

The Wandering Jew — Volume 10 eBook

The Wandering Jew — Volume 10 by Eugène Sue

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CHAPTER XXXIII.

Confessions.

During the painful scene that we have just described, a lively emotion glowed in the countenance of Mdlle. de Cardoville, grown pale and thin with sorrow. Her cheeks, once so full, were now slightly hollowed, whilst a faint line of transparent azure encircled those large black eyes, no longer so bright as formerly. But the charming lips, though contracted by painful anxiety, had retained their rich and velvet moisture. To attend more easily to Mother Bunch, Adrienne had thrown aside her bonnet, and the silky waves of her beautiful golden hair almost concealed her face as she bent over the mattress, rubbing the thin, ivory hands of the poor sempstress, completely called to life by the salubrious freshness of the air, and by the strong action of the salts which Adrienne carried in her smelling-bottle. Luckily, Mother Bunch had fainted, rather from emotion and weakness than from the effects of suffocation, the senses of the unfortunate girl having failed her before the deleterious gas had attained its highest degree of intensity.

Before continuing the recital of the scene between the sempstress and the patrician, a few retrospective words will be necessary. Since the strange adventure at the theatre of the Porte-Saint-Martin, where Djalma, at peril of his life, rushed upon the black panther in sight of Mdlle. de Cardoville, the young lady had been deeply affected in various



ways. Forgetting her jealousy, and the humiliation she had suffered in presence of Djalma—of Djalma exhibiting himself before every one with a woman so little worthy of him—Adrienne was for a moment dazzled by the chivalrous and heroic action of the prince, and said to herself: “In spite of odious appearances, Djalma loves me enough to brave death in order to pick up my nosegay.”

But with a soul so delicate as that of this young lady, a character so generous, and a mind so true, reflection was certain soon to demonstrate the vanity of such consolations, powerless to cure the cruel wounds of offended dignity and love.

“How many times,” said Adrienne to herself, and with reason, “has the prince encountered, in hunting, from pure caprice and with no gain, such danger as he braved in picking up my bouquet! and then, who tells me he did not mean to offer it to the woman who accompanied him?”



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Singular (it may be) in the eyes of the world, but just and great in those of heaven, the ideas which Adrienne cherished with regard to love, joined to her natural pride, presented an invincible obstacle to the thought of her succeeding this woman (whoever she might be), thus publicly displayed by the prince as his mistress. And yet Adrienne hardly dared avow to herself, that she experienced a feeling of jealousy, only the more painful and humiliating, the less her rival appeared worthy to be compared to her.

At other times, on the contrary, in spite of a conscious sense of her own value, Mdlle. de Cardoville, remembering the charming countenance of Rose-Pompon, asked herself if the bad taste and improper manners of this pretty creature resulted from precocious and depraved effrontery, or from a complete ignorance of the usages of society. In the latter case, such ignorance, arising from a simple and ingenuous nature, might in itself have a great charm; and if to this attraction, combined with that of incontestable beauty, were added sincere love and a pure soul, the obscure birth, or neglected education of the girl might be of little consequence, and she might be capable of inspiring Djalma with a profound passion. If Adrienne hesitated to see a lost creature in Rose-Pompon, notwithstanding unfavorable appearances, it was because, remembering what so many travellers had related of Djalma's greatness of soul, and recalling the conversation she had overheard between him and Rodin, she could not bring herself to believe that a man of such remarkable intelligence, with so tender a heart, so poetical, imaginative and enthusiastic a mind could be capable of loving a depraved and vulgar creature, and of openly exhibiting himself in public along with her. There was a mystery in the transaction, which Adrienne sought in vain to penetrate. These trying doubts, this cruel curiosity, only served to nourish Adrienne's fatal love; and we may imagine her incurable despair, when she found that the indifference, or even disdain of Djalma, was unable to stifle a passion that now burned more fiercely than ever. Sometimes, having recourse to notions of fatality, she fancied that she was destined to feel this love; that Djalma must therefore deserve it, and that one day whatever was incomprehensible in the conduct of the prince would be explained to his advantage. At other times, on the contrary, she felt ashamed of excusing Djalma, and the consciousness of this weakness was for Adrienne a constant occasion for remorse and torture. The victim of all these agonies, she lived in perfect solitude.



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The cholera soon broke out, startling as a clap of thunder. Too unhappy to fear the pestilence on her own account, Adrienne was only moved by the sorrows of others. She was amongst the first to contribute to those charitable donations, which were now flowing in from all sides in the admirable spirit of benevolence. Florine was suddenly attacked by the epidemic. In spite of the danger, her mistress insisted on seeing her, and endeavored to revive her failing courage. Conquered by this new mark of kindness, Florine could no longer conceal the treachery in which she had borne a part. Death was about to deliver her from the odious tyranny of the people whose yoke weighed upon her, and she was at length in a position to reveal everything to Adrienne. The latter thus learned how she had been continually betrayed by Florine, and also the cause of the sewing-girl's abrupt departure. At these revelations, Adrienne felt her affection and tender pity for the poor sempstress greatly increase. By her command, the most active steps were taken to discover traces of the hunchback; but Florine's confession had a still more important result. Justly alarmed at this new evidence of Rodin's machinations, Adrienne remembered the projects formed, when, believing herself beloved, the instinct of affection had revealed to her the perils to which Djalma and other members of the Rennepont family were exposed. To assemble the race around her, and bid them rally against the common enemy, such was Adrienne's first thought, when she heard the confession of Florine. She regarded it as a duty to accomplish this project. In a struggle with such dangerous and powerful adversaries as Rodin, Father d'Aigrigny, and the Princess de Saint-Dizier, and their allies, Adrienne saw not only the praiseworthy and perilous task of unmasking hypocrisy and cupidity, but also, if not a consolation, at least a generous diversion in the midst of terrible sorrows.

From this moment, a restless, feverish activity took the place of the mournful apathy in which the young lady had languished. She called round her all the members of her family capable of answering the appeal, and, as had been mentioned in the secret note delivered to Father d'Aigrigny, Cardoville House soon became the centre of the most active and unceasing operations, and also a place of meeting, in which the modes of attack and defence were fully discussed. Perfectly correct in all points, the secret note of which we have spoken stated, as a mere conjecture, that Mdlle. de Cardoville had granted an interview to Djalma. This fact was untrue, but the cause which led to the supposition will be explained hereafter. Far from such being the case, Mdlle. de Cardoville scarcely found, in attending to the great family interests now at stake, a momentary diversion from the fatal love, which was slowly undermining her health, and with which she so bitterly reproached herself.

The morning of the day on which Adrienne, at length discovering Mother Bunch's residence, came so miraculously to rescue her from death, Agricola Baudoin had been to Cardoville House to confer on the subject of Francis Hardy, and had begged Adrienne to permit him to accompany her to the Rue Clovis, whither they repaired in haste.



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Thus, once again, there was a noble spectacle, a touching symbol! Mdlle. de Cardoville and Mother Bunch, the two extremities of the social chain, were united on equal terms—for the sempstress and the fair patrician were equal in intelligence and heart—and equal also, because the one was the ideal of riches, grace, and beauty, and the other the ideal of resignation and unmerited misfortune—and does not a halo rest on misfortune borne with courage and dignity? Stretched on her mattress, the hunchback appeared so weak, that even if Agricola had not been detained on the ground floor with Cephyse, now dying a dreadful death, Mdlle. de Cardoville would have waited some time, before inducing Mother Bunch to rise and accompany her to her carriage. Thanks to the presence of mind and pious fraud of Adrienne, the sewing-girl was persuaded that Cephyse had been carried to a neighboring hospital, to receive the necessary succors, which promised to be crowned with success. The hunchback's faculties recovering slowly from their stupor, she at first received this fable without the least suspicion—for she did not even know that Agricola had accompanied Mdlle. de Cardoville.

“And it is to you, lady, that Cephyse and I owe our lives,” said she, turning her mild and melancholy face towards Adrienne, “you, kneeling in this garret, near this couch of misery, where I and my sister meant to die—for you assure me, lady, that Cephyse was succored in time.”

“Be satisfied! I was told just now that she was recovering her senses.”

“And they told her I was living, did they not, lady? Otherwise, she would perhaps regret having survived me.”

“Be quite easy, my dear girl!” said Adrienne, pressing the poor hands in her own, and gazing on her with eyes full of tears; “they have told her all that was proper. Do not trouble yourself about anything; only think of recovering—and I hope you will yet enjoy that happiness of which you have known so little, my poor child.”

“How kind you are, lady! After flying from your house—and when you must think me so ungrateful!”

“Presently, when you are not so weak, I have a great deal to tell you. Just now, it would fatigue you too much. But how do you feel?”

“Better, lady. This fresh air—and then the thought, that, since you are come—my poor sister will no more be reduced to despair; for I will tell you all, and I am sure you will have pity on Cephyse—will you not, lady?”

“Rely upon me, my child,” answered Adrienne, forced to dissemble her painful embarrassment; “you know I am interested in all that interests you. But tell me,” added Mdlle. de Cardoville, in a voice of emotion, “before taking this desperate resolution, did you not write to me?”



“Yes, lady.”

“Alas!” resumed Adrienne, sorrowfully; “and when you received no answer—how cruel, how ungrateful you must have thought me!”

“Oh! never, lady, did I accuse you of such feelings; my poor sister will tell you so. You had my gratitude to the last.”



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“I believe you—for I knew your heart. But how then did you explain my silence?”

“I had justly offended you by my sudden departure, lady.”

“Offended!—Alas! I never received your letter.”

“And yet you know that I wrote to you, lady.”

“Yes, my poor girl; I know, also, that you wrote to me at my porter’s lodge. Unfortunately, he delivered your letter to one of my women, named Florine, telling her it came from you.”

“Florine! the young woman that was so kind to me!”

“Florine deceived me shamefully; she was sold to my enemies, and acted as a spy on my actions.”

“She!—Good Heavens!” cried Mother Bunch. “Is it possible?”

“She herself,” answered Adrienne, bitterly; “but, after all, we must pity as well as blame her. She was forced to obey by a terrible necessity, and her confession and repentance secured my pardon before her death.”

“Then she is dead—so young! so fair!”

“In spite of her faults, I was greatly moved by her end. She confessed what she had done, with such heart-rending regrets. Amongst her avowals, she told me she had intercepted a letter, in which you asked for an interview that might save your sister’s life.”

“It is true, lady; such were the terms of my letter. What interest had they to keep it from you?”

“They feared to see you return to me, my good guardian angel. You loved me so tenderly, and my enemies dreaded your faithful affection, so wonderfully aided by the admirable instinct of your heart. Ah! I shall never forget how well-deserved was the horror with which you were inspired by a wretch whom I defended against your suspicions.”

“M. Rodin?” said Mother Bunch, with a shudder.

“Yes,” replied Adrienne; “but we will not talk of these people now. Their odious remembrance would spoil the joy I feel in seeing you restored to life—for your voice is less feeble, your cheeks are beginning to regain a little color. Thank God! I am so



happy to have found you once more;—if you knew all that I hope, all that I expect from our reunion—for we will not part again—promise me that, in the name of our friendship.”

“I—your friend!” said Mother Bunch, timidly casting down her eyes.

“A few days before your departure from my house, did I not call you my friend, my sister? What is there changed? Nothing, nothing,” added Mdlle. de Cardoville, with deep emotion. “One might say, on the contrary, that a fatal resemblance in our positions renders your friendship even dearer to me. And I shall have it, shall I not. Oh, do not refuse it me—I am so much in want of a friend!”

“You, lady? you in want of the friendship of a poor creature like me?”

“Yes,” answered Adrienne, as she gazed on the other with an expression of intense grief; “nay, more, you are perhaps the only person, to whom I could venture to confide my bitter sorrows.” So saying, Mdlle. de Cardoville colored deeply.



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“And how do I deserve such marks of confidence?” asked Mother Bunch, more and more surprised.

“You deserve it by the delicacy of your heart, by the steadiness of your character,” answered Adrienne, with some hesitation; “then—you are a woman—and I am certain you will understand what I suffer, and pity me.”

“Pity you, lady?” said the other, whose astonishment continued to increase. “You, a great lady, and so much envied—I, so humble and despised, pity you?”

“Tell me, my poor friend,” resumed Adrienne, after some moments of silence, “are not the worst griefs those which we dare not avow to any one, for fear of raillery and contempt? How can we venture to ask interest or pity, for sufferings that we hardly dare avow to ourselves, because they make us blush?”

The sewing-girl could hardly believe what she heard. Had her benefactress felt, like her, the effects of an unfortunate passion, she could not have held any other language. But the sempstress could not admit such a supposition; so, attributing to some other cause the sorrows of Adrienne, she answered mournfully, whilst she thought of her own fatal love for Agricola, “Oh! yes, lady. A secret grief, of which we are ashamed, must be frightful—very frightful!”

“But then what happiness to meet, not only a heart noble enough to inspire complete confidence, but one which has itself been tried by a thousand sorrows, and is capable of affording you pity, support and counsel!—Tell me, my dear child,” added Mdlle. de Cardoville, as she looked attentively at Mother Bunch, “if you were weighed down by one of those sorrows, at which one blushes, would you not be happy, very happy, to find a kindred soul, to whom you might entrust your griefs, and half relieve them by entire and merited confidence?”

For the first time in her life, Mother Bunch regarded Mdlle. de Cardoville with a feeling of suspicion and sadness.

The last words of the young lady seemed to her full of meaning “Doubtless, she knows my secret,” said Mother Bunch to herself; “doubtless, my journal has fallen into her hands.—She knows my love for Agricola, or at least suspects it. What she has been saying to me is intended to provoke my confidence, and to assure herself if she has been rightly informed.”

These thoughts excited in the workgirl’s mind no bitter or ungrateful feeling towards her benefactress; but the heart of the unfortunate girl was so delicately susceptible on the subject of her fatal passion, that, in spite of her deep and tender affection for Mdlle. de Cardoville, she suffered cruelly at the thought of Adrienne’s being mistress of her secret.



CHAPTER XXXIV.

More confessions.

The fancy, at first so painful, that Mdlle. de Cardoville was informed of her love for Agricola was soon exchanged in the hunchbacks heart, thanks to the generous instincts of that rare and excellent creature, for a touching regret, which showed all her attachment and veneration for Adrienne.



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“Perhaps,” said Mother Bunch to herself, “conquered by the influence of the adorable kindness of my protectress, I might have made to her a confession which I could make to none other, and revealed a secret which I thought to carry with me to my grave. It would, at least, have been a mark of gratitude to Mdlle. de Cardoville; but, unfortunately, I am now deprived of the sad comfort of confiding my only secret to my benefactress. And then—however generous may be her pity for me, however intelligent her affection, she cannot—she, that is so fair and so much admired—she cannot understand how frightful is the position of a creature like myself, hiding in the depth of a wounded heart, a love at once hopeless and ridiculous. No, no—in spite of the delicacy of her attachment, my benefactress must unconsciously hurt my feelings, even whilst she pities me—for only sympathetic sorrows can console each other. Alas! why did she not leave me to die?”

These reflections presented themselves to the thinker’s mind as rapidly as thought could travel. Adrienne observed her attentively; she remarked that the sewing-girl’s countenance, which had lately brightened up, was again clouded, and expressed a feeling of painful humiliation. Terrified at this relapse into gloomy dejection, the consequences of which might be serious, for Mother Bunch was still very weak, and, as it were, hovering on the brink of the grave, Mdlle. de Cardoville resumed hastily: “My friend, do not you think with me, that the most cruel and humiliating grief admits of consolation, when it can be entrusted to a faithful and devoted heart?”

“Yes, lady,” said the young sempstress, bitterly; “but the heart which suffers in silence, should be the only judge of the moment for making so painful a confession. Until then, it would perhaps be more humane to respect its fatal secret, even if one had by chance discovered it.”

“You are right, my child,” said Adrienne, sorrowfully, “if I choose this solemn moment to entrust you with a very painful secret, it is that, when you have heard me, I am sure you will set more value on your life, as knowing how much I need your tenderness, consolation, and pity.”

At these words, the other half raised herself on the mattress, and looked at Mdlle. de Cardoville in amazement. She could scarcely believe what she heard; far from designing to intrude upon her confidence, it was her protectress who was to make the painful confession, and who came to implore pity and consolation from her!

“What!” stammered she; “you, lady!”

“I come to tell you that I suffer, and am ashamed of my sufferings. Yes,” added the young lady, with a touching expression, “yes—of all confessions, I am about to make the most painful—I love—and I blush for my love.”

“Like myself!” cried Mother Bunch, involuntarily, clasping her hands together.



“I love,” resumed Adrienne, with a long-pent-up grief; “I love, and am not beloved—and my love is miserable, is impossible—it consumes me—it kills me—and I dare not confide to any one the fatal secret!”



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“Like me,” repeated the other, with a fixed look. “She—a queen in beauty, rank, wealth, intelligence—suffers like me. Like me, poor unfortunate creature! she loves, and is not loved again.”

“Well, yes! like you, I love and am not loved again,” cried Mdlle. de Cardoville; “was I wrong in saying, that to you alone I could confide my secret—because, having suffered the same pangs, you alone can pity them?”

“Then, lady,” said Mother Bunch, casting down her eyes, and recovering from her first amazement, “you knew—”

“I knew all, my poor child—but never should I have mentioned your secret, had I not had one to entrust you with, of a still more painful nature. Yours is cruel, but mine is humiliating. Oh, my sister!” added Mdlle. de Cardoville, in a tone impossible to describe, “misfortune, you, see, blends and confounds together what are called distinctions of rank and fortune—and often those whom the world envies are reduced by suffering far below the poorest and most humble, and have to seek from the latter pity and consolation.”

Then, drying her tears, which nosy flowed abundantly, Mdlle. de Cardoville resumed, in a voice of emotion: “Come, sister! courage, courage! let us love and sustain each other. Let this sad and mysterious bond unite us forever.”

“Oh, lady! forgive me. But now that you know the secret of my life,” said the workgirl, casting down her eyes, and unable to vanquish her confusion, “it seems to me, that I can never look at you without blushing.”

“And why? because you love Agricola?” said Adrienne. “Then I must die of shame before you, since, less courageous than you, I had not the strength to suffer and be resigned, and so conceal my love in the depths of my heart. He that I love, with a love henceforth deprived of hope, knew of that love and despised it—preferring to me a woman, the very choice of whom was a new and grievous insult, if I am not much deceived by appearances. I sometimes hope that I am deceived on this point. Now tell me—is it for you to blush?”

“Alas, lady! who could tell you all this?”

“Which you only entrusted to your journal? Well, then—it was the dying Florine who confessed her misdeeds. She had been base enough to steal your papers, forced to this odious act, by the people who had dominion over her. But she had read your journal—and as every good feeling was not dead within her, your admirable resignation, your melancholy and pious love, had left such an impression on her mind, that she was able to repeat whole passages to me on her death bed, and thus to explain the cause of



your sudden disappearance—for she had no doubt that the fear of seeing your love for Agricola divulged had been the cause of your flight.”

“Alas! it is but too true, lady.”

“Oh, yes!” answered Adrienne, bitterly; “those who employed the wretched girl to act as she did, well knew the effect of the blow. It was not their first attempt. They reduced you to despair, they would have killed you, because you were devoted to me, and because you had guessed their intentions. Oh! these black-gowns are implacable, and their power is great!” said Adrienne, shuddering.



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"It is fearful, lady."

"But do not be alarmed, dear child; you see, that the arms of the wicked have turned against themselves; for the moment I knew the cause of your flight, you became dearer to me than ever. From that time I made every exertion to find out where you were; after long efforts, it was only this morning that the person I had employed succeeded in discovering that you inhabited this house. Agricola was with me when I heard it, and instantly asked to accompany me."

"Agricola!" said Mother Bunch, clasping her hands; "he came—"

"Yes, my child—be calm. Whilst I attended to you, he was busy with your poor sister. You will soon see him."

"Alas, lady!" resumed the hunchback, in alarm. "He doubtless knows—"

"Your love! No, no; be satisfied. Only think of the happiness of again seeing your good and worthy brother."

"Ah, lady! may he never know what caused me so much shame, that I was like to die of it. Thank God, he is not aware of it!"

"Then let us have no more sad thoughts, my child. Only remember, that this worthy brother came here in time to save us from everlasting regrets—and you from a great fault. Oh! I do not speak of the prejudices of the world, with regard to the right of every creature to return to heaven a life that has become too burdensome!—I only say that you ought not to have died, because those who love you, and whom you love, were still in need of your assistance."

"I thought you happy; Agricola was married to the girl of his choice, who will, I am sure, make him happy. To whom could I be useful?"

"First, to myself, as you see—and then, who tells you that Agricola will never have need of you? Who tells you, that his happiness, or that of his family, will last forever, and will not be tried by cruel shocks? And even if those you love had been destined to be always happy, could their happiness be complete without you? And would not your death, with which they would perhaps have reproached themselves, have left behind it endless regrets?"

"It is true, lady," answered the other, "I was wrong—the dizziness of despair had seized me—frightful misery weighed upon us—we had not been able to find work for some days—we lived on the charity of a poor woman, and her the cholera carried off. Tomorrow or next day, we must have died of hunger."

"Die of hunger!—and you knew where I lived!"



“I had written to you, lady, and receiving no answer, I thought you offended at my abrupt departure.”

“Poor, dear child! you must have been, as you say, seized with dizziness in that terrible moment; so that I have not the courage to reproach you for doubting me a single instant. How can I blame you? Did I not myself think of terminating my life?”

“You, lady!” cried the hunchback.



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“Yes, I thought of it—when they came to tell me, that Florine, dying, wished to speak to me. I heard what she had to say; her revelations changed my projects. This dark and mournful life which had become insupportable to me, was suddenly lighted up. The sense of duty woke within me. You were no doubt a prey to horrible misery; it was my duty to seek and save you. Florine’s confessions unveiled to me the new plots of the enemies of my scattered family, dispersed by sorrows and cruel losses; it was my duty to warn them of their danger, and to unite them against the common enemy. I had been the victim of odious manoeuvres: it was my duty to punish their authors, for fear that, encouraged by impunity, these black-gowns should make other victims. Then the sense of duty gave me strength, and I was able to rouse myself from my lethargy. With the help of Abbe Gabriel, a sublime, oh! a sublime priest—the ideal of a true Christian—the worthy brother of Agricola—I courageously entered on the struggle. What shall I say to you, my child? The performance of these duties, the hope of finding you again, have been some relief to me in my trouble. If I was not consoled, I was at least occupied. Your tender friendship, the example of your resignation, will do the rest—I think so—I am sure so—and I shall forget this fatal love.”

At the moment Adrienne pronounced these words, rapid footsteps were heard upon the stairs, and a young, clear voice exclaimed: “Oh! dear me, poor Mother Bunch! How lucky I have come just now! If only I could be of some use to her!”

Almost immediately, Rose-Pompon entered the garret with precipitation. Agricola soon followed the grisette, and pointing to the open window, tried to make Adrienne understand by signs, that she was not to mention to the girl the deplorable end of the Bacchanal Queen. This pantomime was lost on Mdlle. de Cardoville. Adrienne’s heart swelled with grief, indignation, pride, as she recognized the girl she had seen at the Porte Saint-Martin in company with Djalma, and who alone was the cause of the dreadful sufferings she endured since that fatal evening. And, strange irony of fate! it was at the very moment when Adrienne had just made the humiliating and cruel confession of her despised love, that the woman, to whom she believed herself sacrificed, appeared before her.

If the surprise of Mdlle. de Cardoville was great, Rose-Pompon’s was not less so. Not only did she recognize in Adrienne the fair young lady with the golden locks, who had sat opposite to her at the theatre, on the night of the adventure of the black panther, but she had serious reasons for desiring most ardently this unexpected interview. It is impossible to paint the look of malignant joy and triumph, that she affected to cast upon Adrienne. The first impulse of Mdlle. de Cardoville was to quit the room. But she could not bear to leave Mother Bunch at this moment, or to give, in the presence of Agricola, her reasons for such an abrupt departure, and moreover, an inexplicable and fatal curiosity held her back, in spite of her offended pride. She remained, therefore, and was about to examine closely, to hear and to judge, this rival, who had nearly occasioned her death, to whom, in her jealous agony, she had ascribed so many different aspects, in order to explain Djalma’s love for such a creature.



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CHAPTER XXXV.

The rivals.

Rose-Pompon, whose presence caused such deep emotion in Mdlle. de Cardoville, was dressed in the most showy and extravagant bad taste. Her very small, narrow, rose-colored satin bonnet, placed so forward over her face as almost to touch the tip of her little nose, left uncovered behind half of her light, silky hair; her plaid dress, of an excessively broad pattern, was open in front, and the almost transparent gauze, rather too honest in its revelations, hardly covered the charms of the form beneath.

The grisette having run all the way upstairs, held in her hands the ends of her large blue shawl, which, falling from her shoulders, had slid down to her wasp-like waist, and there been stopped by the swell of the figure. If we enter into these details, it is to explain how, at the sight of this pretty creature, dressed in so impertinent and almost indecent, a fashion, Mdlle. de Cardoville, who thought she saw in her a successful rival, felt her indignation, grief, and shame redoubled.

But judge of the surprise and confusion of Adrienne, when Mdlle. Rose Pompon said to her, with the utmost freedom and pertness, "I am delighted to see you, madame. You and I must have a long talk together. Only I must begin by kissing poor Mother Bunch—with your permission, madame!"

To understand the tone and manner with which this word, "madame" was pronounced, you must have been present at some stormy discussion between two Rose-Pompons, jealous of each other; then you would be able to judge how much provoking hostility may be compressed into the word "madame," under certain circumstances. Amazed at the impudence of Rose-Pompon, Mdlle. de Cardoville remained mute; whilst Agricola, entirely occupied with the interest he took in the workgirl, who had never withdrawn her eyes from him since he entered the room, and with the remembrance of the painful scene he had just quitted, whispered to Adrienne, without remarking the grisette's effrontery, "Alas, lady! it is all over. Cephyse has just breathed her last sigh, without recovering her senses."

"Unfortunate girl!" said Adrienne, with emotion; and for the moment she forgot Rose-Pompon.

"We must keep this sad news from Mother Bunch, and only let her know it hereafter, with great caution," resumed Agricola. "Luckily, little Rose Pompon knows nothing about it."

