish that my tender mother would always keep in the little back parlor, where she usually sits, my embroidery frame, with the tapestry I have begun in it."

"Your wishes shall be fulfilled, my child; your room has remained exactly as it was the day you left the palace; for everything belonging to you is an object of religious worship to us. Clémence will be deeply touched at your remembrance of her."

"As to you, my good father, take, I beg you, my large ebony chair, in which I have thought and dreamed so much."

"It shall be placed by the side of mine in my working cabinet, and I shall see you in it every day, seated beside me, as you so often used to sit." Could I tell her this, and restrain my tears?

"Now I should wish to leave some memorials of me to those who took so much interest in me when I was unfortunate. To Madame George I should like to give my writing-desk, of which I have lately made use. This gift will be appropriate," added she, with a sweet smile, "for it was she at the farm who began to teach me to write. As to the venerable curate of Bouqueval, who instructed me in religion, I destine for him the beautiful Christ in my oratory."

"Good, my child."

"I should like to send my bandeau of pearls to good little Rigolette. It is a simple ornament that she can wear on her beautiful black hair; and then, if it were possible, since you know where Martial and La Louve are, in Algiers, I should wish that the courageous woman, who once saved my life, should have my enameled cross. These different pledges of remembrance, my good father, I should wish to have sent to them _from Fleure-de Marie._"

"I will execute your wishes; have you forgotten none?"

"I believe not, my good father."

"Think carefully: among those who love you, is there not some one very unhappy--as unhappy as your mother and myself; some one finally who regrets as deeply as we do your entrance into the convent?"

The poor child understood me she pressed my hand; a slight blush colored for a moment her pale face.

Anticipating a question which she feared, undoubtedly, to ask me, I said to her, "He is better; they no longer fear for his life."

"And his father?"

"He feels the improvement in the health of his son--he, too, is better. And to Henry, what will you give? A remembrance from you will be such a dear, such a precious consolation to him."

"My father, offer him my praying-desk. Alas! I have often watered it with my tears, in begging of Heaven strength to forget Henry, since I was not worthy of his love."

"How happy he will be to see that you had a thought for him!"

"The Asylum for Orphans and young women abandoned by their relations, I should desire, my good father--"

Here Rudolph's letter was interrupted by the following words which were almost illegible: "Commence, Murphy will finish this letter: I have no longer any mind--I am distracted. Oh, the thirteenth of January!!!"

The conclusion of this letter is the handwriting of Murphy, was thus conceived:

YOUR HIGHNESS,--In obedience to the orders of his royal highness, I complete this sad recital. The two letters of my lord must have prepared your royal highness for the overwhelming news which it remains to me to acquaint you with. It was three o'clock; my lord was employed in writing to your royal highness; I was waiting in a neighboring apartment until he should give me the letter, to forward it immediately by a courier. Suddenly I saw the Princess Juliana enter with an air of consternation. "Where is his royal highness?" said she to me, with a voice filled with emotion. "Princess, my lord is writing to the grand duchess the news of the day."

"Sir Walter, you must inform my lord--a terrible event. You are his friend, be so kind as to inform him; from you the blow will be less terrible."

I understood everything; I thought it more prudent to take this sad revelation upon myself, the superior having added that the Princess Amelia was slowly sinking away, and that my lord must hasten to receive the last sighs of his daughter. I unfortunately had not time to take any precautions. I entered the saloon; his royal highness perceived my paleness. "You have come to acquaint me of some misfortune."

"An irreparable misfortune, my lord--courage."

"Ah, my presentiments!" cried he, and, without adding a word, he ran to the cloister. I followed him.

From the apartment of the superior, the Princess Amelia had been transported into her cell after her last interview with my lord. One of the sisters was watching by her; at the end of an hour she perceived that the voice of the Princess Amelia, who spoke to her at intervals, was becoming weaker, and that she was more distressed. The sister hastened to inform the superior; Dr. David was called; he hoped to remedy this new loss of strength by a cordial, but it was in vain; the pulse was scarcely perceptible; he saw, with despair, that reiterated emotions had probably exhausted the strength of the Princess Amelia; there remained no hope of saving her. It was then that my lord arrived. Princess Amelia had just received the last sacrament; a ray of intelligence still lingered about her; in one of her hands, crossed on her bosom, was the _remains of her little rose-bush._

My lord fell on his knees by her pillow: he sobbed. "My daughter, my beloved child," cried he in a heart-rending tone.

The Princess Amelia heard him, turned her head gently toward him, opened her eyes, endeavored to smile, and said, with a feeble voice:

"My good father, pardon--Henry also--my good mother--forgive."

Such were her last words! After an hour of silent agony, she gave up her spirit to God.

When his daughter had yielded up her last sigh, my lord did not say a word; his calmness was frightful; he closed the eyes of the princess, kissed her forehead again and again, took piously the remains of the little rose-bush, and left the cell.

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I have executed the orders of my lord. Permit me, as his oldest servant, to beseech your royal highness to hasten your return as soon as the health of the Count d'Orbigny will permit it. The presence of your royal highness alone can calm the despair of the prince. He wishes to watch every night by his daughter till the day when she shall be buried in the grand ducal chapel. I have accomplished my sad task, madame; be so kind as to excuse the incoherence of this letter, and accept the expression of respectful devotion with which I have the honor to be your loyal highness's very obedient servant,

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The night before the funeral service of the Princess Amelia, Clømence arrived at Gerolstein with her father. Rudolph was not alone the day of the funeral of Fleur-de-Marie.

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