And he pointed to the grisette, who was now stooping down by the side of the workgirl. On hearing Agricola speak so familiarly of Rose-Pompon, Adrienne's amazement increased. It is impossible to describe what she felt; yet, strangely enough, her

sufferings grew less and less, and her anxiety diminished, as she listened to the chatter of the grisette.



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“Oh, my good dear!” said the latter, with as much volubility as emotion, while her pretty blue eyes were filled with tears; “is it possible that you did so stupid a thing? Do not poor people help one another? Could you not apply to me? You knew that others are welcome to whatever is mine, and I would have made a raffle of Philemon’s bazaar,” added this singular girl, with a burst of feeling, at once sincere, touching, and grotesque; “I would have sold his three boots, pipes, boating-costume, bed, and even his great drinking-glass, and at all events you should not have been brought to such an ugly pass. Philemon would not have minded, for he is a good fellow; and if he had minded, it would have been all the same. Thank heaven! we are not married. I am only wishing to remind you that you should have thought of little Rose-Pompon.”

“I know you are obliging and kind, miss,” said Mother Bunch: for she had heard from her sister that Rose-Pompon, like so many of her class, had a warm and generous heart.

“After all,” resumed the grisette, wiping with the back of her hand the tip of her little nose, down which a tear was trickling, “you may tell me that you did not know where I had taken up my quarters. It’s a queer story, I can tell you. When I say queer,” added Rose-Pompon, with a deep sigh, “it is quite the contrary—but no matter: I need not trouble you with that. One thing is certain; you are getting better—and you and Cephyse will not do such a thing again. She is said to be very weak. Can I not see her yet, M. Agricola?”

“No,” said the smith, with embarrassment, for Mother Bunch kept her eyes fixed upon him; “you must have patience.”

“But I may see her to-day, Agricola?” exclaimed the hunchback.

“We will talk about that. Only be calm, I entreat.”

“Agricola is right; you must be reasonable, my good dear,” resumed Rose Pompon; “we will wait patiently. I can wait too, for I have to talk presently to this lady;” and Rose-Pompon glanced at Adrienne with the expression of an angry cat. “Yes, yes; I can wait; for I long to tell Cephyse also that she may reckon upon me.” Here Rose-Pompon bridled up very prettily, and thus continued, “Do not be uneasy! It is the least one can do, when one is in a good position, to share the advantages with one’s friends, who are not so well off. It would be a fine thing to keep one’s happiness to one’s self! to stuff it with straw, and put it under a glass, and let no one touch it! When I talk of happiness, it’s only to make talk; it is true in one sense; but to another, you see, my good dear—Bah! I am only seventeen—but no matter—I might go on talking till tomorrow, and you would not be any the wiser. So let me kiss you once more, and don’t be down-hearted—nor Cephyse either, do you hear? for I shall be close at hand.”



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And, stooping still lower, Rose-Pompon cordially embraced Mother Bunch. It is impossible to express what Mdlle. de Cardoville felt during this conversation, or rather during this monologue of the grisette on the subject of the attempted suicide. The eccentric jargon of Mdlle. Rose Pompon, her liberal facility in disposing of Philemon's bazaar, to the owner of which (as she said) she was luckily not married—the goodness of her heart, which revealed itself in her offers of service—her contrasts, her impertinence, her drollery—all this was so new and inexplicable to Mdlle. de Cardoville, that she remained for some time mute and motionless with surprise. Such, then, was the creature to whom Djalma had sacrificed her!

If Adrienne's first impression at sight of Rose-Pompon had been horribly painful, reflection soon awakened doubts, which were to become shortly ineffable hopes. Remembering the interview she had overheard between Rodin and Djalma, when, concealed in the conservatory, she had wished to prove the Jesuit's fidelity, Adrienne, asked herself if it was reasonable, if it was possible to believe, that the prince, whose ideas of love seemed to be so poetical, so elevated, so pure, could find any charm in the disjointed and silly chat of this young girl? Adrienne could not hesitate; she pronounced the thing impossible, from the moment she had seen her rival near, and witnessed her style both of manners and conversation, which, without detracting from the prettiness of her features, gave them a trivial and not very attractive character. Adrienne's doubts with regard to the deep love of the prince for Rose Pompon were hence soon changed to complete incredulity. Endowed with too much sense and penetration, not to perceive that this apparent connection, so inconceivable on the part of Djalma, must conceal some mystery, Mdlle. de Cardoville felt her hopes revive. As this consoling thought arose in her mind, her heart, until now so painfully oppressed, began once more to dilate; she felt vague aspirations towards a better future; and yet, cruelly warned by the past, she feared to yield too readily to a mere illusion, for she remembered the notorious fact that the prince had really appeared in public with this girl. But now that Mdlle. de Cardoville could fully appreciate what she was, she found the conduct of the prince only the more incomprehensible. And how can we judge soundly and surely of that which is enveloped in mystery? And then a secret presentiment told her, that it would, perhaps, be beside the couch of the poor sempstress, whom she had just saved from death, that, by a providential coincidence, she would learn the secret on which depended the happiness of her life.



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The emotions which agitated the heart of Adrienne, became so violent, that her fine face was flushed with a bright red, her bosom heaved, and her large, black eyes, lately dimmed by sadness, once more shone with a mild radiance. She waited with inexpressible impatience for what was to follow. In the interview, with which Rose-Pompon had threatened her, and which a few minutes before Adrienne would have declined with all the dignity of legitimate indignation, she now hoped to find the explanation of a mystery, which it was of such importance for her to clear up. After once more tenderly embracing Mother Bunch, Rose-Pompon got up from the ground, and, turning towards Adrienne, eyed her from head to foot, with the utmost coolness, and said to her, in a somewhat impertinent tone: "It is now our turn, madame"—the word "madame" still pronounced with the accent before described—"we have a little matter to settle together."

"I am at your order," answered Adrienne, with much mildness and simplicity.

At sight of the triumphant and decisive air of Rose-Pompon, and on hearing her challenge to Mdlle. de Cardoville, the worthy Agricola, after exchanging a few words with Mother Bunch, opened his eyes and ears very wide, and remained staring in amazement at the effrontery of the grisette; then, advancing towards her, he whispered, as he plucked her by the sleeve: "I say, are you mad? Do you know to whom you speak?"

"Well! what then? Is not one pretty woman worth another! I say that for the lady. She will not eat me, I suppose," replied Rose-Pompon, aloud, and with an air of defiance. "I have to talk with madame, here. I am sure, she knows why and wherefore. If not, I will tell her; it will not take me long."

Adrienne, who feared some ridiculous exposure on the subject of Djalma, in the presence of Agricola, made a sign to the latter, and thus answered the grisette: "I am ready to hear you, miss, but not in this place. You will understand why."

"Very well, madame, I have my key. You can come to any apartments"—the last word pronounced with an air of ostentatious importance.

"Let us go then to your apartments, miss since you do me the honor to receive me there," answered Mdlle. de Cardoville, in her mild, sweet voice, and with a slight inclination of the head, so full of exquisite politeness, that Rose-Pompon was daunted, notwithstanding all her effrontery.

"What, lady!" said Agricola to Adrienne; "you are good enough—"

"M. Agricola," said Mdlle. de Cardoville, interrupting him, "please to remain with our poor friend: I shall soon be back."



Then, approaching Mother Bunch, who shared in Agricola's astonishment she said to her: "Excuse me for leaving you a few seconds. Only regain a little strength, and, when I return, I will take you home with me, dear sister."

Then, turning towards Rose-Pompon, who was more and more surprised at hearing so fine a lady call the workgirl her sister, she added: "I am ready whenever you please, mademoiselle."



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“Beg pardon, madame, if I go first to show you the way, but it’s a regular break-neck sort of a place,” answered Rose-Pompon, pressing her elbows to her sides, and screwing up her lips to prove that she was no stranger to polite manners and fine language. And the two rivals quitted the garret together, leaving Agricola alone with Mother Bunch.

Luckily, the disfigured remains of the Bacchanal Queen had been carried into Mother Arsene’s subterraneous shop, so that the crowd of spectators, always attracted by any fatal event, had assembled in front of the house; and Rose-Pompon, meeting no one in the little court she had to traverse with Adrienne, continued in ignorance of the tragical death of her old friend Cephyse. In a few moments the grisette and Mdlle. de Cardoville had reached Philemon’s apartment. This singular abode remained in the same state of picturesque disorder in which Rose-Pompon had left it, when Ninny Moulin came to fetch her to act the heroine of a mysterious adventure.

Adrienne, completely ignorant of the eccentric modes of life of students and their companions, could not, in spite of the thoughts which occupied her mind, forebear examining, with a mixture of surprise and curiosity, this strange and grotesque chaos, composed of the most dissimilar objects—disguises for masked balls, skulls with pipes in their mouths, odd boots standing on book shelves, monstrous bottles, women’s clothes, ends of tobacco pipes, *etc.*, *etc.* To the first astonishment of Adrienne succeeded an impression of painful repugnance. The young lady felt herself uneasy and out of place in this abode, not of poverty, but disorder; whilst, on the contrary, the sewing-girl’s miserable garret had caused her no such feeling.

Rose-Pompon, notwithstanding all her airs, was considerably troubled when she found herself alone with Mdlle. de Cardoville; the rare beauty of the young patrician, her fashionable look, the elegance of her manners, the style, both dignified and affable, with which she had answered the impertinent address of the grisette, began to have their effect upon the latter, who, being moreover a good-natured girl, had been touched at hearing Mdlle. de Cardoville call the hunchback “friend and sister.” Without knowing exactly who Adrienne was, Rose-Pompon was not ignorant that she belonged to the richest and highest class of society; she felt already some remorse at having attacked her so cavalierly; and her intentions, at first very hostile with regard to Mdlle. de Cardoville, were gradually much modified. Yet, being very obstinate, and not wishing to appear to submit to an influence that offended her pride, Rose-Pompon endeavored to recover her assurance; and, having bolted the door, she said to Adrienne: “Pray do me the favor to sit down, madame”—still with the intention of showing that she was no stranger to refined manners and conversation.

Mdlle. de Cardoville was about mechanically to take a chair, when Rose Pompon, worthy to practise those ancient virtues of hospitality, which regarded even an enemy as sacred in the person of a guest, cried out hastily: “Don’t take that chair, madame; it wants a leg.”



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Adrienne laid her hand on another chair.

“Nor that either; the back is quite loose,” again exclaimed Rose-Pompon. And she spoke the truth; for the chair-back, which was made in the form of a lyre, remained in the hands of Mdlle. de Cardoville, who said, as she replaced it discreetly in its former position: “I think, miss, that we can very well talk standing.”

“As you please, madame,” replied Rose-Pompon, steadying herself the more bravely the more uneasy she felt. And the interview of the lady and the grisette began in this fashion.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

The interview.

After a minute’s hesitation, Rose-Pompon said to Adrienne, whose heart was beating violently: “I will tell you directly, madame, what I have on my mind. I should not have gone out of my way to seek you, but, as I happen to fall in with you, it is very natural I should take advantage of it.”

“But, miss,” said Adrienne, mildly, “may I at least know the subject of the conversation we are to have together?”

“Yes, madame,” replied Rose-Pompon, affecting an air of still more decided confidence; “first of all, you must not suppose I am unhappy, or going to make a scene of jealousy, or cry like a forsaken damsel. Do not flatter yourself! Thank heaven, I have no reason to complain of Prince Charming—that is the pet name I gave him—on the contrary, he has made me very happy. If I left him, it was against his will, and because I chose.”

So saying, Rose-Pompon, whose heart was swelling in spite of her fine airs, could not repress a sigh.

“Yes, madame,” she resumed, “I left him because I chose—for he quite doted on me. If I had liked, he would have married me—yes, madame, married me—so much the worse, if that gives you pain. Though, when I say ‘so much the worse,’ it is true that I meant to pain you. To be sure I did—but then, just now when I saw you so kind to poor Mother Bunch, though I was certainly in the right, still I felt something. However, to cut matters short, it is clear that I detest you, and that you deserve it,” added Rose-Pompon, stamping her foot.

From all this it resulted, even for a person much less sagacious than Adrienne, and much less interested in discovering the truth, that Rose Pompon, notwithstanding her triumphant airs in speaking of him whom she represented as so much attached to her, and even anxious to wed her, was in reality completely disappointed, and was now



taking refuge in a deliberate falsehood. It was evident that she was not loved, and that nothing but violent jealousy had induced her to desire this interview with Mdlle. de Cardoville, in order to make what is vulgarly called a scene, considering Adrienne (the reason will be explained presently) as her successful rival. But Rose-Pompon, having recovered her good-nature, found it very difficult to continue the scene in question, particularly as, for many reasons, she felt overawed by Adrienne.



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Though she had expected, if not the singular speech of the grisette, at least something of the same result—for she felt it was impossible that the prince could entertain a serious attachment for this girl—Mdlle. de Cardoville was at first delighted to hear the confirmation of her hopes from the lips of her rival; but suddenly these hopes were succeeded by a cruel apprehension, which we will endeavor to explain. What Adrienne had just heard ought to have satisfied her completely. Sure that the heart of Djalma had never ceased to belong to her, she ought, according to the customs and opinions of the world, to have cared little if, in the effervescence of an ardent youth, he had chanced to yield to some ephemeral caprice for this creature, who was, after all, very pretty and desirable—the more especially as he had now repaired his error by separating from her.

Notwithstanding these good reasons, such an error of the senses would not have been pardoned by Adrienne. She did not understand that complete separation of the body and soul that would make the one exempt from the stains of the other. She did not think it a matter of indifference to toy with one woman whilst you were thinking of another. Her young, chaste, passionate love demanded an absolute fealty—a fealty as just in the eyes of heaven and nature as it may be ridiculous and foolish in the eyes of man. For the very reason that she cherished a refined religion of the senses, and revered them as an adorable and divine manifestation, Adrienne had all sorts of delicate scruples and nice repugnances, unknown to the austere spirituality of those ascetic prudes who despise vile matter too much to take notice of its errors, and allow it to grovel in filth, to show the contempt in which they hold it. Mdlle. de Cardoville was not one of those wonderfully modest creatures who would die of confusion rather than say plainly that they wished for a young and handsome husband, at once ardent and pure. It is true that they generally marry old, ugly, and corrupted men, and make up for it by taking two or three lovers six months after. But Adrienne felt instinctively how much of virginal and celestial freshness there is in the equal innocence of two loving and passionate beings—what guarantees for the future in the remembrance which a man preserves of his first love!

We say, then, that Adrienne was only half-satisfied, though convinced by the vexation of Rose-Pompon that Djalma had never entertained a serious attachment for the grisette.

“And why do you detest me, miss?” said Adrienne mildly, when Rose-Pompon had finished her speech.

“Oh! bless me, madame!” replied the latter, forgetting altogether her assumption of triumph, and yielding to the natural sincerity of her character; “pretend that you don’t know why I detest you!—Oh, yes! people go and pick bouquets from the jaws of a panther for people that they care nothing about, don’t they? And if it was only that!” added Rose-Pompon, who was gradually getting animated, and whose pretty face, at first contracted into a sullen pout, now assumed an expression of real and yet half-comic sorrow.



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“And if it was only the nosegay!” resumed she. “Though it gave me a dreadful turn to see Prince Charming leap like a kid upon the stage, I might have said to myself: ‘Pooh! these Indians have their own way of showing politeness. Here, a lady drops her nosegay, and a gentleman picks it up and gives it to her; but in India it is quite another thing; the man picks up the nosegay, and does not return it to the woman—he only kills a panther before her eyes.’ Those are good manners in that country, I suppose; but what cannot be good manners anywhere is to treat a woman as I have been treated. And all thanks to you, madame!”

These complaints of Rose-Pompon, at once bitter and laughable, did not at all agree with what she had previously stated as to Djalma’s passionate love for her; but Adrienne took care not to point out this contradiction, and said to her, mildly: “You must be mistaken, miss, when you suppose that I had anything to do with your troubles. But, in any case, I regret sincerely that you should have been ill-treated by any one.”

“If you think I have been beaten, you are quite wrong,” exclaimed Rose Pompon. “Ah! well, I am sure! No, it is not that. But I am certain that, had it not been for you, Prince Charming would have got to love me a little. I am worthy of the trouble, after all—and then there are different sorts of love—I am not so very particular—not even so much as that,” added Rose-Pompon, snapping her fingers.

“Ah!” she continued, “when Ninny Moulin came to fetch me, and brought me jewels and laces to persuade me to go with him, he was quite right in saying there was no harm in his offers.”

“Ninny Moulin?” asked Mdlle. de Cardoville, becoming more and more interested; “who is this Ninny Moulin, miss?”

“A religious writer,” answered Rose-Pompon, pouting; “the right-hand man of a lot of old sacristans, whose money he takes on pretense of writing about morality and religion. A fine morality it is!”

At these words—“a religious writer”—“sacristans” Adrienne instantly divined some new plot of Rodin or Father d’Aigrigny, of which she and Djalma were to have been the victims. She began vaguely to perceive the real state of the case, as she resumed: “But, miss, under what pretence could this man take you away with him?”

“He came to fetch me, and said I need not fear for my virtue, and was only to make myself look pretty. So I said to myself: ‘Philemon’s out of town, and it’s very dull here all alone: This seems a droll affair; what can I risk by it?’—Alas! I didn’t know what I risked,” added Rose Pompon, with a sigh. “Well! Ninny Moulin takes me away in a fine carriage. We stop in the Place du Palais-Royal. A sullen-looking man, with a yellow face, gets up in the room of Ninny Moulin, and takes me to the house of Prince Charming. When I saw him—la! he was so handsome, so very handsome, that I was



quite dizzy-like; and he had such a kind, noble air, that I said to myself, 'Well! there will be some credit if I remain a good girl now!'—I did not know what a true word I was speaking. I have been good—oh! worse than good."



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“What, miss! do you regret having been so virtuous?”

“Why, you see, I regret, at least, that I have not had the pleasure of refusing. But how can you refuse, when nothing is asked—when you are not even thought worth one little loving word?”

“But, miss, allow me to observe to you that the indifference of which you complain does not see to have prevented your making a long stay in the house in question.”

“How should I know why the prince kept me there, or took me out riding with him, or to the play? Perhaps it is the fashion in his savage country to have a pretty girl by your side, and to pay no attention to her at all!”

“But why, then, did you remain, miss?”

“Why did I remain?” said Rose-Pompon, stamping her foot with vexation. “I remained because, without knowing how it happened, I began to get very fond of Prince Charming; and what is queer enough, I, who am as gay as a lark, loved him because he was so sorrowful, which shows that it was a serious matter. At last, one day, I could hold out no longer. I said: ‘Never mind; I don’t care for the consequences. Philemon, I am sure, is having his fun in the country.’ That set my mind at ease. So one morning, I dress myself in my best, all very pretty, look in my glass, and say: ‘Well, that will do—he can’t stand that! and, going to his room, I tell him all that passes through my head; I laugh, I cry—at last I tell him that I adore him. What do you think he answers, in his mild voice, and as cold as a piece of marble? Why, ‘Poor child—poor child—poor child!’” added Rose-Pompon, with indignation; “neither more nor less than if I had come to complain to him of the toothache. But the worst of it is that I am sure, if he were not in love elsewhere, he would be all fire and gunpowder. Only now he is so sad, so dejected!”

Then, pausing a moment, Rose-Pompon added: “No, I will not tell you that; you would be too pleased.” But, after another pause, she continued: “Well, never mind; I will tell you, though”; and this singular girl looked at Mdlle. de Cardoville with a mixture of sympathy and deference. “Why should I keep it from you? I began by riding the high horse, and saying that the prince wished to marry me; and I finished by confessing that he almost turned me out. Well, it’s not my fault; when I try to fib, I am sure to get confused. So, madame, this is the plain truth:—When I met you at poor Mother Bunch’s, I was at first as angry as a little turkey-cock; but when I heard you, that are such a fine great lady, speak so kindly to the poor girl, and treat her as your sister, do what I would, my anger began to go away. Since we have been here, I have done my utmost to get it up again; but I find it impossible, and the more I see the difference between us, the more I perceive that Prince Charming was right in thinking so much of you. For you must know, madame, that he is over head and ears in love with you. I don’t say so merely because



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he killed the panther for you at the Porte-Saint-Martin; but if you knew all the tricks he played with your bouquet, and how he will sit up all night weeping in that room where he saw you for the first time—and then your portrait, that he has drawn upon glass, after the fashion of his country, and so many other things—the fact is, that I, who was fond of him, and saw all this was at first in a great rage; but afterwards it was so touching that it brought the tears into my eyes. Yes, madame, just as it does now, when I merely think of the poor prince. Oh, madame!” added Rose-Pompon, her eyes swimming in tears, and with such an expression of sincere interest, that Adrienne was much moved by it; “oh, madame, you look so mild and good, that you will not make this poor prince miserable. Pray love him a little bit; what can it matter to you?”

So saying, Rose-Pompon, with a perfectly simple, though too familiar, gesture, took hold of Adrienne’s hand, as if to enforce her request. It had required great self-command in Mdlle. de Cardoville to repress the rush of joy that was mounting from her heart to her lips, to check the torrent of questions which she burned to address to Rose-Pompon, and to restrain the sweet tears of happiness that for some seconds had trembled in her eyes; and, strangely enough, when Rose-Pompon took her hand, Adrienne, instead of withdrawing it, pressed the offered hand almost affectionately, and led her towards the window, as if to examine her sweet face more attentively.

On entering the room, the grisette had thrown her bonnet and shawl down upon the bed, so that Adrienne could admire the thick and silky masses of light hair that crowned the fresh face of the charming girl, with its firm, rosy cheeks, its mouth as red as a cherry, and its large blue laughing eyes; and, thanks to the somewhat scanty dress of Rose-Pompon, Adrienne could fully appreciate the various graces of her nymph-like figure. Strange as it may appear, Adrienne was delighted at finding the girl still prettier than she had at first imagined. The stoical indifference of Djalma to so attractive a creature was the best proof of the sincerity of the passion by which he was actuated.

Having taken the hand of Adrienne, Rose-Pompon was herself confused and surprised at the kindness with which Mdlle. de Cardoville permitted this familiarity. Emboldened by this indulgence, and by the silence of Adrienne, who for some moments had been contemplating her with almost grateful benevolence, the grisette resumed: “Oh, you will not refuse, madame? You will take pity on this poor prince?”

We cannot tell how Adrienne would have answered this indiscreet question of Rose-Pompon, for suddenly a loud, wild, shrill, piercing sound, evidently intended to imitate the crowing of a cock, was heard close to the door of the room.

Adrienne started in alarm; but the countenance of Rose Pompon, just now so sad, brightened up joyously at this signal, and, clapping her hands she exclaimed, “It is Philemon!”



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“What—who?” said Adrienne, hastily.

“My lover; oh, the monster! he must have come upstairs on tiptoe, to take me by surprise with his crowing. Just like him!”

A second cock-a-doodle-doo, still louder than the first, was heard close to the door. “What a stupid, droll creature it is! Always the same joke, and yet it always amuses me,” said Rose-Pompon.

And drying her tears with the back of her hand, she began to laugh like one bewitched at Philemon’s jest, which, though well known to her, always seemed new and agreeable.

“Do not open the door,” whispered Adrienne, much embarrassed; “do not answer, I beg of you.”

“Though the door is bolted, the key is on the outside; Philemon can see that there is some one at home.”

“No matter—do not let him in.”

“But, madame, he lives here; the room belongs to him.”

In fact, Philemon, probably growing tired of the little effect produced by his two ornithological imitations, turned the key in the lock, and finding himself unable to open the door, said in a deep bass voice: “What, dearest puss, have you shut yourself in? Are you praying Saint Flambard for the return of Philly?” (short for Philemon.)

Adrienne, not copping to increase, by prolonging it, the awkwardness of this ridiculous situation, went straight to the door and opened it, to the great surprise of Philemon, who recoiled two or three steps. Notwithstanding the annoyance of this incident, Mdlle. de Cardoville could not help smiling at sight of Rose-Pompon’s lover, and of the articles he carried in his hand or under his arm.

Philemon was a tall fellow, with dark hair and a very fresh color, and, being just arrived from a journey, he wore a white cap; his thick, black beard flowed down on his sky-blue waistcoat; and a short olive-colored velvet shooting-coat, with extravagantly large plaid trousers, completed his costume. As for the accessories which had provoked a smile from Adrienne, they consisted: first, of a portmanteau tucked under his arm, with the head and neck of a goose protruding from it; secondly, of a cage held in his hand, with an enormous white rabbit all alive within it.

“Oh! the darling white rabbit! what pretty red eyes!” Such, it must be confessed, was the first exclamation of Rose-Pompon, though Philemon, to whom it was not addressed, had returned after a long absence; but the student far from being shocked at seeing



himself thus sacrificed to his long-earned companion, smiled complacently, rejoicing at the success of his attempt to please his mistress.

All this passed very rapidly. While Rose-Pompon, kneeling before the cage, was still occupied with her admiration of the rabbit, Philemon, struck with the lofty air of Mdlle. de Cardoville, raised his hand to his cap, and bowed respectfully as he made way for her to pass. Adrienne returned his salutation with politeness, full of grace and dignity, and, lightly descending the stairs, soon disappeared. Dazzled by her beauty, as well as impressed with her noble and lofty bearing, and curious to know how in the world Rose-Pompon had fallen in with such an acquaintance, Philemon said to her, in his amorous jargon: "Dearest puss! tell her Philly who is that fine lady?"



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“One of my school-fellows, you great satyr!” said Rose-Pompon, still playing with the rabbit.

Then, glancing at a box, which Philemon deposited close to the cage and the portmanteau, she added: “I’ll wager anything you have brought me some more preserves!”

“Philly has brought something better to his dear puss,” said the student, imprinting two vigorous kisses on the rosy cheeks of Rose-Pompon, who had at length, consented to stand up; “Philly has brought her his heart.”

“Fudge!” said the grisette, delicately placing the thumb of her left hand on the tip of her nose, and opening the fingers, which she slightly moved to and fro. Philemon answered this provocation by putting his arm around her waist; and then the happy pair shut their door.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

Soothing words.

During the interview of Adrienne with Rose-Pompon a touching scene took place between Agricola and Mother Bunch, who had been much surprised at Mdlle. de Cardoville’s condescension with regard to the grisette. Immediately after the departure of Adrienne, Agricola had knelt down beside Mother Bunch, and said to her, with profound emotion: “We are alone, and I can at length tell you what weighs upon my heart. This act is too cruel—to die of misery and despair, and not to send to me for assistance.”

“Listen to me, Agricola—”

“No, there is no excuse for this. What! we called each other by the names of brother and sister, and for fifteen years gave every proof of sincere affection—and, when the day of misfortune comes, you quit life without caring for those you must leave behind—without considering that to kill yourself is to tell them they are indifferent to you!”

“Forgive me, Agricola! it is true. I had never thought of that,” said the workgirl, casting down her eyes; “but poverty—want of work—”

“Misery! want of work! and was I not here?”

“And despair!”

“But why despair? This generous young lady had received you in her house; she knew your worth, and treated you as her friend—and just at the moment when you had every



chance of happiness, you leave the house abruptly, and we remain in the most horrible anxiety on your account.”

“I feared—to be—to be a burden to my benefactress,” stammered she.

“You a burden to Mdlle. de Cardoville, that is so rich and good!”

“I feared to be indiscreet,” said the sewing-girl, more and more embarrassed.

Instead of answering his adopted sister, Agricola remained silent, and contemplated her for some moments with an undefinable expression; then he exclaimed suddenly, as if replying to a question put by himself: “She will forgive me for disobeying her.—I am sure of it.”

He next turned towards Mother Bunch, who was looking at him in astonishment, and said to her in a voice of emotion: “I am too frank to keep up this deception. I am reproaching you—blaming you—and my thoughts are quite different.”



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“How so, Agricola?”

“My heart aches, when I think of the evil I have done you.”

“I do not understand you, my friend; you have never done me any evil.”

“What! never? even in little things? when, for instance, yielding to a detestable habit, I, who loved and respected you as my sister, insulted you a hundred times a day?”

“Insulted me!”

“Yes—when I gave you an odious and ridiculous nickname, instead of calling you properly.”

At these words, Mother Bunch looked at the smith in the utmost alarm, trembling lest he had discovered her painful secret, notwithstanding the assurance she had received from Mdlle. de Cardoville. Yet she calmed herself a little when she reflected, that Agricola might of himself have thought of the humiliation inflicted on her by calling her Mother Bunch, and she answered him with a forced smile. “Can you be grieved at so small a thing? It was a habit, Agricola, from childhood. When did your good and affectionate mother, who nevertheless loved me as her daughter, ever call me anything else?”

“And did my mother consult you about my marriage, speak to you of the rare beauty of my bride, beg you to come and see her, and study her character, in the hope that the instinct of your affection for me would warn you—if I made a bad choice? Did my mother have this cruelty?—No; it was I, who thus pierced your heart!”

The fears of the hearer were again aroused; there could be but little doubt that Agricola knew her secret. She felt herself sinking with confusion; yet, making a last effort not to believe the discovery, she murmured in a feeble voice: “True, Agricola! It was not your mother, but yourself, who made me that request—and I was grateful to you for such a mark of confidence.”

“Grateful, my poor girl!” cried the smith, whilst his eyes filled with tears; “no, it is not true. I pained you fearfully—I was merciless—heaven knows, without being aware of it!”

“But,” said the other, in a voice now almost unintelligible, “what makes you think so?”

“Your love for me!” cried the smith, trembling with emotion, as he clasped Mother Bunch in a brotherly embrace.

“Oh heaven!” murmured the unfortunate creature, as she covered her face with her hands, “he knows all.”



“Yes, I know all,” resumed Agricola, with an expression of ineffable tenderness and respect: “yes, I know all, and I will not have you blush for a sentiment, which honors me, and of which I feel so justly proud. Yes, I know all; and I say to myself with joy and pride, that the best, the most noble heart in the world is mine—will be mine always. Come, Magdalen; let us leave shame to evil passions. Raise your eyes, and look at me! You know, if my countenance was ever false—if it ever reflected a feigned emotion. Then look and tell me, if you cannot read in my features, how proud I am, Magdalen, how justly proud of your love!”



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Overwhelmed with grief and confusion, Mother Bunch had not dared to look on Agricola; but his words expressed so deep a conviction, the tones of his voice revealed so tender an emotion, that the poor creature felt her shame gradually diminish, particularly when Agricola added, with rising animation: "Be satisfied, my sweet, my noble Magdalen; I will be worthy of this love. Believe me, it shall yet cause you as much happiness as it has occasioned tears. Why should this love be a motive for estrangement, confusion, fear? For what is love, in the sense in which it is held by your generous heart? Is it not a continual exchange of devotion, tenderness, esteem, of mutual and blind confidence?—Why, Magdalen! we may have all this for one another—devotion, tenderness, confidence—even more than in times past; for, on a thousand occasions, your secret inspired you with fear and suspicion—while, for the future, on the contrary, you will see me take such delight in the place I fill in your good and valiant heart, that you will be happy in the happiness you bestow. What I have just said may seem very selfish and conceited; so much the worse! I do not know how to lie."

The longer the smith spoke, the less troubled became Mother Bunch. What she had above all feared in the discovery of her secret was to see it received with raillery, contempt, or humiliating compassion; far from this, joy and happiness were distinctly visible on the manly and honest face of Agricola. The hunchback knew him incapable of deception; therefore she exclaimed, this time without shame or confusion, but rather with a sort of pride.

"Every sincere and pure passion is so far good and consoling as to end by deserving interest and sympathy, when it has triumphed over its first excess! It is alike honorable to the heart which feels and that which inspires it!—Thanks to you, Agricola—thanks to the kind words, which have raised me in my own esteem—I feel that, instead of blushing, I ought to be proud of this love. My benefactress is right—you are right: why should I be ashamed of it? Is it not a true and sacred love? To be near you, to love you, to tell you so, to prove it by constant devotion, what did I ever desire more? And yet shame and fear, joined with that dizziness of the brain which extreme misery produces, drove me to suicide!—But then some allowance must be made for the suspicions of a poor creature, who has been the subject of ridicule from her cradle. So my secret was to die with me, unless some unforeseen accident should reveal it to you; and, in that case, you are right—sure of myself, sure of you, I ought to have feared nothing. But I may claim some indulgence; mistrust, cruel mistrust of one's self makes one doubt others also. Let us forget all that. Agricola, my generous brother, I will say to you, as you said to me just now, 'Look at me; you know my countenance cannot lie. Look at me: see if I shun your gaze; see if, ever in my life, I looked so happy'—and yet, even now, I was about to die!"



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She spoke the truth. Agricola himself could not have hoped so prompt an effect from his words. In spite of the deep traces which misery, grief, and sickness had imprinted on the girl's features, they now shone with radiant happiness and serenity, whilst her blue eyes, gentle and pure as her soul, were fixed, without embarrassment, on those of Agricola.

"Oh! thanks, thanks!" cried the smith, in a rapture of delight: "when I see you so calm, and so happy, Magdalen, I am indeed grateful."

"Yes, I am calm, I am happy," replied she; "and happy I shall be, for I can now tell you my most secret thoughts. Yes, happy; for this day, which began so fatally, ends like a divine dream. Far from being afraid, I now look at you with hope and joy. I have again found my generous benefactress, and I am tranquil as to the fate of my poor sister. Oh! shall we not soon see her? I should like her to take part in this happiness."

She seemed so happy, that the smith did not dare to inform her of the death of Cephyse, and reserved himself to communicate the same at a more fitting opportunity. Therefore he answered: "Cephyse, being the stronger, has been the more shaken; it will not be prudent, I am told, to see her to-day."

"I will wait then. I can repress my impatience, I have so much to say to you."

"Dear, gentle Magdalen!"

"Oh, my friend!" cried the girl, interrupting Agricola, with tears of joy: "I cannot tell you what I feel, when I hear you call me Magdalen. It is so sweet, so soothing, that my heart expands with delight."

"Poor girl! how dreadfully she must have suffered!" cried the smith, with inexpressible emotion, "when she displays so much happiness, so much gratitude, at being called by her own poor name!"

"But consider, my friend; that word in your mouth contains a new life for me. If you only knew what hopes, what pleasures I can now see gleaming in the future! If you knew all the cherished longings of my tenderness! Your wife, the charming Angela, with her angel face and angel-soul—oh! in my turn, I can say to, you, 'Look at me, and see how sweet that name is to my lips and heart!' Yes, your charming, your good Angela will call me Magdalen—and your children, Agricola, your children!—dear little creatures!—to them also I shall be Magdalen—their good Magdalen—and the love I shall bear them will make them mine, as well as their mother's—and I shall have my part in every maternal care—and they will belong to us three; will they not, Agricola?—Oh! let me, let me weep! These tears without bitterness do me so much good; they are tears that need not be concealed. Thank heaven! thank you, my friend! those other tears are I trust dried forever."



For some seconds, this affecting scene had been overlooked by an invisible witness. The smith and Mother Bunch had not perceived Mdlle. de Cardoville standing on the threshold of the door. As Mother Bunch had said, this day, which dawned with all under such fatal auspices, had become for all a day of ineffable felicity. Adrienne, too, was full of joy, for Djalma had been faithful to her, Djalma loved her with passion. The odious appearances, of which she had been the dupe and victim, evidently formed part of a new plot of Rodin, and it only remained for Mdlle. de Cardoville to discover the end of these machinations.



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Another joy was reserved for her. The happy are quick in detecting happiness in others, and Adrienne guessed, by the hunchback's last words, that there was no longer any secret between the smith and the sempstress. She could not therefore help exclaiming, as she entered: "Oh! this will be the brightest day of my life, for I shall not be happy alone!"

Agricola and Mother Bunch turned round hastily. "Lady," said the smith, "in spite of the promise I made you, I could not conceal from Magdalen that I knew she loved me!"

"Now that I no longer blush for this love before Agricola, why should I blush for it before you, lady, that told me to be proud of it, because it is noble and pure?" said Mother Bunch, to whom her happiness gave strength enough to rise, and to lean upon Agricola's arm.

"It is well, my friend," said Adrienne, as she threw her arms round her to support her; "only one word, to excuse the indiscretion with which you will perhaps reproach me. If I told your secret to M. Agricola—"

"Do you know why it was, Magdalen?" cried the smith, interrupting Adrienne. "It was only another proof of the lady's delicate generosity. 'I long hesitate to confide to you this secret,' said she to me this morning, 'but I have at length made up my mind to it. We shall probably find your adopted sister; you have been to her the best of brothers: but many times, without knowing it, you have wounded her feelings cruelly—and now that you know her secret, I trust in your kind heart to keep it faithfully, and so spare the poor child a thousand pangs—pangs the more bitter, because they come from you, and are suffered in silence. Hence, when you speak to her of your wife, your domestic happiness, take care not to gall that noble and tender heart.'—Yes, Magdalen, these were the reasons that led the lady to commit what she called an indiscretion."

"I want words to thank you now and ever," said Mother Bunch.

"See, my friend," replied Adrienne, "how often the designs of the wicked turn against themselves. They feared your devotion to me, and therefore employed that unhappy Florine to steal your journal—"

"So as to drive me from your house with shame, lady, When I supposed my most secret thoughts an object of ridicule to all. There can be no doubt such was their plan," said Mother Bunch.

"None, my child. Well! this horrible wickedness, which nearly caused your death, now turns to the confusion of the criminals. Their plot is discovered—and, luckily, many other of their designs," said Adrienne, as she thought of Rose-Pompon.



Then she resumed, with heartfelt joy: “At last, we are again united, happier than ever, and in our very happiness we shall find new resources to combat our enemies. I say our enemies—for all that love me are odious to these wretches. But courage, the hour is come, and the good people will have their turn.”

“Thank heaven, lady,” said the smith; “or my part, I shall not be wanting in zeal. What delight to strip them of their mask!”



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“Let me remind you, M. Baudoin, that you have an appointment for to-morrow with M. Hardy.”

“I have not forgotten it, lady, any more than the generous offers I am to convey to him.”

“That is nothing. He belongs to my family. Tell him (what indeed I shall write to him this evening), that the funds necessary to reopen his factory are at his disposal; I do not say so for his sake only, but for that of a hundred families reduced to want. Beg him to quit immediately the fatal abode to which they have taken him: for a thousand reasons he should be on his guard against all that surround him.”

“Be satisfied, lady. The letter he wrote to me in reply to the one I got secretly delivered to him, was short, affectionate, sad—but he grants me the interview I had asked for, and I am sure I shall be able to persuade him to leave that melancholy dwelling, and perhaps to depart with me, he has always had so much confidence in my attachment.”

“Well, M. Baudoin, courage!” said Adrienne, as she threw her cloak over the workgirl’s shoulders, and wrapped her round with care. “Let us be gone, for it is late. As soon as we get home, I will give you a letter for M. Hardy, and to-morrow you will come and tell me the result of your visit. No, not to-morrow,” she added, blushing slightly. “Write to me to-morrow, and the day after, about twelve, come to me.”

Some minutes later, the young sempstress, supported by Agricola and Adrienne, had descended the stairs of that gloomy house, and, being placed in the carriage by the side of Mdlle. de Cardoville, she earnestly entreated to be allowed to see Cephyse; it was in vain that Agricola assured her it was impossible, and that she should see her the next day. Thanks to the information derived from Rose-Pompon, Mdlle. de Cardoville was reasonably suspicious of all those who surrounded Djalma, and she therefore took measures, that, very evening, to have a letter delivered to the prince by what she considered a sure hand.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

The two carriages.

It is the evening of the day on which Mdlle. de Cardoville prevented the sewing-girl’s suicide. It strikes eleven; the night is dark; the wind blows with violence, and drives along great black clouds, which completely hide the pale lustre of the moon. A hackney-coach, drawn by two broken-winded horses, ascends slowly and with difficulty the slope of the Rue Blanche, which is pretty steep near the barrier, in the part where is situated the house occupied by Djalma.

The coach stops. The coachman, cursing the length of an interminable drive “within the circuit,” leading at last to this difficult ascent, turns round on his box, leans over towards



the front window of the vehicle, and says in a gruff tone to the person he is driving: “Come! are we almost there? From the Rue de Vaugirard to the Barriere Blanche, is a pretty good stretch, I think, without reckoning that the night is so dark, that one can hardly see two steps before one—and the street-lamps not lighted because of the moon, which doesn’t shine, after all!”



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“Look out for a little door with a portico-drive on about twenty yards beyond—and then stop close to the wall,” answered a squeaking voice, impatiently, and with an Italian accent.

“Here is a beggarly Dutchman, that will make me as savage as a bear?” muttered the angry Jehu to himself. Then he added: “Thousand thunders! I tell you that I can’t see. How the devil can I find out your little door?”

“Have you no sense? Follow the wall to the right, brush against it, and you will easily find the little door. It is next to No. 50. If you do not find it, you must be drunk,” answered the Italian, with increased bitterness.

The coachman only replied by swearing like a trooper, and whipping up his jaded horses. Then, keeping close to the wall, he strained his eyes in trying to read the numbers of the houses, by the aid of his carriage lamps.

After some moments, the coach again stopped. “I have passed No. 50, and here is a little door with a portico,” said the coachman. “Is that the one?”

“Yes,” said the voice. “Now go forward some twenty yards, and then stop.”

“Well! I never—”

“Then get down from your box, and give twice three knocks at the little door we have just passed—you understand me?—twice three knocks.”

“Is that all you give me to drink?” cried the exasperated coachman.

“When you have taken me back to the Faubourg Saint-Germain, where I live, you shall have something handsome, if you do but manage matters well.”

“Ha! now the Faubourg Saint-Germain! Only that little bit of distance!” said the driver, with repressed rage. “And I who have winded my horses, wanted to be on the boulevard by the time the play was out. Well, I’m blown!” Then, putting a good face on his bad luck, and consoling himself with the thought of the promised drink-money, he resumed: “I am to give twice three knocks at the little door?”

“Yes; three knocks first—then pause—then three other knocks. Do you understand?”

“What next?”

“Tell the person who comes, that he is waited for, and bring him here to the coach.”

“The devil burn you!” said the coachman to himself, as he turned round on the box, and whipped up his horses, adding: “this crusty old Dutchman has something to do with



Free-masons, or, perhaps, smugglers, seeing we are so near the gates. He deserves my giving him in charge, for bringing me all the way from the Rue de Vaugirard.”

At twenty steps beyond the little door, the coach again stopped, and the coachman descended from the box to execute the orders he had received. Going to the little door, he knocked three times; then paused, as he had been desired, and then knocked three times more. The clouds, which had hitherto been so thick as entirely to conceal the disk of the moon, just then withdrew sufficiently to afford a glimmering light, so that when the door opened at the signal, the coachman saw a middle-sized person issue from it, wrapped in a cloak, and wearing a colored cap.

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This man carefully locked the door, and then advanced two steps into the street. "They are waiting for you," said the coachman; "I am to take you along with me to the coach."

Preceding the man with the cloak, who only answered him by a nod, he led him to the coach-door, which he was about to open, and to let down the step, when the voice exclaimed from the inside: "It is not necessary. The gentleman may talk to me through the window. I will call you when it is time to start."

"Which means that I shall be kept here long enough to send you to all the devils!" murmured the driver. "However, I may as well walk about, just to stretch my legs."

So saying, he began to walk up and down, by the side of the wall in which was the little door. Presently he heard the distant sound of wheels, which soon came nearer and nearer, and a carriage, rapidly ascending the slope, stopped on the other side of the little garden-door.

"Come, I say! a private carriage!" said the coachman. "Good horses those, to come up the Rue Blanche at a trot."

The coachman was just making this observation, when, by favor of a momentary gleam of light, he saw a man step from the carriage, advance rapidly to the little door, open it, and go in, closing it after him.

"It gets thicker and thicker!" said the coachman. "One comes out, and the other goes in."

So saying, he walked up to the carriage. It was splendidly harnessed, and drawn by two handsome and vigorous horses. The driver sat motionless, in his great box-coat, with the handle of his whip resting on his right knee.

"Here's weather to drive about in, with such tidy dukes as yours, comrade!" said the humble hackney-coachman to this automaton, who remained mute and impassible, without even appearing to know that he was spoken to.

"He doesn't understand French—he's an Englishman. One could tell that by his horses," said the coachman, putting this interpretation on the silence of his brother whip. Then, perceiving a tall footman at a little distance, dressed in a long gray livery coat, with blue collar and silver buttons, the coachman addressed himself to him, by way of compensation, but without much varying his phrase: "Here's nice weather to stand about in, comrade!" On the part of the footman, he was met with the same imperturbable silence.

"They're both Englishmen," resumed the coachman, philosophically; and, though somewhat astonished at the incident of the little door, he recommenced his walk in the direction of his own vehicle.



While these facts were passing, the man in the cloak, and the man with the Italian accent continued their conversation, the one still in the coach, and the other leaning with his hand on the door. It had already lasted for some time, and was carried on in Italian. They were evidently talking of some absent person, as will appear from the following.

“So,” said the voice from the coach, “that is agreed to?”



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“Yes, my lord,” answered the man in the cloak; “but only in case the eagle should become a serpent.”

“And, in the contrary event, you will receive the other half of the ivory crucifix I gave you.”

“I shall know what it means, my lord.”

“Continue to merit and preserve his confidence.”

“I will merit and preserve it, my lord, because I admire and respect this man, who is stronger than the strongest, by craft, and courage, and will. I have knelt before him with humility, as I would kneel before one of the three black idols that stand between Bowanee and her worshippers; for his religion, like mine, teaches to change life into nothingness.”

“Humph!” said the voice, in a tone of some embarrassment; “these comparisons are useless and inaccurate. Only think of obeying him, without explaining your obedience.”

“Let him speak, and I perform his will! I am in his hands like a corpse, as he himself expresses it. He has seen, he sees every day, my devotion to his interests with regard to Prince Djalma. He has only to say: ‘Kill him!’ and this son of a king—”

“For heaven’s salve, do not have such ideas!” cried the voice, interrupting the man in the cloak. “Thank heaven, you will never be asked for such proofs of your submission.”

“What I am ordered I do. Bowanee sees me.”

“I do not doubt your zeal. I know that you are a loving and intelligent barrier, placed between the prince and many guilty interests; and it is because I have heard of that zeal, of your skill in circumventing this young Indian, and, above all, of the motives of your blind devotion, that I have wished to inform you of everything. You are the fanatical worshipper of him you serve. That is well; man should be the obedient slave of the god he chooses for himself.”

“Yes, my lord; so long as the god remains a god.”

“We understand each other perfectly. As for your recompense, you know what I have promised.”

“My lord, I have my reward already.”

“How so?”

“I know what I know.”



“Very well. Then as for secrecy—”

“You have securities, my lord.”

“Yes—and sufficient ones.”

“The interest of the cause I serve, my lord, would alone be enough to secure my zeal and discretion.”

“True; you are a man of firm and ardent convictions.”

“I strive to be so, my lord.”

“And, after all, a very religious man in your way. It is very praiseworthy, in these irreligious times, to have any views at all on such matters—particularly when those views will just enable me to count upon your aid.”

“You may count upon it, my lord, for the same reason that the intrepid hunter prefers a jackal to ten foxes, a tiger to ten jackals, a lion to ten tigers, and the welmiss to ten lions.”

“What is the welmiss?”

“It is what spirit is to matter, the blade to the scabbard, the perfume to the flower, the head to the body.”



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"I understand. There never was a more just comparison. You are a man of sound judgment. Always recollect what you have just told me, and make yourself more and more worthy of the confidence of—your idol."

"Will he soon be in a state to hear me, my lord?"

"In two or three days, at most. Yesterday a providential crisis saved his life; and he is endowed with so energetic a will, that his cure will be very rapid."

"Shall you see him again to-morrow, my lord?"

"Yes, before my departure, to bid him farewell."

"Then tell him a strange circumstance, of which I have not been able to inform him, but which happened yesterday."

"What was it?"

"I had gone to the garden of the dead. I saw funerals everywhere, and lighted torches, in the midst of the black night, shining upon tombs. Bowanee smiled in her ebon sky. As I thought of that divinity of destruction, I beheld with joy the dead-cart emptied of its coffins. The immense pit yawned like the mouth of hell; corpses were heaped upon corpses, and still it yawned the same. Suddenly, by the light of a torch, I saw an old man beside me. He wept. I had seen him before. He is a Jew—the keeper of the house in the Rue Saint-Francois—you know what I mean." Here the man in the cloak started.

"Yes, I know; but what is the matter? why do you stop short?"

"Because in that house there has been for a hundred and fifty years the portrait of a man whom I once met in the centre of India, on the banks of the Ganges." And the man in the cloak again paused and shuddered.

"A singular resemblance, no doubt."

"Yes, my lord, a singular resemblance—nothing more."

"But the Jew—the old Jew?"

"I am coming to that, my lord. Still weeping, he said to a gravedigger, 'Well! and the coffin?' 'You were right,' answered the man; 'I found it in the second row of the other grave. It had the figure of a cross on it, formed by seven black nails. But how could you know the place and the mark?' 'Alas! it is no matter,' replied the old Jew, with bitter melancholy. 'You see that I was but too well informed on the subject. But where is the coffin?' 'Behind the great tomb of black marble; I have hidden it there. So make haste;



for, in the confusion, nothing will be noticed. You have paid me well, and I wish you to succeed in what you require.”

“And what did the old Jew do with the coffin marked with the seven black nails?”

“Two men accompanied him, my lord, bearing a covered litter, with curtains drawn round it. He lighted a lantern, and, followed by these two men, went towards the place pointed out by the gravedigger. A stoppage, occasioned by the dead-carts, made me lose sight of the old Jew, whom I was following amongst the tombs. Afterwards I was unable to find him.”

“It is indeed a strange affair. What could this old Jew want with the coffin?”



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“It is said, my lord, that they use dead bodies in preparing their magic charms.”

“Those unbelievers are capable of anything—even of holding communication with the Enemy of mankind. However, we will look after this: the discovery may be of importance.”

At this instant a clock struck twelve in the distance.

“Midnight! already?”

“Yes, my lord.”

“I must be gone. Good-bye—but for the last time swear to me that, should matters so turn out, as soon as you receive the other half of the ivory crucifix I have just given you, you will keep your promise.”

“I have sworn it by Bowanee, my lord.”

“Don’t forget that, to make all sure, the person who will deliver to you the other half of the crucifix is to say—come, what is he to say?”

“He is to say, my lord: ’There is many a slip ’twixt the cup and the lip.’”

“Very well. Adieu! secrecy and fidelity!”

“Secrecy and fidelity, my lord,” answered the man in the cloak.

Some seconds after the hackney-coach started, carrying with it Cardinal Malipieri, one of the speakers in the above dialogue. The other, whom the reader has no doubt recognized as Faringhea, returned to the little garden-door of the house occupied by Djalma. At the moment he was putting the key into the lock, the door opened, to his great astonishment, and a man came forth. Faringhea rushed upon the unknown, seized him violently by the collar, and exclaimed: “Who are you? whence came you?”

The stranger evidently found the tone of this question anything but satisfactory; for, instead of answering, he struggled to disengage himself from Faringhea’s hold, and cried out, in a loud voice: “Help! Peter!”

Instantly the carriage, which had been standing a few yards off, dashed up at full speed, and Peter, the tall footman, seizing the half-breed by the shoulders, flung him back several paces, and thus made a seasonable diversion in favor of the unknown.

“Now, sir,” said the latter to Faringhea, shaking himself, and still protected by the gigantic footman, “I am in a state to answer your questions, though you certainly have a very rough way of receiving an old acquaintance. I am Dupont, ex-bailiff of the estate of



Cardoville, and it was I who helped to fish you out of the water, when the ship was wrecked in which you had embarked.”

By the light of the carriage-lamps, indeed, the half-caste recognized the good, honest face of Dupont, formerly bailiff, and now house-steward, to Mdlle. de Cardoville. It must not be forgotten that Dupont had been the first to write to Mdlle. de Cardoville, to ask her to interest herself for Djalma, who was then detained at Cardoville Castle by the injuries he had received during the shipwreck.

“But, sir, what is your business here? Why do you introduce yourself clandestinely into this house?” said Faringhea, in an abrupt and suspicious tone.



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“I will—just observe to you that there is nothing clandestine in the matter. I came here in a carriage, with servants in the livery of my excellent mistress, Mdlle. de Cardoville, charged by her, without any disguise or mystery, to deliver a letter to Prince Djalma, her cousin,” replied Dupont, with dignity.

On these words, Faringhea trembled with mute rage, as he answered: “And why, sir, come at this late hour, and introduce yourself by this little door?”

“I came at this hour, my dear sir, because such was Mdlle. de Cardoville’s command, and I entered by this little gate because there is every reason to believe that if I had gone around to the other I should not have been permitted to see the prince.”

“You are mistaken, sir,” replied the half-caste.

“It is possible: but as we knew that the prince usually passed a good portion of the night in the little saloon, which communicates with the greenhouse, and as Mdlle. de Cardoville had kept a duplicate key of this door, I was pretty certain, by taking this course, to be able to deliver into the prince’s own hands the letter from Mdlle. de Cardoville, his cousin, which I have now had the honor of doing, my dear sir; and I have been deeply touched by the kindness with which the prince deigned to receive me and to remember our last interview.”

“And who kept you so well informed, sir, of the prince’s habits?” said Faringhea, unable to control his vexation.

“If I have been well informed as to his habits, my dear sir, I have had no such correct knowledge of yours,” answered Dupont, with a mocking air; “for I assure you that I had no more notion of seeing you than you had of seeing me.”

So saying, M. Dupont bowed with something like mock politeness to the half-caste, and got into the carriage, which drove off rapidly, leaving Faringhea in a state of the utmost surprise and anger.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

The appointment.

The morning after—Dupont’s mission to Prince Djalma, the latter was walking with hasty and impatient step up and down the little saloon, which communicated, as we already know, with the greenhouse from which Adrienne had entered when she first appeared to him. In remembrance of that day, he had chosen to dress himself as on the occasion in question; he wore the same tunic of white cashmere, with a cherry-colored turban, to match with his girdle; his gaiters, of scarlet velvet, embroidered with silver, displayed the fine form of his leg, and terminated in small white morocco slippers, with red heels.



Happiness has so instantaneous, and, as it were, material an influence upon young, lively, and ardent natures, that Djalma, dejected and despairing only the day before, was no longer like the same person. The pale, transparent gold of his complexion was no longer tarnished by a livid hue. His large eyes, of late obscured like black diamonds by a humid vapor, now shone with mild radiance in the centre of their pearly setting; his lips, long pale, had recovered their natural color, which was rich and soft as the fine purple flowers of his country.



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Ever and anon, pausing in his hasty walk, he stopped suddenly, and drew from his bosom a little piece of paper, carefully folded, which he pressed to his lips with enthusiastic ardor. Then, unable to restrain the expression of his full happiness, he uttered a full and sonorous cry of joy, and with a bound he was in front of the plate-glass which separated the saloon from the conservatory, in which he had first seen Mdlle. de Cardoville. By a singular power of remembrance, or marvellous hallucination of a mind possessed by a fixed idea, Djalma had often seen, or fancied he saw, the adored semblance of Adrienne appear to him through this sheet of crystal. The illusion had been so complete, that, with his eyes ardently fixed on the vision he invoked, he had been able, with the aid of a pencil dipped in carmine, to trace with astonishing exactness, the profile of the ideal countenance which the delirium of his imagination had presented to his view.[42] It was before these delicate lines of bright carmine that Djalma now stood in deep contemplation, after perusing and reperusing, and raising twenty times to his lips, the letter he had received the night before from the hands of Dupont. Djalma was not alone. Faringhea watched all the movements of the prince, with a subtle, attentive, and gloomy aspect. Standing respectfully in a corner of the saloon, the half-caste appeared to be occupied in unfolding and spreading out Djalma's sash, light, silky Indian web, the brown ground of which was almost entirely concealed by the exquisite gold and silver embroidery with which it was overlaid.

The countenance of the half-caste wore a dark and gloomy expression. He could not deceive himself. The letter from Mdlle. de Cardoville, delivered by Dupont to Djalma, must have been the cause of the delight he now experienced, for, without doubt, he knew himself beloved. In that event, his obstinate silence towards Faringhea, ever since the latter had entered the saloon, greatly alarmed the half-caste, who could not tell what interpretation to put upon it. The night before, after parting with Dupont, he had hastened, in a state of anxiety easily understood, to look for the prince, in the hope of ascertaining the effect produced by Mdlle. de Cardoville's letter. But he found the parlor door closed, and when he knocked, he received no answer from within. Then, though the night was far advanced, he had dispatched a note to Rodin, in which he informed him of Dupont's visit and its probable intention. Djalma had indeed passed the night in a tumult of happiness and hope, and a fever of impatience quite impossible to describe. Repairing to his bed-chamber only towards the morning, he had taken a few moments of repose, and had then dressed himself without assistance.



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Many times, but in vain, the half-caste had discreetly knocked at the door of Djalma's apartment. It was only in the early part of the afternoon that the prince had rung the bell to order his carriage to be ready by half-past two. Faringhea having presented himself, the prince had given him the order without looking at him, as he might have done to any other of his servants. Was this suspicion, aversion, or mere absence of mind on the part of Djalma? Such were the questions which the half caste put to himself with growing anguish; for the designs of which he was the most active and immediate instrument might all be ruined by the least suspicion in the prince.

"Oh! the hours—the hours—how slow they are!" cried the young Indian, suddenly, in a low and trembling voice.

"The day before yesterday, my lord, you said the hours were very long," observed Faringhea, as he drew near Djalma in order to attract his attention. Seeing that he did not succeed in this he advanced a few steps nearer, and resumed: "Your joy seems very great, my lord; tell the cause of it to your poor and faithful servant, that he also may rejoice with you."

If he heard the words, Djalma did not pay any attention to them. He made no answer, and his large black eyes gazed upon vacancy. He seemed to smile admiringly upon some enchanting vision, and he folded his two hands upon his bosom, in the attitude which his countrymen assume at the hour of prayer. After some instants of contemplation, he said: "What o'clock is it?"—but he asked this question of himself, rather than of any third person.

"It will soon be two o'clock, my lord," said Faringhea.

Having heard this answer, Djalma seated himself, and hid his face in his hands, as if completely absorbed in some ineffable meditation. Urged on by his growing anxiety, and wishing at any cost to attract the attention of Djalma, Faringhea approached still nearer to him, and, almost certain of the effect of the words he was about to utter, said to him in a slow and emphatic voice: "My lord, I am sure that you owe the happiness which now transports you to Mdlle. de Cardoville."

Hardly had this name been pronounced, than Djalma started from his chair, looked the half-breed full in the face, and exclaimed, as if only just aware of his presence, "Faringhea! you here!—what is the matter?"

"Your faithful servant shares in your joy, my lord."

"What joy?"

"That which the letter of Mdlle. de Cardoville has occasioned, my lord."



Djalma returned no answer, but his eye shone with so much serene happiness, that the half-caste recovered from his apprehensions. No cloud of doubt or suspicion obscured the radiant features of the prince. After a few moments of silence, Djalma fixed upon the half-caste a look half-veiled with a tear of joy, and said to him, with the expression of one whose heart overflows with love and happiness: “Oh! such delight is good—great—like heaven!—for it is heaven which—”



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“You deserve this happiness, my lord, after so many sufferings.”

“What sufferings?—Oh! yes. I formerly suffered at Java; but that was years ago.”

“My lord, this great good fortune does not astonish me. What have I always told you? Do not despair; feign a violent passion for some other woman, and then this proud young lady—”

At these words Djalma looked at the half-caste with so piercing a glance, that the latter stopped short; but the prince said to him with affectionate goodness, “Go on! I listen.”

Then, leaning his chin upon his hand, and his elbow on his knee, he gazed so intently on Faringhea, and yet with such unutterable mildness, that even that iron soul was touched for a moment with a slight feeling of remorse.

“I was saying, my lord,” he resumed, “that by following the counsels of your faithful slave, who persuaded you to feign a passionate love for another woman, you have brought the proud Mdle. de Cardoville to come to you. Did I not tell you it would be so?”

“Yes, you did tell me so,” answered Djalma, still maintaining the same position, and examining the half-caste with the same fixed and mild attention.

The surprise of Faringhea increased; generally, the prince, without treating him with the least harshness, preserved the somewhat distant and imperious manners of their common country, and he had never before spoken to him with such extreme mildness. Knowing all the evil he had done the prince, and suspicious as the wicked must ever be, the half-caste thought for a moment, that his master’s apparent kindness might conceal a snare. He continued, therefore, with less assurance, “Believe me, my lord, this day, if you do but know how to profit by your advantages, will console you for all your troubles, which have indeed been great—for only yesterday, though you were generous enough to forget it, only yesterday you suffered cruelly—but you were not alone in your sufferings. This proud young lady suffered also!”

“Do you think so?” said Djalma.

“Oh! it is quite sure, my lord. What must she not have felt, when she saw you at the theatre with another woman!—If she loved you only a little, she must have been deeply wounded in her self-esteem; if she loved you with passion, she must have been struck to the heart. At length, you see, wearied out with suffering, she has come to you.”

“So that, any way, she must have suffered—and that does not move your pity?” said Djalma, in a constrained, but still very mild voice.



“Before thinking of others, my lord, I think of your distresses; and they touch me too nearly to leave me any pity for other woes,” added Faringhea hypocritically, so greatly had the influence of Rodin already modified the character of the Phansegar.

“It is strange!” said Djalma, speaking to himself, as he viewed the half caste with a glance still kind but piercing.



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“What is strange, my lord?”

“Nothing. But tell me, since your advice has hitherto prospered so well, what think you of the future?”

“Of the future, my lord?”

“Yes; in an hour I shall be with Mdlle. de Cardoville.”

“That is a serious matter, my lord. The whole future will depend upon this interview.”

“That is what I was just thinking.”

“Believe me, my lord, women never love any so well, as the bold man who spares them the embarrassment of a refusal.”

“Explain more fully.”

“Well, my lord, they despise the timid and languishing lover, who asks humbly for what he might take by force.”

“But to-day I shall meet Mdlle. de Cardoville for the first time.”

“You have met her a thousand times in your dreams, my lord; and depend upon it, she has seen you also in her dreams, since she loves you. Every one of your amorous thoughts has found an echo in her heart. All your ardent adorations have been responded to by her. Love has not two languages, and, without meeting, you have said all that you had to say to each other. Now, it is for you to act as her master, and she will be yours entirely.”

“It is strange—very strange!” said Djalma, a second time, without removing his eyes from Faringhea’s face.

Mistaking the sense which the prince attached to these words, the half caste resumed:

“Believe me, my lord, however strange it may appear, this is the wisest course. Remember the past. Was it by playing the part of a timid lover that you have brought to your feet this proud young lady, my lord? No, it was by pretending to despise her, in favor of another woman. Therefore, let us have no weakness. The lion does not woo like the poor turtle-dove. What cares the sultan of the desert for a few plaintive howls from the lioness, who is more pleased than angry at his rude and wild caresses? Soon submissive, fearful and happy, she follows in the track of her master. Believe me, my lord—try everything—dare everything—and to-day you will become the adored sultan of this young lady, whose beauty all Paris admires.”



After some minutes' silence, Djalma, shaking his head with an expression of tender pity, said to the half-caste, in his mild, sonorous voice: "Why betray me thus? Why advise me thus wickedly to use violence, terror, and surprise, towards an angel of purity, whom I respect as my mother? Is it not enough for you to have been so long devoted to my enemies, whose hatred has followed me from Java?"

Had Djalma sprung upon the half-caste with bloodshot eye, menacing brow, and lifted poniard, the latter would have been less surprised, and perhaps less frightened, than when he heard the prince speak of his treachery in this tone of mild reproach.

He drew back hastily, as if about to stand on his guard. But Djalma resumed, with the same gentleness, "Fear nothing. Yesterday I should have killed you! But to-day happy love renders me too just, too merciful for that. I pity you, without any feeling of bitterness—for you must have been very unhappy, or you could not have become so wicked."



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“My lord!” said the half-caste, with growing amazement.

“Yes, you must have suffered much, and met with little mercy, poor creature, to have become so merciless, in your hate, and proof against the sight of a happiness like mine. When I listened to you just now, and saw the sad perseverance of your hatred, I felt the deepest commiseration for you.”

“I do not know, my lord—but—” stammered the half-caste, and was unable to find words to proceed.

“Come, now—what harm have I ever done you?”

“None, my lord,” answered Faringhea.

“Then why do you hate me thus? why pursue me with so much animosity? Was it not enough to give me the perfidious counsel to feign a shameful love for the young girl that was brought hither, and who quitted the house disgusted at the miserable part she was to play?”

“Your feigned love for that young girl, my lord,” replied Faringhea, gradually recovering his presence of mind, “conquered the coldness of—”

“Do not say that,” resumed the prince, interrupting him with the same mildness. “If I enjoy this happiness, which makes me compassionate towards you, and raises me above myself, it is because Mdlle de Cardoville now knows that I have never for a moment ceased to love her as she ought to be loved, with adoration and reverence. It was your intention to have parted us forever, and you had nearly succeeded.”

“If you think this of me, my lord, you must look upon me as your most mortal enemy.”

“Fear nothing, I tell you. I have no right to blame you. In the madness of my grief, I listened to you and followed your advice. I was not only your dupe, but your accomplice. Only confess that, when you saw me at your mercy, dejected, crushed, despairing, it was cruel in you to advise the course that might have been most fatal to me.”

“The ardor of my zeal may have deceived me, my lord.”

“I am willing to believe it. And yet again to-day there were the same evil counsels. You had no more pity for my happiness than for my sorrow. The rapture of my heart inspires you with only one desire—that of changing this rapture into despair.”

“I, my lord!”



“Yes, you. It was your intention to ruin me—to dishonor me forever in the eyes of Mdlle. de Cardoville. Now, tell me—why this furious hate? what have I done to you?”

“You misjudge me, my lord—and—”

“Listen to me. I do not wish you to be any longer wicked and treacherous. I wish to make you good. In our country, they charm serpents, and tame the wildest tigers. You are a man, with a mind to reason, a heart to love, and I will tame you too by gentleness. This day has bestowed on me divine happiness; you shall have good cause to bless this day. What can I do for you? what would you have—gold? You shall have it. Do you desire more than gold? Do you desire a friend, to console you for the sorrows that made you



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wicked, and to teach you to be good? Though a king's son, I will be that friend—in spite of the evil—ay, because of the evil you have done me. Yes; I will be your sincere friend, and it shall be my delight to say to myself: 'The day on which I learned that my angel loved me, my happiness was great indeed—for, in the morning, I had an implacable enemy, and, ere night, his hatred was changed to friendship.' Believe me, Faringhea, misery makes crime, but happiness produces virtue. Be happy!"

At this moment the clock struck two. The prince started. It was time to go on his visit to Adrienne. The handsome countenance of Djalma, doubly embellished by the mild, ineffable expression with which it had been animated whilst he was talking to the half-caste, now seemed illumined with almost divine radiance.

Approaching Faringhea, he extended his hand with the utmost, grace and courtesy, saying to him, "Your hand!"

The half-caste, whose brow was bathed with a cold sweat, whose countenance was pale and agitated, seemed to hesitate for an instant; then, overawed, conquered, fascinated, he offered his trembling hand to the prince, who pressed it, and said to him, in their country's fashion, "You have laid your hand honestly in a friend's; this hand shall never be closed against you. Faringhea, farewell! I now feel myself more worthy to kneel before my angel."

And Djalma went out, on his way to the appointment with Adrienne. In spite of his ferocity, in spite of the pitiless hate he bore to the whole human race, the dark sectary of Bowanee was staggered by the noble and clement words of Djalma, and said to himself, with terror, "I have taken his hand. He is now sacred for me."

Then, after a moment's silence, a thought occurred to him, and he exclaimed, "Yes—but he will not be sacred for him who, according to the answer of last night, waits for him at the door of the house."

So saying, the half-caste hastened into the next room, which looked upon the street, and, raising a corner of the curtain, muttered anxiously to himself, "The carriage moves off—the man approaches. Perdition! it is gone and I see no more."

CHAPTER XL.

Anxiety.

By a singular coincidence of ideas, Adrienne, like Djalma, had wished to be dressed exactly in the same costume as at their interview in the house in the Rue Blanche. For the site of this solemn meeting, so important to her future happiness, Adrienne had



chosen, with habitual tact, the grand drawing-room of Cardoville House, in which hung many family portraits. The most apparent were those of her father and mother. The room was large and lofty, and furnished, like those which preceded it, with all the imposing splendor of the age of Louis XIV. The ceiling, painted by Lebrun, to represent the Triumph of Apollo, displayed his bold designing and vigorous coloring, in the centre



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of a wide cornice, magnificently carved and gilt, and supported at its angles by four large gilt figures, representing the Seasons. Huge panels, covered with crimson damask, and set in frames, served as the background to the family portraits which adorned this apartment. It is easier to conceive than describe the thousand conflicting emotions which agitated the bosom of Mdlle. de Cardoville as the moment approached for her interview with Djalma. Their meeting had been hitherto prevented by so many painful obstacles, and Adrienne was so well aware of the vigilant and active perfidy of her enemies, that even now she doubted of her happiness. Every instant, in spite of herself, her eyes wandered to the clock. A few minutes more, and the hour of the appointment would strike. It struck at last. Every reverberation was echoed from the depth of Adrienne's heart. She considered that Djalma's modest reserve had, doubtless, prevented his coming before the moment fixed by herself. Far from blaming this discretion, she fully appreciated it. But, from that moment, at the least noise in the adjoining apartments, she held her breath and listened with the anxiety of expectation.

For the first few minutes which followed the hour at which she expected Djalma, Mdlle. de Cardoville felt no serious apprehension, and calmed her impatience by the notion (which appears childish enough to those who have never known the feverish agitation of waiting for a happy meeting), that perhaps the clocks in the Rue Blanche might vary a little from those in the Rue d'Anjou. But when this supposed variation, conceivable enough in itself, could no longer explain a delay of a quarter of an hour, of twenty minutes, of more, Adrienne felt her anxiety gradually increase. Two or three times the young girl rose, with palpitating heart, and went on tip-toe to listen at the door of the saloon. She heard nothing. The clock struck half-past three.

Unable to suppress her growing terror, and clinging to a last hope, Adrienne returned towards the fireplace and rang the bell. After which she endeavored to compose her features, so as to betray no outward sign of emotion. In a few seconds, a gray-haired footman, dressed in black, opened the door, and waited in respectful silence for the orders of his mistress. The latter said to him, in a calm voice, "Andrew, request Hebe to give you the smelling bottle that I left on the chimney-piece in my room, and bring it me here." Andrew bowed; but just as he was about to withdraw to execute Adrienne's orders, which was only a pretext to enable her to ask a question without appearing to attach much importance to it in her servant's eyes, already informed of the expected visit of the prince, Mdlle. de Cardoville added, with an air of indifference. "Pray, is that clock right?"

Andrew drew out his watch, and replied as he cast his eyes upon it, "Yes, mademoiselle. I set my watch by the Tuileries. It is more than half past three."



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“Very well—thank you!” said Adrienne kindly.

Andrew again bowed; but, before going out, he said to Adrienne, “I forgot to tell you, lady, that Marshal Simon called about an hour ago; but, as you were only to be at home to Prince Djalma, we told him that you received no company.”

“Very well,” said Adrienne. With another low bow, Andrew quitted the room, and all returned to silence.

For the precise reason that, up to the last minute of the hour previous to the time fixed for her interview with Djalma, the hopes of Adrienne had not been disturbed by the slightest shadow of doubt, the disappointment she now felt was the more dreadful. Casting a desponding look at one of the portraits placed above her, she murmured, with a plaintive and despairing accent, “Oh, mother!”

Hardly had Mdlle. de Cardoville uttered the words than the windows were slightly shaken by a carriage rolling into the courtyard. The young lady started, and was unable to repress a low cry of joy. Her heart bounded at the thought of meeting Djalma, for this time she felt that he was really come. She was quite as certain of it as if she had seen him. She resumed her seat and brushed away a tear suspended from her long eyelashes. Her hand trembled like a leaf. The sound of several doors opening and shutting proved that the young lady was right in her conjecture. The gilded panels of the drawing-room door soon turned upon their hinges, and the prince appeared.

While a second footman ushered in Djalma, Andrew placed on a gilded table, within reach of his mistress, a little silver salver, on which stood the crystal smelling-bottle. Then he withdrew, and the door of the room was closed. The prince and Mdlle. de Cardoville were left alone together.

CHAPTER XLI.

Adrienne and Djalma.

The prince had slowly approached Mdlle. de Cardoville. Notwithstanding the impetuosity of the Oriental's passions, his uncertain and timid step—timid, yet graceful—betrayed his profound emotion. He did not venture to lift his eyes to Adrienne's face; he had suddenly become very pale, and his finely formed hands, folded over his bosom in the attitude of adoration, trembled violently. With head bent down, he remained standing at a little distance from Adrienne. This embarrassment, ridiculous in any other person, appeared touching in this prince of twenty years of age, endowed with an almost fabulous intrepidity, and of so heroic and generous a character, that no traveller could speak of the son of Kadja sing without a tribute of admiration and respect. Sweet

emotion! chaste reserve! doubly interesting if we consider that the burning passions of this youth were all the more inflammable, because they had hitherto been held in check.



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No less embarrassed than her cousin, Adrienne de Cardoville remained seated. Like Djalma, she cast down her eyes; but the burning blush on her cheeks, the quick heaving of her virgin bosom, revealed an emotion that she did not even attempt to hide. Notwithstanding the powers of her mind, by turns gay, graceful, and witty—notwithstanding the decision of her proud and independent character, and her complete acquaintance with the manners of the world—Adrienne shared Djalma's simple and enchanting awkwardness, and partook of that kind of temporary weakness, beneath which these two pure, ardent, and loving beings appeared sinking—as if unable to support the boiling agitation of the senses, combined with the intoxicating excitement of the heart. And yet their eyes had not met. Each seemed to fear the first electric shock of the other's glance—that invincible attraction of two impassioned beings—that sacred fire, which suddenly kindles the blood, and lifts two mortals from earth to heaven; for it is to approach the Divinity to give one's self up with religious fervor to the most noble and irresistible sentiment that He has implanted within us—the only sentiment that, in His adorable wisdom, the Dispenser of all good has vouchsafed to sanctify, by endowing it with a spark of His own creative energy.

Djalma was the first to raise his eyes. They were moist and sparkling. The excitement of passionate love, the burning ardor of his age, so long repressed, the intense admiration in which he held ideal beauty, were all expressed in his look, mingled with respectful timidity, and gave to the countenance of this youth an undefinable, irresistible character. Yes, irresistible!—for, when Adrienne encountered his glance, she trembled in every limb, and felt herself attracted by a magnetic power. Already, her eyes were heavy with a kind of intoxicating languor, when, by a great effort of will and dignity, she succeeded in overcoming this delicious confusion, rose from her chair, and said to Djalma in a trembling voice: “Prince, I am happy to receive you here.” Then, pointing to one of the portraits suspended above her, she added, as if introducing him to a living person: “Prince—my mother!”

With an instinct of rare delicacy, Adrienne had thus summoned her mother to be present at her interview with Djalma. It seemed a security for herself and the prince, against the seductions of a first interview—which was likely to be all the more perilous, that they both knew themselves madly loved that they both were free, and had only to answer to Providence for the treasures of happiness and enjoyment with which He had so magnificently endowed them. The prince understood Adrienne's thoughts; so that, when the young lady pointed to the portrait, Djalma, by a spontaneous movement full of grace and simplicity, knelt down before the picture, and said to it in a gentle, but manly voice: “I will love and revere you as my mother. And, in thought, my mother too shall be present, and stand like you, beside your child!”



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No better answer could have been given to the feeling which induced Mdlle. de Cardoville to place herself, as it were, under the protection of her mother. From that moment, confident in Djalma, confident in herself, the young lady felt more at her ease, and the delicious sense of happiness replaced those exciting emotions, which had at first so violently agitated her.

Then, seating herself once more, she said to Djalma, as she pointed to the opposite chair: "Pray take a seat, my dear cousin; and allow me to call you so, for there is too much ceremony in the word prince; and do you call me cousin also, for I find other names too grave. Having settled this point, we can talk together like old friends."

"Yes cousin," answered Djalma, blushing.

"And, as frankness is proper between friends," resumed Adrienne, "I have first to make you a reproach," she added, with a half-smile.

The prince had remained standing, with his arm resting on the chimney piece, in an attitude full of grace and respect.

"Yes, cousin," continued Adrienne, "a reproach, that you will perhaps forgive me for making. I had expected you a little sooner."

"Perhaps, cousin, you may blame me for having come so soon."

"What do you mean?"

"At the moment when I left home, a man, whom I did not know, approached my carriage, and said to me, with such an air of sincerity that I believed him: 'You are able to save the life of a person who has been a second father to you. Marshal Simon is in great danger, and, to rescue him, you must follow me on the instant—'"

"It was a snare," cried Adrienne, hastily. "Marshal Simon was here, scarcely an hour ago."

"Indeed!" exclaimed Djalma, joyfully, and as if he had been relieved from a great weight. "Then there will be nothing to sadden this happy day!"

"But, cousin," resumed Adrienne, "how came you not to suspect this emissary?"

"Some words, which afterwards escaped from him, inspired me with doubts," answered Djalma: "but at first I followed him, fearing the marshal might be in danger—for I know that he also has enemies."



“Now that I reflect on it, you were quite right, cousin, for some new plot against the marshal was probable enough; and the least doubt was enough to induce you to go to him.”

“I did so—even though you were waiting for me.”

“It was a generous sacrifice; and my esteem for you is increased by it, if it could be increased,” said Adrienne, with emotion. “But what became of this man?”

“At my desire, he got into the carriage with me. Anxious about the marshal, and in despair at seeing the time wasted, that I was to have passed with you, cousin, I pressed him with all sorts of questions. Several times, he replied to me with embarrassment, and then the idea struck me that the whole might be a snare. Remembering all that they had already attempted, to ruin me in your opinion, I immediately changed my course. The vexation of the man who accompanied me then became so visible, that I ought to have had no doubt upon the subject. Still, when I thought of Marshal Simon, I felt a kind of vague remorse, which you, cousin, have now happily set at rest.”



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“Those people are implacable!” said Adrienne; “but our happiness will be stronger than their hate.”

After a moment’s silence, she resumed, with her habitual frankness: “My dear cousin, it is impossible for me to conceal what I have at heart. Let us talk for a few seconds of the past, which was made so painful to us, and then we will forget it forever, like an evil dream.”

“I will answer you sincerely, at the risk of injuring myself,” said the prince.

“How could you make up your mind to exhibit yourself in public with—?”

“With that young girl?” interrupted Djalma.

“Yes, cousin,” replied Mdlle. de Cardoville, and she waited for Djalma’s answer with anxious curiosity.

“A stranger to the customs of this country,” said Djalma, without any embarrassment, for he spoke the truth, “with a mind weakened with despair, and misled by the fatal counsels of a man devoted to my enemies, I believed, even as I was told, that, by displaying before you the semblance of another love, I should excite your jealousy, and thus—”

“Enough, cousin; I understand it all,” said Adrienne hastily, interrupting Djalma in her turn, that she might spare him a painful confession. “I too must have been blinded by despair, not to have seen through this wicked plot, especially after your rash and intrepid action. To risk death for the sake of my bouquet!” added Adrienne, shuddering at the mere remembrance. “But one last question,” she resumed, “though I am already sure of your answer. Did you receive a letter that I wrote to you, on the morning of the day in which I saw you at the theatre?”

Djalma made no reply. A dark cloud passed over his fine countenance, and, for a second, his features assumed so menacing an expression, that Adrienne was terrified at the effect produced by her words. But this violent agitation soon passed away, and Djalma’s brow became once more calm and serene.

“I have been more merciful than I thought,” said the prince to Adrienne, who looked at him with astonishment. “I wished to come hither worthy of you, my cousin. I pardoned the man who, to serve my enemies, had given me all those fatal counsels. The same person, I am sure, must have intercepted your letter. Just now, at the memory of the evils he thus caused me, I, for a moment, regretted my clemency. But then, again, I thought of your letter of yesterday—and my anger is all gone.”



“Then the sad time of fear and suspicion is over—suspicion, that made me doubt of your sentiments, and you of mine. Oh, yes! far removed from us be that fatal past!” cried Adrienne de Cardoville, with deep joy.

Then, as if she had relieved her heart from the last thought of sadness, she continued: “The future is all your own—the radiant future, without cloud or obstacle, pure in the immensity of its horizon, and extending beyond the reach of sight!”

It is impossible to describe the tone of enthusiastic hope which accompanied these words. But suddenly Adrienne’s features assumed an expression of touching melancholy, and she added, in a voice of profound emotion: “And yet—at this hour—so many unfortunate creatures suffer pain!”



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This simple touch of pity for the misfortunes of others, at the moment when the noble maiden herself attained to the highest point of happiness, had such an effect on Djalma, that involuntarily he fell on his knees before Adrienne, clasped his hands together, and turned towards her his fine countenance, with an almost daring expression. Then, hiding his face in his hands, he bowed his head without speaking a single word. There was a moment of deep silence. Adrienne was the first to break it, as she saw a tear steal through the slender fingers of the prince.

“My friend! what is the matter?” she exclaimed, as with a movement rapid as thought, she stooped forward, and taking hold of Djalma’s hands, drew them from before his face. That face was bathed in tears.

“You weep!” cried Mdlle. de Cardoville, so much agitated that she kept the hands of Djalma in her own; and, unable to dry his tears, the young Hindoo allowed them to flow like so many drops of crystal over the pale gold of his cheeks.

“There is not in this wide world a happiness like to mine!” said the prince, in his soft, melodious voice, and with a kind of exhaustion: “therefore do I feel great sadness, and so it should be. You give me heaven—and were I to give you the whole earth, it would be but a poor return. Alas! what can man do for a divinity, but humbly bless and adore? He can never hope to return the gifts bestowed: and this makes him suffer—not in his pride—but in his heart!”

Djalma did not exaggerate. He said what he really felt: and the rather hyperbolic form, familiar to Oriental nations, could alone express his thought. The tone of his regret was so sincere, his humility so gentle and full of simplicity, that Adrienne, also moved to tears, answered him with an effusion of serious tenderness, “My friend, we are both at the supreme point of happiness. Our future felicity appears to have no limits, and yet, though derived from different sources, sad reflections have come to both of us. It is, you see, that there are some sorts of happiness, which make you dizzy with their own immensity. For a moment, the heart, the mind, the soul, are incapable of containing so much bliss; it overflows and drowns us. Thus the flowers sometimes hang their heads, oppressed by the too ardent rays of the sun, which is yet their love and life. Oh, my friend! this sadness may be great, but it also sweet!”

As she uttered these words, the voice of Adrienne grew fainter and fainter, and her head bowed lower, as if she were indeed sinking beneath the weight of her happiness. Djalma had remained kneeling before her, his hands in hers—so that as she thus bent forward, her ivory forehead and golden hair touched the amber-colored brow and ebon curls of Djalma. And the sweet, silent tears of the two young lovers flowed together, and mingled as they fell on their clasped hands.

Whilst this scene was passing in Cardoville House, Agricola had gone to the Rue de Vaugirard, to deliver a letter from Adrienne to M. Hardy.



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CHAPTER XLII.

"The imitation."

As we have already said, M. Hardy occupied a pavilion in the "Retreat" annexed to the house in the Rue de Vaugirard, inhabited by a goodly number of the reverend fathers of the Company of Jesus. Nothing could be calmer and more silent than this dwelling. Every one spoke in whispers, and the servants themselves had something oily in their words, something sanctified in their very walk.

Like all that is subject to the chilling and destructive influences of these men, this mournfully quiet house was entirely wanting in life and animation. The boarders passed an existence of wearisome and icy monotony, only broken by the use of certain devotional exercises; and thus, in accordance with the selfish calculation of the reverend fathers, the mind, deprived of all nourishment and all external support, soon began to droop and pine away in solitude. The heart seemed to beat more slowly, the soul was benumbed, the character weakened; at last, all freewill, all power of discrimination, was extinguished, and the boarders, submitting to the same process of self-annihilation as the novices of the Company, became, like them, mere "corpses" in the hands of the brotherhood.

The object of these manoeuvres was clear and simple. They secured the means of obtaining all kinds of donations, the constant aim of the skillful policy and merciless cupidity of these priests. By the aid of enormous sums, of which they thus become the possessors or the trustees, they follow out and obtain the success of their projects, even though murder, incendiarism, revolt, and all the horrors of civil war, excited by and through them, should drench in blood the lands over which they seek to extend their dark dominion.

Such, then, was the asylum of peace and innocence in which Francois Hardy had taken refuge. He occupied the ground-floor of a summer-house, which opened upon a portion of the garden. His apartments had been judiciously chosen, for we know with what profound and diabolical craft the reverend fathers avail themselves of material influences, to make a deep impression upon the minds they are moulding to their purpose. Imagine a prospect bounded by a high wall, of a blackish gray, half-covered with ivy, the plant peculiar to ruins. A dark avenue of old yew-trees, so fit to shade the grave with their sepulchral verdure, extended from this wall to a little semicircle, in front of the apartment generally occupied by M. Hardy. Two or three mounds of earth, bordered with box, symmetrically cut, completed the charms of this garden, which in every respect resembled a cemetery.

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It was about two o'clock in the afternoon. Though the April sun shone brightly, its rays, intercepted by the high wall of which we have spoken, could not penetrate into that portion of the garden, obscure, damp, and cold as a cavern, which communicated with M. Hardy's apartment. The room was furnished with a perfect sense of the comfortable. A soft carpet covered the floor; thick curtains of dark green baize, the same color as the walls, sheltered an excellent bed, and hung in folds about the glass door, which opened on the garden. Some pieces of mahogany furniture, plain, but very clean and bright, stood round the room. Above the secretary, placed just in front of the bed, was a large ivory crucifix, upon a black velvet ground. The chimney-piece was adorned with a clock, in an ebony case, with ivory ornaments representing all sorts of gloomy emblems, such as hour-glasses, scythes, death's-heads, *etc.* Now imagine this scene in twilight, with its solitary and mournful silence, only broken at the hour of prayer by the lugubrious sound of the bells of the neighboring chapel, and you will recognize the infernal skill, with which these dangerous priests know how to turn to account every external object, when they wish to influence the mind of those they are anxious to gain over.

And this was not all. After appealing to the senses, it was necessary to address themselves to the intellect—and this was the method adopted by the reverend fathers. A single book—but one—was left, as if by chance, within reach. This book was Thomas a Kempis' "Imitation." But as it might happen that M. Hardy would not have the courage or the desire to read this book, thoughts and reflections borrowed from its merciless pages, and written in very large characters, were suspended in black frames close to the bed, or at other parts within sight, so that, involuntarily, in the sad leisure of his inactive dejection, the dweller's eyes were almost necessarily attracted by them. To that fatal circle of despairing thoughts they confined the already weakened mind of this unfortunate man, so long a prey to the most acute sorrow. What he read mechanically, every instant of the day and night, whenever the blessed sleep fled from his eyes inflamed with tears, was not enough merely to plunge the soul of the victim into incurable despair, but also to reduce him to the corpse-like obedience required by the Society of Jesus. In that awful book may be found a thousand terrors to operate on weak minds, a thousand slavish maxims to chain and degrade the pusillanimous soul.

And now imagine M. Hardy carried wounded into this house; while his heart, torn by bitter grief and the sense of horrible treachery, bled even faster than his external injuries. Attended with the utmost care, and thanks to the acknowledged skill of Dr. Baleinier, M. Hardy soon recovered from the hurts he had received when he threw himself into the embers of his burning factory. Yet, in order to favor



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the projects of the reverend fathers, a drug, harmless enough in its effects, but destined to act for a time upon the mind of the patient, and often employed for that purpose in similar important cases by the pious doctor, was administered to Hardy, and had kept him pretty long in a state of mental torpor. To a soul agonized by cruel deceptions, it appears an inestimable benefit to be plunged into that kind of torpor, which at least prevents one from dwelling upon the past.

Hardy resigned himself entirely to this profound apathy, and at length came to regard it as the supreme good. Thus do unfortunate wretches, tortured by cruel diseases, accept with gratitude the opiate which kills them slowly, but which at least deadens the sense of pain.

In sketching the portrait of M. Hardy, we tried to give some idea of the exquisite delicacy of his tender soul, of his painful susceptibility with regard to anything base or wicked, and of his extreme goodness, uprightness, and generosity. We now allude to these admirable qualities, because we must observe, that with him, as with almost all who possess them, they were not, and could not be, united with an energetic and resolute character. Admirably persevering in good deeds, the influence of this excellent man, was insinuating rather than commanding; it was not by the bold energy and somewhat overbearing will, peculiar to other men of great and noble heart, that Hardy had realized the prodigy of his Common Dwelling-house; it was by affectionate persuasion, for with him mildness took the place of force. At sight of any baseness or injustice, he did not rouse himself, furious and threatening; but he suffered intense pain. He did not boldly attack the criminal, but he turned away from him in pity and sorrow. And then his loving heart, so full of feminine delicacy, had an irresistible longing for the blessed contact of dear affections; they alone could keep it alive. Even as a poor, frail bird dies with the cold, when it can no longer lie close to its brethren, and receive and communicate the sweet warmth of the maternal nest. And now this sensitive organization, this extremely susceptible nature, receives blow after blow from sorrows and deceptions, one of which would suffice to shake, if it did not conquer, the firmest and most resolute character. Hardy's best friend has infamously betrayed him. His adored mistress has abandoned him.

The house which he had founded for the benefit of his workmen, whom he loved as brethren, is reduced to a heap of ashes. What then happens? All the springs of his soul are at once broken. Too feeble to resist such frightful attacks, too fatally deceived to seek refuge in other affections, too much discouraged to think of laying the first stone of any new edifice—this poor heart, isolated from every salutary influence, finds oblivion of the world and of itself in a kind of gloomy torpor. And if some remaining instincts of life and affection, at long intervals, endeavored to rouse themselves within him, and if, half-opening his mind's eye, which he had kept closed against the present, the past,

and the future, Hardy looks around him—what does he see? Only these sentences, so full of terrible despair:



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“Thou art nothing but dust and ashes. Grief and tears art thy portion. Believe not in any son of man. There are no such things as friendship or ties of kindred. All human affections are false. Die in the morning, and thou wilt be forgotten before night. Be humble—despise thyself—and let others despise thee. Think not, reason not, live not—but commit thy fate to the hands of a superior, who will think and reason for thee. Weep, suffer, think upon death. Yes, death! always death—that should be thy thought when thou thinkest—but it is better not to think at all. Let a feeling of ceaseless woe prepare thy way to heaven. It is only by sorrow that we are welcome to the terrible God whom we adore!”

Such were the consolations offered to this unfortunate man. Affrighted, he again closed his eyes, and fell back into his lethargy. As for leaving this gloomy retreat, he could not, or rather he did not desire to do so. He had lost the power of will; and then, it must be confessed, he had finished by getting accustomed to this house, and liked it well—they paid him such discreet attentions, and yet left him so much alone with his grief—there reigned all around such a death-like silence, which harmonized closely with the silence of his heart; and that was now the tomb of his last love, last friendship, last hope. All energy was dead within him! Then began that slow, but inevitable transformation, so judiciously foreseen by Rodin, who directed the whole of this machination, even in its smallest details. At first alarmed by the dreadful maxims which surrounded him, M. Hardy had at length accustomed himself to read them over almost mechanically, just as the captive, in his mournful hours of leisure, counts the nails in the door of his prison, or the bars of the grated window. This was already a great point gained by the reverend fathers.

And soon his weakened mind was struck with the apparent correctness of these false and melancholy aphorisms.

Thus he read: “Do not count upon the affection of any human creature”—and he had himself been shamefully betrayed.

“Man is born to sorrow and despair”—and he was himself despairing.

“There is no rest save in the cessation of thought”—and the slumber of his mind had brought some relief to his pain.

Peepholes, skillfully concealed by the hangings and in the wainscoting of these apartments, enabled the reverend fathers at all times to see and hear the boarders, and above all to observe their countenance and manner, when they believed themselves to be alone. Every exclamation of grief which escaped Hardy in his gloomy solitude, was repeated to Father d’Aigrigny by a mysterious listener. The reverend father, following scrupulously Rodin’s instructions, had at first visited his boarder very rarely. We have said, that when Father d’Aigrigny wished it, he could display an almost irresistible power of charming, and accordingly he threw all his tact



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and skill into the interviews he had with Hardy, when he came from time to time to inquire after his health. Informed of everything by his spies, and aided by his natural sagacity, he soon saw all the use that might be made of the physical and moral prostration of the boarder. Certain beforehand that Hardy would not take the hint, he spoke to him frequently of the gloom of the house, advising him affectionately to leave it, if he felt oppressed by its monotony, or at all events to seek beyond its walls for some pleasure and amusement. To speak of pleasure and amusement to this unfortunate man, was in his present state to insure a refusal, and so it of course happened. Father d'Aigrigny did not at first try to gain the recluse's confidence, nor did he speak to him of sorrow; but every time he came, he appeared to take such a tender interest in him, and showed it by a few simple and well timed words. By degrees, these interviews, at first so rare, became more frequent and longer. Endowed with a flow of honeyed, insinuating, and persuasive eloquence, Father d'Aigrigny naturally took for his theme those gloomy maxims, to which Hardy's attention was now so often directed.

Supple, prudent, skillful, knowing that the hermit had hitherto professed that generous natural religion which teaches the grateful adoration of God, the love of humanity, the worship of what is just and good, and which, disdaining dogmas, professes the same veneration for Marcus Aurelius as for Confucius, for Plato as for Christ, for Moses as for Lycurgus—Father d'Aigrigny did not at first attempt to convert him, but began by incessantly reminding him of the abominable deceptions practised upon him; and, instead of describing such treachery as an exception in life—instead of trying to calm, encourage, and revive his drooping soul—instead of exhorting Hardy to seek oblivion and consolation in the discharge of his duties toward humanity, towards his brethren, whom he had previously loved and succored—Father d'Aigrigny strove to inflame the bleeding wounds of the unfortunate man, painted the human race in the most atrocious blackness, and, by declaring all men treacherous, ungrateful, wicked, succeeded in rendering his despair incurable. Having attained this object, the Jesuit took another step. Knowing Hardy's admirable goodness of heart, and profiting by the weakened state of his mind, he spoke to him of the consolation to be derived by a man overwhelmed with sorrow, from the belief that every one of his tears, instead of being unfruitful, was in fact agreeable to God, and might aid in the salvation of souls—the belief, as the reverend father adroitly added, that by faith alone can sorrow be made useful to humanity, and acceptable to Divinity.



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Whatever impiety, whatever atrocious Machiavelism there was in these detestable maxims, which make of a loving-kind Deity a being delighted with the tears of his creatures, was thus skillfully concealed from Hardy's eyes, whose generous instincts were still alive. Soon did this loving and tender soul, whom unworthy priests were driving to a sort of moral suicide, find a mournful charm in the fiction, that his sorrows would at least be profitable to other men. It was at first only a fiction; but the enfeebled mind which takes pleasure in such a fable, finishes by receiving it as a reality, and by degrees will submit to the consequences. Such was Hardy's moral and physical state, when, by means of a servant who had been bought over, he received from Agricola Baudoin a letter requesting an interview. Alone, the workman could not have broken the band of the Jesuit's pleadings, but he was accompanied by Gabriel, whose eloquence and reasonings were of a most convincing nature to a spirit like Hardy's.

It is unnecessary to point out to the reader, with what dignified reserve Gabriel had confined himself to the most generous means of rescuing Hardy from the deadly influence of the reverend fathers. It was repugnant to the great soul of the young missionary, to stoop to a revelation of the odious plots of these priests. He would only have taken this extreme course, had his powerful and sympathetic words have failed to have any effect on Hardy's blindness. About a quarter of an hour had elapsed since Gabriel's departure, when the servant appointed to wait on this boarder of the reverend fathers entered and delivered to him a letter.

"From whom is this?" asked Hardy.

"From a boarder in the house, sir," answered the servant bowing.

This man had a crafty hypocritical face; he wore his hair combed over his forehead, spoke in a low voice, and always cast clown his eyes. Waiting the answer, he joined his hands, and began to twiddle his thumbs. Hardy opened the letter, and read as follows:

"*Sir*,—I have only just heard, by mere chance, that you also inhabit this respectable house: a long illness, and the retirement in which I live, will explain my ignorance of your being so near. Though we have only met once, sir, the circumstance which led to that meeting was of so serious a nature, that I cannot think you have forgotten it."

Hardy stopped, and tasked his memory for an explanation, and not finding anything to put him on the right track, he continued to read:

"This circumstance excited in me a feeling of such deep and respectful sympathy for you, sir, that I cannot resist my anxious desire to wait upon you, particularly as I learn, that you intend leaving this house to day—a piece of information I have just derived from the excellent and worthy Abbe Gabriel, one of the men I most love, esteem, and reverence. May I venture to hope, sir, that just at the moment

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of quitting our common retreat to return to the world, you will deign to receive favorably the request, however intrusive, of a poor old man, whose life will henceforth be passed in solitude, and who cannot therefore have any prospect of meeting you, in that vortex of society which he has abandoned forever. Waiting the honor of your answer, I beg you to accept, sir, the assurance of the sentiments of high esteem with which I remain, sir, with the deepest respect,

“Your very humble and most obedient servant,

“*Rodin.*”

After reading this letter and the signature of the writer, Hardy remained for some time in deep thought, without being able to recollect the name of Rodin, or to what serious circumstances he alluded.

After a silence of some duration, he said to the servant “M. Rodin gave you this letter?”

“Yes, sir.”

“And who is M. Rodin?”

“A good old gentleman, who is just recovering from a long illness, that almost carried him off. Lately, he has been getting better, but he is still so weak and melancholy, that it makes one sad to see him. It is a great pity, for there is not a better and more worthy gentleman in the house—unless it be you, sir,” added the servant, bowing with an air of flattering respect.

“M. Rodin;” said Hardy, thoughtfully. “It is singular, that I should not remember the name nor any circumstance connected with it.”

“If you will give me your answer, sir,” resumed the servant, “I will take it to M. Rodin. He is now with Father d’Aigrigny, to whom he is bidding farewell.”

“Farewell?”

“Yes, sir, the post-horses have just come.”

“Post-horses for whom?” asked Hardy.

“For Father d’Aigrigny, sir.”

“He is going on a journey then!” said Hardy, with some surprise.



“Oh! he will not, I think be long absent,” said the servant, with a confidential air, “for the reverend father takes no one with him, and but very light luggage. No doubt, the reverend father will come to say farewell to you, sir, before he starts. But what answer shall I give M. Rodin?”

The letter, just received, was couched in such polite terms—it spoke of Gabriel with so much respect—that Hardy, urged moreover by a natural curiosity, and seeing no motive to refuse this interview before quitting the house, said to the servant: “Please tell M. Rodin, that if he will give himself the trouble to come to me, I shall be glad to see him.”

“I will let him know immediately, sir,” answered the servant, bowing as he left the room.

When alone, Hardy, while wondering who this M. Rodin could be, began to make some slight preparations for his departure. For nothing in the world would he have passed another night in this house; and, in order to keep up his courage, he recalled every instant the mild, evangelical language of Gabriel, just as the superstitious recite certain litanies, with a view of escaping from temptation.



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The servant soon returned, and said: "M. Rodin is here, sir."

"Beg him to walk in."

Rodin entered, clad in his long black dressing-gown, and with his old silk cap in his hand. The servant then withdrew. The day was just closing. Hardy rose to meet Rodin, whose features he did not at first distinguish. But as the reverend father approached the window, Hardy looked narrowly at him for an instant, and then uttered an exclamation, wrung from him by surprise and painful remembrance. But, recovering himself from this first movement, Hardy said to the Jesuit, in an agitated voice: "You here, sir? Oh, you are right! It was indeed a very serious circumstance that first brought us together."

"Oh, my dear sir!" said Rodin, in a kindly and unctuous tone; "I was sure you would not have forgotten me."

CHAPTER XLIII.

Prayer.

It will doubtless be remembered that Rodin had gone (although a stranger to Hardy) to visit him at his factory, and inform him of De Blessac's shameful treachery—a dreadful blow, which had only preceded by a few moments a second no less horrible misfortune; for it was in the presence of Rodin that Hardy had learned the unexpected departure of the woman he adored. Painful to him must have been the sudden appearance of Rodin. Yes, thanks to the salutary influence of Gabriel's counsels, he recovered himself by degrees, and the contraction of his features being succeeded by a melancholy calm, he said to Rodin: "I did not indeed expect to meet you, sir, in this house."

"Alas, sir!" answered Rodin, with a sigh, "I did not expect to come hither, probably to end my days beneath this roof, when I went, without being acquainted with you, but only as one honest man should serve another, to unveil to you a great infamy."

"Indeed, sir, you then rendered me a true service; perhaps, in that painful moment, I did not fully express my gratitude; for, at the same moment in which you revealed to me the treachery of M. de Blessac—"

"You were overwhelmed by another piece of painful intelligence," said Rodin, interrupting M. Hardy; "I shall never forget the sudden arrival of that poor woman, who, pale and affrighted, and without considering my presence, came to inform you that a person who was exceedingly dear to you had quitted Paris abruptly."

"Yes, sir; and, without stopping to thank you, I set out immediately," answered Hardy, with a mournful air.



“Do you know, sir,” said Rodin, after a moment’s silence, “that there are sometimes very strange coincidences?”

“To what do you allude, sir?”

“While I went to inform you that you were betrayed in so infamous a manner—I was myself—”

Rodin paused, as if unable to control his deep emotion, and his countenance wore the expression of such overpowering grief that Hardy said to him, with interest: “What ails you, sir?”



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“Forgive me,” replied Rodin, with a bitter smile. “Thanks to the ghostly counsels of the angelic Abbe Gabriel, I have reached a sort of resignation. Still, there are certain memories which affect me with the most acute pain. I told you,” resumed Rodin, in a firmer voice, “or was going to tell you, that the very day after that on which I informed you of the treachery practised against you, I was myself the victim of a frightful deception. An adopted son—a poor unfortunate child, whom I had brought up—” He paused again, drew his trembling hand over his eyes, and added: “Pardon me, sir, for speaking of matters which must be indifferent to you. Excuse the intrusive sorrow of a poor, broken hearted old man!”

“I have suffered too much myself, sir, to be indifferent to any kind of sorrow,” replied Hardy. “Besides, you are no stranger to me—for you did me a real service—and we both agree in our veneration for the same young priest.”

“The Abbe Gabriel!” cried Rodin, interrupting Hardy; “ah, sir! he is my deliverer, my benefactor. If you knew all his care and devotion, during my long illness, caused by intense grief—if you knew the ineffable sweetness of his counsels—”

“I know them, sir,” cried Hardy; “oh, yes! I know how salutary is the influence.”

“In his mouth, sir, the precepts of religion are full of mildness,” resumed Rodin, with excitement. “Do they not heal and console? do they not make us love and hope, instead of fear and tremble?”

“Alas, sir! in this very house,” said Hardy, “I have been able to make the comparison.”

“I was happy enough,” said Rodin, “to have the angelic Abbe Gabriel for my confessor, or, rather, my confidant.”

“Yes,” replied Hardy, “for he prefers confidence to confession.”

“How well you know him!” said Rodin, in a tone of the utmost simplicity. Then he resumed: “He is not a man but an angel. His words would convert the most hardened sinner. Without being exactly impious, I had myself lived in the profession of what is called Natural Religion; but the angelic Abbe Gabriel has, by degrees, fixed my wavering belief, given it body and soul, and, in fact, endowed me with faith.”

“Yes! he is a truly Christian priest—a priest of love and pardon!” cried Hardy.

“What you say is perfectly true,” replied Rodin; “for I came here almost mad with grief, thinking only of the unhappy boy who had repaid my paternal goodness with the most monstrous ingratitude, and sometimes I yielded to violent bursts of despair, and sometimes sank into a state of mournful dejection, cold as the grave itself. But, suddenly, the Abbe Gabriel appeared—and the darkness fled before the dawning of a new day.”



“You were right, sir; there are strange coincidences,” said Hardy, yielding more and more to the feeling of confidence and sympathy, produced by the resemblance of his real position to Rodin’s pretended one. “And to speak frankly,” he added, “I am very glad I have seen you before quitting this house. Were I capable of falling back into fits of cowardly weakness, your example alone would prevent me. Since I listen to you, I feel myself stronger in the noble path which the angelic Abbe Gabriel has opened before me, as you so well express it.”



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“The poor old man will not then regret having listened to the first impulse of his heart, which urged him to come to you,” said Robin, with a touching expression. “You will sometimes remember me in that world to which you are returning?”

“Be sure of it, sir; but allow me to ask one question: You remain, you say, in this house?”

“What would you have me do? There reigns here a calm repose, and one is not disturbed in one’s prayers,” said Rodin, in a very gentle tone. “You see, I have suffered so much—the conduct of that unhappy youth was so horrible—he plunged into such shocking excesses—that the wrath of heaven must be kindled against him. Now I am very old, and it is only by passing the few days that are left me in fervent prayer that I can hope to disarm the just anger of the Lord. Oh! prayer—prayer! It was the Abbe Gabriel who revealed to me all its power and sweetness—and therewith the formidable duties it imposes.”

“Its duties are indeed great and sacred,” answered Hardy, with a pensive air.

“Do you remember the life of Rancey?” said Rodin, abruptly, as he darted a peculiar glance at Hardy.

“The founder of La Trappe?” said Hardy, surprised at Rodin’s question. I remember hearing a very vague account, some time ago, of the motives of his conversion.”

“There is, mark you, no more striking an example of the power of prayer, and of the state of almost divine ecstasy, to which it may lead a religious soul. In a few words, I will relate to you this instructive and tragic history. Rancey—but I beg your pardon; I fear I am trespassing on your time.”

“No, no,” answered Hardy, hastily; “You cannot think how interested I am in what you tell me. My interview with the Abbe Gabriel was abruptly broken off, and in listening to you I fancy that I hear the further development of his views. Go on, I conjure you.

“With all my heart. I only wish that the instruction which, thanks to our angelic priest, I derived from the story of Rancey might be as profitable to you as it was to me.”

“This, then, also came from the Abbe Gabriel?”

“He related to me this kind of parable in support of his exhortations,” replied Rodin.

“Oh, sir! do I not owe to the consoling words of that young priest all that has strengthened and revived my poor old broken heart?”

“Then I shall listen to you with a double interest.”



“Rancey was a man of the world,” resumed Rodin, as he looked attentively at Hardy; “a gentleman—young, ardent, handsome. He loved a young lady of high rank. I cannot tell what impediments stood in the way of their union. But this love, though successful, was kept secret, and every evening Rancey visited his mistress by means of a private staircase. It was, they say, one of those passionate loves which men feel but once in their lives. The mystery, even the sacrifice made by the unfortunate girl, who forgot every duty, seemed to give new charms to this guilty passion. In the silence and darkness of secrecy, these two lovers passed two years of voluptuous delirium, which amounted almost to ecstasy.”



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At these words Hardy started. For the first time of late his brow was suffused with a deep blush; his heart throbbed violently; he remembered that he too had once known the ardent intoxication of a guilty and hidden love. Though the day was closing rapidly, Rodin cast a sidelong glance at Hardy, and perceived the impression he had made. "Some times," he continued, "thinking of the dangers to which his mistress was exposed, if their connection should be discovered, Rancey wished to sever these delicious ties; but the girl, beside herself with passion, threw herself on the neck of her lover, and threatened him, in the language of intense excitement, to reveal and to brave all, if he thought of leaving her. Too weak and loving to resist the prayers of his mistress, Rancey again and again yielded, and they both gave themselves up to a torrent of delight, which carried them along, forgetful of earth and heaven!"

M. Hardy listened to Rodin with feverish and devouring avidity. The Jesuit, in painting, with these almost sensual colors, an ardent and secret love, revived in Hardy burning memories, which till now had been drowned in tears. To the beneficent calm produced by the mild language of Gabriel had succeeded a painful agitation, which, mingled with the reaction of the shocks received that day, began to throw his mind into a strange state of confusion.

Rodin, having so far succeeded in his object, continued as follows: "A fatal day came at last. Rancey, obliged to go to the wars, quitted the girl; but, after a short campaign, he returned, more in love than ever. He had written privately, to say he would arrive almost immediately after his letter. He came accordingly. It was night. He ascended, as usual, the private staircase which led to the chamber of his mistress; he entered the room, his heart beating with love and hope. His mistress had died that morning!"

"Ah!" cried Hardy, covering his face with his hands, in terror.

"She was dead," resumed Rodin. "Two wax-candles were burning beside the funeral couch. Rancey could not, would not believe that she was dead. He threw himself on his knees by the corpse. In his delirium, he seized that fair, beloved head, to cover it with kisses. The head parted from the body, and remained in his hands! Yes," resumed Rodin as Hardy drew back, pale and mute with terror, "yes, the girl had fallen a victim to so swift and extraordinary a disease, that she had not been able to receive the last sacraments. After her death, the doctors, in the hope of discovering the cause of this unknown malady, had begun to dissect that fair form—"

As Rodin reached this part of his narrative, night was almost come. A sort of hazy twilight alone reigned in this silent chamber, in the centre of which appeared the pale and ghastly form of Rodin, clad in his long black gown, whilst his eyes seemed to sparkle with diabolic fire. Overcome by the violent emotions occasioned by this story, in which thoughts of death and voluptuousness, love and horror, were so strangely mingled, Hardy remained fixed and motionless, waiting for the words of Rodin, with a combination of curiosity, anguish and alarm.



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“And Rancey?” said he, at last, in an agitated voice, whilst he wiped the cold sweat from his brow.

“After two days of furious delirium,” resumed Rodin, “he renounced the world, and shut himself up in impenetrable solitude. The first period of his retreat was frightful; in his despair, he uttered loud yells of grief and rage, that were audible at some distance. Twice he attempted suicide, to escape from the terrible visions.”

“He had visions, then?” said Hardy, with an increased agony of curiosity.

“Yes,” replied Rodin, in a solemn tone, “he had fearful visions. He saw the girl, who, for his sake, had died in mortal sin, plunged in the heat of the everlasting flames of hell! On that fair face, disfigured by infernal tortures, was stamped the despairing laugh of the damned! Her teeth gnashed with pain; her arms writhed in anguish! She wept tears of blood, and, with an agonized and avenging voice, she cried to her seducer: ‘Thou art the cause of my perdition—my curse, my curse be upon thee!’”

As he pronounced these last words, Rodin advanced three steps nearer to Hardy, accompanying each step with a menacing gesture. If we remember the state of weakness, trouble, and fear, in which M. Hardy was—if we remember that the Jesuit had just roused in the soul of this unfortunate man all the sensual and spiritual memories of a love, cooled, but not extinguished, in tears—if we remember, too, that Hardy reproached himself with the seduction of a beloved object, whom her departure from her duties might (according to the Catholic faith) doom to everlasting flames—we shall not wonder at the terrible effect of this phantasmagoria, conjured up in silence and solitude, in the evening dusk, by this fearful priest.

The effect on Hardy was indeed striking, and the more dangerous, that the Jesuit, with diabolical craft, seemed only to be carrying out, from another point of view, the ideas of Gabriel. Had not the young priest convinced Hardy that nothing is sweeter, than to ask of heaven forgiveness for those who have sinned, or whom we have led astray? But forgiveness implies punishment; and it was to the punishment alone that Rodin drew the attention of his victim, by painting it in these terrible hues. With hands clasped together, and eye fixed and dilated, Hardy trembled in all his limbs, and seemed still listening to Rodin, though the latter had ceased to speak. Mechanically, he repeated: “My curse, my curse be upon thee?”

Then suddenly he exclaimed, in a kind of frenzy: “The curse is on me also! The woman, whom I taught to forget her sacred duties, and to commit mortal sin—one day plunged in the everlasting flames—her arms writhing in agony—weeping tears of blood—will cry to me from the bottomless pit: ‘My curse, my curse be upon thee!’—One day,” he added, with redoubled terror, “one day?—who knows? perhaps at this moment!—for if the sea voyage had been fatal to her—if a shipwreck—oh, God! she too would have



died in mortal sin—lost, lost, forever!—Oh, have mercy on her, my God! Crush me in Thy wrath—but have mercy on her—for I alone am guilty!”



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And the unfortunate man, almost delirious, sank with clasped hands upon the ground.

“Sir,” cried Rodin, in an affectionate voice, as he hastened to lift him up, “my dear sir—my dear friend—be calm! Comfort yourself. I cannot bear to see you despond. Alas! my intention was quite the contrary to that.”

“The curse! the curse! yes, she will curse me also—she, that I loved so much—in the everlasting flames!” murmured Hardy, shuddering, and apparently insensible to the other’s words.

“But, my dear sir, listen to me, I entreat you,” resumed the latter; “let me finish my story, and then you will find it as consoling as it now seems terrible. For heaven’s sake, remember the adorable words of our angelic Abbe Gabriel, with regard to the sweetness of prayer.”

At the name of Gabriel, Hardy recovered himself a little, and exclaimed, in a heart-rending tone: “Ay! his words were sweet and beneficent. Where are they now? For mercy’s sake, repeat to me those consoling words.”

“Our angelic Abbe Gabriel,” resumed Rodin, “spoke to you of the sweetness of prayer —”

“Oh, yes! prayer!”

“Well, my dear sir, listen to me, and you shall see how prayer saved Rancey, and made a saint of him. Yes, these frightful torments, that I have just described, these threatening visions, were all conquered by prayer, and changed into celestial delights.”

“I beg of you,” said Hardy, in a faint voice, “speak to me of Gabriel, speak to me of heaven—but no more flames—no more hell—where sinful women weep tears of blood —”

“No, no,” replied Rodin; and even as, in describing hell, his tone had been harsh and threatening, it now became warm and tender, as he uttered the following words: “No; we will have no more images of despair—for, as I have told you, after suffering infernal tortures, Rancey, thanks to the power of prayer, enjoyed the delights of paradise.”

“The delights of paradise?” repeated Hardy, listening with anxious attention.

“One day, at the height of his grief, a priest, a good priest—another Abbe Gabriel—came to Rancey. Oh, happiness! oh, providential change! In a few days, he taught the sufferer the sacred mysteries of prayer—that pious intercession of the creature, addressed to the Creator, in favor of a soul exposed to the wrath of heaven. Then Rancey seemed transformed. His grief was at once appeased. He prayed; and the more he prayed, the greater was his hope. He felt that God listened to his prayer.



Instead of trying to forget his beloved, he now thought of her constantly, and prayed for her salvation. Happy in his obscure cell, alone with that adored remembrance, he passed days and nights in praying for her—plunged in an ineffable, burning, I had almost said amorous ecstasy.”

It is impossible to give an idea of the tone of almost sensual energy with which Rodin pronounced the word “amorous.” Hardy started, changing from hot to cold. For the first time, his weakened mind caught a glimpse of the fatal pleasures of asceticism, and of that deplorable catalepsy, described in the lives of St. Theresa, St. Aubierge and others.

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Rodin perceived the other's thoughts, and continued "Oh, Rancey was not now the man to content himself with a vague, passing prayer, uttered in the whirl of the world's business, which swallows it up, and prevents it from reaching the ear of heaven. No, no; in the depth of solitude, he endeavored to make his prayers even more efficacious, so ardently did he desire the eternal salvation of his mistress."

"What did he do then—oh! what did he do in his solitude?" cried Hardy, who was now powerless in the hands of the Jesuit.

"First of all," said Rodin, with a slight emphasis, "he became a monk."

"A monk!" repeated Hardy, with a pensive air.

"Yes," resumed Rodin, "he became a monk, because his prayers were thus more likely to be favorably accepted. And then, as in solitude our thoughts are apt to wander, he fasted, and mortified his flesh, and brought into subjection all that was carnal within him, so that, becoming all spirit, his prayers might issue like a pure flame from his bosom, and ascend like the perfume of incense to the throne of the Most High!"

"Oh! what a delicious dream!" cried Hardy, more and more under the influence of the spell; "to pray for the woman we have adored, and to become spirit—perfume—light!"

"Yes; spirit, perfume, light!" said Rodin, with emphasis. "But it is no dream. How many monks, how many hermits, like Rancey, have, by prayers, and austerity, and macerations, attained a divine ecstasy! and if you only knew the celestial pleasures of such ecstasies!—Thus, after he became a monk, the terrible dreams were succeeded by enchanting visions. Many times, after a day of fasting, and a night passed in prayers and macerations, Rancey sank down exhausted on the floor of his cell! Then the spirit freed itself from the vile clogs of matter. His senses were absorbed in pleasure; the sound of heavenly harmony struck upon his ravished ear; a bright, mild light, which was not of this world, dawned upon his half-closed eyes; and, at the height of the melodious vibrations of the golden harps of the Seraphim, in the centre of a glory, compared to which the sun is pale, the monk beheld the image of that beloved woman—"

"Whom by his prayers he had at length rescued from the eternal flames?" said Hardy, in a trembling voice.

"Yes, herself," replied Rodin, with eloquent enthusiasm, for this monster was skilled in every style of speech. "Thanks to the prayers of her lover, which the Lord had granted, this woman no longer shed tears of blood—no longer writhed her beautiful arms in the convulsions of infernal anguish. No, no; still fair—oh! a thousand times fairer than when she dwelt on earth—fair with the everlasting beauty of angels—she smiled on her lover with ineffable ardor, and, her eyes beaming with a mild radiance, she said to him in a tender and passionate voice: 'Glory to the Lord! glory to thee, O my beloved! Thy



prayers and austerities have saved me. I am numbered amongst the chosen. Thanks, my beloved, and glory!’—And therewith, radiant in her felicity, she stooped to kiss, with lips fragrant with immortality, the lips of the enraptured monk—and their souls mingled in that kiss, burning as love, chaste as divine grace immense as eternity!”



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“Oh!” cried Hardy, completely beside himself; “a whole life of prayer, fasting, torture, for such a moment—with her, whom I mourn—with her, whom I have perhaps led to perdition!”

“What do you say? such a moment!” cried Rodin, whose yellow forehead was bathed in sweat like that of a magnetizer, and who now took Hardy by the hand, and drew still closer, as if to breathe into him the burning delirium; “it was not once in his religious life—it was almost every day, that Rancey, plunged in divine ecstasy, enjoyed these delicious, ineffable, superhuman pleasures, which are to the pleasures of earth what eternity is to man’s existence!”

Seeing, no doubt, that Hardy was now at the point to which he wished to bring him, and the night being almost entirely come, the reverend father coughed two or three times in a significant manner, and looked towards the door. At this moment, Hardy, in the height of his frenzy, exclaimed, with a supplicating voice: “A cell—a tomb—and the Ecstatic Vision!”

The door of the room opened, and Father d’Aigrigny entered, with a cloak under his arm. A servant followed him, bearing a light.

About ten minutes after this scene, a dozen robust men with frank, open countenances, led by Agricola, entered the Rue de Vaugirard, and advanced joyously towards the house of the reverend fathers. It was a deputation from the former workmen of M. Hardy. They came to escort him, and to congratulate him on his return amongst them. Agricola walked at their head. Suddenly he saw a carriage with post-horses issuing from the gateway of the house. The postilion whipped up the horses, and they started at full gallop. Was it chance or instinct? The nearer the carriage approached the group of which he formed a part, the more did Agricola’s heart sink within him.

The impression became so vivid that it was soon changed into a terrible apprehension; and at the moment when the vehicle, which had its blinds down, was about to pass close by him, the smith, in obedience to a resistless impulse, exclaimed, as he rushed to the horses’ heads: “Help, friends! stop them!”

“Postilion! ten louis if you ride over him!” cried from the carriage the military voice of Father d’Aigrigny.

The cholera was still raging. The postilion had heard of the murder of the poisoners. Already frightened at the sudden attack of Agricola, he struck him a heavy blow on the head with the butt of his whip which stretched him senseless on the ground. Then, spurring with all his might, he urged his three horses into a triple gallop, and the carriage rapidly disappeared, whilst Agricola’s companions, who had neither understood his actions nor the sense of his words, crowded around the smith, and did their best to revive him.

CHAPTER XLIV.

Remembrances.



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Other events took place a few days after the fatal evening in which M. Hardy, fascinated and misled by the deplorable, mystic jargon of Rodin, had implored Father d'Aigrigny on his knees to remove him far from Paris, into some deep solitude where he might devote himself to a life of prayer and ascetic austerities. Marshal Simon, since his arrival in Paris, had occupied, with his two daughters, a house in the Rue des Trois-Freres. Before introducing the reader into this modest dwelling, we are obliged to recall to his memory some preceding facts. The day of the burning of Hardy's factory, Marshal Simon had come to consult with his father on a question of the highest importance, and to communicate to him his painful apprehensions on the subject of the growing sadness of his twin daughters, which he was unable to explain.

Marshal Simon held in religious reverence the memory of the Great Emperor. His gratitude to the hero was boundless, his devotion blind, his enthusiasm founded upon reason, his affection warm as the most sincere and passionate friendship. But this was not all.

One day the emperor, in a burst of joy and paternal tenderness, had led the marshal to the cradle of the sleeping King of Rome, and said to him, as he proudly pointed to the beautiful child: "My old friend, swear to me that you will serve the son as you have served the father!"

Marshal Simon took and kept that vow. During the Restoration, the chief of a military conspiracy in favor of Napoleon II., he had attempted in vain to secure a regiment of cavalry, at that time commanded by the Marquis d'Aigrigny. Betrayed and denounced, the marshal, after a desperate duel with the future Jesuit, had succeeded in reaching Poland, and thus escaping a sentence of death. It is useless to repeat the series of events which led the marshal from Poland to India, and then brought him back to Paris after the Revolution of July—an epoch at which a number of his old comrades in arms had solicited and obtained from the government, without his knowledge, the confirmation of the rank and title which the emperor had bestowed upon him just before Waterloo.

On his return to Paris, after his long exile, in spite of all the happiness he felt in at length embracing his children, Marshal Simon was deeply affected on learning the death of their mother, whom he adored. Till the last moment, he had hoped to find her in Paris. The disappointment was dreadful, and he felt it cruelly, though he sought consolation in his children's affection.

But soon new causes of trouble and anxiety were interwoven with his life by the machinations of Rodin. Thanks to the secret intrigues of the reverend father at the Courts of Rome and Vienna, one of his emissaries, in a condition to inspire full confidence, and provided with undeniable evidence to support his words, went to Marshal Simon, and said to him: "The son of the emperor is dying, the victim of the fears with which the name of Napoleon still inspires Europe.



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“From this slow expiring, you, Marshal Simon, one of the emperor's most faithful friends, are able to rescue this unfortunate prince.

“The correspondence in my hand proves that it would be easy to open relations, of the surest and most secret nature, with one of the most influential persons about the King of Rome, and this person would be disposed to favor the prince's escape.

“It is possible, by a bold, unexpected stroke, to deliver Napoleon II. from the custody of Austria, which would leave him to perish by inches in an atmosphere that is fatal to him.

“The enterprise may be a rash one, but it has chances of success that you Marshal Simon, more than any other, could change into certainties; for your devotion to the emperor is well known, and we remember with what adventurous audacity you conspired, in 1815, in favor of Napoleon II.”

The state of languor and decline of the King of Rome was then in France a matter of public notoriety. People even went so far as to affirm that the son of the hero was carefully trained by priests, who kept him in complete ignorance of the glory of his paternal name; and that, by the most execrable machinations, they strove day by day to extinguish every noble and generous instinct that displayed itself in the unfortunate youth. The coldest hearts were touched and softened at the story of so sad and fatal a destiny. When we remember the heroic character and chivalrous loyalty of Marshal Simon, and his passionate devotion to the emperor, we can understand how the father of Rose and Blanche was more interested than any one else in the fate of the young prince, and how, if occasion offered, he would feel himself obliged not to confine his efforts to mere regrets. With regard to the reality of the correspondence produced by Rodin's emissary, it had been submitted by the marshal to a searching test, by means of his intimacy with one of his old companions in arms, who had been for a long period on a mission to Vienna, in the time of the empire. The result of this investigation, conducted with as much prudence as address, so that nothing should transpire, showed that the marshal might give his serious attention to the advances made him.

Hence, this proposition threw the father of Rose and Blanche into a cruel perplexity; for, to attempt so bold and dangerous an enterprise, he must once more abandon his children; whilst, on the contrary, if, alarmed at this separation, he renounced the endeavor to save the King of Rome, whose lingering death was perfectly true and well authenticated, the marshal would consider himself as false to the vow he had sworn to the emperor. To end these painful hesitations, full of confidence in the inflexible uprightness of his father's character, the marshal had gone to ask his advice; unfortunately the old republican workman, mortally wounded during the attack on M. Hardy's factory, but still pondering over the serious communication of his son, died with these words upon his Lips: “My son, you have a great duty to perform, under pain of not acting like a man of honor, and of disobeying my last will. You must, without hesitation—”



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But, by a deplorable fatality, the last words, which would have completed the sense of the old workman's thought, were spoken in so feeble a voice as to be quite unintelligible. He died, leaving Marshal Simon in a worse state of anxiety, as one of the two courses open to him had now been formally condemned by his father, in whose judgment he had the most implicit and merited confidence. In a word, his mind was now tortured by the doubt whether his father had intended, in the name of honor and duty, to advise him not to abandon his children, to engage in so hazardous an enterprise, or whether, on the contrary, he had wished him to leave them for a time, to perform the vow made to the emperor, and endeavor at least to rescue Napoleon II. from a captivity that might soon be mortal.

This perplexity, rendered more cruel by certain circumstances, to be related hereafter, the tragical death of his father, who had expired in his arms; the incessant and painful remembrance of his wife, who had perished in a land of exile; and finally, the grief he felt at perceiving the overgrowing sadness of Rose and Blanche, occasioned severe shocks to Marshal Simon. Let us add that, in spite of his natural intrepidity, so nobly proved by twenty years of war, the ravages of the cholera, the same terrible malady to which his wife had fallen a victim in Siberia, filled the marshal with involuntary dread. Yes, this man of iron nerves, who had coolly braved death in so many battles, felt the habitual firmness of his character give way at sight of the scenes of desolation and mourning which Paris offered at every step. Yet, when Mdlle. de Cardoville gathered round her the members of her family, to warn them against the plot of their enemies, the affectionate tenderness of Adrienne for Rose and Blanche appeared to exercise so happy an influence on their mysterious sorrow, that the marshal, forgetting for a moment his fatal regrets, thought only of enjoying this blessed change, which, alas! was but of short duration. Having now recalled these facts to the mind of the reader, we shall continue our story.

CHAPTER XLV.

THE BLOCKHEAD

We have stated that Marshal Simon occupied a small house in the Rue des Trois-Freres. Two o'clock in the afternoon had just struck in the marshal's sleeping-chamber, a room furnished with military simplicity. In the recess, in which stood the bed, hung a trophy composed of the arms used by the marshal during his campaigns. On the secretary opposite was a small bronze bust of the emperor, the only ornament of the apartment. Out of doors the temperature was far from warm, and the marshal had become susceptible to cold during his long residence in India. A good fire therefore blazed upon the hearth. A door, concealed by the hangings, and leading to a back staircase, opened slowly, and a man entered the chamber. He carried a basket of wood, and advanced leisurely to the fireplace, before which he knelt clown, and began to arrange the logs symmetrically in a box that stood besides the hearth. After some

minutes occupied in this manner, still kneeling, he gradually approached another door, at a little distance from the chimney, and appeared to listen with deep attention, as if he wished to hear what was passing in the next room.

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This man, employed as an inferior servant in the house, had the most ridiculously stupid look that can be imagined. His functions consisted in carrying wood, running errands, *etc.* In other respects he was a kind of laughing-stock to the other servants. In a moment of good humor, Dagobert, who filled the post of major-domo, had given this idiot the name of “Loony” (lunatic), which he had retained ever since, and which he deserved in every respect, as well for his awkwardness and folly as for his unmeaning face, with its grotesquely flat nose, sloping chin, and wide, staring eyes. Add to this description a jacket of red stuff, and a triangular white apron, and we must acknowledge that the simpleton was quite worthy of his name.

Yet, at the moment when Loony listened so attentively at the door of the adjoining room, a ray of quick intelligence animated for an instant his dull and stupid countenance.

When he had thus listened for a short time, Loony returned to the fireplace, still crawling on his knees; then rising, he again took his basket half full of wood, and once more approaching the door at which he had listened knocked discreetly. No one answered. He knocked a second time, and more loudly. Still there was the same silence.

Then he said, in a harsh, squeaking, laughable voice: “Ladies, do you want any wood, if you please, for your fire?”

Receiving no answer, Loony placed his basket on the ground, opened the door gently, and entered the next room, after casting a rapid glance around. He came out again in a few seconds, looking from side to side with an anxious air, like a man who had just accomplished some important and mysterious task.

Taking up his basket, he was about to leave Marshal Simon’s room, when the door of the private staircase was opened slowly and with precaution, and Dagobert appeared.

The soldier, evidently surprised at the servant’s presence, knitted his brows, and exclaimed abruptly, “What are you doing here?”

At this sudden interrogation, accompanied by a growl expressive of the ill-humor of Spoil-sport, who followed close on his master’s heels, Loony uttered a cry of real or pretended terror. To give, perhaps, an appearance of greater reality to his dread, the supposed simpleton let his basket fall on the ground, as if astonishment and fear had loosened his hold of it.

“What are you doing, numbskull?” resumed Dagobert, whose countenance was impressed with deep sadness, and who seemed little disposed to laugh at the fellow’s stupidity.

“Oh, M. Dagobert! how you frighten me! Dear me! what a pity I had not an armful of plates, to prove it was not my fault if I broke them all.”



“I ask what you are doing,” resumed the soldier.

“You see, M. Dagobert,” replied Loony, pointing to his basket, “that I came with some wood to master’s room, so that he might burn it, if it was cold—which it is.”



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“Very well. Pick up your wood, and begone!”

“Oh, M. Dagobert! my legs tremble under me. How you did scare me, to be sure!”

“Will you begone, brute?” resumed the veteran; and seizing Loony by the arm, he pushed him towards the door, while Spoil-sport, with recumbent ears, and hair standing up like the quills of a porcupine, seemed inclined to accelerate his retreat.

“I am going, M. Dagobert, I am going,” replied the simpleton, as he hastily gathered up his basket; “only please to tell the dog—”

“Go to the devil, you stupid chatterbox!” cried Dagobert, as he pushed Loony through the doorway.

Then the soldier bolted the door which led to the private staircase, and going to that which communicated with the apartments of the two sisters, he double-locked it. Having done this, he hastened to the alcove in which stood the bed and taking down a pair of loaded pistols, he carefully removed the percussion caps, and, unable to repress a deep sigh, restored the weapons to the place in which he had found them. Then, as if on second thoughts, he took down an Indian dagger with a very sharp blade, and drawing it from its silver-gilt sheath, proceeded to break the point of this murderous instrument, by twisting it beneath one of the iron castors of the bed.

Dagobert then proceeded to unfasten the two doors, and, returning slowly to the marble chimney-piece, he leaned against it with a gloomy and pensive air. Crouching before the fire, Spoil-sport followed with an attentive eye the least movement of his master. The good dog displayed a rare and intelligent sagacity. The soldier, having drawn out his handkerchief, let fall, without perceiving it, a paper containing a roll of tobacco. Spoil-sport, who had all the qualities of a retriever of the Rutland race, took the paper between his teeth, and, rising upon his hind-legs, presented it respectfully to Dagobert. But the latter received it mechanically, and appeared indifferent to the dexterity of his dog. The grenadier’s countenance revealed as much sorrow as anxiety. After remaining for some minutes near the fire, with fixed and meditative look, he began to walk about the room in great agitation, one of his hands thrust into the bosom of his long blue frock-coat, which was buttoned up to the chin, and the other into one of his hind-pockets.

From time to time he stopped abruptly, and seemed to make reply to his own thoughts, or uttered an exclamation of doubt and uneasiness; then, turning towards the trophy of arms, he shook his head mournfully, and murmured, “No matter—this fear may be idle; but he has acted so extraordinarily these two days, that it is at all events more prudent —”



He continued his walk, and said, after a new and prolonged silence: “Yes he must tell me. It makes me too uneasy. And then the poor children—it is enough to break one’s heart.”

And Dagobert hastily drew his moustache between his thumb and forefinger, a nervous movement, which with him was an evident symptom of extreme agitation. Some minutes after, the soldier resumed, still answering his inward thoughts: “What can it be? It is hardly possible to be the letters, they are too infamous; he despises them. And yet But no, no—he is above that!”



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And Dagobert again began to walk with hasty steps. Suddenly, Spoil-sport pricked up his ears, turned his head in the direction of the staircase door, and growled hoarsely. A few seconds after, some one knocked at the door.

“Who is there?” said Dagobert. There was no answer, but the person knocked again. Losing patience, the soldier went hastily to open it, and saw the servant’s stupid face.

“Why don’t you answer, when I ask who knocks!” said the soldier, angrily.

“M. Dagobert, you sent me away just now, and I was afraid of making you cross, if I said I had come again.”

“What do you want? Speak then—come in, stupid!” cried the exasperated. Dagobert, as he pulled him into the room.

“M. Dagobert, don’t be angry—I’ll tell you all about it—it is a young man.”

“Well?”

“He wants to speak to you directly, Mr. Dagobert.”

“His name?”

“His name, M. Dagobert?” replied Loony, rolling about and laughing with an idiotic air.

“Yes, his name. Speak, idiot!”

“Oh, M. Dagobert! it’s all in joke that you ask me his name!”

“You are determined, fool that you are, to drive me out of my senses!” cried the soldier, seizing Loony by the collar. “The name of this young man!”

“Don’t be angry, M. Dagobert. I didn’t tell you the name because you know it.”

“Beast!” said Dagobert, shaking his fist at him.

“Yes, you do know it, M. Dagobert, for the young man is your own son. He is downstairs, and wants to speak to you directly—yes, directly.”

The stupidity was so well assumed, that Dagobert was the dupe of it. Moved to compassion rather than anger by such imbecility, he looked fixedly at the servant, shrugged his shoulders, and said, as he advanced towards the staircase, “Follow me!”

Loony obeyed; but, before closing the door, he drew a letter secretly from his pocket, and dropped it behind him without turning his head, saying all the while to Dagobert, for



the purpose of occupying his attention: “Your son is in the court, M. Dagobert. He would not come up—that’s why he is still downstairs!”

Thus talking, he closed the door, believing he had left the letter on the floor of Marshal Simon’s room. But he had reckoned without Spoil-sport. Whether he thought it more prudent to bring up the rear, or, from respectful deference for a biped, the worthy dog had been the last to leave the room, and, being a famous carrier, as soon as he saw the letter dropped by Loony, he took it delicately between his teeth, and followed close on the heels of the servant, without the latter perceiving this new proof of the intelligence and sagacity of Spoil-sport.

CHAPTER XLVI.

The anonymous letters.

We will explain presently what became of the letter, which Spoil-sport held between his teeth, and why he left his master, when the latter ran to meet Agricola. Dagobert had not seen his son for some days. Embracing him cordially, he led him into one of the rooms on the ground floor, which he usually occupied. “And how is your wife?” said the soldier to his son.



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“She is well, father, thank you.”

Perceiving a great change in Agricola’s countenance, Dagobert resumed: “You look sad. Has anything gone wrong since I saw you last?”

“All is over, father. We have lost him,” said the smith, in a tone of despair.

“Lost whom?”

“M. Hardy.”

“M. Hardy!—why, three days ago, you told me you were going to see him.”

“Yes, father, I have seen him—and my dear brother Gabriel saw him and spoke to him—how he speaks! with a voice that comes from the heart!—and he had so revived and encouraged him, that M. Hardy consented to return amongst us. Then I, wild with joy, ran to tell the good news to some of my mates, who were waiting to hear the result of my interview with M. Hardy. I brought them all with me to thank and bless him. We were within a hundred yards of the house belonging to the black-gowns—”

“Ali, the black-gowns!” said Dagobert, with a gloomy air. “Then some mischief will happen. I know them.”

“You are not mistaken, father,” answered Agricola, with a sigh. “I was running on with my comrades, when I saw a carriage coming towards us. Some presentiment told me that they were taking away M. Hardy.”

“By force!” said Dagobert, hastily.

“No,” answered Agricola, bitterly; “no—the priests are too cunning for that. They know how to make you an accomplice in the evil they do you. Shall I not always remember how they managed with my good mother?”

“Yes, the worthy woman! there was a poor fly caught in the spider’s web. But this carriage, of which you speak?”

“On seeing it start from the house of the black-gowns,” replied Agricola, “my heart sank within me; and, by an impulse stronger than myself, I rushed to the horses’ heads, calling on my comrades to help me. But the postilion knocked me down and stunned me with a blow from his whip. When I recovered my senses, the carriage was already far away.”

“You were not hurt?” cried Dagobert, anxiously, as he examined his son from top to toe.

“No, father; a mere scratch.”



“What did you next, my boy?”

“I hastened to our good angel, Mdlle. de Cardoville, and told her all. ‘You must follow M. Hardy on the instant,’ said she to me. ‘Take my carriage and post-horses. Dupont will accompany you; follow M. Hardy from stage to stage; should you succeed in overtaking him your presence and your prayers may perhaps conquer the fatal influence that these priests have acquired over him.’”

“It was the best advice she could give you. That excellent young lady is always right.”



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“An hour after, we were upon our way, for we learned by the returned postilions, that M. Hardy had taken the Orleans road. We followed him as far as Etampes. There we heard that he had taken a cross-road, to reach a solitary house in a valley about four leagues from the highway. They told us that this house called the Val-de-St. Herem, belonged to certain priests, and that, as the night was so dark, and the road so bad, we had better sleep at the inn, and start early in the morning. We followed this advice, and set out at dawn. In a quarter of an hour, we quitted the high-road for a mountainous and desert track. We saw nothing but brown rocks, and a few birch trees. As we advanced, the scene became wilder and wilder. We might have fancied ourselves a hundred leagues from Paris. At last we stopped in front of a large, old, black-looking house with only a few small windows in it, and built at the foot of a high, rocky mountain. In my whole life I have never seen anything so deserted and sad. We got out of the carriage, and I rang the bell. A man opened the door. ‘Did not the Abbe d’Aigrigny arrive here last night with a gentleman?’ said I to this man, with a confidential air. ‘Inform the gentleman directly, that I come on business of importance, and that I must see him forthwith.’—The man, believing me an accomplice, showed us in immediately; a moment after, the Abbe d’Aigrigny opened the door, saw me, and drew back; yet, in five minutes more, I was in presence of M. Hardy.”

“Well!” said Dagobert, with interest.

Agricola shook his head sorrowfully, and replied: “I knew by the very countenance of M. Hardy, that all was over. Addressing me in a mild but firm voice, he said to me: ‘I understand, I can even excuse, the motives that bring you hither. But I am quite determined to live henceforth in solitude and prayer. I take this resolution freely and voluntarily, because I would fain provide for the salvation of my soul. Tell your fellows that my arrangements will be such as to leave them a good remembrance of me.’—And as I was about to speak, M. Hardy interrupted me, saying: ‘It is useless, my friend. My determination is unalterable. Do not write to me, for your letters would remain unanswered. Prayer will henceforth be my only occupation. Excuse me for leaving you, but I am fatigued from my journey!’—He spoke the truth for he was as pale as a spectre, with a kind of wildness about the eyes, and so changed since the day before, as to be hardly the same man. His hand, when he offered it on parting from me, was dry and burning. The Abbe d’Aigrigny soon came in. ‘Father,’ said M. Hardy to him, ‘have the goodness to see M. Baudoin to the door.’—So saying, he waved his hand to me in token of farewell, and retired to the next chamber. All was over; he is lost to us forever.”

“Yes,” said Dagobert, “those black-gowns have enchanted him, like so many others.”



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“In despair,” resumed Agricola, “I returned hither with M. Dupont. This, then, is what the priests have made of M. Hardy—of that generous man, who supported nearly three hundred industrious workmen in order and happiness, increasing their knowledge, improving their hearts, and earning the benediction of that little people, of which he was the providence. Instead of all this, M. Hardy is now forever reduced to a gloomy and unavailing life of contemplation.”

“Oh, the black-gowns!” said Dagobert, shuddering, and unable to conceal a vague sense of fear. “The longer I live, the more I am afraid of them. You have seen what those people did to your poor mother; you see what they have just done to M. Hardy; you know their plots against my two poor orphans, and against that generous young lady. Oh, these people are very powerful! I would rather face a battalion of Russian grenadiers, than a dozen of these cassocks. But don’t let’s talk of it. I have causes enough beside for grief and fear.”

Then seeing the astonished look of Agricola, the soldier, unable to restrain his emotion, threw himself into the arms of his son, exclaiming with a choking voice: “I can hold out no longer. My heart is too full. I must speak; and whom shall I trust if not you?”

“Father, you frighten me!” said Agricola, “What is the matter?”

“Why, you see, had it not been for you and the two poor girls, I should have blown out my brains twenty times over rather than see what I see—and dread what I do.”

“What do you dread, father?”

“Since the last few days, I do not know what has come over the marshal—but he frightens me.”

“Yet in his last interviews with Mdlle. de Cardoville—”

“Yes, he was a little better. By her kind words, this generous young lady poured balm into his wounds; the presence of the young Indian cheered him; he appeared to shake off his cares, and his poor little girls felt the benefit of the change. But for some days, I know not what demon has been loosed against his family. It is enough to turn one’s head. First of all, I am sure that the anonymous letters have begun again.”

“What letters, father?”

“The anonymous letters.”

“But what are they about?”

“You know how the marshal hated that renegade, the Abbe d’Aigrigny. When he found that the traitor was here, and that he had persecuted the two orphans, even as he



persecuted their mother to the death—but that now he had become a priest—I thought the marshal would have gone mad with indignation and fury. He wishes to go in search of the renegade. With one word I calmed him. 'He is a priest,' I said; 'you may do what you will, insult or strike him—he will not fight. He began by serving against his country, he ends by becoming a bad priest. It is all in character. He is not worth spitting upon.'—'But surely I may punish the wrong done to my children, and avenge the death of my wife,' cried the marshal, much exasperated.—'They say, as you well know, that there are courts of law to avenge your wrongs,' answered I; 'Mdlle. de Cardoville has lodged a charge against the renegade, for having attempted to confine your daughters in a convent. We must champ the bit and wait.'"



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“Yes,” said Agricola, mournfully, “and unfortunately there lacks proof to bring it home to the Abbe d’Aigrigny. The other day, when I was examined by Mdlle. de Cardoville’s lawyer, with regard to our attempt on the convent, he told me that we should meet with obstacles at every step, for want of legal evidence, and that the priests had taken their precautions with so much skill that the indictment would be quashed.”

“That is just what the marshal thinks, my boy, and this increases his irritation at such injustice.”

“He should despise the wretches.”

“But the anonymous letters!”

“Well, what of them, father?”

“You shall know all. A brave and honorable man like the marshal, when his first movement of indignation was over, felt that to insult the renegade disguised in the garb of a priest, would be like insulting an old man or a woman. He determined therefore to despise him, and to forget him as soon as possible. But then, almost every day, there came by the post anonymous letters, in which all sorts of devices were employed, to revive and excite the anger of the marshal against the renegade by reminding him of all the evil contrived by the Abbe d’Aigrigny against him and his family. The marshal was reproached with cowardice for not taking vengeance on this priest, the persecutor of his wife and children, the insolent mocker at his misfortunes.”

“And from whom do you suspect these letters to come, father?”

“I cannot tell—it is that which turns one’s brain. They must come from the enemies of the marshal, and he has no enemies but the black-gowns.”

“But, father, since these letters are to excite his anger against the Abbe d’Aigrigny, they can hardly have been written by priests.”

“That is what I have said to myself.”

“But what, then, can be their object?”

“Their object? oh, it is too plain!” cried Dagobert. “The marshal is hasty, ardent; he has a thousand reasons to desire vengeance on the renegade. But he cannot do himself justice, and the other sort of justice fails him. Then what does he do? He endeavors to forget, he forgets. But every day there comes to him an insolent letter, to provoke and exasperate his legitimate hatred, by mockeries and insults. Devil take me! my head is not the weakest—but, at such a game, I should go mad.”

“Father, such a plot would be horrible, and only worthy of hell!”



“And that is not all.”

“What more?”

“The marshal has received other letters; those he has not shown me—but, after he had read the first, he remained like a man struck motionless, and murmured to himself: ‘They do not even respect that—oh! it is too much—too much!’—And, hiding his face in his hands he wept.”

“The marshal wept!” cried the blacksmith, hardly able to believe what he heard.

“Yes,” answered Dagobert, “he wept like a child.”



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“And what could these letters contain, father?”

“I did not venture to ask him, he appeared so miserable and dejected.”

“But thus harassed and tormented incessantly, the marshal must lead a wretched life.”

“And his poor little girls too! he sees them grow sadder and sadder, without being able to guess the cause. And the death of his father, killed almost in his arms! Perhaps, you will think all this enough; but, no! I am sure there is something still more painful behind. Lately, you would hardly know the marshal. He is irritable about nothing, and falls into such fits of passion, that—” After a moment’s hesitation, the soldier resumed: “I may tell this to you, my poor boy. I have just been upstairs, to take the caps from his pistols.”

“What, father!” cried Agricola; “you fear—”

“In the state of exasperation in which I saw him yesterday, there is everything to fear.”

“What then happened?”

“Since some time, he has often long secret interviews with a gentleman, who looks like an old soldier and a worthy man. I have remarked that the gloom and agitation of the marshal are always redoubled after one of these visits. Two or three times, I have spoken to him about it; but I saw by his look, that I displeased him, and therefore I desisted.

“Well! yesterday, this gentleman came in the evening. He remained here until eleven o’clock, and his wife came to fetch him, and waited for him in a coach. After his departure, I went up to see if the marshal wanted anything. He was very pale, but calm; he thanked me, and I came down again. You know that my room is just under his. I could hear the marshal walking about as if much agitated, and soon after he seemed to be knocking down the furniture. In alarm, I once more went upstairs. He asked me, with an irritated air, what I wanted, and ordered me to leave the room. Seeing him in that way, I remained; he grew more angry, still I remained; perceiving a chair and table thrown down, I pointed to them with so sad an air that he understood me. You know that he has the best heart in the world, so, taking me by the hand, he said to me: ‘Forgive me for causing you this uneasiness, my good Dagobert; but just now, I lost my senses, and gave way to a burst of absurd fury; I think I should have thrown myself out of the window, had it been open. I only hope, that my poor dear girls have not heard me,’ added he, as he went on tip-toe to open the door which communicates with his daughters’ bedroom. When he had listened anxiously for a moment, he returned to me, and said: ‘Luckily, they are asleep.’—Then I asked him what was the cause of his agitation, and if, in spite of my precautions, he had received any more anonymous letters. ‘No,’ replied he, with a gloomy air; ‘but leave me, my friend. I am now better. It



has done me good to see you. Good—night, old comrade! go downstairs to bed.’—I took care not to contradict



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him; but, pretending to go down, I came up again, and seated myself on the top stair, listening. No doubt, to calm himself entirely, the marshal went to embrace his children, for I heard him open and shut their door. Then he returned to his room, and walked about for a long time, but with a more quiet step. At last, I heard him throw himself on his bed, and I came down about break of day. After that, all remained tranquil.”

“But whatever can be the matter with him, father?”

“I do not know. When I went up to him, I was astonished at the agitation of his countenance, and the brilliancy of his eyes. He would have looked much the same, had he been delirious, or in a burning fever—so that, when I heard him say, he could have thrown himself out of the window, had it been open, I thought it more prudent to remove the caps from his pistols.”

“I cannot understand it!” said Agricola. “So firm, intrepid, and cool a man as the marshal, a prey to such violence!”

“I tell you that something very extraordinary is passing within him. For two days, he has not been to see his children, which is always a bad sign with him—to say nothing of the poor little angels themselves, who are miserable at the notion that they have displeased their father. They displease him! If you only knew the life they lead, dear creatures! a walk or ride with me and their companion, for I never let them go out alone, and, the rest of their time, at their studies, reading, or needlework—always together—and then to bed. Yet their duenna, who is, I think, a worthy woman, tells me that sometimes at night, she has seen them shed tears in their sleep. Poor children! they have hitherto known but little happiness,” added the soldier, with a sigh.

At this moment, hearing some one walk hastily across the courtyard, Dagobert raised his eyes, and saw Marshal Simon, with pale face and bewildered air, holding in his two hands a letter, which he seemed to read with devouring anxiety.

CHAPTER XLVII.

The golden city.

While Marshal Simon was crossing the little court with so agitated an air, reading the anonymous letter, which he had received by Spoil-sport’s unexpected medium, Rose and Blanche were alone together, in the sitting room they usually occupied, which had been entered for a moment by Loony during their absence. The poor children seemed destined to a succession of sorrows. At the moment their mourning for their mother drew near its close, the tragical death of their grandfather had again dressed them in



funereal weeds. They were seated together upon a couch, in front of their work-table. Grief often produces the effect of years. Hence, in a few months, Rose and Blanche had become quite young women. To the infantine grace of their charming faces, formerly so plump and rosy, but now pale and thin, had succeeded an expression of grave and touching sadness. Their large, mild eyes of limpid azure, which always had a dreamy character, were now never bathed in those joyous tears, with which a burst of frank and hearty laughter used of old to adorn their silky lashes, when the comic coolness of Dagobert, or some funny trick of Spoil-sport, cheered them in the course of their long and weary pilgrimage.



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In a word, those delightful faces, which the flowery pencil of Greuze could alone have painted in all their velvet freshness, were now worthy of inspiring the melancholy ideal of the immortal Ary Scheffer, who gave us Mignon aspiring to Paradise, and Margaret dreaming of Faust. Rose, leaning back on the couch, held her head somewhat bowed upon her bosom, over which was crossed a handkerchief of black crape. The light streaming from a window opposite, shone softly on her pure, white forehead, crowned by two thick bands of chestnut hair. Her look was fixed, and the open arch of her eyebrows, now somewhat contracted, announced a mind occupied with painful thoughts. Her thin, white little hands had fallen upon her knees, but still held the embroidery, on which she had been engaged. The profile of Blanche was visible, leaning a little towards her sister, with an expression of tender and anxious solicitude, whilst her needle remained in the canvas, as if she had just ceased to work.

“Sister,” said Blanche, in a low voice, after some moments of silence, during which the tears seemed to mount to her eyes, “tell me what you are thinking of. You look so sad.”

“I think of the Golden City of our dreams,” replied Rose, almost in a whisper, after another short silence.

Blanche understood the bitterness of these words. Without speaking, she threw herself on her sister’s neck, and wept. Poor girls! the Golden City of their dreams was Paris, with their father in it—Paris, the marvellous city of joys and festivals, through all of which the orphans had beheld the radiant and smiling countenance of their sire! But, alas! the Beautiful City had been changed into a place of tears, and death, and mourning. The same terrible pestilence which had struck down their mother in the heart of Siberia, seemed to have followed them like a dark and fatal cloud, which, always hovering above them, hid the mild blue of the sky, and the joyous light of the sun.

The Golden City of their dreams! It was the place, where perhaps one day their father would present to them two young lovers, good and fair as themselves. “They love you,” he was to say; “they are worthy of you. Let each of you have a brother, and me two sons.” Then what chaste, enchanting confusion for those two orphans, whose hearts, pure as crystal, had never reflected any image but that of Gabriel, the celestial messenger sent by their mother to protect them!

We can therefore understand the painful emotion of Blanche, when she heard her sister repeat, with bitter melancholy, those words which described their whole situation: “I think of the Golden City of our dreams!”

“Who knows?” proceeded Blanche, drying her sister’s tears; “perhaps, happiness may yet be in store for us.”

“Alas! if we are not happy with our father by us—shall we ever be so?”

“Yes, when we rejoin our mother,” said Blanche, lifting her eyes to heaven.



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“Then, sister, this dream may be a warning—it is so like that we had in Germany.”

“The difference being that then the Angel Gabriel came down from heaven to us, and that this time he takes us from earth, to our mother.”

“And this dream will perhaps come true, like the other, my sister. We dreamt that the Angel Gabriel would protect us, and he came to save us from the shipwreck.”

“And, this time, we dream that he will lead us to heaven. Why should not that happen also?”

“But to bring that about, sister, our Gabriel, who saved us from the shipwreck, must die also. No, no; that must not happen. Let us pray that it may not happen.”

“No, it will not happen—for it is only Gabriel’s good angel, who is so like him, that we saw in our dreams.”

“Sister, dear, how singular is this dream!—Here, as in Germany, we have both dreamt the same—three times, the very same!”

“It is true. The Angel Gabriel bent over us, and looked at us with so mild and sad an air, saying: ‘Come, my children! come, my sisters! Your mother waits for you. Poor children, arrived from so far!’ added he in his tender voice: ‘You have passed over the earth, gentle and innocent as two doves, to repose forever in the maternal nest.’”

“Yes, those were the words of the archangel,” said the other orphan, with a pensive air; “we have done no harm to any one, and we have loved those who loved us—why should we fear to die?”

“Therefore, dear sister, we rather smiled than wept, when he took us by the hand, and, spreading wide his beautiful white wings, carried us along with him to the blue depths of the sky.”

“To heaven, where our dear mother waited for us with open arms, her face all bathed in tears.”

“Oh, sweet sister! one has not dreams like ours for nothing. And then,” added she, looking at Rose, with a sad smile that went to the heart, “our death might perhaps end the sorrow, of which we have been the cause.”

“Alas! it is not our fault. We love him so much. But we are so timid and sorrowful before him, that he may perhaps think we love him not.”

So saying, Rose took her handkerchief from her workbasket, to dry her fears; a paper, folded in the form of a letter, fell out.



At this sight, the two shuddered, and pressed close to one mother, and Rose said to Blanche, in a trembling voice: “Another of these letters!—Oh, I am afraid! It will doubtless be like the last.”

“We must pick it up quickly, that it may not be seen,” said Blanche, hastily stooping to seize the letter; “the people who take interest in us might otherwise be exposed to great danger.”

“But how could this letter come to us?”

“How did the others come to be placed right under our hand, and always in the absence of our duenna?”

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“It is true. Why seek to explain the mystery? We should never be able to do so. Let us read the letter. It will perhaps be more favorable to us than the last.” And the two sisters read as follows:—“Continue to love your father, dear children, for he is very miserable, and you are the involuntary cause of his distress. You will never know the terrible sacrifices that your presence imposes on him; but, alas! he is the victim of his paternal duties. His sufferings are more cruel than ever; spare him at least those marks of tenderness, which occasion him so much more pain than pleasure. Each caress is a dagger-stroke, for he sees in you the innocent cause of his misfortunes. Dear children, you must not therefore despair. If you have enough command over yourselves, not to torture him by the display of too warm a tenderness, if you can mingle some reserve with your affection, you will greatly alleviate his sorrow. Keep these letters a secret from every one, even from good Dagobert, who loves you so much; otherwise, both he and you, your father, and the unknown friend who is writing to you, will be exposed to the utmost peril, for your enemies are indeed formidable. Courage and hope! May your father’s tenderness be once more free from sorrow and regret!—That happy day is perhaps not so far distant. Burn this letter like all the others!”

The above note was written with so much cunning that, even supposing the orphans had communicated it to their father or Dagobert, it would at the worst have been considered a strange, intrusive proceeding, but almost excusable from the spirit in which it was conceived. Nothing could have been contrived with more perfidious art, if we consider the cruel perplexity in which Marshal Simon was struggling between the fear of again leaving his children and the shame of neglecting what he considered a sacred duty. All the tenderness, all the susceptibility of heart which distinguished the orphans, had been called into play by these diabolical counsels, and the sisters soon perceived that their presence was in fact both sweet and painful to their father; for sometimes he felt himself incapable of leaving them, and sometimes the thought of a neglected duty spread a cloud of sadness over his brow. Hence the poor twins could not fail to value the fatal meaning of the anonymous letters they received. They were persuaded that, from some mysterious motive, which they were unable to penetrate, their presence was often importunate and even painful to their father. Hence the growing sadness of Rose and Blanche—hence the sort of fear and reserve which restrained the expression of their filial tenderness. A most painful situation for the marshal, who deceived by inexplicable appearances, mistook, in his turn, their manner of indifference to him—and so, with breaking heart, and bitter grief upon his face, often abruptly quitted his children to conceal his tears!

And the desponding orphans said to each other: “We are the cause of our father’s grief. It is our presence which makes him so unhappy.”



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The reader may now judge what ravages such a thought, when fixed and incessant, must have made on these young, loving, timid, and simple hearts. How could the orphans be on their guard against such anonymous communications, which spoke with reverence of all they loved, and seemed every day justified by the conduct of their father? Already victims of numerous plots, and hearing that they were surrounded by enemies, we can understand, how faithful to the advice of their unknown friend, they forbore to confide to Dagobert these letters, in which he was so justly appreciated. The object of the proceeding was very plain. By continually harassing the marshal on all sides, and persuading him of the coldness of his children, the conspirators might naturally hope to conquer the hesitation which had hitherto prevented his again quitting his daughters to embark in a dangerous enterprise. To render the marshal's life so burdensome that he would desire to seek relief from his torments in any project of daring and generous chivalry, was one of the ends proposed by Rodin—and, as we have seen, it wanted neither logic nor possibility.

After having read the letter, the two remained for a moment silent and dejected. Then Rose, who held the paper in her hand, started up suddenly, approached the chimneypiece, and threw the letter into the fire, saying, with a timid air: "We must burn it quickly, or perhaps some great danger will ensue."

"What greater misfortune can happen to us," said Blanche, despondingly, "than to cause such sorrow to our father? What can be the reason of it?"

"Perhaps," said Rose, whose tears were slowly trickling down her cheek, "he does not find us what he could have desired. He may love us well as the children of our poor mother, but we are not the daughters he had dreamed of. Do you understand me, sister?"

"Yes, yes—that is perhaps what occasioned all his sorrow. We are so badly informed, so wild, so awkward, that he is no doubt ashamed of us; and, as he loves us in spite of all, it makes him suffer."

"Alas! it is not our fault. Our dear mother brought us up in the deserts of Siberia as well as she could."

"Oh! father himself does not reproach us with it; only it gives him pain."

"Particularly if he has friends whose daughters are very beautiful, and possessed of all sorts of talents. Then he must bitterly regret that we are not the same."

"Dost remember when he took us to see our cousin, Mdlle. Adrienne, who was so affectionate and kind to us, that he said to us, with admiration: 'Did you notice her, my children? How beautiful she is, and what talent, what a noble heart, and therewith such grace and elegance!'"



“Oh, it is very true! Mdlle. de Cardoville is so beautiful, her voice is so sweet and gentle, that, when we saw and heard her, we fancied that all our troubles were at an end.”

“And it is because of such beauty, no doubt, that our father, comparing us with our cousin and so many other handsome young ladies, cannot be very proud of us. And he, who is so loved and honored, would have liked to have been proud of his daughters.”



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Suddenly Rose laid her hand on her sister's arm, and said to her, with anxiety: "Listen! listen! they are talking very loud in father's bedroom."

"Yes," said Blanche, listening in her turn; "and I can hear him walking. That is his step."

"Good heaven! how he raises his voice; he seems to be in a great passion; he will perhaps come this way."

And at the thought of their father's coming—that father who really adored them—the unhappy children looked in terror at each other. The sound of a loud and angry voice became more and more distinct; and Rose, trembling through all her frame, said to her sister: "Do not let us remain here! Come into our room."

"Why?"

"We should hear, without designing it, the words of our father—and he does not perhaps know that we are so near."

"You are right. Come, come!" answered Blanche, as she rose hastily from her seat.

"Oh! I am afraid. I have never heard him speak in so angry a tone."

"Oh! kind heaven!" said Blanche, growing pale, as she stopped involuntarily. "It is to Dagobert that he is talking so loud."

"What can be the matter—to make our father speak to him in that way?"

"Alas! some great misfortune must have happened."

"Oh, sister! do not let us remain here! It pains me too much to hear Dagobert thus spoken to."

The crash of some article, hurled with violence and broken to pieces in the next room, so frightened the orphans, that, pale and trembling with emotion, they rushed into their own apartment, and fastened the door. We must now explain the cause of Marshal Simon's violent anger.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

The stung lion.

This was the scene, the sound of which had so terrified Rose and Blanche. At first alone in his chamber, in a state of exasperation difficult to describe, Marshal Simon had begun to walk hastily up and down, his handsome, manly face inflamed with rage, his



eyes sparkling with indignation, while on his broad forehead, crowned with short-cut hair that was now turning gray, large veins, of which you might count the pulsations, were swollen almost to bursting; and sometimes his thick, black moustache was curled with a convulsive motion, not unlike that which is seen in the visage of a raging lion. And even as the wounded lion, in its fury, harassed and tortured by a thousand invisible darts, walks up and down its den with savage wrath, so Marshal Simon paced the floor of his room, as if bounding from side to side; sometimes he stooped, as though bending beneath the weight of his anger; sometimes, on the contrary, he paused abruptly, drew himself up to his full height, crossed his arms upon his vigorous chest, and with raised brow, threatening and terrible look, seemed to defy some invisible enemy, and murmur confused exclamations. Then he stood like a man of war and battle in all his intrepid fire.



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And now he stamped angrily with his foot, approached the chimney-piece, and pulled the bell so violently that the bell-rope remained in his hand. A servant hastened to attend to this precipitate summons. "Did you not tell Dagobert that I wished to speak to him?" cried the marshal.

"I executed your grace's orders, but M. Dagobert was accompanying his son to the door, and—"

"Very well!" interrupted Marshal Simon, with an abrupt and imperious gesture.

The servant went out, and his master continued to walk up and down with impatient steps, crumpling, in his rage, a letter that he held in his left hand. This letter had been innocently delivered by Spoil-sport, who, seeing him come in, had run joyously to meet him. At length the door opened, and Dagobert appeared. "I have been waiting for you a long time, sirrah!" cried the marshal, in an irritated tone.

Dagobert, more pained than surprised at this burst of anger, which he rightly attributed to the constant state of excitement in which the marshal had now been for some time past, answered mildly: "I beg your pardon, general, but I was letting out my son—"

"Read that, sir!" said the marshal abruptly, giving him the letter.

While Dagobert was reading it, the marshal resumed, with growing anger, as he kicked over a chair that stood in his way: "Thus, even in my own house, there are wretches bribed to harass me with incredible perseverance. Well! have you read it, sir?"

"It is a fresh insult to add to the others," said Dagobert, coolly, as he threw the letter into the fire.

"The letter is infamous—but it speaks the truth," replied the marshal. Dagobert looked at him in amazement.

"And can you tell who brought me this infamous letter" continued the marshal. "One would think the devil had a hand in it—for it was your dog!"

"Spoil-sport?" said Dagobert, in the utmost surprise.

"Yes," answered the marshal, bitterly; "it is no doubt a joke of your invention."

"I have no heart for joking, general," answered Dagobert, more and more saddened by the irritable state of the marshal; "I cannot explain how it happened. Spoil-sport is a good carrier, and no doubt found the letter in the house—"

"And who can have left it there? Am I surrounded by traitors? Do you keep no watch? You, in whom I have every confidence?"



“Listen to me, general—”

But the marshal proceeded, without waiting to hear him. “What! I have made war for five-and-twenty years, I have battled with armies, I have struggled victoriously through the evil times of exile and proscription, I have withstood blows from maces of iron—and now I am to be killed with pins! Pursued into my own house, harassed with impunity, worn out, tortured every minute, to gratify some unknown, miserable hate!—When I say unknown, I am wrong—it is d’Aigrigny, the renegade, who is at the bottom of all this, I am sure. I have in the world but one enemy, and he is the man. I must finish with him, for I am weary of this—it is too much.”



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“But, general, remember he is a priest—”

“What do I care for that? Have I not seen him handle the sword? I will yet make a soldier’s blood rise to the forehead of the traitor!”

But, general—”

“I tell you, that I must be avenged on some one,” cried the marshal, with an accent of the most violent exasperation; “I tell you, that I must find a living representative of these cowardly plots, that I may at once make an end of him!—They press upon me from all sides; they make my life a hell—you know it—and you do nothing to save me from these tortures, which are killing me as by a slow fire. Can I have no one in whom to trust?”

“General, I can’t let you say that,” replied Dagobert, in a calm, but firm voice.

“And why not?”

“General, I can’t let you say that you have no one to trust to. You might end perhaps in believing it, and then it would be even worse for yourself, than for those who well know their devotion for you, and would go through fire and water to serve you. I am one of them—and you know it.”

These simple words, pronounced by Dagobert with a tone of deep conviction, recalled the marshal to himself; for although his honorable and generous character might from time to time be embittered by irritation and grief, he soon recovered his natural equanimity. So, addressing Dagobert in a less abrupt tone, he said to him, though still much agitated: “You are right. I could never doubt your fidelity. But anger deprives me of my senses. This infamous letter is enough to drive one mad. I am unjust, ungrateful—yes, ungrateful—and to you!”

“Do not think of me, general. With a kind word at the end, you might blow me up all the year round. But what has happened?”

The general’s countenance again darkened, as he answered rapidly: “I am looked down upon, and despised!”

“You?”

“Yes I. After all,” resumed the marshal bitterly, “why should I conceal from you this new wound? If I doubted you a moment, I owe you some compensation, and you shall know all. For some time past, I perceived that, when I meet any of my old companions in arms, they try to avoid me—”

“What! was it to this that the anonymous letter alluded?”



“Yes; and it spoke the truth,” replied the marshal, with a sigh of grief and indignation.

“But it is impossible, general—you are so loved and respected—”

“Those are mere words; I speak of positive facts. When I appear, the conversation is often interrupted. Instead of treating me as an old comrade, they affect towards me a rigorously cold politeness. There are a thousand little shades, a thousand trifles, which wound the heart, but which it is impossible to notice—”

“What you are now saying, general, quite confounds me,” replied Dagobert. “You assure me of it, and I am forced to believe you.”

“Oh, it is intolerable! I was resolved to ease my heart of it; so, this morning, I went to General d’Havrincourt, who was colonel with me in the Imperial Guard; he is honor and honesty itself. I went to him with open heart. ‘I perceive,’ said I, ‘the coldness that is shown me. Some calumny must be circulating to my disadvantage. Tell me all about it. Knowing the attack, I shall be able to defend myself—’



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“Well, general?”

“D’Havrincourt remained impassible ceremoniously polite. To all my questions he answered coldly: ‘I am not aware, my lord duke, that any calumny has been circulated with regard to you.’—‘Do not call me “my lord duke,” my dear D’Havrincourt; we are old fellow-soldiers and friends, my honor is somewhat touchy, I confess, and I find that you and our comrades do not receive me so cordially, as in times past. You do not deny it; I see, I know, I feel it.’ To all this D’Havrincourt answered, with the same coldness: ‘I have never seen any one wanting in respect towards you.’—‘I am not talking of respect,’ exclaimed I, as I clasped his hand affectionately, though I observed that he but feebly returned the pressure; ‘I speak of cordiality, confidence, which I once enjoyed, while now I am treated like a stranger. Why is it? What has occasioned this change?’—Still cold and reserved, he answered: ‘These distinctions are so nice, marshal, that it is impossible for me to give you any opinion on the subject.’—My heart swelled with grief and anger. What was I to do? To quarrel with D’Havrincourt would have been absurd. A sense of dignity forced me to break off the interview, but it has only confirmed my fears. Thus,” added the marshal, getting more and more animated, “thus am I fallen from the esteem to which I am entitled, thus am I despised, without even knowing the cause! Is it not odious? If they would only utter a charge against me—I should at least be able to defend myself, and to find an answer. But no, no! not even a word—only the cold politeness that is worse than any insult. Oh! it is too much, too much! for all this comes but in addition to other cares. What a life is mine since the death of my father! If I did but find rest and happiness at home—but no! I come in, but to read shameful letters; and still worse,” added the marshal, in a heartrending tone, and after a moment’s hesitation, “to find my children grow more and more indifferent towards me—” “Yes,” continued he, perceiving the amazement of Dagobert, “and yet they know how much I love them!”

“Your daughters indifferent!” exclaimed Dagobert, in astonishment. “You make them such a reproach?”

“Oh! I do not blame them. They have hardly had time to know me.”

“Not had time to know you?” returned the soldier, in a tone of remonstrance, and warming up in his turn. “Ah! of what did their mother talk to them, except you? and I too! what could I teach your children except to know and love you?”

“You take their part—that is natural—they love you better than they do me,” said the marshal, with growing bitterness. Dagobert felt himself so painfully affected, that he looked at the marshal without answering.



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“Yes!” continued the other; “yes! it may be base and ungrateful—but no matter!—Twenty times I have felt jealous of the affectionate confidence which my children display towards you, while with me they seem always to be in fear. If their melancholy faces ever grow animated for a moment, it is in talking to you, in seeing you; while for me they have nothing but cold respect—and that kills me. Sure of the affection of my children, I would have braved and surmounted every difficulty—” Then, seeing that Dagobert rushed towards the door which led to the chamber of Rose and Blanche, the marshal asked: “Where are you going?”

“For your daughters, general.”

“What for?”

“To bring them face to face with you—to tell them: ‘My children, your father thinks that you do not love him.’—I will only say that—and then you will see.”

“Dagobert! I forbid you to do it,” cried the marshal, hastily.

“I don’t care for that—you have no right to be unjust to the poor children,” said the soldier, as he again advanced towards the door.

“Dagobert, I command you to remain here,” cried the marshal.

“Listen to me, general. I am your soldier, your inferior, your servant, if you will,” said the old grenadier, roughly; “but neither rank nor station shall keep me silent, when I have to defend your daughters. All must be explained—I know but one way—and that is to bring honest people face to face.”

If the marshal had not seized him by the arm, Dagobert would have entered the apartment of the young girls.

“Remain!” said the marshal, so imperiously that the soldier, accustomed to obedience, hung his head, and stood still.

“What would you do?” resumed the marshal. “Tell my children, that I think they do not love me? induce them to affect a tenderness they do not feel—when it is not their fault, but mine?”

“Oh, general!” said Dagobert, in a tone of despair, “I no longer feel anger, in hearing you speak thus of your children. It is such grief, that it breaks my heart!”

Touched by the expression of the soldier’s countenance, the marshal continued, less abruptly: “Come, I may be wrong; and yet I ask you, without bitterness or jealousy, are not my children more confiding, more familiar, with you than with me?”



“God bless me, general!” cried Dagobert; “if you come to that, they are more familiar with Spoil-sport than with either of us. You are their father; and, however kind a father may be, he must always command some respect. Familiar with me! I should think so. A fine story! What the devil should they respect in me, who, except that I am six feet high, and wear a moustache, might pass for the old woman that nursed them?—and then I must say, that, even before the death of your worthy father, you were sad and full of thought; the children have remarked that; and what you take for coldness on their part, is, I am sure, anxiety for you. Come, general; you are not just. You complain, because they love you too much.”



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"I complain, because I suffer," said the marshal, in an agony of excitement. "I alone know my sufferings."

"They must indeed be grievous, general," said Dagobert, carried further than he would otherwise have gone by his attachment for the orphans, "since those who love you feel them so cruelly."

"What, sir! more reproaches?"

"Yes, general, reproaches," cried Dagobert. "Your children have the right to complain of you, since you accuse them so unjustly."

"Sir," said the marshal, scarcely able to contain himself, "this is enough—this is too much!"

"Oh, yes! it is enough," replied Dagobert, with rising emotion. "Why defend unfortunate children, who can only love and submit? Why defend them against your unhappy blindness?"

The marshal started with anger and impatience, but then replied, with a forced calmness: "I needs must remember all that I owe you—and I will not forget it, say what you will."

"But, general," cried Dagobert, "why will you not let me fetch your children?"

"Do you not see that this scene is killing me?" cried the exasperated marshal. "Do you not understand, that I will not have my children witness what I suffer? A father's grief has its dignity, sir; and you ought to feel for and respect it."

"Respect it? no—not when it is founded on injustice!"

"Enough, sir—enough!"

"And not content with tormenting yourself," cried Dagobert, unable any longer to control his feelings, "do you know what you will do? You will make your children die of sorrow. Was it for this, that I brought them to you from the depths of Siberia?"

"More reproaches!"

"Yes; for the worst ingratitude towards me, is to make your children unhappy."

"Leave the room, sir!" cried the marshal, quite beside himself, and so terrible with rage and grief, that Dagobert, regretting that he had gone so far, resumed: "I was wrong, general. I have perhaps been wanting in respect to you—forgive me—but—"



“I forgive you—only leave me!” said the marshal, hardly restraining himself.

“One word, general—”

“I entreat you to leave me—I ask it as a service—is that enough?” said the marshal, with renewed efforts to control the violence of his emotions.

A deadly paleness succeeded to the high color which during this painful scene had inflamed the cheeks of the marshal. Alarmed at this symptom, Dagobert redoubled his entreaties. “I implore you, general,” said he, in an agitated voice, “to permit me for one moment—”

“Since you will have it so, sir, I must be the one to leave,” said the marshal, making a step towards the door.

These words were said in such a manner, that Dagobert could no longer resist. He hung his head in despair, looked for a moment in silent supplication at the marshal, and then, as the latter seemed yielding to a new movement of rage, the soldier slowly quitted the room.



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A few minutes had scarcely elapsed since the departure of Dagobert, when the marshal, who, after a long and gloomy silence, had repeatedly drawn near the door of his daughters' apartment with a mixture of hesitation and anguish, suddenly made a violent effort, wiped the cold sweat from his brow, and entered the chamber in which Rose and Blanche had taken refuge.

CHAPTER XLIX.

The test.

Dagobert was right in defending his children, as he paternally called Rose and Blanche, and yet the apprehensions of the marshal with regard to the coldness of his daughters, were unfortunately justified by appearances. As he had told his father, unable to explain the sad, and almost trembling embarrassment, which his daughters felt in his presence, he sought in vain for the cause of what he termed their indifference. Now reproaching himself bitterly for not concealing from them his grief at the death of their mother, he feared he might have given them to understand that they would be unable to console him; now supposing that he had not shown himself sufficiently tender, and that had chilled them with his military sternness; and now repeating with bitter regret, that, having always lived away from them, he must be always a stranger to them. In a word, the most unlikely suppositions presented themselves by turns to his mind, and whenever such seeds of doubt, suspicion, or fear, are blended with a warm affection, they will sooner or later develop themselves with fatal effect. Yet, notwithstanding this fancied coldness, from which he suffered so much, the affection of the marshal for his daughters was so true and deep, that the thought of again quitting them caused the hesitations which were the torment of his life, and provoked an incessant struggle between his paternal love and the duty he held most sacred.

The injurious calumnies, which had been so skillfully propagated, that men of honor, like his old brothers in arms, were found to attach some credit to them, had been spread with frightful pertinacity by the friends of the Princess de Saint-Dizier. We shall describe hereafter the meaning and object of these odious reports, which, joined with so many other fatal injuries, had filled up the measure of the marshal's indignation. Inflamed with anger, excited almost to madness by this incessant "stabbing with pins" (as he had himself called it), and offended at some of Dagobert's words, he had spoken harshly to him. But, after the soldier's departure, when left to reflect in silence, the marshal remembered the warm and earnest expressions of the defender of his children, and doubt crossed his mind, as to the reality of the coldness of which he accused them. Therefore, having taken a terrible resolution in case a new trial should confirm his desponding doubts, he entered, as we before said, his daughters' chamber. The discussion with Dagobert had been so loud, that the sound of



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the voices had confusedly reached the ears of the two sisters, even after they had taken refuge in their bedroom. So that, on the arrival of their father, their pale faces betrayed their fear and anxiety. At sight of the marshal, whose countenance was also much agitated, the girls rose respectfully, but remained close together, trembling in each other's arms. And yet there was neither anger nor severity on their father's face—only a deep, almost supplicating grief, which seemed to say: "My children, I suffer—I have come to you—console me, love me! or I shall die!"

The marshal's countenance was at this moment so expressive, that, the first impulse of fear once surmounted, the sisters were about to throw themselves into his arms; but remembering the recommendations of the anonymous letter, which told them how painful any effusion of their tenderness was to their father, they exchanged a rapid glance, and remained motionless. By a cruel fatality, the marshal at this moment burned to open his arms to his children. He looked at them with love, he even made a slight movement as if to call them to him; but he would not attempt more, for fear of meeting with no response. Still the poor children, paralyzed by perfidious counsels, remained mute, motionless, trembling!

"It is all over," thought he, as he gazed upon them. "No chord of sympathy stirs in their bosom. Whether I go—whether I remain—matters not to them. No, I am nothing to these children—since, at this awful moment, when they see me perhaps for the last time, no filial instinct tells them that their affection might save me still!"

During these terrible reflections, the marshal had not taken his eyes off his children, and his manly countenance assumed an expression at once so touching and mournful—his look revealed so painfully the tortures of his despairing soul—that Rose and Blanche, confused, alarmed, but yielding together to a spontaneous movement, threw themselves on their father's neck, and covered him with tears and caresses. Marshal Simon had not spoken a word; his daughters had not uttered a sound; and yet all three had at length understood one another. A sympathetic shock had electrified and mingled those three hearts. Vain fears, false doubts, lying counsel, all had yielded to the irresistible emotion which had brought the daughters to their father's arms. A sudden revelation gave them faith, at the fatal moment when incurable suspicion was about to separate them forever.

In a second, the marshal felt all this, but words failed him. Pale, bewildered, kissing the brows, the hair, the hands of his daughters, weeping, sighing, smiling all in turn, he was wild, delirious, drunk with happiness. At length, he exclaimed: "I have found them—or rather, I have never lost them. They loved me, and did not dare to tell me so. I overawed them. And I thought it was my fault. Heavens! what good that does! what strength, what heart, what hope!—Ha! ha!" cried he, laughing and weeping at the same time, whilst he covered his children with caresses; "they may despise me now, they may



harass me now—I defy them all. My own blue eyes! my sweet blue eyes! look at me well, and inspire me with new life.”



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“Oh, father! you love us then as much as we love you?” cried Rose, with enchanting simplicity.

“And we may often, very often, perhaps every day, throw ourselves on your neck, embrace you, and prove how glad we are to be with you?”

“Show you, dear father, all the store of love we were heaping up in our hearts—so sad, alas! that we could not spend it upon you?”

“Tell you aloud all that we think in secret?”

“Yes—you may do so—you may do so,” said Marshal Simon, faltering with joy; “what prevented you, my children? But no; do not answer; enough of the past!—I know all, I understand all. You misinterpreted my gloom, and it made you sad; I, in my turn, misinterpreted your sadness. But never mind; I scarcely know what I am saying to you. I only think of looking at you—and it dazzles me—it confuses me—it is the dizziness of joy!”

“Oh, look at us, father! look into our eyes, into our hearts,” cried Rose, with rapture.

“And you will read there, happiness for us, and love for you, sir!” added Blanche.

“Sir, sir!” said the marshal, in a tone of affectionate reproach; “what does that mean? Will you call me father, if you please?”

“Dear father, your hand!” said Blanche, as she took it, and placed it on her heart.

“Dear father, your hand!” said Rose, as she took the other hand of the marshal. “Do you believe now in our love and happiness?” she continued.

It is impossible to describe the charming expression of filial pride in the divine faces of the girls, as their father, slightly pressing their virgin bosoms, seemed to count with delight the joyous pulsations of their hearts.

“Oh, yes! happiness and affection can alone make the heart beat thus!” cried the marshal.

A hoarse sob, heard in the direction of the open door, made the three turn round, and there they saw the tall figure of Dagobert, with the black nose of Spoil-sport reaching to his master’s knee. The soldier, drying his eyes and moustache with his little blue cotton handkerchief, remained motionless as the god Terminus. When he could speak, he addressed himself to the marshal, and, shaking his head, muttered, in a hoarse voice, for the good man was swallowing his tears: “Did I not tell you so?”



“Silence!” said the marshal, with a sign of intelligence. “You were a better father than myself, my old friend. Come and kiss them! I shall not be jealous.”

The marshal stretched out his hand to the soldier, who pressed it cordially, whilst the two sisters threw themselves on his neck, and Spoil-sport, according to custom wishing to have his share in the general joy, raised himself on his hind legs, and rested his fore-paws against his master’s back. There was a moment of profound silence. The celestial felicity enjoyed during that moment, by the marshal, his daughters, and the soldier, was interrupted by the barking of Spoil-sort, who suddenly quitted the attitude of a biped. The happy group separated, looked round, and saw Loony’s stupid face. He looked even duller than usual, as he stood quite still in the doorway, staring with wide stretched eyes, and holding a feather-broom under his arm, and in his hand the ever-present basket of wood.

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Nothing makes one so gay as happiness; and, though this grotesque figure appeared at a very unseasonable moment, it was received with frank laughter from the blooming lips of Rose and Blanche. Having made the marshal's daughters laugh, after their long sadness, Loony at once acquired a claim to the indulgence of the marshal, who said to him, good humoredly: "What do you want, my lad?"

"It's not me, my lord duke!" answered Loony, laying his hand on his breast, as if it were taking a vow, so that his feather-brush fell down from under his arm. The laughter of the girls redoubled.

"It is not you?" said the marshal.

"Here! Spoil-sport!" Dagobert called, for the honest dog seemed to have a secret dislike for the pretended idiot, and approached him with an angry air.

"No, my lord duke, it is not me!" resumed Loony. "It is the footman who told me to tell M. Dagobert, when I brought up the wood to tell my lord duke, as I was coming up with the basket, that M. Robert wants to see him."

The girls laughed still more at this new stupidity. But, at the name of Robert, Marshal Simon started.

M. Robert was the secret emissary of Rodin, with regard to the possible, but adventurous, enterprise of attempting the liberation of Napoleon II.

After a moment's silence, the marshal, whose face was still radiant with joy and happiness, said to Loony: "Beg M. Robert to wait for me a moment in my study."

"Yes, my lord duke," answered Loony, bowing almost to the ground.

The simpleton withdrew, and the marshal said to his daughters, in a joyous tone, "You see, that, in a moment like this, one does not leave one's children, even for M. Robert."

"Oh! that's right, father!" cried Blanche, gayly; "for I was already very angry with this M. Robert."

"Have you pen and paper at hand?" asked the marshal.

"Yes, father; there on the table," said Rose, hastily, as she pointed to a little desk near one of the windows, towards which the marshal now advanced rapidly.

From motives of delicacy, the girls remained where they were, close to the fireplace, and caressed each other tenderly, as if to congratulate themselves in private on the unexpected happiness of this day.



The marshal seated himself at the desk, and made a sign to Dagobert to draw near.

While he wrote rapidly a few words in a firm hand, he said to the soldier with a smile, in so low a tone that it was impossible for his daughters to hear: "Do you know what I had almost resolved upon, before entering this room?"

"What, general?"

"To blow my brains out. It is to my children that I owe my life." And the marshal continued writing.

Dagobert started at this communication, and then replied, also in a whisper: "It would not have been with your pistols. I took off the caps."

The marshal turned round hastily, and looked at him with an air of surprise. But the soldier only nodded his head affirmatively, and added: "Thank heaven, we have now done with all those ideas!"



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The marshal's only answer was to glance at his children, his eyes swimming with tenderness, and sparkling with delight; then, sealing the note he had written, he gave it to the soldier, and said to him, "Give that to M. Robert. I will see him to-morrow."

Dagobert took the letter, and went out. Returning towards his daughters, the marshal joyfully extended his arms to them, and said, "Now, young ladies, two nice kisses for having sacrificed M. Robert to you. Have I not earned them?" And Rose and Blanche threw themselves on their father's neck.

About the time that these events were taking place at Paris, two travellers, wide apart from each other, exchanged mysterious thoughts through the breadth of space.